

the university of oklahoma

college of arts and sciences film and video studies program

FVStakes

Fall 2003

Volume 4 Number 4

Screenwriting muse

She's alive and well at FVS

L.A. wows student

Annual Los Angeles trip leads to internship

Guerrilla filmfare

New course mixes production and theory



FVS and the screenwriting muse

By Andrew Horton
Jeanne H. Smith Professor of FVS
Director of FVS

Another full newsletter is coming your way as the fall 2003 semester heads toward midterm.

The spring and summer accomplishments for the FVS program strongly point to the high level of energy and devotion our faculty and students have shown to exploring many aspects of film, video and new media on campus and off. They are working in the classroom and in internships and study programs around the world.

But in my brief notes this time I wish to salute the screenwriting muse at OU.

It's been only a few years that screenwriting has been in the FVS program, and already we have students making names for themselves with their stories for the screen. Sterlin Harjo, our Native American major who won a Sundance Summer 2003 Screenwriting Workshop scholarship, was one of the 14 chosen from several thousand applications and, according to many distinguished screenwriting mentors and fellow workshop participants, came up with the most promising script in progress. As a result of this work, he

has a good chance to be accepted into the Director's Workshop at Sundance next summer, an honor that often leads to the completion of a first feature film.

Gena Ellis has just completed an interdisciplinary master's degree at OU focusing on screenwriting. Her short scripts and feature script for her thesis already have received strong interest from Hollywood producers and a sale on at least one of them seems close at hand as we go to press. And Sarah Lee Parrish, an attorney in Oklahoma City who has taken the FVS script class, has been asked — based on the quality of her own script — to rewrite a script for a Texas producer.

Sometimes it seems that not a week goes by without someone calling to say, "I have a great story, but I need help in writing it as a screenplay. Can you help?" I smile and pull out a list of our students who have proved themselves in our script classes and begin to connect them with those needing someone who can write FADE IN and keep going to FADE OUT.

Not every FVS major wants to be a writer, but many who wish to be directors, actors or editors find that taking screenwriting helps them better understand the craft and art of

filmmaking. "I was the only one in the 16mm production class who had had screenwriting, and so I found it easy to come up with that 10-minute film we had to do and to write it out and then shoot it," one student said.

Finally, I found it wonderfully fitting during the FVS Greek seminar last summer that everyone in the Greek film world seems to want to do a big fat Greek script in English. The 2004 FVS Greek island seminar will focus on screenwriting as well as on Greece.

As if in preparation for such an enjoyable opportunity, I am working on two Greek screenplays.

It's all Greek to me, but you are welcome to join us next June as we pursue the screenwriting muse by Homer's wine dark seas.

DIRECTOR'Schair



OU College of Arts and Sciences Film and Video Studies Program
SCREENWRITING ON A GREEK ISLAND
June 4-11, 2004

Lew Hunter, UCLA, and Andrew Horton, OU

This workshop is designed for beginning, intermediate and advanced writers. Alumni of past Greece script seminars have received scholarships to Sundance, earned admission to the NYU and other graduate programs and won contests.

In 2003, participants came from Australia, England, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Oklahoma.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (405) 325-3020 OR E-MAIL FVS@OU.EDU

FVS wishes to thank Richard Dulaney and Jeanne Hoffman Smith for their generous donations of funds for the production of FVS Takes.

COVER PHOTOS (clockwise from left): Korrissia, on the Greek island of Kea, a stop on the 2003 FVS Greece trip; renowned director Theo Angelopoulos speaks to OU seminar group; FVS students await their next Greek adventure.

Speaker stresses film's life relevance

Editor Beatrice Rehl spoke at the April 28 FVS Awards Ceremony. Below is an excerpt from her talk.

By Beatrice Rehl, Ph.D.
Senior Editor, Cambridge Press

This evening marks the beginning of a whirlwind few weeks when you wind up your undergraduate years and go on for graduate work and/or jobs, perhaps in film or perhaps in whatever job has come your way.

For so many of us in this room, film is the center of our lives. It is not too difficult to understand why that should be so. Film is, quite literally, a medium that is larger than life. It brings together and synthesizes a number of variables — story, images, music — through which time, space and mimesis are manipulated.

Film, or more appropriately movies, also is an important part of the lives of people who have not necessarily committed their lives to the medium.

