IN MOTION

USC Cinematic Arts

WORLD BUILDING

Enter SCA's Newest Discipline

Comedy @ SCA
STUDYING COMEDY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Bryan Singer
FIRST SCA ALUMNUS TO NAME A DIVISION

Alumni Profile: Jenova Chen
SCA GAME DESIGNER HAS A BIG YEAR

DEPARTMENTS

ON THE COVER: *House of El*
Illustrated by Jaime Jones, production
design Alex McDowell, for *Man of
Steel*, for Warner Bros. Pictures

STORIES

Dean	Elizabeth M. Daley	
Senior Associate Dean, External Relations	Marlene Loadvine	
Associate Dean of Communications & PR	Kristin Borella	
Contributors	James Crawford	
	Bill Desowitz	
	Ryan Gilmour	
	Hugh Hart	
	Matthew Lara	
	Desa Philadelphia	
	Scott Stephan	
	Justin Wilson	
Design	Roberto A. Gómez	
Photographers	Carell Augustus	
	Alan Baker	
	Stephen Blaha	
	Steve Cohn	
	Roberto A. Gómez	
	Valerie Turpin	

BOARD OF COUNCILORS

Frank Price (Chair, Board of Councilors)

Frank Biondi, Jr.	Bill M. Mechanic
Barry Diller	Barry Meyer
Lee Gabler	Sidney Poitier
David Geffen	John Riccitiello
Brian T. Grazer	Barney Rosenzweig
Brad Grey	Scott Sassa
Jeffrey Katzenberg	Steven Spielberg
Alan Levine	John Wells
George Lucas	Jim Wiatt
Michael Lynton	Paul Junger Witt
Don Mattrick	Robert Zemeckis

ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

John August '94	Neal Moritz '85
Tim Dowling '96	Robert Osher '81
Susan Downey '95	Shonda Rhimes '94
Bob Ducsay '86	Jay Roach '86
Robert Greenblatt '87	Bruce Rosenblum '79
Ramses Ishak '92	Gary Rydstrom '81
James Ishii '76	Josh Schwartz
Leslie Iwerks '93	Peter Segal '84
Polly Cohen Johnsen '95	Stacey Sher '85
Aaron Kaplan '90	Jason Shuman '96
Tim Kring	John Singleton '90
Michael Lehmann '85	Scott Stone '79
Laird Malamed '94	Tim Story
Michelle Manning '81	Toper Taylor '85
Andrew Marlowe '92	Jennifer Todd
Derek McLay	Randy Zisk '81
Andrew Millstein	

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Everything we do at the School of Cinematic Arts is grounded in making sure our students are fully prepared as scholars, media makers and entrepreneurs to be innovators in the entertainment industry. That means we are always questioning ourselves, particularly about whether we have the faculty, staff and equipment to best support their talent and vision. The right answer, regardless of what we are doing now, is always that we can do more. As a future-focused institution, our goal is to anticipate the changes that are coming and prepare to meet them head-on.

In June, we officially opened our new Interactive Media Building with an event that featured a panel on the future of entertainment with three giants of the industry, George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Don Mattrick. An interesting thread of the discussion was how important new digital technologies and interactivity have become in storytelling—in everything from movies and television to mobile apps and, of course, video games.

Interactive user experiences are obviously central to the work being done in two of our divisions, Interactive Media & Games, which was established ten years ago, and Media Arts + Practice, which is in its first year of existence. However, as you will realize after reading this edition of In Motion, we are doing all we can to introduce all our students to the world of interactive entertainment even if, as the cover story on world building documents, it means having to create entirely new genres of storytelling. This is in addition to maintaining our strong curriculum in all the traditional forms of moving-image arts.

In the pages that follow you will also find out how the School's divisions are preparing for the future. The newly rebranded Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies, for example, boasts a curriculum that is reflective of all the media changes occurring around the globe. It is the first division to be named for an alum, and we couldn't be more proud and grateful that Bryan has decided to celebrate his successes by giving back to generations of SCA students. Other important contributions to the School this past year include the naming of the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building, which houses two state-of-the-art stages, and the establishment of the Kortschak Family Endowed Division Chair in Film and Television Production, which is held by Professor Michael Taylor. The Kortschaks are the first SCA parents to endow a faculty position at the School.

At the same time we are hoping to grow our Comedy@SCA initiative, which teaches comedy as an important art form. It is the first program of its kind at a research university. The initiative provides professional opportunities to students interested in comedy and gives them a head start on finding and growing their comedic voice.

Of course, we are always interested in interacting with you. Your support allows us to always stay a step ahead in an industry that is rapidly, constantly changing. Please continue to be in touch online and visit us on campus whenever you can.

Happy Holidays!

Elizabeth M. Daley
Steven J. Ross/Time Warner
Professor and Dean

Director Randal Kleiser '68, Dean Elizabeth M. Daley, Director Bryan Singer '89

YEAR IN REVIEW

Throughout the year, the USC School of Cinematic Arts welcomed alumni, guest lecturers and friends from the entertainment, technology and video game industries to speak to students and faculty. In addition to these guests, the calendar included the installation of the Kortschak Family Endowed Division Chair, the dedication of the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building, the opening of the Interactive Media Building, the dedication of the Charles S. Swartz Endowed Chair in Entertainment Technology and alumnus Bryan Singer naming the Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies.

Pat Crowley and husband, producer/alum Andy Friendly '73 established the Pat Crowley and Andy Friendly Endowed Fund for Student Support.

Robert Evans at the dedication of the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building.

Dean Elizabeth M. Daley, Steven Spielberg, Frank Price, George Lucas '66, C.L. Max Nikias and Sumner Redstone at the dedication of the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building.

Head of Student Industry Relations Larry Auerbach funded the Carole & Larry Auerbach and Family Endowed Finishing Fund this year.

Jim Wiatt from CIW Consulting, LLC, CBS President and Chief Executive Officer Les Moonves and Imagine Entertainment Founder Brian Grazer at the dedication of the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building.

SCA alum Cinco Paul '93 (right) with writing partner Ken Dario at a special pre-screening of their film Despicable Me 2 at Norris Cinema Theatre.

(Left to right) Dr. Haifa Reda Jamalallail, President of Effat University and HRH Princess Lolowah join USC Provost Elizabeth Garrett in signing SCA and Effat University's agreement to collaborate in the creation of a Media & Digital Production program.

Iron Man 3: President of Marvel Studios/alum Kevin Feige '95, Dean Elizabeth M. Daley, screenwriter Shane Black and Professor Howard Rodman at a screening of Iron Man 3.

(From left) Professor Leonard Maltin, writer/director Ryan Coogler '11, associate producer Haroula Rose, co-producer Sev Ohanian '12, associate producer Gerard McMurray '11, editor Michael Shawver '12 and composer Ludwig Göransson at the Norris screening of Fruitvale Station.

Dean Elizabeth M. Daley attended the MASTER media summit in China.

Electronic Arts Endowed Chair of the Interactive Media & Games Division Tracy Fullerton '91 (right) kicks off the 2012 Demo Day with Professor Mike Zyda (Viterbi School of Engineering).

Recent graduate James Iliff '12 (center) demonstrated Project Holodeck during the 2012 Demo Day.

Legendary actor / comedian Billy Crystal makes a surprise appearance following an advance screening of Monsters University in Norris Cinema Theatre.

