

the university of oklahoma

college of arts and sciences film and video studies program

FVStakes

Winter 2004

Volume 4 Number 4

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The long, happy year of short films

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

DIRECTOR'S Chair

2003 has been The Year of Short Films for FVS.

Fade in on Sunday evening, Sept. 7, in the newly renovated Sooner Theatre on Main Street, where Roger Gonin, director of the Clermont-Ferrand (France) International Short Film Festival, walked onto the stage and introduced an evening titled "The Best French Short Films of the Year" to an audience of more than 200 OU students, faculty and Oklahoma film lovers.



Some were surprised that so many would show up to see not only foreign films, but *short* foreign films. What was the draw? Gonin and I realized that for this second year of featuring Clermont shorts on campus and reciprocating with the best OU shorts being screened at the Clermont Fest in February, word of mouth had spread the news about how much *fun* these films are. This year provided another evening of shorts and lively discussion.

The next night in Nielsen Hall, more than 240 gathered. Once more, buzz about these films led students and others to understand how much one can do with a short that, in many ways, feature films cannot accomplish. After all, Steven Spielberg said this year that while he

doesn't have time to read many feature screenplays, he's always happy to see a film up to five minutes long. Our own Paul Bell, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, understands this. He not only supports the FVS screenings at the Clermont Film Festival, but attended both evenings of screenings here.

With the talented help of two production faculty — Gary Rhodes of FVS and Heidi Mau of the School of Art — we actively have encouraged our students to write, shoot, edit and, now, "expose" their shorts by screening them. Oct. 31 was our deadline to submit OU films for the 2004 Clermont Festival. Gary and Heidi will select and package the films for screening there.

The Clermont shorts, however, were not the only ones screened this fall. Elly Petrides of the Greek Film Centre brought three excellent Greek shorts — *The Hawker*, *The Dress* and *Listen* — which, as one viewer said, had the audience "caught off guard" at how clever and moving they were. Petrides said that Greece is not the only country undergoing something of a revolution in short films, especially those made by women.

"Quite simply, many of the shorts are much better than most of the feature films made," she said.

No matter what country they come from, filmmakers are realizing the double value of making shorts.

On one hand, shorts provide more freedom to experiment than feature films because they are less costly and take less time to make. On the other, shorts often can be a passport or ticket to getting the attention of producers interested in funding



features. All the more reason to encourage FVS students to "think big and shoot brief."

For more information about this year's festival in France, visit www.clermont-filmfest.com.

The still at left is from the Pigly and the one at right from De Beste gar forst, both films shown at the 2002 Clermont festival. (Printed with permission of the Clermont-Ferrand International Film Festival.)

COVER PHOTOS (clockwise from left): Actor James Garner accepts The FVS Lifetime Achievement Award Oct 16; Victoria Sturtevant's Introduction to Film class; Betty Robbins' Children's Cinema class; entrance to the Academy of Film and Television in Belgrade.

My fall semester

By Albert LaValley
Visiting Professor

When Andy Horton and Joanna Rapf asked me to be a visiting professor of film and video studies, I felt thrilled and honored, but also a little wary. I knew nothing about Oklahoma, having lived all my 68 years on either the East or West coast. Oklahoma for me was a jumble of images and geographies from plays and films: the Western *Tumbleweeds*, where the opening of the territory is a major event; *Oklahoma*, the musical of my youth; and John Ford and Will Rogers movies. I knew Oklahoma City directly only from I-40, which I crossed occasionally on my winter route to California from the East Coast.

A sample syllabus for the film history course didn't dispel my wariness. It contained warnings about watching sex or nudity on screen and not getting either outraged or juvenile about them. Here I was, about to show *Pink Flamingoes*. Would I be driven from town my first week?

Hardly. Instead, I have encountered a lively, sophisticated campus filled with bright people and a film studies program not very different from those at Dartmouth or the University of California, Santa Barbara. Here, as is true at both those places, film studies faculty members have a broad knowledge of film history and various critical approaches and specialties in language, history, art, etc. that provide a broad multidisciplinary approach. The program seems most energetic largely because Andy Horton functions as a ringmaster and impresario of festivities, reaching out to other departments and students, bringing in visitors and spreading enthusiasm about screenwriting.

