

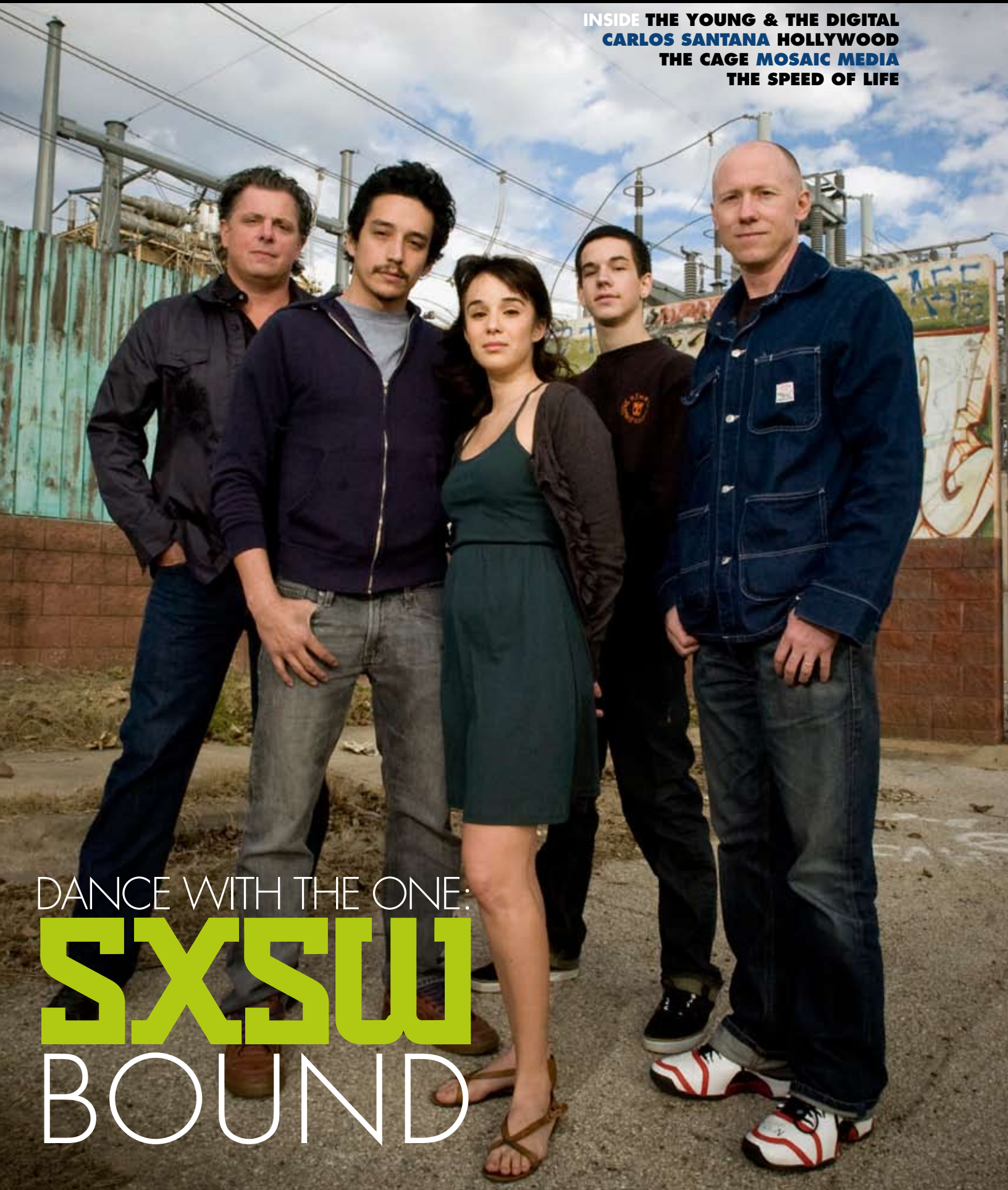
COMMUNIQUE

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INSIDE THE YOUNG & THE DIGITAL
CARLOS SANTANA HOLLYWOOD
THE CAGE MOSAIC MEDIA
THE SPEED OF LIFE

DANCE WITH THE ONE:

SXSW
BOUND



A Lot of Good News



More films completed and more begun, more articles and books published, more students doing creative work in both production and media analysis – the fall term brought a lot of good news.

We know that films from our University of Texas Film Institute (*Dance with the One*) and from faculty members Geoff Marslett (*MARS*) and Steven Mims (*Honorarium*) and student Miguel Alvarez (*Mnemosyne Rising*) will premiere at the SXSW Film Festival, widely thought to be one of the top ten US festivals. In this issue we tell you a little bit about both Geoff (an award-winning teacher) and about the UTFI's efforts. We'll also give you a preview of some of the work in progress from our faculty. Paul Stekler, Ellen Spiro and Andrew Shea are all producing documentaries about fascinating subjects – New Orleans politics in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; the adaptation of the well known Venezuelan music training system, El Sistema (which produced renowned Los Angeles Philharmonic conductor Gustavo Dudamel), to American youth; and the legal battles around Nazi-looted art in United States museums.

Three faculty members joined us this year, PJ Raval, Ed Radtke, and Wenhong Chen, and you can get to know a little bit about them in this issue. You'll also read about an exciting new project organized by Derek Lackaff, who currently serves as a Post Doctoral Fellow at the Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute and is teaching one course for RTF. Lackaff developed an arrangement with musician Carlos Santana so that students in his Introduction to Digital Media

class could develop content for a new Web site Mr. Santana is launching. The students were thrilled with the opportunity to work with this legendary musician.

Several of our faculty members are working on new media-related topics. Janet Staiger published an anthology of essays examining historical aspects of convergence; Laura Stein is writing about how new media capabilities are utilized by activists who hope to institute social change; and Kathleen Tyner edited a volume on New Media Literacy that came out in the fall. S. Craig Watkins' book *The Young & The Digital* also was published in the fall, creating a stir around the country

with the findings from his lengthy analyses of how young people are interacting with social media systems.

There are always people working behind the scenes to help students do their best work, and Derek Young, our equipment guru, and Sarah Gonzalez, who staffs the student Production Resource Center, are mainstays. As our growing list of scholarship award opportunities demonstrates, you are mainstays as well. We had the best year ever in terms of supporting our students. Our alums and friends were very generous in 2009, and we are especially pleased to add the Nick Cominos Fund to the list of our endowments. Last year we raised over \$25,000 to create a fund in Nick's name that will support students making documentaries.

This will be my last letter introducing the *Communique* as I stepped down from my position as Chair on February 1 in order to work in Washington, D.C., with a federal agency addressing broadband policy. Although I will return to UT late in 2010, I will miss these opportunities to reflect on the "big picture" of the Department that the *Communique* captures. We continue to do truly amazing work here, and I am so proud to have led the Department over the past seven years. I think you'll hear more about what I'll be up to in future issues, but for now, I wish you a productive and happy 2010, and hope you can visit the Department whenever you are in Austin.