Nashville executive producer/director and SCA alum R.J. Cutler visits Professor Howard Rosenberg's Television Symposium.

SCA Faculty John Watson, Pen Densham, actor Ed Harris and faculty member Todd Robinson discuss their film Phantom following its SCA screening.

Alum George Lucas '66 receives the National Medal of Arts and Humanities from President Barack Obama.

Saudi students learn how to conduct on-camera interviews, as part of the Saudi Aramco's iSpark Program.

Legendary director James L. Brooks leads a Comedy@SCA master class on directing comedy.

GI Joe Panel: Alumni David Ellison, Jon Chu '03 and Joseph Mazzello '05 at the screening of GI Joe 2 in SCA 108.

Professor Everett Lewis '85 (right) briefs students at the Saudi Aramco's iSpark Mobile program, that provides hands-on science, technology, engineering and math experiences to Saudi students.
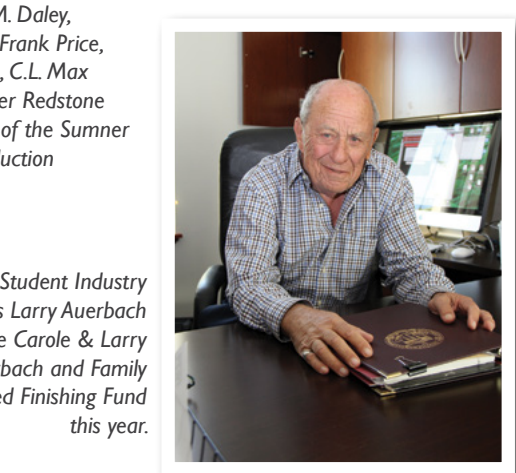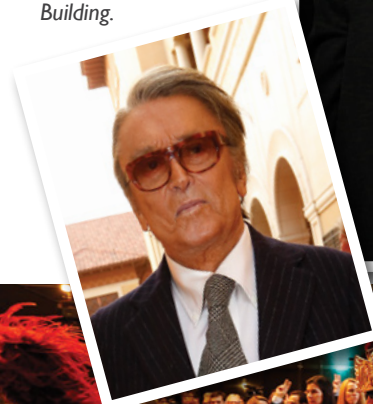

Actor Zach Braff and actor/SCA teacher James Franco with Leonard Maltin and Dean Elizabeth M. Daley at Maltin's Theatrical Film Symposium for a discussion following the 3D screening of Oz the Great and Powerful.

Geena Davis was a keynote speaker at Redefining Animation, the 25th Conference of the Society of Animation Studies.

Dean Elizabeth M. Daley, Michael Fink, Michael Renov, Richard Weinberg and artist David Quayola at Redefining Animation.

Martha De Laurentiis (center) with daughter and graduate Dina De Laurentiis '12 at the 2012 SCA Commencement.

(Top) Academy Award-winning writer Robert Towne signs a poster of Chinatown after screening the movie for Professor Ted Braun's Screenwriters of the 70s course. (Above) Towne with Braun (left) and Writing Division Chair Jack Epps Jr.

Celebrating the installation of the Kortschak Family Endowed Division Chair, (from left) Andrew Kortschak, Marcia Kortschak, Chairholder Michael Taylor, Sarah Kortschak and Walter Kortschak.

Commencement honoree Stacey Sher '85.

SCA Parent John Goodman with SCA Board Member, Parent, alum and adjunct professor Bob Osher.

Matthew Weiner '90 accepts the Mary Pickford Alumni Award.

Interactive Media & Games Division Chair, Tracy Fullerton, after winning IndieCade's Trailblazer award.

(Above) Dean Elizabeth M. Daley, Richard Weinberg and Stephanie Rothman at the installation of the Charles S. Swartz Endowed Chair. (Below from left) Spencer Stephens, Roberto Schaefer, Stephen Sommers and Michael Fink discuss The Future of Digital Filmmaking.

Alum Kevin Bachus '90, faculty member Chanel Summers and John Riccitiello at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

CNBC Media and Entertainment reporter/moderator Julia Boorstin, George Lucas '66, Don Mattrick and Steven Spielberg discuss the future of entertainment at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

George Lucas '66, Zynga CEO Don Mattrick, Dean Elizabeth M. Daley and Steven Spielberg at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

Steven Spielberg and CEO of Zynga, Don Mattrick, examine student work at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

Media Arts + Practice Ph.D. candidate Amanda Tasse (left) demonstrates her Miraviz project at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

Alum Jay Roach '86 (center) poses with members of USC's Comedy Squad after An Evening with Jay Roach.
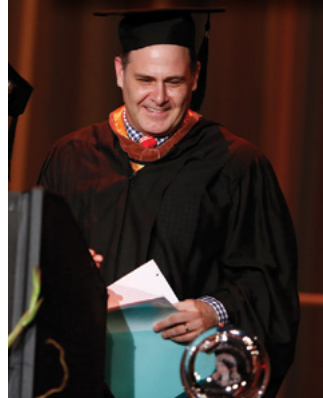
Professors Perry Hoberman and Andreas Kratky's Living Building project on display at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

Steven Spielberg, George Lucas '66 and Dean Elizabeth M. Daley play with Pluff, an interactive stuffed animal which helps children with autism at the opening of the Interactive Media Building.

(Top) John Ottman and director Bryan Singer at the dedication of the Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies. (Top right) Actor Jack Larson and Bryan Singer. (Right) Alma and Alfred Hitchcock Professor of American Film, Drew Casper, and director Bryan Singer.

(From left) Filmmakers Gaz Alazraki '01, Eugenio Derbez, Michel Franco and Michael Row with VP of Grupo Editorial Expansión, Rossana Fuentes-Berain, and Chairman of the Board of Latinasia Group, Simon Levy-Dabbah, following a panel on the "Renaissance of Mexican Film & Soft Power."

(From left) Directors Bryan Singer (The Usual Suspects, X-Men), Lee Daniels (The Butler) and Randal Kleiser (Grease).

ZERO *TO* SIXTY

BY RYAN GILMOUR

Less than two years out of School, these three SCA alums are already making their mark.

THE PROJECT: FRUITVALE STATION

The true story of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Bay Area resident, who crosses paths with friends, enemies, family and strangers on the last day of his life.

THE ALUM: RYAN COOGLER
PRODUCTION 2011

As an MFA student, writer/director Ryan Coogler worked at the Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts. Part of his responsibilities included greeting and helping VIP guests who came to campus. Less than two years later, Coogler's film *Fruitvale Station* screened in Norris Cinema Theatre where he was welcomed and treated as a VIP guest.

Fruitvale Station, Coogler's film debut, tells the story of Oscar Grant, who was killed by police on a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) platform in the early hours of New Year's Day 2009. Coogler, a native of the Bay Area, was home for the holidays when Grant was killed. He interviewed Grant's family and friends as background for his script.

After being accepted and workshopped in the Sundance Labs program, *Fruitvale Station* was pitched to actor/USC alumnus Forrest Whitaker who signed on as an executive producer. The film was shot entirely in the Bay Area, including on the BART platform where Grant lost his life.

The film won both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at Sundance this year, and the Un Certain Regard Avenir prize at Cannes, given to the most promising filmmakers. After Sundance, *Fruitvale Station* was picked up by the Weinstein company and Coogler embarked on a whirlwind tour that included a screening in Oakland for people affected by the shooting.