Screenwriting is the most practical point of entry to a film career, so it makes a lot of sense to highlight it. At Dartmouth, our majors are few and largely production oriented, not a good thing for the breadth of the department or its budget. At Santa Barbara, the production requirement causes havoc, given the department's 350 majors. The wide range of faculty here also gives film a variety of theoretical approaches, which is pretty much where the discipline is today. With two famous film theorists on staff at Santa Barbara and three required theory courses, it seemed almost inevitable that the program might be attacked, which it was — quite beyond any rational critique — in the Los Angeles Times recently by a disgruntled father of a student who had received Cs in all three courses.

My classes here take me back to when I started teaching film in 1969 at Livingston College, Rutgers, in New Jersey. There, too, I found a lot of friendly, bright, eager students for whom film was really an enthusiasm and a commitment. I might have thought I would be bringing unusual films to my independent film class, but

students here have seen everything and on occasion have brought the unusual to me: *Okie Noodling* and the hard-to-find *Eraserhead*. Here, students regularly ask me out for lunch or coffee and walk me to my car talking about films. Students at the other schools are less willing to engage faculty so directly. Lunches are more formal events scheduled weeks in advance.

The campus also has been a surprise with its many attractive buildings and sense of lively space. I love sitting on the benches — thank you, President Boren — and watching the parade. Students I don't know, workers on the buildings and even a TV interview class on diversity who taped me for half an hour have joined me. The student union and the library look like Yale Gothic, but without the gloom. And the addition to the library is far more inviting than Dartmouth's recent behemoth. I can't imagine sitting down anywhere on the Dartmouth campus and don't think I ever have in my 15 years there. New England is always chilly. UCSB, however, is nicely peppered with little outdoor eateries, although its look-alike tacky state buildings are ill-suited to the gorgeous beachside setting they conceal. The campus here reminds me most of USC, a similar small space nicely laid out and given to human interaction.

Finally, I've enjoyed the visitors who have enlivened the fall. I missed James Garner, but I enjoyed Elly Petrides and her short Greek films. Beverly Garland brought high energy to the *Stark Fear* showing, Stephen Prince gave a memorable talk on digital film and Ken Bacon provided a powerful critique of Bush's Iraq policies in an FVS co-sponsored event. Two drama productions were more ambitious than anything Dartmouth could do because of its lack of a graduate program: *Metamorphoses* and *Sweet Charity*.

Even Norman has grown on me. A man of 68 finds it easier to get around here than in Los Angeles. It has a lot of good stores and restaurants, and it is very walkable. The people at Borders know much more about books and films than those at the Borders in Glendale, Calif. And Norman is unpretentious, a real virtue. So much of America is now cutesied up and prettified that it's refreshing to find a city and a university that remind me of an older America I liked better.

I'll return to Los Angeles with different images of Oklahoma and linger longer on future trips east or west.

LaValley spent fall 2003 as a visiting professor in FVS

FEATUREpresentation

FVS major wins contest for script set in Oklahoma

Dustin Hutton wins a scriptwriting award at the Bare Bones International Film Festival.

By Dustin Hutton
FVS junior

Recently, I won the Bare Bones International Film Festival Script-to-Screen Contest for my script *Staring at the Sun*, a 101-page dramedy with an Oklahoma setting. The festival, held in Muskogee, calls itself the largest annual gathering of independent moviemakers in the Southwest for projects produced for less than \$1 million.

Festival directors Shiron and Oscar Ray made it a point to keep the mood very relaxed and inviting. This led many of the filmmakers to be quite receptive to me and my barrage of questions. The festival had two parts: the screenwriting contest and a film festival. I was the third-youngest person there. Surprisingly, this made little difference to anyone; film has a way of bringing everyone together.

The films were varied: horror, comedy, drama and some absolute, well, losers. However, most films that took home audience choice awards deserved them.

The screenwriting competition was broken down into rounds. The first was an open call for entrants before the festival. These scripts were narrowed to the final three to be performed on stage at the festival. Mine was one of these. Oklahoma Casting helped me find actors. After an open call, two auditions and a few rehearsals, I had my cast.