Dr. Sharon Strover

Outgoing Chair, Department of Radio-Television-Film
Philip G. Warner Regents Professor in Communication

PHOTO BY CHRISTINA MURREY



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PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLES RAMIREZ BERG

IMPRESSIVE PROFESSORS RTF FACULTY RAMÍREZ BERG AND MARSLETT WIN REGENTS' AWARD FOR TEACHING AND SERVICE TO UNDERGRAD STUDENTS

RTF professor Charles Ramirez Berg and lecturer Geoff Marslett

each received the 2009 University of Texas System Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award.

Ramírez Berg received an award of \$30,000 as a tenured faculty member, and Marslett received \$15,000 as a non-tenure track faculty member.

The winners, announced in August, were judged on student feedback, course materials, student learning outcomes, peer reviews, teaching philosophy and more.

"Besides teaching the material and critical thinking, I hope I'm saying one more thing to students," says Ramírez Berg, University Distinguished Teaching Professor and Joe M. Dealey, Sr. Professor in Media Studies. "I hope my teaching says: 'This is what loving what you do looks like. Now go out and find what you love, what you are born to do. Follow your passion and we all benefit. You will be creative, happy, and fulfilled, and we will reap the rewards of your creativity.'"

Ramírez Berg has taught in the Department of Radio-Television-Film since 1983, and he received his Ph.D. from the The University of Texas at Austin in 1987. His research topics include Mexican cinema, as well as

Latinos in American film.

Marslett received his MFA from the Department of Radio-Television-Film in 2000 and has worked in nearly every capacity of short film making in both animation and live action.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEOFF MARSLETT

Marslett says, "By requiring every student to try new technically demanding techniques, I am able to keep classes up to date and to allow experimentation with the same tools that are emerging within the industry. Whatever ideas I am currently exploring in my own work, I bring into the classroom to make sure the material evolves from semester to semester. Showing the students that the field is ever-changing hopefully keeps them excited and encourages them to continue learning throughout their careers."

'DOC U' DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL PARTNERS WITH DOC CENTER, PICKS UP RTF STUDENT FILMS

Up-and-coming documentary filmmakers from The University of Texas at Austin will have a national audience for their work, thanks to a partnership between The University of Texas at Austin Documentary Center and The Documentary Channel.

Through the agreement – three years in the making – The Documentary Channel will have exclusive U.S. broadcast rights to select films from University of Texas at Austin student documentary filmmakers for 18 months. These films will be showcased on The Documentary Channel's "DOC U," a platform for student work, during the first quarter of 2010.



The first four films to be broadcast are: "The Cockroach Project" (Ruth Fertig), "Dreams in All Sizes" (Christina Kim), "Pay Dirt" (Berndt Mader) and "A Casebook on Remote Viewing" (Anthony Penta). All four films were created in Radio-TV-Film classes and selected by a panel of Radio-TV-Film faculty and The Documentary Channel programmers.

At the end of the spring 2010 semester, additional University of Texas at Austin student documentaries will be selected to be telecast on The Documentary Channel.

"Having your film seen by an audience of millions lends a certain level of credibility to a filmmaker's work and – most importantly – brings the films to an audience," said Ellen Spiro, co-director of the University of Texas at Austin Documentary Center, which is training the next generation of non-fiction filmmakers and photographers.

Faculty Faces

GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW NAMES AROUND RTF



PHOTOS BY MIKE ANDRICK



PJ Raval recently returned to the Department of Radio-Television-Film as an assistant professor in January. He is the director of such films as *Lead Role: Father* and *Trinidad*. He is also an accomplished cinematographer, having worked on the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Trouble the Water*.

HOME: Austin, Texas.

FIELD of WORK: Making films centering around identity changes and transformations.

RECENT/FORTHCOMING WORK: "With the help of several grants and awards, I am currently developing a feature doc about gay and lesbian retirees, collaborating with performer Paul Soileau who stars in a series of short works directed and produced by myself. I am developing two feature narrative projects, and was recently in the Middle East shooting a feature narrative that takes place in Gaza. I am also working on [RTF lecturer] Kyle Henry's upcoming feature project *Fourplay* throughout the next year."

THREE FILMS YOU RECOMMEND:

- *Chung King Express* (Dir. Wong Kar Wai, 1996, Hong Kong). I love to watch this film when I am feeling under the weather. I want to live in one of his films.
- *All About My Mother (Todo Sobre Mi Madre)* (Dir. Pedro Almodovar, 1999, Spain). Amazing piece of storytelling, so complex and creative.
- A tie between *Ballast* (Dir. Lance Hammer, 2008, USA) and *Wendy and Lucy* (Dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2008, USA). Two of the best new American indies.

ONE ADVANTAGE TO LIVING IN AUSTIN: "The creative community. People are still excited about local creative endeavors (i.e. people still smile when they see you filming)."

Wenhong Chen joined RTF as an assistant professor in 2009. Dr. Chen's research interests focus on the impact of new technologies on society, especially social relationships and business opportunities.

HOME: Beijing, China.

FIELD of WORK: "My research interests include the social implication of new communication technologies, social capital and social networks, transnationalism and media, and entrepreneurship."

RECENT/FORTHCOMING WORK:

- Chen, Wenhong and Justin Tan. 2009. "Understanding Transnational Entrepreneurship through a Network Lens." *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 33: (5) 1079-1091.
- Chen, Wenhong and Barry Wellman. 2009. "Net and Jet: The Internet Use, Travel and Social Networks of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs." *Information, Communication & Society*, 12: (4) 525-547.

THREE BOOKS YOU RECOMMEND:

- *Communication Power*. 2009. Manuel Castells. The maestro's latest book on the interaction of communication and power relationships in the network society.
- *A Free Life*. 2008. Ha Jin. The book is about the unique journey of a Chinese immigrant in the U.S., from dropping out of a graduate program to running a restaurant to becoming a poet writing in English.
- *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. 1995. Anne Lamott. A friendly book about writing.

ONE ADVANTAGE TO LIVING IN AUSTIN: "The warm winter weather. I know this sounds cliché, but I'd lived up north for a long time."

Getting Published

On topics such as new media, media literacy and convergence, three RTF professors have been at the forefront of research in the field.



LAURA STEIN, an associate professor in RTF, published the article "Social Movement Web Use in Theory and Practice: A Content Analysis of US Movement Web sites" in the academic journal *New Media and Society*.

The article examines U.S.-based social movement organizations' Internet use at one of its most visible points of access, the World Wide Web. Drawing on alternative media studies, her paper develops a typology of communication functions central to social movements.

The article includes survey results of a random sample of SMO Web sites to determine whether and to what degree they exhibit features related to these types.

Dr. Stein, along with Clemencia Rodriguez and Dorothy Kidd, co-edited the second volume of the book *Making Our Media: Global Initiatives Towards a Democratic Public Sphere* (Hampton Press, 2009). This volume introduces readers to national and global policy initiatives spearheaded by civil society groups that seek to transform the structures, practices and norms surrounding communication and culture.



KATHLEEN TYNER, associate professor as of fall 2010, recently edited the volume *Media Literacy from the New Agendas in Communication Series* (Routledge, 2009). In the book, scholars on the forefront of media literacy scholarship explore how educators can leverage student proficiency with new literacies for learning in formal and informal educational environments. The volume provides valuable insights into the issues of contemporary literacy and the way that social networking, gaming, and digital communication are being utilized in schools and communities around the world.