Fruitvale Station opened in July to rave reviews and is considered an Oscar contender.

Coogler attributed much of his success to his time at USC. "It was the place where I learned how to make films; it's the place where I met most of the crew that worked on this film. Pretty much everything I learned about movies, I learned at SC."

COOGLER'S ADVICE FOR SCA STUDENTS

My main advice is to appreciate what you have and use the resources available to you. You are coming from a campus that has sent so many filmmakers out before you. Appreciate that you are a part of something that is greater than yourself.

THE PROJECT: RED QUEEN TRILOGY

In the future, instead of judgments based on class, race or nationality, humans are divided by the color of their blood. When a young girl with normal, red blood begins to develop super powers associated with the elite caste of "silver bloods," the government works quickly to avoid a revolution.

THE ALUM: VICTORIA AVEYARD
WRITING 2012

Just last year Victoria Aveyard was a student worker for the Writing Division, getting ready for First Pitch (the Division's pitching festival). She was excited about her future as a screenwriter but had also started dabbling in writing novels, beginning but not completing a book. First Pitch is a "speed dating" style pitch festival where graduating seniors and graduate students meet several representatives from various companies in the entertainment industry. The night went incredibly well for Aveyard, who signed with literary management company, Benderspink.

Soon after, Aveyard pitched her new manager an idea for the young adult novel she assumed was a throw away. As she describes it, "I told my manager, 'I know you guys probably won't go for this, but I really want to write a Young Adult novel.' I gave them a one-line, basic distilling of the story, and they said, 'That's what you're doing. Put all the screenplay ideas on hold, you're gonna write a YA novel.'" So she went back home to Massachusetts and devoted herself to finishing the first book.

Aveyard's instincts were spot on, and after a series of pitches she signed a three-novel deal with HarperTeen, an imprint of HarperCollins. The first book in the trilogy, "The Red Queen," is scheduled for a Winter 2015 release.

AVEYARD'S ADVICE FOR SCA STUDENTS

I think something I learned the hard way was not to get pushed into doing something you're not comfortable doing, career-wise. At the end of my senior year, I knew I wasn't mentally able to be an assistant for five years and still be writing and still keep my dream alive. I said, "I'm going to go home. I'm going to write straight through. I'm gonna see if I can do this book. That's how I'm gonna break in."

THE PROJECT: FARAH GOES BANG

The story of Farah Mahtab, a woman in her twenties who tries to lose her virginity while on the road campaigning for presidential candidate John Kerry in 2004.

THE ALUM: MEERA MENON
PRODUCTION 2012

Less than a year after graduation, Production Division alum, Meera Menon, became a pioneer in the world of DIY filmmaking by taking her first feature *Farah Goes Bang* from fundraising site Kickstarter to the Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the inaugural Nora Ephron Prize. The internet and the availability of technology has changed the way that films get made but few have taken advantage of them as successfully or as quickly as Menon. *Farah Goes Bang* is a true microbudget film made with a USC-heavy crew.

The process wasn't without bumps, however. Menon had to learn that the world of DIY filmmaking is a little harsher than USC. "What I learned through shooting on a microbudget is that you have to be flexible," said Menon. "After going through USC you think that everything is possible because of what the School gives you. For instance, if something was in the script at USC, you made it happen. In the real world, you have to give things up. Sometimes you can't afford it and you have to work with what's available."

MENON'S ADVICE FOR SCA STUDENTS

The number one thing that I got out of USC was the people. The people that were in the crew that made Farah Goes Bang were people that I went to School with. They continue to be the people that I turn to. Finding your people and developing a community that you can make films with outside of School is incredibly important.

Comedy@SCA Initiative

GIVING COMEDY ARTS THE PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT

by Desa Philadelphia

Why do comedians get no respect?

After all, as SCA Writing Division Chair Jack Epps Jr. likes to point out, Shakespeare wrote more comedies than dramas. Two years ago, Epps, along with Professors Barnet Kellman and David Isaacs, launched the Comedy@SCA initiative to teach comedy as a serious art form, giving students the opportunity to master the fundamentals and finally, *finally* giving comedy the attention and respect it deserves.

In practice, Comedy@SCA functions as an umbrella that encompasses several initiatives. There are classes of course, but there is also a student-run Comedy Club, extracurricular programs, partnerships with professional outlets like Funny Or Die and events like the Comedy@SCA Festival, a weekend of panels featuring comedy heavyweights. The idea is to (as much as possible) allow students who are interested in the form to start building their comedic muscles and exploring the kinds of professional jobs they could pursue.

Epps says it's about providing a safe jumping-off point. "First off we want to create an environment where people find out if they're funny," he says. "Part of it is to allow students to experiment because there's many different types of comedy. Some people are not funny in person but they're hysterical on the page." Kellman, who first pitched the idea of an academic pathway that was comedy-centered, says the initiative is trying to be as holistic as possible. "I was aware that many places teach courses in writing comedy and SCA

is actually very strong in that area," he says. "But there was a disconnect when it came to production. No one was teaching comedy direction anywhere on the planet and likewise, nobody was raising the special issues of cinematography in comedy or editing in comedy. I knew there was a vacuum in education on the subject of comedy."

The comedy curriculum currently includes almost two-dozen classes in the Writing, Production and Critical Studies divisions, with several others on the drawing board. The classes are open to all SCA students and the hope is that eventually there will be comedy classes in every division, maybe a class titled something like "Writing Comedy for Video Games" that is offered by the Interactive Media & Games Division.

Michael Starr, who is a board member of the SCA Comedy Club, says students see the initiative as a future pathway to jobs in the industry. "I would personally like to see it become a breeding ground for talent, a place to nurture and grow a new crop

of writers, directors and producers." Starr says the club offers the opportunity to be fearless in trying out new things. "It is a major benefit that it is a student-run organization because members have more freedom to express their own comedic vision," he says. Comedy Club members have created animated work, podcasts, short films, webisodes, feature-length scripts and even stand-up routines.

David Isaacs, who along with Kellman and Epps, advises the group (they've come to be known as "the three amigos"), says it is also important to have a place where failing is okay: "There's no sort of magic you can do to suddenly make a person Jerry Seinfeld." The initiative, he adds, really does give students a head start. "I think most comic writers, stand-up comedians and directors really learn their craft when they work in the business," says Isaacs. "Why not have a place to really work on a professional level in college, and have those extra years to work on your voice and characters and the art of expressing yourself comically?"

In February, Comedy@SCA partnered with Funny Or Die to challenge students to create shorts for the humor site. Writer/Director Judd Apatow helped pick the winner, a short called *Snapchat Jesus*, which was featured on the Funny or Die home page. Another popular event this year was a workshop with legendary director James L. Brooks and renowned

ABC Family. And the initiative is launching Comedy@SCA Live, an SNL-style show that will air on the Trojan Vision network.

Professor Barnet Kellman says the idea is to explore whatever is resonating in the professional world, especially since the response from students has been overwhelming. "We threw back the curtain

(Above) Director Jay Roach (Austin Powers), center, with Comedy@SCA Faculty and Students. (Below, front) Director/Writer Paul Feig and Writer/Producer Gabe Sachs with "the three amigos."

acting coach Larry Moss, where they watched live, student-directed scenes from *Tootsie*, then offered notes on how to increase the laughs—all in front of a rapt audience. Recently, producer/director Tim Marx allowed students to shadow writers on his show *Baby Daddy*, which runs on

and uncovered a tremendous underlying interest on the part of students," he says. "We have students who really love comedy. It's their go-to place, their favorite place. It's where they spend their downtime on the internet, it's almost their native language—so native that it goes almost unexamined."