I attended a film seminar a few years ago in Salzburg, Austria, where the participants came from all over the world. Each participant — be she from India, China, Rwanda or Yugoslavia — spoke of the central role of film in national popular cultures: as entertainment, as a forum for debate on changing values and mores, and as a potent political weapon. I think it is fair to say that film is without question the single most important genre through which modern and contemporary popular culture is expressed.

Film is the modern form of story communication. We humans have always needed stories. Beginning

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with the cave paintings of the prehistoric era, humans have told stories through images in the form of powerful re-creations of the animals that threatened them and which they hunted. With the rise of civilization comes the rise of myths through which humanity, in the ancient societies of China, the Near East, Egypt, classical Greece and Rome, told stories that made sense of their existence, of their relationship with nature, of the old ways giving way to the new. These stories, in short, expressed their hopes and fears.

Today, film has assumed this function as the medium through which we reflect on our existences.

FVS kudos, spring 2003

As the list below shows, spring 2003 was a productive time. FVS had its largest graduating class, played host to distinguished visitors and saw its faculty and students achieve impressively.

- The largest class ever, 20 seniors, left OU with degrees in film and video studies. They left to jobs all over the United States and the world. The alumni base grows more impressive each year.

- FVS participated in the first screening of FVS, art school and Oklahoma short films at the February 2003 Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Fest in France

- In April, a group of 12 FVS majors and three faculty visited studios in Los Angeles. Seventy alumni and friends showed up for the OU film gathering at Papa Cristo's Greek Restaurant.

- Gary Rhodes taught FVS's first production class, Guerilla Filmmaking.

- FVS major Sterlin Harjo received a summer Sundance Institute Script Development Seminar

scholarship, thought to be a first for any undergraduate anywhere.

- Misha Nedeljkovich received a Fulbright Fellowship to study and teach media in Yugoslavia.

- The program brought in a wide variety of guest speakers and filmmakers, including the Foster Brothers — Craig and Damon — from South Africa; Ken Brown and Lisa Crafts, who make shorts for "Sesame Street" and "MTV"; UCLA script expert Lew Hunter; and drive-in moviemaker Frank Hill.

- FVS initiated a well-received six-film series called "My Favorite Movie" with introductions by OU President David Boren, head football coach Bob Stoops, Norman Mayor Ron Henderson, Provost Nancy Mergler, Vice President for Student Affairs Clarke Stroud and College of Arts and Sciences Dean Paul Bell.

FVSnews

L.A. lures FVS group for third annual trip

Los Angeles 2003: Freshman Lauren Neal shares her experiences on the annual FVS California trip for networking and sightseeing.

By Lauren Neal
FVS Sophomore

This trip was my first time to step foot in Los Angeles outside of its airport. I was excited just to see some palm trees and walk down the Avenue of the Stars, but I had some truly exciting first-time experiences throughout the trip.

Our tour of *Judging Amy* was my first time on a set. One of the show's writers and co-producers, Lyla Oliver, took us on a grand tour of the set. We even got to watch as scenes were shot. Everyone from production manager Jan DeWitt to the directors to the actors to the script supervisor was pleased to meet

us and answer our questions. It was such a wonderful thing just to see a real live set working, thriving with creativity and productivity.

We traveled from Santa Monica to Hollywood to Culver City to Beverly Hills and visited the homes of screenwriters and film critics well versed in the business.

We toured the office of Movieline as well as the office of screenwriters' agent Ken Sherman, which is in a historic building that also has such tenants such as Jack Nicholson and Chuck Barris.

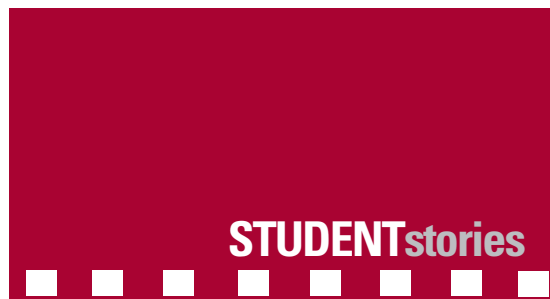
Our final hurrah of the weekend was a tribute to late filmmaker George Roy Hill at Papa Cristo's that

wrapped up the trip before everyone traveled his or her separate way.