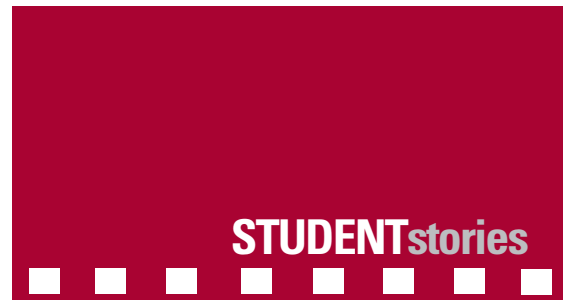
The performance went off beautifully, thanks in large part to the fine acting of fellow OU student Jacob Higginbotham. I was nervous at the awards ceremony and actually thought I had lost until the woman next to me told me that my script had won the best feature screenplay award. I stumbled onto the stage and made a really bad acceptance speech. Despite that, the experience is one I won't soon forget.

FVS Student Film Club returns with plans for a full year of events

After a short hiatus, the Film and Video Studies Club is back in full force with new officers and new ideas.

Officers are Dustin Hutton, president and junior FVS major; Bentley Dill, vice president and junior FVS major; Whitney Porter, secretary and junior FVS major; Katie Slaughter, treasurer and junior FVS major; and Laura Casey, programming chair and junior FVS major. Vicki Sturtevant is faculty sponsor.

Officers are planning a movie night with Gary Rhodes (film to be announced). In the spring semester,



the club will bring in a notable guest speaker and sponsor the annual Oscar Party. Officers have narrowed the list of possible high-level speakers and will announce their choice soon.

The club also is exploring a student film festival. Planned events include trips to the Noble Theater at the Oklahoma City Art Museum to see films and group outings to other film events.

The Film and Video Studies Club meets at 9:30 p.m. every other Thursday in the Frontier Room in Oklahoma Memorial Union. Officers invite anyone interested in film to join them in creating new ideas and making this the best time ever to be involved with FVS. E-mail Whitney Porter at whitneylaine@ou.edu for more information.

1995 grad works in TV and film

Craig Hitchcock wasted little time entering the professional production market after he graduated in 1995.

In 1991, while still a student, Hitchcock convinced CBS, ABC Sports and ESPN to hire him to help in televising OU football games. Since then, Hitchcock has worked in a variety of positions with ABC Sports.

Hitchcock also has worked both in front of and behind the camera on film projects. In 1993 he played the role of an assistant football coach for the New York Jets in the FOX film *Rise and Walk: The Dennis Byrd Story*, which was shot in Oklahoma. He worked on *Twister*, the television show *Touched by an Angel* and the award-winning IMAX film *Stormchasers*. Hitchcock now works for TBS, FOX, Norsemen Productions and several independent companies. To break into production, he says, students should go to production sites early enough to be hired for the same day and tell the production manager that they are film students. He says students should consider sports production even if sports aren't a primary interest because sports are a great place to begin. Television companies often need help.

Hitchcock recommends that students place their names on the Oklahoma Film Commission list for production assistants.

"There are a lot of interesting production plans being made for Oklahoma, so now would be a great time to get your name on the production crew list," he says.

Hitchcock says his FVS coursework and experience prepared him well for the production work he does now.

We're not in Kansas anymore

FVS offers its first children's cinema course as film and literature for the young step into the arena of serious scholarly study.

By Betty Robbins
FVS Faculty

Who doesn't recall the full-body rapture of flying with *Peter Pan* to Never Never Land and clapping tearfully for Tinker Bell to live again or hunkering down in terror and disbelief as *Old Yeller* turned rabid or straining to soak up the blossoming wonders of *The Secret Garden*?

To re-enter that enchanted space as adults and to examine the values and cultural artifacts in such film from a mature perspective are magical adventures. Looking back and inward while viewing children's film from the '30s on is a study, in part, of our individual yellow brick roads to discovering meaning in our own lives. Sharing this in Children's Cinema does, indeed, feel like clicking our red-spangled heels collectively to take our souls and minds into this century's Oz of

cinematic imagination.

When FVS major Emily Fultz suggested a course in children's cinema, I jumped at the chance to teach it. I had a rough design for just such a course and welcomed the push into more deeply researching this rich subject matter. For texts, I chose Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* for its relevant theory and its psychological study into the meaning of fairy tales for children;



Ian Wojcik-Andrews on *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*; and Tim Morris's cultural examination of

children's cinema in *You're Only Young Twice*.