A truism in the entertainment industry is that while drama wins awards, comedy pays the bills. The irony is that as an academic program the Comedy@SCA initiative needs to be taken seriously enough to attract the kind of funding—perhaps in the form of a substantial endowment—that will ensure its longevity. The initiative's first donor, director Jay Roach, spent an evening with students, breaking down the directing decisions in scenes from successful feature comedies. He then set up a scholarship fund for students interested in studying the art form.

Roach sees the initiative as a way for working professionals to pass on important knowledge. "People see comedies and think it's easy, but comedy directors, writers and performers work very hard to make it look easy," says Roach. "I've personally benefitted from talking with my friends in the comedy world and I see this as a way to spread that knowledge. There's a lore that gets passed around in comedy. A lot of it is practical and unless you have access to that it's difficult to pick it up."

Indeed one of the most important goals of the initiative is to establish a historical archive of comedy at USC that really connects comedy through the years. "It would show how Lenny Bruce begat Richard Pryor begat all the great young edgy comics of today," says Isaacs. "I think those kinds of connections are universal and very informative and important."

Epps is hopeful the initiative can attract enough funding that even their smaller dreams can come true. "We would love to have a green room that is our space, much like the new Interactive Media Building where they have the think tanks— a comedy think tank." he says, adding: "I'd go to that room where all the funny people are."

Remembering
Don Thompson

by James Crawford

TROJAN ICON IS MEMORIALIZED WITH LBGT FILM FESTIVAL

It started with The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. It continues as a pair of School of Cinematic Arts institutions: The Don Thompson Scholarship and the Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival.

One day in 2006, Amy Ross (Ph.D. '86) gathered a few close friends at her home to honor the memory of Don Thompson, the late head of Reference Services at the School of Cinematic Arts library. Don's great loves in life were film, Trojan football, and the LA Frontrunners, a running and walking club for gay men, lesbians, their friends and supporters. "Don had an encyclopedic knowledge of movies," recalled Ms. Ross, and counted completing the marathon at the 2002 Sydney Gay Games in sweltering heat as one of his proudest achievements. He was also willing to bend SCA's rules on the sly to help out aspiring—if disorganized—student filmmakers, according to alumna Tina Mabry (MFA '05). "We all ran into Don at some point in the film research library," said Ms. Mabry, "and he was such a sweet guy. He let us film down there with no permit. He would say 'I know you're doing a [first-semester] 507 project, and you're just learning. If you want to shoot one scene at a table, real quick, go ahead.'" That kind of quiet mischief endeared Don to SCA students.

Don suddenly passed away in 2006, due to unexpected complications following a routine surgery. Grieving members of the running club sought a lasting way to remember a man who was prominent both at USC and in the Los Angeles LGBT community. With some seed money donated by Ms. Ross, now president-elect of the USC Alumni Association Board of Governors, LA Frontrunners founded the Don Thompson Scholarship. This financial award recognizes an undergraduate or graduate student enrolled at SCA who demonstrates a commitment to advancing LGBT issues

through creative work, scholarship, and/or community engagement.

LA Frontrunners members Sean O'Brien and Dan Posten held the first Don Thompson Movie Night in the summer of 2007—an evening of movies, margaritas, and a silent auction fundraiser. They screened Stephan Elliott's camp cult classic, *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, starring Hugo Weaving, Guy Pierce, and Terrence Stamp as a trio of drag queens travelling by bus across the Australian outback. In 2010, Ms. Ross teamed with SCA's queer student organization, Queer Cut, and USC Lambda, USC's LGBT Alumni Association, to grow the event. With the help of Dean Elizabeth Daley, they brought Don Thompson Movie Night into the newly built School of Cinematic Arts Complex and established it as a signature event in the USC Lambda calendar. The Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival was born.

This daylong celebration of Don's life serves two important functions: raising scholarship funds, and showcasing short films made by USC's LGBT and allied students and graduates. "The films run the gamut, from the 210 projects of students at the undergraduate level to the thesis work from MFA candidates," said Grant Hoover, Associate Director of Alumni Affinity Programs. Films by graduates who have been working in the industry for a few years are also included. By having their films screened alongside more established colleagues—and having them evaluated by visiting judges—current students get valuable exposure to what it's like to be on the festival circuit.

The Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival has grown in size and scope every year, and its sixth edition, held in the Ray Stark Family Theatre on Februrary 9, 2013, featured seven

films chosen from over 40 applications. Alumna Tina Mabry joined the illustrious company of previous judges like *Star Trek*'s George Takei when she returned to campus to adjudicate with four other jury members. Ms. Mabry was impressed at the quality of the films on display. "Everybody keeps stepping up their game," she said, reflecting on her graduate studies. "I wish I had the creative and technical knowledge [back then] that they do now—I want to go back and re-do my thesis."

After an evening hosted by stand-up comedian Drew Droege, known for his viral online impressions of actress Chloë Sevigny, the jury handed out two awards: Dominic Haxton ('07) was given the Prize for Artistic Merit for *Teens Like Phil*, a drama about a pair of closeted teens at a conservative boarding school; MFA student Leopold Déwolf won the Prize for LGBT Awareness for *Niagara*, which follows a man scheming to steal $1 million from his lover on a road trip. Conor Fetting-Smith's documentary *Bingo Night* was feted with the Audience Choice Award. "It was very difficult for us to choose which one should win," said Ms. Mabry, "because they were all great." All the filmmakers, even those filmmakers who weren't recognized with prizes, were given a complimentary six-month subscription to Netflix. And after a night of mingling and movies, participants came away with something more valuable: now "you've got an open phone call to another alum, whether it's for support or a job," said Ms. Mabry.

Beyond accolades and an opportunity to network, the DTFF and Scholarship perform important functions: creative and financial support to keep telling their stories. The Festival "builds a community of LGBT filmmakers at the School of Cinematic Arts," said Rebecca Louisell (MFA '12),

a former Scholarship recipient whose film, *Genderfreak*, showed at this year's DTFF. "You get the feeling that there are people out there who are supportive and encouraging of your work." Alumnae who have benefited from being a part of this community include Mitsuyo Miyazaki, whose short film *Tsuyako* screened at the fifth DTFF in 2012. Ms. Miyazaki's film has gone on to win 38 awards, including the Directors Guild of America Award for Best Female Student Filmmaker.

Through the Festival, SCA has witnessed the evolution of queer storytelling over seven years. "It's changed tremendously in quality and perspective," said Ms. Mabry. "Every LGBT story is not just about coming out. What happens after we come out? What about the other things that we struggle with: political issues that are really pressing in our community…or just everyday life that straight couples go through as well?" With the Don Thompson Film Festival and Scholarship's continued support, SCA filmmakers will continue to find a place to grow and develop in their craft and voice for years to come. A fitting tribute to Don Thompson.