Those of us who had made the FVS trip to Greece had the chance to reminisce with fellow Greek travelers, catch up on Greek cuisine, learn about the making of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* from those who knew from experience and meet still more people in the industry.

The whole weekend was like a dream, and I would still be pinching myself if I didn't have the e-mails from internship contacts made in Los Angeles to prove that I didn't make it all up.

Lauren Neal completed a summer internship for Miramax in Los Angeles.



FVS student Sterlin Harjo at Sundance



(From left) Screenplay writer Chris McQuarrie (The Usual Suspects), screenplay writer Tyger Williams (Menace II Society) and FVS major Sterlin Harjo take a moment to bond in the natural beauty surrounding the Sundance Film Festival. Harjo was accepted as a special guest of the 2003 festival under a special award created by a filmmaker whose film was accepted in the 2003 festival. Harjo is working a rewrite of a script to submit for next year's Sundance Director's Workshop.

Two from FVS represent OU at France's Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival

By Marina McDonnell
FVS/JMC graduate assistant

A light sprinkling of snow ensured the small French town of Clermont-Ferrand was studio-set perfect in time to welcome visitors to the annual Short Film Festival Jan. 31-Feb 5.

The festival is the largest of its kind in Europe and because it is only three and a half hours by train from Paris' Gare-De-Lyon station, it attracts a large number of international buyers and sellers as well as a dedicated short film-loving French audience.

Norman is twinned with Clermont as a sister city and, thanks to Director Andrew Horton's work on behalf of FVS, a connection brought festival Director Roger Gonin to Norman in fall 2002 to screen the winners of that year's festival and to issue an invitation to OU's student filmmakers to enter their work in the 2003 event.

FVS faculty members Gary Rhodes and Heidi Mau attended the event in France after choosing and editing more than 20 Oklahoma short films to fit the 70-minute screening time assigned to OU.

As it turned out, OU's entries made up the opening screening of the festival. Some of us were concerned, including a jet-lagged me downing my second cup of espresso,

that a late-rising European audience might not show up. My worries were squashed as fast as the French cigarettes the omnipresent smokers were putting out against the building walls as wave after wave of black-clad strangers flooded into the cinema.

It was a proud moment later to see the names of the OU filmmakers and their films mentioned in *Variety*.

When I met with Brian Hearn, film curator at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, he was talking to a buyer from Canada seeking to purchase enough films to supply a Canadian short film channel that is on air 24 hours a day. Hearn was at the festival with his own short animated adaptation, *The Sinking Ship*.

"The quality of films screened was truly inspirational and international in scope, also somewhat humbling insofar as I realized how many good films are being made, but few can make a great film," he said. "This market is an ideal place to network with film distributors, television buyers and other filmmakers from around the world."

Buyers were there in force and available for those who wanted to find a market for their shorts. The market catalog, thicker than a telephone directory, guided buyers to exactly who was responsible for what film and where they could get in

FEATUREpresentation

touch with the filmmakers. That in itself was no easy task, given that the festival screened more than 3,000 shorts in the course of the week.

The audience clearly appreciated the OU shorts. What seemed to get the most positive reactions were unscripted drama, comedy and animation.

For me, the festival has strongly reinforced the creative idea that a person's culture, history and personal stories — while perhaps of little interest to his or her friends and neighbors — are unique and, perhaps, fascinating in a global context. This seems especially true when there is no language barrier in the film.

Note that you still have plenty of time to grab your friends and camera and tell your local stories for consideration as part of next year's festival entry.

Many of the professional filmmakers who spoke at FVS events in 2002-2003 said they got their start in the film business making shorts.

Now that Horton is providing this showcase to FVS students, they, too, have a chance to expose their shorts to an international audience.

For festival details, visit www.clermont-filmfest.com. Check fvs.ou.edu for updates on deadlines and dates for 2004 Clermont-Ferrand Festival.

26th Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival

Jan. 30 to Feb. 7, 2004

Any type of film (fiction, animation, documentary, experimental) on 35mm, 16mm single optical soundtrack system or Digital Betacam Pal that was completed after Jan. 1, 2002, and has not already been submitted to the selection committee, may compete.

Selected films will be requested in the screening

format specified on their entry form.

Films of 40 minutes or less are eligible to enter.

Industrial or commercial films and double track films are not accepted.