Tyner also contributed the feature article for the latest issue of *AfterImage*, *The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism*, the venerable publication from the Visual Studies Workshop.

The article, "The Tyranny of the Narrative," explores the way that factory models of production have been used by media educators in youth media programs and demonstrates the way that art, aesthetics and experimental structures can be balanced with storytelling to engage new media learners.



JANET STAIGER, William P. Hobby Centennial Professor of Communication, has recently published an essay "The Revenge of the Film Education Movement: Cult Movies and Fan Interpretative Behaviors," in *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*, Vol. 1 (Fall 2008), 43-69.

The essay looks at how, as early as the 1930s, teachers of English taught high school students to look for directors' styles (auteurism before the 1960s) and encouraged attention to camera movement and editing as part of analyzing movies. These methods of critically examining films not only continue today in academic film studies but also in the way fans of movies debate about films in Internet chat rooms.

Dr. Staiger has also coedited with University of Texas at Austin Germanic Studies film scholar, Sabine Hake, a new anthology on writing histories of film, television, and the *Internet: Convergence Media History* (Routledge, 2008).

To read about all research done by RTF faculty, visit us online at: <http://rtf.utexas.edu>.

Production Notes



CHANGING EL SISTEMA ELLEN SPIRO DOC FOCUSES ON LATIN-INSPIRED PROGRAM

El Sistema in the USA, a feature documentary produced and directed by RTF professor Ellen Spiro, is in the early stages of production. The film tells the evolving story of several young American classical musicians who have dedicated themselves to bringing Venezuela's revolutionary music education program, El Sistema, to underserved communities in the United States. It is also the story of the children whose lives they touch.

The documentary, slated for international theatrical release, shows student musicians at various stages of partici-

pation in youth orchestras, as well as in their home (or street) environments before and during their recruitment. By telling the story of young people who have overcome adversity through the power of music, the documentary brings to a mass audience the awareness of the vitality of music education and its ability to bring about positive social change.

El Sistema in the USA sheds light on just what can happen when children, no matter what their social status, are part of a community where life actually works, where they are consistently valued, and where beauty and harmony are not ideals but physical realities, created every day.

Spiro says she and her crew will be shooting in Venezuela and several communities in the U.S. over the next two years. Release is planned for 2011.

ABNORMAL DOCUMENTARY LOOKING AT POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS POLITICS

RTF professor Paul Stekler is in production on *Getting Back to Abnormal*, a documentary that looks at the state of New Orleans politics and culture five years after the events of Hurricane Katrina.

Set against the backdrop of the upcoming local political season and the election of a new mayor, the film will tell the story of the next chapter of the city's life, looking forward to the future rather than backwards to the storm. The film will feature a wide-ranging cast of characters: community activists and politicians, urban planners and journalists, longtime residents and new arrivals, celebrity philanthropists and anonymous volunteers. *Getting Back to Abnormal* will take a clear-eyed look at the successes and failures of the city's recovery, explaining why New Orleans matters and what America can learn from its grappling with issues of race, class, and the role of government and the media.

Getting Back to Abnormal will be produced and directed by Louis Alvarez, Andrew Kolker, Peter Odabashian, and Paul Stekler. Production on the film began in the fall and will continue until the city elections this spring. A rich interactive Web site and educational resource will complement the documentary. The film is intended for PBS national broadcast around the time of the fifth anniversary of the storm in September.

FINDING ART HOLOCAUST-ERA PAINTING AT CENTER OF PROF'S NEW FILM

Portrait of Wally is a documentary film by RTF professor Andrew Shea that follows the case of a Nazi-looted painting by Egon Schiele that was discovered on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art in 1997. The Manhattan District Attorney and the United States government stepped in and seized *Wally*. Since then, the Schiele case has inched through federal court. During that time, *Wally* has risen in value in the surging art market from \$1 million to at least \$10 million. *Portrait of Wally* is a story of art and money, a tale of theft and memory. The film addresses two important issues: restitution of Holocaust-era looted art, and the responsibilities of public institutions in these disputes. It is a story filled with personal drama and institutional conflict. The film dramatizes a decades-long struggle to seek justice for a Holocaust property crime and focuses attention on the conflicted positions and missions of major arts institutions. It is also a New York story, since many of the events depicted in the film took place in New York City, home to several of the world's most renowned museums and a city where the Holocaust is still a raw memory.

More than 20 interviews with key players in the case were shot in January 2008 in New York City and during the summer of 2009 in Vienna, Washington, D.C., and New York. Professor Shea has interviewed a number of prominent art historians, provenance researchers, journalists and attorneys.

It is anticipated that the film will be finished in late 2010 or early 2011.





SO-CIAL CLASS

Professor's new book explores the effect of a digital society on young people and education.

PHOTOS & STORY BY
MIKE ANDRICK

At seven years old, S. Craig Watkins' daughter was using media. She was comfortable with playing Internet games and using mobile devices. She would teach her father things about his mobile phone that he didn't know. "Simply, she explored around with the device in ways I did not," says Watkins, an associate professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film.

Five years ago, Watkins says, his class and he were talking about a television show, and one student mentioned an episode that illustrated how comedy can be used as social commentary. Watkins had not seen the episode, but at the end of class the student handed him a DVD he burned while in class. "He had the episode on his laptop and within minutes was able to share a copy with me. This was before YouTube and before video file sharing was common. What I learned from that experience is that young people will have a radically different experience with media than any generation before it. The sociologist in me had to learn more about the migration to digital media."

Personal and professional anecdotes like these inspired Watkins to write his newest book *The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future* (Beacon, 2009). He says this type of research is important coming from the Department of Radio-Television-Film.

"It's important because how we think, theorize, and teach about media should always be informed not by some blind devotion to abstract theory but by real practice and how people are using media," Watkins says. "In today's media

landscape, the lines between consumers and producers of media are blurring faster than we can comprehend. Also, the legacy media – radio, television and film – are under assault from a new set of technological tools and innovative media behaviors that compel us to revisit all that we thought we knew about popular media and entertainment."

Young people are increasingly attracted to media they and their peers create and share, Watkins says. In his study of digital and social media he has learned that media scholars, like the changing media industries, have "to demonstrate a willingness to think outside the box when it comes to truly understanding the historic shift from a TV-centric culture to a new, interactive media-centric culture."

"Anybody who has ever created an online profile, an avatar for a virtual world or a photo slideshow on Flickr knows that the digital media world is a busy world," Watkins notes. "We are just as likely to spend our time creating content as we are consuming content."

For these reasons, Watkins assigns his new book as reading for undergraduate and graduate students. He is also getting requests from his colleagues around the country – many of whom use the book in their classes – to come and speak about his research with their students and colleagues.

"In my classes, I'm challenging students to think sociologically and critically about their use of social, mobile, and digital media," Watkins says. "For instance, they all use Facebook and the issues raised by this book challenges them to think about how their use of that particular platform is changing how they interact with each other, media, and the world

around them. Also, I ask them to consider some of the striking differences between social media – think Twitter – and traditional media – think television."