The 7th Annual Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival is slated for Saturday, April 5, 2014 at the Stark Family Theatre. More information at **usclambda.org**

Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival Planning Committee and winners of the 6th Annual DTFF: Michael Annetta MFA '12, Dominic Haxton '07, John Paul Karliak '03, Leopold Déwolf, Corey Scholibo '01, Conor Fetting-Smith '13, Josh Dinner '06 and Dave O'Brien MFA '05

Michael Fink, Richard Lemarchand AND Dennis Wixon

School of Cinematic Arts Trio Point Students Toward Future

BY HUGH HART

(Left) Professor Michael Fink (*The China Syndrome*, *Tree of Life*) with students on the SCA's green screen production stage. (Right) Associate professor Richard Lemarchand (*Uncharted*, *Jak 3*)

They converged on USC from England, Seattle and the San Fernando Valley armed collectively with eight decades of practical experience. After participating firsthand in seismic shakeups of the entertainment technology landscape, new **School of Cinematic Arts** faculty members Michael Fink, Richard Lemarchand and Dennis Wixon are now importing their hard-won lessons into SCA classrooms with an eye toward fostering a future generation of game-changers.

FINK

As a kid growing up in Sherman Oaks, California, visual effects wizard Professor, **Michael Fink**, remembers unspooling a roll of celluloid film as far as his arms could stretch so he could capture the entire breadth of his neighborhood in a single image. Fink's childhood fascination with the big picture continues to inform the Oscar winner's mastery of new technologies and his story-comes-first approach. While he lives to innovate, he stresses that the technology has to be in service to narrative.

Last year, Fink co-created a course titled "Directing for the Virtual World" with Associate Professor Peter Sollett. The course, which allows students to hone green-screen techniques, acknowledges the central role visual effects now has in filmmaking. "The great transition that's happening now with movies like *Life of Pi* is that effects have become so integrated into the story that people in the audience are not even thinking about them," says Fink. "When I'm teaching, no matter what we're talking about in terms of specifics or the evolution of technology, the whole emphasis is on telling a story."

An early champion of computer-generated characters—he directed Coca Cola's iconic Polar Bear commercial that aired in 1993 a few months before *Jurassic Park* came out—Fink encourages students to exercise restraint in the face of unprecedented technical advancements. "So much of visual effects over the last ten years has been about the power to create characters and build incredible worlds," he says. "People forget there's a difference between what you can do and what you should do."

Fink pushed the limits of visual effects' storytelling capabilities with his work on *The Golden Compass* (2007), for which he won an Academy Award. Besides building a photorealistic North Pole environment inside the computer, Fink digitally constructed entire sequences from scratch during a frenetic, five-week post-production period. "I was hanging on by my fingernails on that movie," Fink recalls. "What I really focused on was making it look beautiful."

In between such projects as *The Tree of Life* and *Life of Pi*, Fink began teaching "The World of Visual Effects" class at SCA one afternoon a week. His course load soon expanded. "I went to a faculty meeting and Everett Lewis, head of the directing track, said he hoped to do a directing for green-screen class. And I said, "We have to do that class."

Fink got the gig. He and Sollett (*Raising Victor Vargas*, *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*) team-teach "Directing in a Virtual World" and a sequel they added this year, "Advanced Directing in a Virtual World." "It's been hugely enriching for me," says Fink. "We spend a lot of time dealing with the technical aspects of what it takes to create a virtual world, but it's really about what you say to an actor when there's nothing but green (screen) and they're supposed to be talking to another character represented by a tennis ball on the end of a stick. It's about getting students to understand that no matter how good the effects are, if you don't draw a believable performance out of your actors, you don't have a movie, or a game, or anything."

LEMARCHAND

Around the time Fink started work on his first movie, 1979's *The China Syndrome*, Associate Professor, **Richard Lemarchand**, was soaking up punk rock, watching *Star Wars* and doing algebra "for fun" in his native England. He also spent a lot of time playing video games. He recalls, "I was one of those kids in school who loved science and mathematics, but I was also drawn to history and geography, and was always getting up on a stage to sing in a choir or act in the school play. For someone like me, who loves the intersection between art, entertainment and technology, video games were exactly the right place to be."

Lemarchand studied physics and philosophy at Oxford University while steeping himself in the UK's burgeoning computer gaming culture. "Britain in the eighties had a really healthy scene of bedroom programmers," he says. "Teenagers prodded away at the personal computer hardware that was beginning to become affordable and discovered different ways we could make our computers sit up and beg."

After college, Lemarchand moved to Northern California in 1995 to design games for Crystal Dynamics. Nine years later, he relocated to Los Angeles and became lead game designer for Santa Monica-based Naughty Dog, now a division of Sony. While guiding the creation of three blockbuster games in Naughty Dog's Uncharted action/adventure series, Lemarchand began mentoring MFA students at USC.

Citing SCA Interactive Media & Games Division Chair Tracy Fullerton's book *Game Design Workshop* as a seminal influence, Lemarchand says, "My life as a game designer prepared me very well for life as a university professor. Video game designers spend a lot of their time teaching the player how to play the game, and they have to be clever about it. They can't seem too didactic, they have to present concepts clearly, in a way that can be understood immediately, and they have to present those concepts in a way that captures the imagination of the player. The work I've done on games over the years set me up to convey the right information at the right time in order to get a concept across in the classroom."

Lemarchand, who teaches "Virtual Experience and World Design" as well as "Intermediate Game Design & Development" (with Assistant Professor Peter Brinson), encourages his students to experiment with alternative approaches to the cinematic aesthetic increasingly featured in big budget video game productions.

He says, "Many game developers chase the dream of photorealism, but something that really excites me about this next generation of games is that I think we'll start to see more developers using all this computer processing power in the service of non-realistic kinds of rendering. We could imagine a video game that looks like an impressionist painting or perhaps a 3-D video game where the geometry is constantly collapsing into some kind of Cubist rendering. I'm interested in game

Wixon speaking to students at the intallation of the Microsoft Endowed Professor on June 6th.

focus of my teaching. I'm exposing people to different research technologies and the assumptions behind those technologies."

At Microsoft, Wixon used both quantitative data and "qualitative" real-time video capture to document hiccups in pre-release beta versions of *Halo* for Microsoft's Xbox console. Game designers at Bungie, the company that developed *Halo*, used the research to improve player experience, which contributed to the game's rise as one of Xbox's biggest hits.

At SCA, Wixon teaches students to apply similarly rigorous research tools for projects ranging from physical therapy applications for Microsoft Kinect to the use of humor in game design. "My students come forward with a diversity of questions that I wouldn't have been exposed to in the industry," he says.

Wixon says, "All products begin with an intention to communicate something to an audience. The contribution of research is to see if that intention was communicated. Did it come across or is there something in the design of the system that gets in the way of the experience, where people got hung up on some aspect of the interactivity and they're not getting the message? That really is where research comes together with design. It's been fascinating to expose students to some of these capabilities."

For Fink, Lemarchand and Wixon, the SCA classroom experience fosters imagination, and marries it to craft and critical thinking. Lemarchand says, "Like so many of my colleagues, I'm interested in bringing industry experience back to the academy to see if we can lay the groundwork so students can take part in some artistic revolutions of their own."

design where we set out to bend or break some of the rules of game design and see what happens when we try new things."

So far, Lemarchand has been pleased with classroom response. "Students have made such wonderful, richly expressive work that I've been blown away by the size of their imaginations."