The Muse, or her much younger sister, the Good Fairy, visited me with the idea of offering three tracks in the course: the critic's track, the

FEATUREDCOURSE

creative track and the scholar's track. Near term's end, I am delighting in reading work on the pleasure/pain principle in *Pinocchio*, heroic horses, magic rings, damsels with rubies falling from their lips, fantasy kingdoms and blue fairies. Students are writing about archetypal events and characters that served as psychological companions as they struggled to negotiate their own childhood ambivalences. Studying enchantment may be a voyage into our endearing human trait of making meaning of life.

It's fitting that we offer this course as *World Literature Today* awards its first prize for children's literature, the box office and bookstores experience the *Harry Potter* bonanza, and children's film and literature reach their deserved status as subjects for serious study.

In the picture above left, Betty Robbins takes a break with Children's Cinema students Emily Fultz and Donovan Kosters.

Eastwood's Mystic River discussed

FVS sponsored a lecture Dec. 1 titled "The Loss of the Illusion of Safety: A Discussion of Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River*" by clinical social worker and longtime FVS supporter Jeanne H. Smith.

"*Mystic River* is one of the most important American films I've seen in a long time," Smith says. "Eastwood's film dares to deal with the subject of the horrible effects of the trauma of child sexual abuse on the lives of the many innocent victims. Religious symbolism is slipped into the film to tie the events to the present time as well as to make a statement about good Christian men."

Sharing views at the event were several FVS students; Catherine John, assistant professor of English and FVS faculty member; and Betty Robbins, assistant professor of marketing and FVS faculty member. Director Andrew Horton, Jeanne H. Smith Professor of Film and Video Studies, served as moderator.

Spring 2004 Classes

FVS 1013 010 Introduction to Film /Joanna Rapf (Majors only)

FVS 1013 020 Introduction to Film /Victoria Sturtevant

FVS 2023 010 Film History 1945-Present/Karen Craig

FVS 2123 001 Acting for the Camera/Darryl Cox

FVS 2123 900 Acting for the Camera/Darryl Cox

FVS 3133 001 Soviet Cinema/Alexandra Kariker

FVS 3213 001 Media Theories/Andrew Horton

FVS 3223 900 Theater on Film/Karen Crain

FVS 3223 900 Vampire Cinema/Gary Rhodes and Michael Lee

FVS 3233 900 Oklahoma Filmmakers/Jeff Van Hanken

FVS 3810 001 Guerrilla Filmmaking/Jeff Van Hanken

FVS 3810 002 Writing About Film/Kathryn Jenson White

FVS 3810 010 Women and Film/Victoria Sturtevant

FVS 3843 900 Violence in American Cinema/Betty Robbins

FVS 3843 901 German Expressionism/Gary Rhodes

FVS 3853 001 Screenwriting/Kevin Mahoney

FVS 4013 001 Senior Seminar/Gary Rhodes

Garner accepts honor, talks about career

By Emily Fultz
FVS junior
FVS Student Advisory Committee

Actor James Garner returned to his hometown Oct. 16 to 18 as a guest of FVS, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Norman Film Society.

Jack, Garner's older brother, escorted me to the FVS luncheon Oct. 16.

Garner was honored with an FVS Lifetime Achievement Award for captivating television and film audiences in more than 80 movies and two major television series.

I would have been content listening from the audience in Meacham Auditorium, but Andrew Horton not only invited me to the luncheon, but he also asked me to participate in the panel discussions following the two screenings Thursday night and to be the student representative who handed Garner his award.

At the luncheon, Garner talked

on an intimate level not possible in front of an auditorium full of fans. Eating chicken fried steak and chocolate cake, at Garner's request, we saw clips from *Space Cowboys* and *The Americanization of Emily* and listened to Garner and his brother comment on them. Garner stressed how honored he was and how excited to be back in Norman.

We watched *The Americanization of Emily* (1964) and *Promise* (1986) — the Hallmark TV film Garner produced as well as co-starred in with James Woods — Friday evening. Garner is deservedly proud of these two films, but they were not the night's highlight. After FVS faculty member Ben Alpers and Horton announced the award, I handed Garner the gold statue. With tears in his eyes, he kissed my cheek. Meeting Garner is an experience I'll be talking about for years. I never

FEATUREpresentation



FVS junior Emily Fultz hands FVS Lifetime Achievement Award to actor James Garner. I knew quite what to say, and I stumbled over my words more than I wish I had, but it was still an extraordinary experience.