One of the big debates in the academic and wider world, Watkins says, can be put this way: is social media making us less social? To that, he says research and work with students suggests that young people are social but in ways that are unique and inventive.

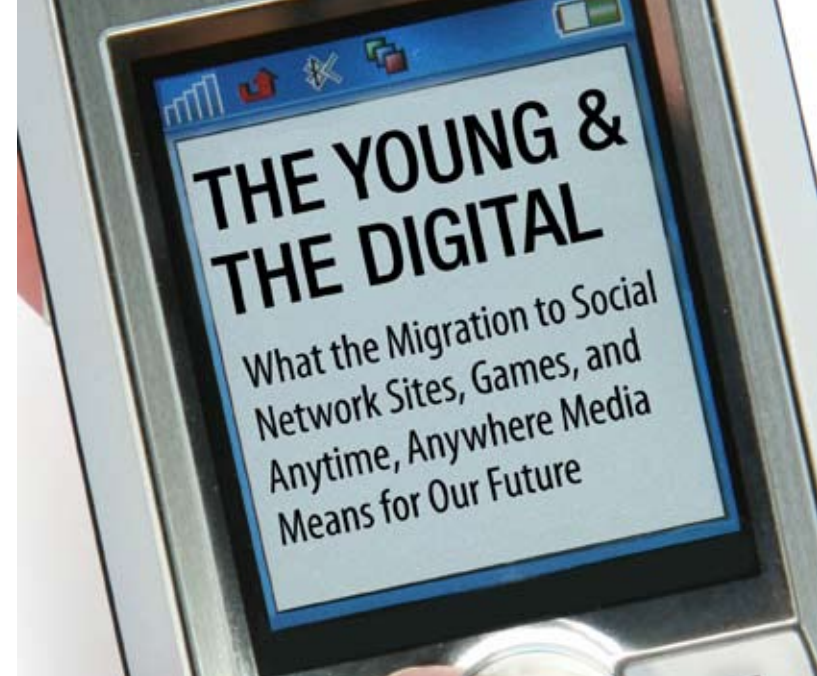
Not just in the Department of Radio-Television-Film but also across the University, social media is central to how students live their lives today, Watkins says. "It's not simply the tools they use but the values and behaviors they cultivate through their use of social media. This is the world that they know and care about." He says they use social networking sites and mobile devices throughout the day to navigate every aspect of their lives including their social, educational, recreational, and professional pursuits.

For filmmakers and producers of creative work, Watkins says social media has been largely helpful. In RTF, students have a particular investment in platforms like Twitter and Facebook because these channels afford them the ability to share their work and creative eye with peers. In addition to developing what Watkins says are called "weak ties" – that is, connections to people and networks that may expand their employment and professional opportunities – social media is a great place to build and showcase their portfolio of work. "By the time they leave college, students develop very different motivations for participating in the digital media world," Watkins says. "They move beyond just wanting their friends to see their pictures and profiles to using social media to cultivate a more professional online persona and set of contacts. New media technologies provide a space to tell your story but also share it with various communities in ways that are hyper-efficient."

As a professor, Watkins says, "[These effects are] both liberating and frustrating at the same time. Liberating in the sense that there is a new energy I feel when it comes to studying the widespread diffusion and use of digital media technologies." There are many questions that are emerging every day as more is to be learned about who uses what, why and to what effect, he says. "Admittedly, it's difficult to get students to step out of the culture they are so immersed in and ask them to inquire about it. Asking them to do so is like asking us to think about the air we breathe. We just do it. What else is there to talk about?"

In the book, Watkins says he grapples with what his colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin and around the country are grappling with: how media that is mobile and personal is changing the classroom.

"Our students are walking into classes armed with more personal media than any generation before," he says. "In an 'always on' and 'always connected' world, they assume constant connectivity to their networks and their media, even when they are sitting in class. Just like the media industries are in a never-ending battle for young people's attention, so too are instructors." Watkins says he knows that the professional world is also dealing with this issue as the next generation of workers is developing very different notions of what it means to pay attention or to carry out tasks in a workplace environment. 



FROM THE BOOK: *THE YOUNG AND THE DIGITAL*

ON THE POWER OF SOCIAL-NETWORK SITES:

It was after a conversation with twenty-two-year-old Erica that I began to comprehend the true pull and power of social-network sites. Her motivation for getting involved in online "friending" was simple, profound and representative of the cultural sensibilities that made social media a generational touchstone.

"It's a big part of our lives in this day and age," she said candidly during a conversation outside a small cafe. "And if you're not part of that, then you're missing a huge part of your friends' lives also," Erica elaborated. "It's hard to relate to the people that you are friends with if they have this big force in their lives and you are not part of it... it's the impact that it has on real life."

ON THE ATTRACTION TO YOUTUBE:

YouTube, in many ways, represents the next evolution in how we consume video - quickly and conveniently. Today we digest bits and pieces of an ever-sprawling narrative universe. This type of watching - call it browsing - began before the arrival of the Web. Since the widespread diffusion of the remote control in 1990, we have grown accustomed to watching bits and pieces of multiple programs at the same time, shifting our allegiance and attention in between commercial breaks, narrative lulls, and a need to sample as much content as we can. YouTube is the ultimate remote control. The platform makes it easier to do what we were already doing - watching a little bit of everything simultaneously. In 2007 the average U.S. home received 118.6 channels, according to Nielsen Media Research. YouTube raises that by infinity.

ON PURCHASING MEDIA:

Not that long ago we typically left our homes to purchase a wide array of media - music, books, magazines, videocassettes, games, DVDs - and then returned home to enjoy it. Today, however, the reverse is increasingly more common. We collect content from the comfort and convenience of our home, via digital downloads and peer-to-peer networks, to take with us when we leave our home.





Dance With the One's Alex Smith, producer; Gabriel Luna, Xochitl Romero, Mike Davis, actors; and Mike Dolan, director.

PHOTO BY MIKE ANDRICK / www.andrickphoto.com LIGHTING BY MICHAEL V. JENSEN / www.mvjensen.com

WHAT A FEAT. URE

UTFI is set to premiere its first feature narrative film at 2010 South By Southwest Film Festival.

The University of Texas Film Institute is proud to announce that its first feature-length narrative film, *Dance with the One*, will have its world premiere at the dramatic competition of the prestigious South By Southwest Film Festival. The film was developed through the UTFI Feature Film Lab course-cycle, a non-profit educational program designed to train students in all phases of professional feature filmmaking.

Dance with the One depicts thirty harrowing hours of one young man's life as he tries desperately to save his family from a lethal drug-dealer. It features a nearly 100% Austin cast, including Gabriel Luna, Dana Wheeler-Nicholson (*Tombstone*, *Fletch*) and Barry Tubb (*Top Gun*, "Return to Lonesome Dove").