WIXON

Like Fink and Lemarchand, Microsoft Endowed Professor, **Dennis Wixon**, marvels at the opportunities to merge practical and conceptual interests in courses that include "The Art of Statistical Analysis for Game Design: Storytelling with Numbers." Schooled in behavioral psychology, Wixon developed graphical user interfaces in 1983 at Digital Entertainment Corporation (DEC). He then joined Microsoft to lead research teams in the development of Xbox and Kinect technologies. "I started working in

computer human interaction before the PC, before the mouse, when computers were big mainframe units and people wondered why anyone would want a computer in their home," Wixon says. "It's rare to be in an industry where you get to see multiple revolutions. Doing graphical user interface at DEC, then going to Microsoft to work on games and gestural interface, I've seen two revolutions."

Wixon began giving guest lectures six years ago for a class called "Usability Testing for Games" which was created by lecturer Heather Desurvire, owner and principal of the game research company Behavioristics Inc. Wixon began teaching full time at SCA last year when he became the first holder of the Microsoft Endowed Professorship. "When you work in a corporate environment, your job is to be very focused on making products better. It's not at all oriented toward 'Let's explain and provide some background on the research techniques we use and why we use them.' But at SCA, that's the major

Jenova Chen '06

The New Face of Innovative Game Design
By Ryan Dee Gilmour

Jenova Chen (M.F.A. Interactive Media & Games) and his work perfectly illustrate the approaches to studying video games that are valued at the **School of Cinematic Arts** (SCA) and why the Interactive Media & Games Division (IMGD) has been promoting innovation and entrepreneurship for the past ten years.

Chen is the Creative Director of thatgamecompany, whose most recent release, *Journey,* is the most celebrated game of 2013. It has enjoyed critical and commercial success, scoring a 92 on Metacritic and winning D.I.C.E (Design.Innovate.Communicate. Entertain), Game Developers Conference (GDC), Annie and BAFTA Awards.

BEING FORCED TO GO TO COMPUTER CAMP

An entire profile could be written on how thatgamecompany and Chen challenge the stereotypes of the video game industry. Without exception, Chen's games and philosophy push the boundaries of what's expected and what's possible from successful video games. The adjectives used to describe his games include poetic, jarring and, to quote the IGN review of *Journey*, "Simply the most beautiful game I've ever played."

One might assume that Chen's commitment to redefining the boundaries of video game design comes from an ingrained sense in his DNA of what a game experience can and should be. However, like many things about his career, Chen's love of video games didn't begin like that of many IMGD students— as infants with Game Boys in their strollers. In fact, it began relatively late in life.

"I wasn't a video game person as a child," says Chen, who grew up in Shanghai. "I can actually remember finding video games for the first time. I was forced by my parents to go to computer school and I can remember going early and seeing the kids playing games. I saw them interacting with the screens and thought, 'What the hell is this?' From then on, I *loved* computer school. Mainly because we got to play games before the session started. It wasn't a calling for me, but in the beginning, something I just enjoyed. When I was growing up, I always felt that playing games wasn't serious."

Chen wanted to study art but his need for a practical job as well as parental pressure led him to computer science. "The problem was that there wasn't much of an art scene in China at the time. When I was out of my parents' control and on my own, I started to study art and animation on the side. What I found was, because

of my computer background, it was easier for me to adapt to the new digital tools than people with only an art background and I was ready when the digital art revolution happened."

Seeking to expand his love of art and his technical skills, Chen applied to the Master of Fine Arts in the John C. Hench Division of Animation and Digital Arts but was told that, with his extensive background in computers, he would be perfect for a division that was then in its first year—Interactive Media. (In 2013, it was renamed the Interactive Media & Games Division.)

"At the time, [the division] was doing mostly interactive media with no games direction. Other students were doing mobile apps, internet apps, virtual reality but no one was working on games," says Chen. The spark that convinced Chen that the video game industry was his calling was a USC trip to the Game Developers Conference in 2004. "When I went to GDC and saw 20,000 people who were so excited about the industry, I thought 'Woah, these people are the real thing. These people are proud of their work and that work is making games.' It changed things for me."

CRASHING THE SERVERS

Upon returning to USC, Chen and a team of students including thatgamecompany co-founder, Kellee Santiago (IMGD '06), began working on a game. Chen shared a childhood experience with the group. Hospitalized after an asthma attack, he had spent the time daydreaming about the world outside. Inspired, the team made *Cloud*, a game where the player assumes the role of a child in a hospital bed who flies outside in their imagination.

Cloud was an instant sensation, with so many downloads that it crashed the USC server. This incredible success caused Sony to take note and, after graduation, Chen was offered a three-game deal. The deal allowed Chen and Santiago to begin setting up thatgamecompany. But despite his entrepreneurial spirit Chen had one more roadblock. As an international student, he had to get a job that would allow him to stay in the country.

"I didn't know if thatgamecompany would be funded," says Chen. "I went to work for Electronic Arts which was a hard decision but, without their sponsorship, I would have had to return to my homeland. Kellee was the one who was actually setting the company up while I was in the Bay Area. It was a challenging time."

After just nine months, the deal with Sony solidified, Chen left EA to return to thatgamecompany. The Sony deal produced three critically acclaimed games—*flOw, Flower* and *Journey*, culminating with the latter sweeping the D.I.C.E awards in 2013.
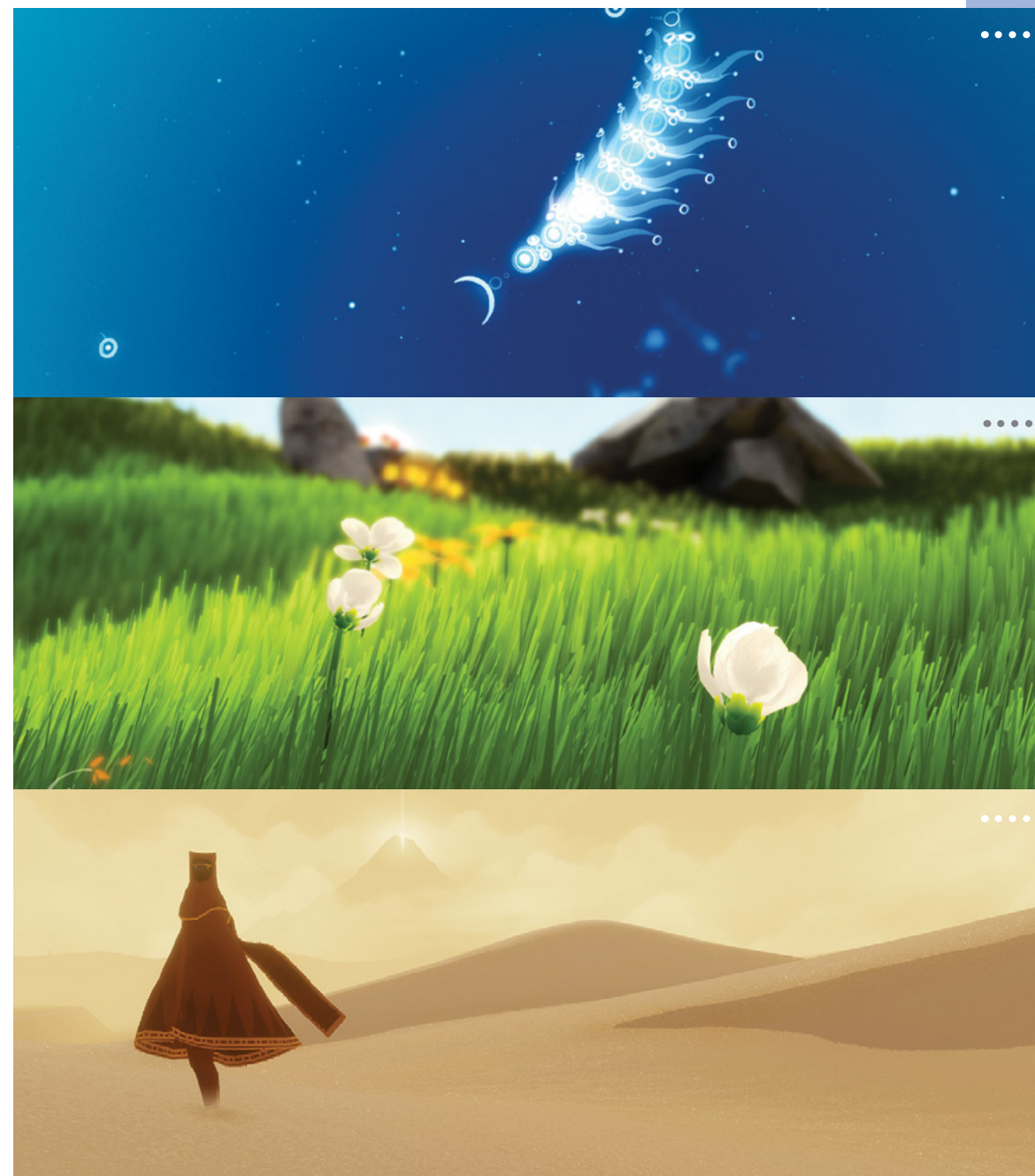
ON THE FUTURE OF THE GAME INDUSTRY