James Garner: An appreciation

By Darryl Cox
FVS faculty

James Garner, whose career has spanned six decades, became a star when he introduced a new breed of Western hero to the public consciousness in the hit TV series *Maverick*. His film work in *Sayonara*, with Marlon Brando, and *The Great Escape*, with Steve MacQueen and Richard Attenborough, confirmed him as one of the great actors of his age. In the '70s, TV lightning struck twice when Garner created the classic character James Rockford in *The Rockford Files*.

Garner was part of the wave of actors in the '50s who brought the naturalistic style of on-camera acting to film and television. His mastery of

craft and easygoing accessibility have made him one of the most beloved actors of the last half of the 20th century.

However, his commercial success can be deceptive. He also has made a number of risky films with controversial subjects: interracial marriage (*Sayonara*), lesbianism (*The Children's Hour*), homosexuality (*Victor/Victoria*), mental illness (*Promise*) and anti-war sentiments (*The Americanization of Emily*). Even his popular characterizations were not traditional; Bret Maverick had no problems backing away from showdowns that defined courage to someone like John Wayne.

In person, Garner is as easygoing as many of his characters and has a

sharp, self-deprecating sense of humor that shows he is no legend in his own mind. In *On-Camera Acting*, he discussed his breakthrough as an actor when he learned really to *listen* to an actor's performance and emphasized the importance of professionalism both for the actor and the filmmaker.

As gracious at the end of the long day as he had been at the beginning, the star seemed genuinely moved by the FVS Lifetime Achievement Award. He gave more than he got, however. His insights enlightened and entertained all who heard him.

Darryl Cox is an active professional stage and screen actor who teaches *Acting for the Camera* for the FVS program. Garner spoke in his class.

Faculty members produce creative and scholarly works

Andrew Horton published *Henry Bumstead and the World of Hollywood Art Direction* with the University of Texas Press in September and held a book signing in Pasadena, Calif., sponsored by the Hollywood Art Directors Guild. He published “Beyond *No Man’s Land*: Comic Tragedy and Tearful Laughter in Cinemas of the Balkans,” in the *World Literature Today* Oct. to Dec. 2003 issue, its first focusing on cinema. He spoke at the Buster Keaton Festival and Conference in Keaton’s birthplace, Iola, Kan., Sept. 26, on “Keaton’s Perfect Endings for Comedies With Special Attention to *Sherlock Jr.*” He completed a screenplay treatment for a romantic comedy, *The Art of Flying* with Hollywood screenwriter Herschel Weingrod (*Trading Places*, *Twins*, *Kindergarten Cop*) to be made with Greek film and TV star Renos Haralambidis. For the third year, Horton conducted an Intro to Film Studies seminar Oct. 30 and Nov. 4 for gifted and talented eighth graders from the Norman Public Schools. His review of two books on the Bosnian filmmaker Emir Kusturica appeared in the fall 2003 issue of *Cineaste*.

Jeff Van Hanken has made the semifinalist cut of the Chesterfield Writer’s Project sponsored by Paramount Pictures, one of the few contests to consider work from multiple writing disciplines (playwriting, poetry, fiction and screenplays). He submitted several short stories and a script, *Billy Fail*, a coming-of-age adventure film about a young boy who learns to survive in the Oklahoma/Arkansas woods after his family loses its farm to suburban sprawl. Of 2,600 original entries, roughly 100 were

semifinalists. *Billy Fail* also made the top 10 percent cut from more than 6,000 original entries in the American Motion Picture Academy’s Nicholl Fellowships. His short film, *The Test*, was selected as one of four in the competitive section of the Second International Festival for Children and Youth in Buenos Aires, Brazil.

Victoria Sturtevant attended the Obermann Humanities Symposium on Feminism and Film History at the University of Iowa Nov. 6 to 8. She gave a women’s studies brown bag talk, “Everything We Had to Lose: *Thelma & Louise* and the Road to Utopia” based on a forthcoming publication, a chapter in *Thelma and Louise* in the Cambridge film handbooks series. She completed a chapter of the forthcoming anthology *Hetero* about heterosexuality and the cinema titled “Stop the Wedding: William Haines and the Comedy of the Closet.”