The film, shot in summer 2008, utilized the talents of more than 120 UT/UTFI students and alumni, contributing to all facets of production, including writer Smith Henderson (MFA '08 Michener Center for Writers); director Mike Dolan (MFA '07 MCW); cinematographer Marcel Rodriguez (MFA '10 RTF); production designer Yvonne Boudreaux (MFA '07 Theater and Dance); and three recently graduated undergraduate RTF students—editor David Fabelo, art director Sam Avila and casting director Molly Green. RTF faculty members Alex Smith, creative director of UTFI, and Tom Schatz, UTFI executive director, produced the film, along with Bryan Sebok (Ph.D. '07

RTF), and Dolan. RTF Technology Manager, Keefe Boerner, was the post-production supervisor.

While graduate and undergraduate students from RTF, the Michener Center, the College of Fine Arts, and the schools of Architecture, Business and Law filled most of the production/post-production roles, professionals from the local and national filmmaking community mentored students. These professionals include producer Elizabeth Avellan (*Sin City*, *El Mariachi*), and casting director Beth Sepko (*Office Space*, *Infamous*). *Dance with the One* began as one of eight scripts selected for a fall screenwriting lab that culminated in fully-cast public readings. It was one of four scripts selected to move on to a spring production lab, where student directors, producers, actors, cinematographers and production designers – guided by professional mentors – rehearsed, shot and edited key scenes from the scripts.

Dance with the One was selected by a panel of filmmaking professionals to be UTFI's initial feature film. Any profits made from the sale and distribution of *Dance with the One* will funnel back into the UTFI Feature Film Lab, which has developed 30 more student-written feature film scripts. UTFI's mandate is to give students an experience they can't get at any other university: the opportunity to create their own professionally-made feature film with industry guidance and mentorship.



PHOTO DALE CANNEDY-AZIM
Actors Gabriel Luna, left, and Mike Davis talk with director Mike Dolan on the set of *Dance With the One*.

DIGITAL SANTANA


**RTF CLASS
PRODUCES
WEB SERIES
HIGHLIGHTING
MUSICIAN'S
MESSAGE OF
SOCIAL HARMONY**

The Fall 2009 Introduction to Digital Media class had a unique opportunity to put their production skills to the test while creating a project for musician and community activist Carlos Santana. RTF lecturer Derek Lackaff organized the project in collaboration with Architects of a New Dawn (AoaND), a California-based organization founded by Santana in a desire to organize and activate people to enact positive change. AoaND was interested in re-orienting its outreach efforts toward a younger, media-savvy audiences. Lackaff was connected with the AoaND project by Austin-based open-source activist William Hurley, who had been invited to provide a guest lecture. The students produced a series of short web videos to highlight different aspects of Santana's message of social harmony. Specifically, the videos were designed to show how media and communication technologies can be used to promote positive social engagement. Audio and video footage of Santana was provided for use in the videos, including raw interview content and concert footage. The student teams combined this content with their own footage to provide unique interpretations of Santana's message. One student group

organized a real community cleanup, footage of which was integrated into a narrative about digital information flows and mobilization.

"We decided the biggest aspect of the AoaND cause was to take the power of changing the world into our own hands and define it for ourselves," said student Katy Poulter. "We took what we knew and dove deep into what we didn't know, and emerged as both stronger filmmakers and better people."

Students received feedback from the AoaND team on their video projects at the storyboard stage, after "prototype" videos had been created, and during the final production.

The students were allowed broad creative control, but remained committed to Santana's concept of community engagement. "I felt this project was a great opportunity for students to gain real world experience and production skills, and to create work that promotes social good," Lackaff said. The results of the class's work were well received by AoaND. "[Santana] was blown away by the students' efforts," said Adam Fells of Santana Management in an e-mail. The videos will be available on the AoaND Web site at <http://youtube.com/architects09>. 





PHOTOS COURTESY OF ED RADTKE
Ed Radtke in New York City on the set of his film *Speed of Life*.

Ed Radtke

RTF professor discusses his latest feature film *The Speed of Life*.

What made you want to make this film?

The core of this film centers around teenagers who shoot video and do unorthodox things with cameras. Sammer, the lead teenager, cuts the footage together. He doesn't really know he is a filmmaker, but he is. Part of the narrative was inspired by that work as a teacher. I've also been involved with teaching underserved populations for non-profits. To me that was a very stimulating process. It inspired me as a storyteller. I tend to write and create characters and situations that have usually revolved around issues of fatherhood. Having become a teenage father and also dealing with issues about my own father who wasn't present in many ways, that is thematically s**t that I've wrestled with for a long time. Filmmaking for me is a way of processing that. I don't write stories because I think they are clever ideas; the material has to mean something to me. That is the basis for characters and the themes in this story. I also shot the film in Brooklyn because I've always wanted to make a film about and in New York because that's where I went to film school and it was a formative part of my growth as a young artist.

Where did the writing process begin?

It was a culmination of many things, and it was very unconscious. I tell young writers not to over analyze or think too hard about what you are going to write or why you are writing. If you have a recurring image that you see or any-

thing that stimulates you and makes you contemplative; or if there is a fictional or real life character that you keep thinking about, you should trust that process and you shouldn't question it. Just record it the best you can. At some point when you come up for air as you sift through it, you see relationships, similarity and repetition. Then you begin to figure out why you wrote it and how you can consciously work with that. But initially I never think too hard about it and that's generally how my projects get made.

Where is the point that it starts to become an actual project?

You can't define it. Usually you just know it. If it's not nonsense, then you find the desire to figure it out. You lie in bed unable to sleep or you think about it throughout the day. You can't help but imagine these fictional characters that seem as real as anyone else in your life. They become a pivotal part of your day. You see an image or overhear a conversation and you align weirdly with this fictional world and you see its relevance and you start stealing from real life to feed the make believe only because it is real to you. And then if you feel a strong conviction, you do the work. When I do find that story it becomes very essential to my being and becomes something that I want to follow through with.

What did you learn during the process of making your third feature length film?

I learned it doesn't get easier. It almost gets harder because you raise the bar. A novelist once said every book gets harder to write because, yeah, you've written a book but you've never written this book. It's new uncharted territory and yet everyone expects you to be better at navigating. Also I learned shooting in New York was ridiculous. It was impossible to get around. It's an old wise city when it comes to shooting film. Nobody gives a damn if you're making a movie. It's "Get out of my way, I'm late for work. What do you mean the sidewalk is closed?" That is the mentality. And justifiably so because who cares about my film other than me? It was very ambitious. We had a lot of very ambitious ingredients that typically low budget features should stay away from.

Do you believe it paid off?

It was heartwrenching. It was the most difficult shoot I have ever been on, and it was mine.

Because we ran out of money, the post-production process was very laborious. I took all the media and began cutting the movie on my own. I brought on an editor who believed in the project and didn't need a salary because he (Jim Klein) trusted me. We cut for nine months with no budget. That is the amazing beauty of this digital revolution that we are a part of. I was also disappointed because there were key scenes that

I didn't get to shoot. So every time I stared at the footage it would remind me of what I didn't get. It would remind me of so much of that disappointment. By the time we were done cutting, we definitely felt like we made the best film we could have made. We cut it until it was done. When we got into the Venice Film Festival, that was an important accolade for all that hard work. And with no money, we were able to make that giant leap. That was obviously pretty important.

What's next for *The Speed of Life*?