Of all of the disciplines taught at SCA, video game design has changed the most in the shortest amount of time. While volatility can be a challenge for recent graduates, it also presents incredible opportunity for individuals and teams who are paying attention and anticipating the shifts.

Chen believes demographic shifts caused by technological advances are going to change everything. While the industry's backbone has always been blockbuster, "Triple A" games, Chen believes the low level of entry for what were traditionally termed "casual" games is going to make hard core console gaming a niche market.

"The biggest changes aren't going to come from console gamers," says Chen. "The mobile industry is changing everything and the biggest revenue games on iOS right now don't even monetize or reach gamers in a traditional way. Ten years ago, you would have to know how to find a game, how to download the game and pay over the internet. Now, playing a game has no entry barrier. It's essentially a viral concept when it comes to game marketing and distribution. Game designers can't ignore this."

With technology tearing barriers down, the definition of who plays games is going to shift, redefining the business side of video games, he adds. "There is going to be incredible opportunity for designers and business people to create games that speak to women or families or to people who don't consider themselves gamers in the traditional mold," says Chen. "This is the greatest time in the world to create games for those people or games that speak to themes that are more emotionally relevant."

THE WISDOM OF JENOVA CHEN

What advice would Chen give today's students who are interested in game design?

"With *flOw*, the real breakthrough [in game design] was figuring out a way to make all gamers enjoy the game in their own way."

"Keep your games small in scope until you have the resources to make a bigger game. It's about the quality of the game, not the size."

"I learned about business the hard way. It's easy to be a game designer, but to own a company you have to learn how to deal with money and people. That's a whole different challenge."

thatgamecompany's GAMES

Cloud While technically a USC student game and not a thatgamecompany game, *Cloud* was Chen's first breakout success and set the tone for his later work. *Cloud* was also an early collaboration between Chen and thatgamecompany co-founder Kellee Santiago '06. The game centers on a boy who dreams of flying while in a hospital bed.

flOw *flOw* started out as a student game and was later released (after extensive tweaking and expanding) as the first of three thatgamecompany games released by Sony. In *flOw*, the player guides a small, multi-segmented worm-like creature through an aquatic environment. Chen's primary goal with *flOw* was to create a game that both hardcore and casual gamers would enjoy.

Flower The second game from thatgamecompany's Sony deal, *Flower* continued the lyrical tradition of *flOw* but added a stronger narrative in the game play. Each level is represented by a flower in a pot on a city apartment windowsill from which the player is taken to the "dream" of that flower. The player attempts to rejuvenate the plant life in a given world. *Flower* was Chen's first attempt to bring the three-act structure of screenwriting to a game format.

Journey The third game in thatgamecompany's deal with Sony, *Journey* won eight D.I.C.E awards, including Game of the Year, in 2013 and has developed a rabid fanbase, cementing thatgamecompany as one of the most innovative forces in the entire video game industry. The player takes the role of a robed figure in a desert that must travel to a beacon on the top of a mountain.

CRITICAL STUDIES
REBRANDED

The Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies
Continues to Remake Itself

BY DESA PHILADELPHIA

As one of the School of Cinematic Arts' **two original divisions (along with Film & Television Production), Critical Studies has a long history. In the early days it was seen as the academic side of a film school, with classes that were focused on film theory and history. But as SCA grew and evolved, so did Critical Studies. In fact, the Division has embraced change by adding classes on new, emerging media like web series and video games, and global movements.**

Today, Critical Studies is the division that unites all of SCA, educating students from every major, and boldly going wherever the next media trends take it. Its outlook is reflected in its new name, the Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies. In February 2013, Singer, the director/producer/writer known for films like *The Usual Suspects, Superman Returns* and the X-Men franchise blockbusters donated $5 million to the School to name the division from which he graduated in 1989, becoming the first alum to do so. What makes it a perfect match is that Singer and Critical Studies have similar reputations, cerebral and laid-back in the way they operate, but showing audacity through the work they create. Singer's gift was dedicated at an event in October (see accompanying story).

Akira Lippit, who chairs Critical Studies, says the division is thrilled that its biggest gift to date came from one of its most famous alumni.

"We're incredibly proud of Bryan Singer. We're very grateful for the gift he gave us. But even before he did that he's been such an eloquent advocate for Critical Studies. He has come on numerous occasions to speak to our students and speaks elsewhere, publicly, about the value of the education he received here."

Lippit says that Singer's career, which moved from dramatic films to special effects-dependent blockbusters, shows that approaches to creating and consuming media can change drastically. It's why the Critical Studies faculty is constantly re-examining their role in preparing students for the future iterations of the media. "We're eager to think through the landscape and what it means from every possible angle," he says. "I'm struck all the time when I think of the experiences my students have today. This sense that you can see films on demand. That you expect to be able to hear about something and then have it."

The Division also takes into consideration that definitions of media literacy are also evolving, but that the need to think critically about those changes is constant. In fact, Lippit argues that the proliferation of media and people's access to it makes media literacy and analysis even more important. "The fact that people are comfortable with new technology, that children can interface with touch screens in ways that are intuitive, is part of the big change," says Lippit. "To understand how media works is something that will affect every aspect of one's life, whether one is in business, pursuing the creative arts or doing other activities. To be able to put it in critical terms, to be able to relate it to one's own life experiences and expectations, that is becoming less and less a marginal or selective activity."

That is why the Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies will continue to welcome every perspective. "If you look at our faculty and what we do, we have people that work on avant-garde, people who work on Korean cinema, people who work on post-nationalist Indian cinema, people who work in entertainment cultures," says Lippit. "We haven't made a decision to have a single identity. What we've tried to do is to really give students a very broad range of things to think about."