Ned Hockman thanks all for their support during his recent hospitalization and for the turning out Oct. 31 to honor *Stark Fear* and its star, Beverly Garland. 31. He’s home now and hopes to be about again soon.

Gary Rhodes’ essay “Fantasmas Del Cine Mexicano” has just appeared in the FAB Press book *Fear Without Frontiers*, edited by Steven Schneider. His essay on film and entropy will appear in the David J. Hogan anthology on science fiction film, *Through a Glass Darkly*

FVS, film noir and a Fulbright in Belgrade

By Misha Nedeljkovich
FVS faculty

Nedeljkovich received a Fulbright teaching/research grant for Serbia Montenegro (Yugoslavia) for this academic year. He is teaching at Belgrade University on the faculty of dramatic arts and at the Academy of Film and Television in Belgrade.

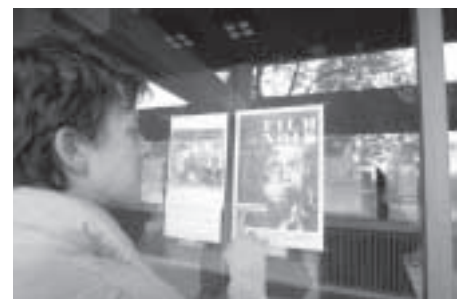
I arrived in Belgrade Sept. 4, although classes started Oct. 15. In Europe the spring semester ends in June and the fall starts in mid-October.

I am teaching two American film noir courses: Survey of American Film Noir, an undergraduate course with 60 students of both Belgrade University and the Acad-

emy of Film and Television. These schools are quite competitive, but I’m convinced both deans their students needed this experience. My second class, American Film Noir: Appropriation and Inspiration, has 30 graduate students. Graduate courses started Nov. 7 and won’t end until July 1.

We have screenings twice a week in a nice cinema café. I also teach there, and the class and screenings are open to the general public.

In December, the Belgrade Cinematheque will conduct a roundtable on American film noir that I have helped organize. We plan



Belgrade student reads flier for Nedeljkovich’s film noir class.

another roundtable for film critics and students.

Some of my former students have visited and will visit Belgrade. Now a producer in Los Angeles, Greg De Cuir spoke to my classes in November.

FACULTYFOCUS

Media ecologist to be keynote speaker at March conference



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



Mark Crispin Miller, professor of media ecology at New York University and author of *The Bush Dyslexicon* and *Boxed In: The Culture of TV*, will be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies March 4 through 7 in Atlanta at the Omni Hotel, CNN Center. The focus of this year's plenary session is "Mediating Tomorrow's History: Live Coverage and Documentary in the Digital Era." For additional information, to join SCMS or to register to attend the conference, visit www.cinemastudies.org or the SCMS home office in 302 Science Hall.

A new beginning

By Rachel Lipsey
Administrative Assistant
Film and Video Studies

The fall semester brought in eager new students and excited returning students who have participated in our fall events.

Thank you for all the comments we have received regarding the newsletter and Web site. These suggestions help us focus on the needs of our students and alumni and always are welcome. Please e-mail the office at fvs@ou.edu or call (405) 325-3020.

While I have enjoyed my position in FVS, my husband has taken a position in Little Rock, Ark., and I leave in December. We are excited about moving back to

our hometown, but we will miss our friends in Norman. I want to thank all the faculty, staff, friends and alumni in FVS for providing such a wonderful working environment. The people I have worked with in Norman have truly blessed my life.

Happy holidays and have a wonderful new year!



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

Editor

Kathryn Jenson White

Other Contributors

Jane Dye — Andrew Horton — Emily Fultz — Dustin Hutton — Art LaValley — Betty Robbins — Misha Nedeljkovich

FVS Takes is published by the University of Oklahoma College of Arts and Sciences Film and Video Studies Program, 640 Parrington Oval, Norman, OK 73019-3060, and authorized by Andrew Horton, director of the Film and Video Studies Program and the Jeanne Hoffman Smith Professor of Film and Video Studies. 2,000 copies were printed by University Printing Services at no cost to the taxpayers of the state of Oklahoma. Address comments and inquiries to fvs@ou.edu or (405) 325-3020.

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