We want to find a home for the film. My films have always done better in Europe. They lack a certain American sensibility. They are not movies that can be easily branded. There is no real niche or sub-genre that they adhere to. We knew going into making the film the market for it would be challenging, and it has been. In light of what has happened economically, it's become all the more challenging. But I want to find a home for the film, and I think we can make that happen. Not just in Europe but here in the States because that is important. The next thing I want to do is make a feature length documentary. That idea is very exciting to me if it is the right subject matter. Or whether it is medium budget narrative that we could shoot independently but attach some key talent to, or a studio packaged project – there are all these different choices I have to make.

There is so much fill and noise already. I don't want to contribute to the fill in programming. I am trying to figure out what is important to me. I want to figure out what stories need to be told about an untruth or an injustice. I don't know exactly, and it's a frightening time to me because for the first time in a long time I don't know what I want to do, but it's exciting as a storyteller and an artist and a teacher. 🎬

Ed Radtke started as an assistant professor in RTF in Fall 2009. For more information about his film *The Speed of Life*, go to: <http://www.speedoflifemovie.com>.



Derek Young

Technical Staff Assistant V

As RTF's Technical Staff Assistant V, Derek Young's primary responsibility is keeping all the department's mechanical equipment working. This includes film cameras, lighting gear, all camera support and grip equipment, flatbed editors, and film projectors. He does many repairs in-house, but also maintains relationships with many different external experts so RTF can get equipment repaired by those who are best qualified.

Derek, who spends some of his free time playing bagpipes in a band, also helps with department purchases, maintaining contact with vendors and following up on orders. He plays a role in the department's inventory accounting and helps when needed with studio modifications or installations. He is also available to train students and TA's on some of our equipment.

Born and raised in Texas, Derek went to The University of Texas and earned a B.S. in RTF in 1988. He worked in radio for about a year, but was laid off when the radio station where he worked was taken off the air. After working for a mortgage company downtown for a while, he found his way back to UT in November of 1990, and has been here ever since.



WHY IS YOUR POSITION IN RTF IMPORTANT? I help keep functional equipment in the hands of our production students. Conditions on location shoots can be pretty harsh, and the gear really has to be able to withstand lots of punishment and still be reliable and safe to operate. I help our students make their films by keeping our equipment working.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING ON STAFF IN RTF? I have met many wonderful people in the time I've been here, and I have lots of good memories. I can't really think of one that I would call my favorite moment - I'm just glad to be a part of the RTF community.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT AT WORK, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO? I spend time with my family. I also enjoy music, movies and books, playing bagpipes and guitar, riding motorcycles, playing golf, swimming, and practicing Taekwondo.

WHAT IS AN ADVANTAGE TO LIVING IN AUSTIN? I'm sure there are many advantages to living in Austin, but I live about 60 miles away on 10 acres in the hill country. I like Austin and will probably move back here someday, but I really like living in the country, too.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS, MUSIC OR MOVIES? I enjoy lots of different books and music. I'll read just about anything, and I like most movies. My music tends to be either heavy metal or bagpipes. I am a member of a local pipe band called Silver Thistle Pipes and Drums, so I'd say that's my favorite band just now.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SPOT IN AUSTIN? The UT campus - there's just so much to see and do here. When off campus I like Mayfield Park and Congress Avenue downtown.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEREK YOUNG

NOT PLAYING GAMES

PH.D. STUDENT'S BOOK EXAMINES MILITARISM AND VIDEO GAMES

Matt Payne, a media studies Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Radio-Television-Film, coedited the book *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*, which was published by Routledge in August 2009.

Joystick Soldiers is the first anthology to examine the reciprocal relationship between militarism and video games.

While war video games began as entertainment, military organizations soon saw their potential as combat simulation and recruitment tools.

"The Army's best investment by far is their own self-authored and self-produced video games that act as recruitment (tools)," Matt told KUT's Julie Moody during an interview in November. This collection features all new essays that explore how modern warfare has been represented in and influenced by video games. "There are better and worse representations of our fighting men and women. It's no longer an issue of shoot the bad guy. The narratives are also increasingly complex," Matt says.

Matt and coeditor Nina Huntemann explore the history and political economy of video games and the "military-entertainment complex."

"What the book does well is complicate the military video game genre," he says. "Not all games are created equal. There are some that are used for educational purposes. There are some that are problematic. There are other ones that perhaps tell us that maybe war is not what we ought to be doing."



PHOTO BY MIKE ANDRICK
Cage director Sarah Gonzalez, center, with Fund winners Sharon Arteaga, Kevin Rowe, Matty Greene, and Alexandra Thomas.

MOVIE MONEY

THE CAGE FUNDS SMALL AWARD FOR FIRST-TIME FEST ENTRIES

The First Time Film Festival Fund is a small award created by Sarah Gonzalez, director of the Student Production Resource Center (more affectionately known as The Cage). The purpose of the award is to give money for festival entries to students who have never participated in a festival. The fees can range from \$0 to more than \$100. The four winners were undergraduate students Matty Greene and Kevin Rowe, MFA graduate student Alexandra Thomas, and Spring 2009 graduate Sharon Arteaga.

After a competitive process, the Cage received \$500 from the College of Communication Career Services Office specifically for the First-Time Film Festival Fund. The \$500 was split between the four applicants, with each receiving \$125. "It's great to have the support of the RTF department," says Greene. "The grant will help support not only me and my film but everyone who worked on it." Film festival participation helps establish an identity within the community, allows room for networking, and helps create a realistic portrait of the kind of films that are being made and how the industry reacts to these films. It also gives prestige to students, the Department of Radio-Television-Film, and the University of Texas at Austin. "The department gives me a lot of

support," says Gonzalez. "I'm grateful that they supported this award creation." Gonzalez established a judging rubric with a point system and gathered a group of judges to ensure objectivity. The judges included Cage President Ashley Carter, Treasurer Alyssa Varsos, Hector Gonzales from RTF Equipment Check-out, Josh Kinney from the College of communication Digital Media Labs, and Gonzalez.