All the festival venues are not yet equipped for Dolby sound.

Spring 2003 graduates

A record 20 FVS students earned their degrees in spring 2003.

Matthew Allen
Joanna Bloom
Dustin Bothwell
Spencer Campbell
Jill Corbin
Sophia Hernandez
Kristina Hull
Page Jones
Mark Long
Adam Madison
Markus Miller
Julie Porter
Bernadette Rouhani
Hunter Sanders
Michael Sheyahshe-Lell
Brian Sittler
Deidra Smith
Shawn Unruh
Meleai Williamson
Christopher Zuhdi

Faculty elects Committee A members

FVS faculty members elected Ben Alpers and Ben Keppel at their April meeting to serve on the 2003-2004 Committee A.

Alpers, assistant professor in the Honors College, will serve a one-year term. Keppel, associate professor in the history department, will serve a two-year term.

They replace Joanna Rapf and Misha Nedeljkovich. Rapf served from 2001-2003 and Nedeljkovich has gone to Yugoslavia on a Fulbright Fellowship.

Committee A evaluates the director and the adviser, suggests improvements to the program, and discusses a wide variety of academic and administrative issues related to the program.



Publications and presentations

As this partial list of activities during the summer months shows, those in FVS stay busy.

Jeff Van Hanken
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FVS Faculty

Van Hanken presented his six films making up the HOLA Film Project at the Great Plains Film Festival in Lincoln, Neb., which ran from July 31 to Aug. 14.

The festival brought in a student from the University of California, Santa Cruz, who was one of the student filmmakers involved with the project. Originally from inner city Los Angeles, he's the first English speaker in his family.

A film festival in Buenos Aires has asked Van Hanken to screen his films there; details will be available later.

Nathan Webb
pifilm@hotmail.com
FVS Senior

The New York Independent Film and Video Festival has accepted Webb's short documentary made in spring 2003 for Guerrilla Filmmaking. Titled *Johnny's Van*, it is scheduled to screen in Los Angeles in September and in New York in November.

A. Robert Lauer
arlaurer@ou.edu
FVS Faculty Member

Lauer published "Run Lola Run at the Dawn of Postmodernity" in *Simile: Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education* 3.1 (2003). This article is available at www.utpjournals.com.

Andrew Horton
andy@ou.edu
FVS Director

Jeanne Hoffman Smith Chair of FVS Studies

Horton co-edited a special issue of *Film Criticism* on contemporary Greek Cinema, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (Winter 2002-03), and wrote an essay for the collection: "Desperately Seeking Screenplays: Five Contemporary Greek Films Considered," pp. 31-43.

He wrote "Five Easy Ways to Write Locally and Reach the World: Oklahoma as a Case Study," *Screentalk*, (July 2003) pp. 46-49.

Horton spoke at the Yale University Balkan Film Conference on "Registers of Emotion, Comedy and Music in Balkan Cinema." He organized a panel on "New Approaches to Teaching Screenwriting" at the March Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Minneapolis. He spoke on screenwriting at the Sarajevo International Film Festival in Bosnia in August.

Guerrillas in the list

FVS' course offerings now include Guerrilla Filmmaking, a course combining theory and production experience.

By Gary Rhodes
FVS Faculty

When FVS first decided to step into teaching a production course, I proposed the guerrilla filmmaking idea – patterned after one taught at USC by OU alum Allen Rucker – in part because of the limited equipment our program owns. But it was also for another reason: the freedom of casting aside some elements of the filmmaking process and learning to make use of a handheld camera, existing lighting and elements of improvisation during production.

Since FVS is not a production program and OU is not a vo-tech

school, Guerrilla Filmmaking focused on aesthetic theory and concerns that we consider more important and more in our realm than technical data. Among other pursuits, this meant each student wrote four essays analyzing various aspects of a favorite film.

The goal of the course was to connect production to film studies, giving students another vantage point from which to examine the cinema.

Though in a way Guerrilla Filmmaking blazes a new trail for FVS, it also follows the path of courses like Screenwriting and Acting for the Camera. In fact, our course examined and considered scripts from the former and worked in groups with actors from the latter.

The ability to work with acting students and Darryl Cox – who has a 15-year-plus film-acting career – became a unique component of the course. To our knowledge, no other

FEATUREDCOURSE

production course anywhere in Oklahoma places attention on filmmakers working with actors and actually provides opportunities for them to do so.