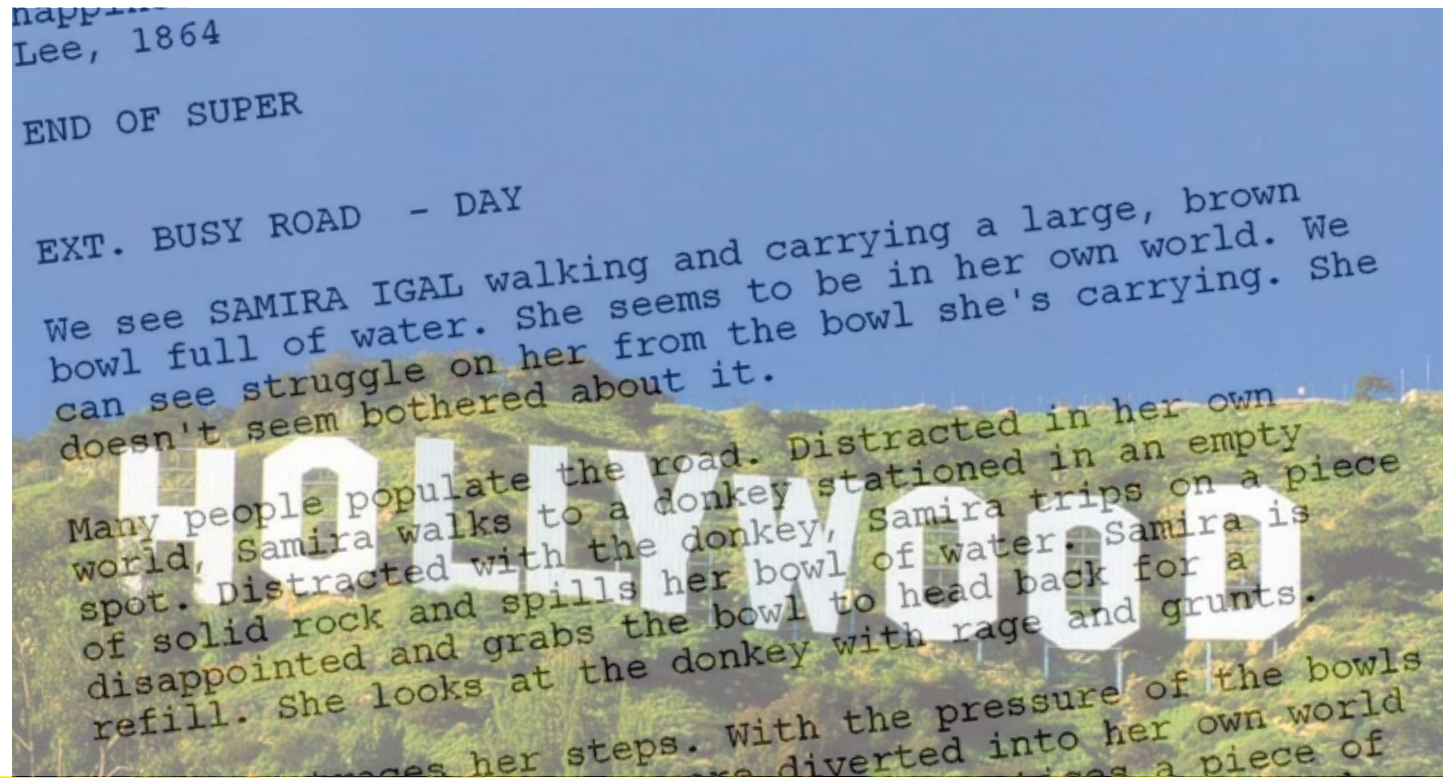
Gonzalez says she hopes to receive more money and more applicants in the future once the word about the awards gets around.

The Cage is a non-profit student organization that gets limited financial support, with most of its revenue coming from locker rentals. It helps students with their pre- and post-production needs, and Gonzalez works closely with students to get what they need to make their films, such as actors, crew members, locations, funding, etc. She also keeps students updated on local events and screenings, jobs, grants, and festivals. "Sarah's creativity and energy have been a boon to the Cage and to RTF students," says Michelle Monk, RTF Department Administrator. "We are fortunate to have her with us."

For more information about the Cage please visit <http://rtfcage.com>.

Here's the Pitch

M.F.A. screenwriter Anthony Faia III talks about his opportunity to pitch a screenplay in L.A.



When you pitch a screenplay you prepare a 15-20 minute presentation, sort of a monologue all about your script. What happens, who it happens to, why anyone cares. And you practice this. You memorize this. Then you try to make everything sound like it was completely off the cuff and improvised and brilliant. Then the producer or agent or whoever jumps up and grabs you by the collar and says "I must read this! I'll be damned if you're walking out of here without giving me a copy of your screenplay!" That's sort of a best-case scenario.

The problem is there really isn't any way to do this in school. You can pitch to a friend who will probably just shrug and go back to Guitar Hero, or to classmates and professors who will tell you what they liked or disliked. But there isn't the hands-on training for being in the room with a producer or agent who hears dozens of pitches a week and knows exactly what he wants to hear in a pitch – and maybe more importantly, exactly what he/she doesn't want to hear. This is what the 2009 Screenwriting Showcase was all about.

I went to L.A. to pitch a script, *The Curse of William Legg*. It was a Western Horror movie – and I mean western in the John Wayne-stagecoach-six shooter sense that I had heard would not sell because of those Western elements and, sure enough, it didn't. But a sale really wasn't the point of the trip. I don't know who decided that production companies don't buy Westerns anymore, but some bastard has been spreading that rumor for years and now even the producers have heard it.

Anyway, I pitched twice – once to an agent for the Alpern Group, an agency representing screenwriters, and once to Martin-Chase productions, a division of Disney.

The experience was invaluable. It really was. Both of my pitches went well, and

they were both drastically different. In one I spoke for twenty minutes, fielding a few questions here and there and generally trying to tell the person a great story.

In the other, I spoke for a minute and a half before the meeting became a sort of rambling conversation. I didn't get many notes on my prepared pitch while I was there, but I did get into the flow of how to present myself to people in these meetings.

In the end, they both asked to read my script. Not a home run, but at least they didn't throw me out.

Anthony Faia III, along with Matt Dunn and Wayne Cheong, won the opportunity to participate in RTF's first ever Screenwriting Showcase. For winning, the student screenwriters pitched their screenplays to film executives in Los Angeles following the 2009 Hollywood Showcase in September.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Compiled is a list of 2009-2010 College and Department Scholarships and the RTF students who received them.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION WINNERS

Bob Schenkkan Endowed Presidential Scholarship
Isaac Rooks, Senior, \$4,200

Craig A. and Denis W. Dubow Endowed Presidential Scholarship
Andrew Miller, Senior, \$2,700

Jesse H. Jones Centennial Scholarship
Blake May, Sophomore, \$8,000

Joanne Sharp and Jack R. Crosby Endowed Scholarship in Communication
Gregory Miller, Senior, \$3,500
Alyssa Varsos, Senior, \$3,500
Ashley Carter, Senior, \$3,500
Priscilla Cuevas, Freshman, \$3,500
Catherine Demartino, Senior, \$3,500
Kathy Tran, Junior, \$3,500

John E. Mankin, Sr. - Texas Cable & Telecommunications Association Endowed Scholarship Fund
Taylor Hertsberg, Senior, \$2,900

Roy D. Pena, Jr. Annual Scholarship
Laura Davila, Junior, \$1,000

Sara Martinez Tucker Endowed Scholarship
Laura Davila, Junior, \$1,350

Wiethorn Family Endowed Presidential Scholarship
Alexandra Lewis, Senior, \$2,500

Cedora Anderson Endowed Presidential Scholarship
Ben Kullerd, Senior, \$5,700

DEPARTMENT OF RADIO-TELEVISION-FILM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Rand Kelleher Endowed Scholarship
Jonathan Estill, Senior, \$1,000
Rebecca Gray, Senior, \$1,000
Erin Richardson, Senior, \$1,000

Gregory Dalton Drago "Spirit of Life" Endowed Memorial Scholarship
Patricia Stievo, Junior, \$1,000
Noel Wells, Senior, \$1,000

James Lawrence Fly Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Communication
Ashley Carter, Senior, \$2,500

The Paul Pierre Standifer Endowed Scholarship in Film Production
Noel Wells, \$2,000

The Entertainment Partners Scholarship for Production Excellence
Andrew Miller, Senior, \$1,750
Isaac Rooks, Senior, \$1,750

Sol Taishoff Memorial Endowed Scholarship in Broadcasting
Chineza Ezinkwo, Senior, \$1,500
Gregory Miller, Senior, \$1,500
Martha Morales, Senior, \$1,500
Matthew Wingard, Senior, \$1,500

Warren Skaaren Endowed Presidential Scholarship
Catherine Jackson, MFA, \$2,500
Timothy Longo, Senior, \$2,500
Andrew Xanthopoulos, MFA, \$2,500

Nicholas Cominos Fund
Winners To Be Announced in 2010



SUPPORT RTF.