Along with that intensive group project, students produced their own final films, which ranged in genre from documentary to comedy to drama to music video. Topics included everything from undergraduate alcohol usage to a rendition of Poe's haunting story "Berenice."

A section of Guerrilla Filmmaking in the spring schedule will allow more students to take advantage of this opportunity for combining production with studies.

Fall 2003 Classes

This fall's list of courses includes new instructors and course titles. From theory to practice, it's here.

- FVS 1013 001 Introduction to Film and Video Studies/
Victoria Sturtevant (Majors only)
- FVS 1013 010 Introduction to Film and Video Studies /Jeff Van Hanken
- FVS 1013 011-014 Discussion for Introduction
- FVS 1013 900 Introduction to Film and Video Studies /Karen Craig
- FVS 2013 001 Film History to 1945/Al LaValley
- FVS 2123 001 Acting for the Camera/Darryl Cox
- FVS 2123 900 Acting for the Camera/Darryl Cox
- FVS 3213 001 Media Theories/Gary Rhodes
- FVS 3223 001 Hollywood Musical /Victoria Sturtevant
- FVS 3233 900 Filmmakers: Kubrick (*2001 Space Odyssey*)/Gary Rhodes
- FVS 3810 001 Children's Cinema/Betty Robbins
- FVS 3810 900 Writing Film Criticism/Dino Lalli
- FVS 3843 001 American Independent Cinema/Al LaValley
- FVS 3843 900 German Cinema/Hester Baer
- FVS 3853 001 Screenwriting/Jeff Van Hanken
- FVS 4013 001 Senior Seminar in Film and Video Studies/Gary Rhodes

Student awards

FVS honored five students with annual awards at its spring presentation ceremony.

Ned Hockman Filmmaking Prize

Josh Hume and
Chris Ivanovskis

Heidi Karriker Scholarship

Adam Madison

C. Clay Withrow FVS Writing Awards

Best Screenplay

Cody Cundiff

Best Film Essay

Jared Ning

Name change recognizes society's diverse membership

By Jane Dye
Administrative Coordinator
Society for Cinema and Media Studies
Film and Video Studies

The membership of the Society for Cinema Studies has voted to change its name to the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. The constitutional amendment was in response to growing concerns that the organization's name reflect the wide range of moving picture and digital technologies that members study and produce.

President Lucy Fischer noted in a letter to the membership that the officers and executive council viewed the name change "as a renewal of our commitment to the history, criticism and practice of cinema in society, while broadening our name to express our commitment to the study of the history of criticism and practice of television, video and computer imaging and sound technologies."

The officers and executive council formalized plans to serve as host to the society's first transatlantic conference in spring 2005 at the Institute of Education, University of London.

New officers announced at the March 2003 conference in Minneapolis are President-elect Stephen Prince (communication studies, Virginia Tech) and Secretary Susan Ohmer (American studies, University of Notre Dame). New Executive Council members include Krin Gabbard (comparative literature, State University of New York), Jamie Poster (graduate student representative, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee) and Patricia White (English literature, Swarthmore College).

Finally, the 2004 annual conference is scheduled for March 4-7 in Atlanta, at the Omni Hotel at CNN Center. In recognition of Atlanta's

role in broadcasting, the arts, scholarship and, particularly, as a center for African-American culture and scholarship, the plenary session will explore the topic, "Mediating Tomorrow's History: Live Coverage and Documentary in the Digital Era."

Visit www.cinemastudies.org or 302 Science Hall for information about joining, attending the conference or submitting a proposal.

SCMSreport



2004 SCMS CONFERENCE

Mediating Tomorrow's History: Live Coverage and Documentary in the Digital Era

SCMS announces its Call for Proposals for the 2004 Conference, slated for March 4-7 in Atlanta at the Omni Hotel at CNN Center.

SCMS looks forward to panel and workshop proposals addressing issues raised by the plenary — and by our Atlanta location — as well as those that engage a

wide range of research in film and media studies.

Student members may apply for the SCMS Travel Fund for Minority Students. Travel funds are available for graduate students. You do not have to present a paper at the conference to apply for travel funding. For details, visit www.cinemastudies.org.

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FVStakesfacts

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