No matter the size, your gift matters. Your support of faculty excellence, innovative programs, student scholarships and world-class educational facilities will ensure academic excellence and opportunity for generations to come.

For more information or to contribute a gift, visit:

rtf.utexas.edu/alumni

Raj Trivedi

Mosaic Media Group/Atlas Entertainment



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAJ TRIVEDI

RTF UNDERGRAD RAJ TRIVEDI WRITES ABOUT HOW HE SPENT THE FALL SEMESTER WORKING FOR THE PRODUCTION COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DARK KNIGHT AND THE INFORMANT.

My semester interning for Mosaic Media Group/Atlas Entertainment proved to be a fantastic experience and gave me insight into the film industry more than any classroom could. After reviewing my resume and letter of intent, Mosaic called me for an interview before offering the position. Working at Mosaic gave me the opportunity to learn about many aspects of the entertainment industry. I worked as an assistant to television producers, film producers, managers, and creative executives. At the end of the semester I had a much clearer idea of the roles of managers, producers, agents and talent from an industry perspective. Mosaic's connection to Atlas Entertainment gave me the opportunity to read through the production binders and files from incep-

tion through release of *The Dark Knight*, *The International*, and *Get Smart*, which was like film school in a box. If I had any questions I could go to the source – producer Charles Roven's office. Working in the same office as the producer of *The Dark Knight* was surreal since it is one of my favorite movies. To read his notes and see his process of producing a film was a great learning experience. Every week an executive at the company would give an intern seminar during which they told their stories and took any and all questions. Jimmy Miller, founder of Mosaic, gave a great seminar detailing his journey – bruises and all – to his current position, inspiring the interns to face anything life throws.

Besides the administrative intern duties, I got a chance to deliver scripts to Sacha Baron Cohen, Christian Bale and Nick Kazan's homes. My semester at Mosaic has prepared me for work in a production office and a management company, and has given me insight into what production companies look for in projects to be produced.

Thank you Ron Standifer, The University of Texas at Austin and Mosaic/Atlas for creating relationships that allow for such great experiences.

RTF friend and donor Ron Standifer established the annual UT internship at Mosaic/Atlas Entertainment.

RTF ALUM WINS \$100,000 NIKON JUDGES' AWARD

Marko Slavnic, a 2006 graduate from the Department of Radio-Television-Film, was announced in January as the winner of the Nikon Festival Judges' Award. For the award, he received \$100,000 and Nikon equipment to further his film career.

Drawing from his own experiences as a shy teenager, Slavnic's video submission entitled "Chicken vs. Penguin" is a unique short film that shows a funny, physical story of unexpected love brought to life through a fast food mascot rivalry between a boy and girl. Slavnic plans to use the award to invest in his next project, which will be a feature film. He also wants to give back to his local film community who supported him, especially friend Andrew McDonald, who helped with his submission.



RTF Notes



'TATTOOED' ON FIRE DOCUMENTARY RECEIVES PLENTY OF PRAISE IN 2009

Tattooed Under Fire, a documentary directed by professor Nancy Schiesari, received a lot of praise and recognition in the last year. The film is a portrait of Iraq-bound and returning U.S. soldiers as they go under the tattoo needle.

In November, Salon.com said of the film that it "is unnervingly prescient in its depiction of the stress and anguish of military duty, of the horrors of war even in the relative comforts of home."

In December, The Women Film Critics Circle, an association of 47 women film critics and scholars from around the country and world, acknowledged Schiesari with an award for Courage In Filmmaking for *Tattooed Under Fire*.

The film was also featured on a number of 2009 year-end lists. TV.com ranked *Tattooed Under Fire* at No. 69 on its Top 100 of the year. Following a heartfelt statement Schiesari wrote about the Nov. 6 shootings in Fort Hood, where the film was made, the Independent Television Service's Beyond the Box Blog listed *Tattooed* at No. 2 on its Top Five list and commended Schiesari for her words.

Then in January, *Tattooed* got the Austin Film Society Documentary Tour treatment – a screening at the Alamo Drafthouse in Austin followed by a question-and-answer session with Schiesari and some of the film's subjects.

For more information on *Tattooed Under Fire*, go to <http://www.tattooedunderfire.com> or find it on Facebook.

DEVELOPING SCRIPT

UT-PORTUGAL TO TRAIN STUDENTS IN ASPECTS OF FILMMAKING

The UT-Portugal Collaboration is inaugurating a unique Script Development Laboratory at UT-Austin this summer. Ten students or recent graduates from a select group of Portuguese universities, along with a small number of UT-Austin students, will be in Austin for nine weeks during the summer for intensive work on short, narrative films. The instructors in the Laboratory include professors Stuart Kelban and Richard Lewis, as well as one other instructor still to be determined. The students will be trained in aspects of producing films (including distribution and exhibition), in writing short fictional stories for the screen, and in directing and moving their projects from script to screen. Participants will return to Portugal and shoot their projects in the fall of 2010. This project itself is the product of an agreement with major Portuguese media company ZON, which sponsors an annual national competition in Portugal for the best among several categories of media content.

TECH NEWS: RTF MAKES SWITCH TO DIGITAL CINEMA PACKAGE

For several years, advanced RTF students have been mixing their final projects in 5.1 audio and have been screening their films in High Definition at the Alamo Drafthouse to sold-out crowds. Unfortunately, we were only able to screen the films in an approximation of the surround-sound mix by playing back the LtRt sound from tape.

This semester, however, we developed a pipeline to begin screening films from a Digital Cinema Package, which has a wider color space than our tape formats, lossless compression and six audio tracks. DCP is the release format for all theatrical films in digital cinemas, but is not widely used outside of the professional digital cinema distributors. We began investigating a DCP pipeline when we found out that this was the method required for submitting student films for Student Academy Award consideration. Instead of bringing a tape to the theater, we bring a USB hard drive that contains the film package and copy the contents onto the Digital Cinema Server at the theater. While tape formats are limited to HD resolution, more and more students work in 4k pipelines when they rent RED cameras to shoot their thesis films.

The DCP format is the only method available to screen high-resolution films in Digital theaters.



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RTF student John Spottswood Moore's film *Untitled Moon Project* was featured in the 2009 Hollywood Showcase.

PHOTO BY SARAH E. GONZALEZ