This approach, he says, is why Critical Studies could produce a filmmaker like Bryan Singer, whose projects have grossed more than $2 billion worldwide, as well as professionals in other fields. "We have lawyers, scholars, journalists, people who go on to become agents or work in many other aspects of the film industry, so we like to think that Critical Studies will not foreclose any of your options," says Lippit, adding, "I don't think we've produced any astronauts; but virtually everything else."
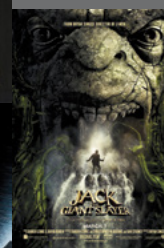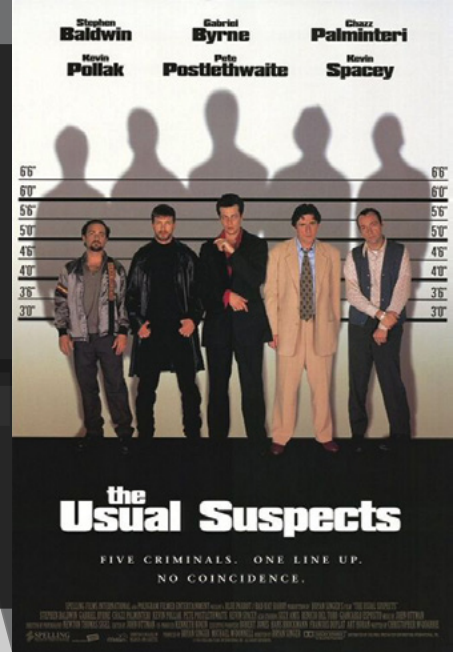
In October, the Bryan Singer Division of Critical Studies was dedicated with a reception, a Q&A with Singer and a screening of *The Usual Suspects*, the breakout 1995 film noir that Singer directed. Akira Lippit, Chair of the Division, led the Q&A and also allowed members of the audience to ask Singer questions. Among other stories, Singer told the audience that he knew *The Usual Suspects* was a hit when he came out of the bathroom during an early screening to witness a young man trying to scare his girlfriend by yelling "Keyser Söze!" He also talked about staying up late and sleeping through his early morning class, on the floor of the Norris Theatre.

Here are a few highlights of the discussion:

Lippit: Why did you study Critical Studies? And why make this gesture for Critical Studies?

Singer: Just the term critical studies confuses the parents who think it's a road to philosophy or academia, which is great. But at the same time there is something about the major—you'll notice that every other (SCA) major has courses in Critical Studies. So, to do anything, whether you're going to be an agent or a producer or a game designer, to have a working knowledge of the way the moving image functions on the audience benefits all those vocations. So, to name the school after a director benefits the perception of the division, in a way. It's a broader major than it sounds like. If I hadn't seen the amount of films I experienced as a critical studies student, without the discussions I had in these classes, the films I've made, there would be some depth that was lacking or maybe they wouldn't have come off.

Lippit: If you were teaching in Critical Studies, what would you teach?

Singer: As a director, I'd teach a course the way I suggest films. I would pick two very different films by a single director—a double feature class. I'd show *Taxi Driver* and *King of Comedy*, very different tonally, but almost the same story. I'd pick something accessible and exciting that's going to get an audience into that director.

Audience Member: What's the Bryan Singer double feature?

Singer: It'd be *The Usual Suspects* and *Valkyrie*. They're both heist-related, they have a pacing. One made years ago and the other has Tom Cruise in it. They're both ensemble pictures. I'm seeing in the intercutting and the parallel editing that it'd be a nice pair.

Lippit: We'd love to hear more about your SCA experiences.

Singer: I would use the computer lab and write until five the morning, which would make International Cinema at 9 a.m. very difficult. I would lay on the floor of Norris while (my friends) took notes for me and use a book bag as a pillow. I felt very guilty about that!

Lippit: What was the most important aspect of transitioning from student to director?

Singer: It's the crash course aspect of filmmaking. You have to muster up confidence and act like you know what you're doing. That's the biggest exercise, plowing ahead with "I know what I'm doing" even if you have moments of doubt. You have to deliver you. That's the biggest jump in the early days of a career.

Lippit: What would you tell current Critical Studies students?

Singer: There are a lot of circuitous routes to where you end up. The reason most bands fail is because they break up, not because they suck. If you have vision and taste, and if you have perseverance, something will open up.

The Future is Now
for WORLD BUILDING

BY BILL DESOWITZ

Yet another paradigm shift is afoot in the entertainment industry. Technology is enabling the biggest, most imaginative entertainment experiences in history and is causing a rethinking and redefinition of the industry's creative processes. Those technological advancements, and the storytelling they enable, are inspiring new educational approaches at the School of Cinematic Arts. So the timing couldn't have been better this summer when George Lucas and Steven Spielberg suggested, in no uncertain terms, that big interactive and immersive experiences are where the entertainment business is headed.

Spielberg and Lucas were participating in a discussion on *The Future of Interactive Entertainment* to mark the dedication of the School's new Interactive Media Building. In front of a rapt audience they offered support to the idea that, from movies to games to television, entertainment needed to become more interactive and more immersive. "I believe we need to get rid of the proscenium," Spielberg said. "We've got to put the player inside the experience, where no matter where you look you're surrounded by a three-dimensional experience. That's the future."

You could call that sort of thinking the gospel of Alex McDowell. As one of the industry's most imaginative production designers, McDowell, who joined the School last year, is one of the world's leading ambassadors for the importance of world building in the creative process. McDowell calls world building a creative process that involves not only conceptualizing an imagined physical setting, but also that setting's politics, culture and technology. The thinking is, if you create a "container" for a narrative with all of these factors built in, then you open up new creative possibilities for a writer, director, game designer, cinematographer, production designer and producer. With advancements in digital technology, particularly with respect to creating visual effects, world building is becoming particularly central in storytelling because it is now possible to create whatever you can dream up.

In movies like *Minority Report*, *Man of Steel* and *Fight Club* McDowell worked to make the worlds the characters inhabit an integral part of who they are and how they live. By creating worlds that were as affecting as the story being told, McDowell was able to give the audience a more immersive experience, even in 2-D. And when the world is so integral to the storytelling, he realized, the old analogue model of preproduction, production and postproduction is no longer viable. On the Spielberg-directed *Minority Report*, McDowell started work on the same day as the scriptwriter and his ideas about how people lived, commuted and the products they used all influenced the script. The g-speak

gestural interface that computer engineer John Underkoffler created for the film is now being used in the real world.

These days, McDowell routinely embraces a nonlinear workflow where the director and the production designer are continuously communicating and perhaps making changes throughout the production. In the case of the gritty Superman reboot, *Man of Steel*, the design of Krypton grew out of the idea that its people could modify the world on a molecular level. Krypton's design was therefore extremely important to the goals of the script and influenced the way strands of narrative evolved as there needed to be a seemingly organic symbiosis between structures and people.

a landscape where art and science, design and engineering are inseparable," explains McDowell. "At their intersection lies world building. In a practical sense, it's a different way of thinking about the future of narrative space that we're all moving into. A lot of the confusion and the problems we've been dealing with in the last few years has been a disconnect between the potential story spaces and our traditional ways of iterating and producing for stories that are not making the best possible use of the tools at our disposal."

McDowell divides the process of world building into Inception (in which the world is developed), Prototyping (in which it is tested and visualized), Manufacturing (in which it is produced
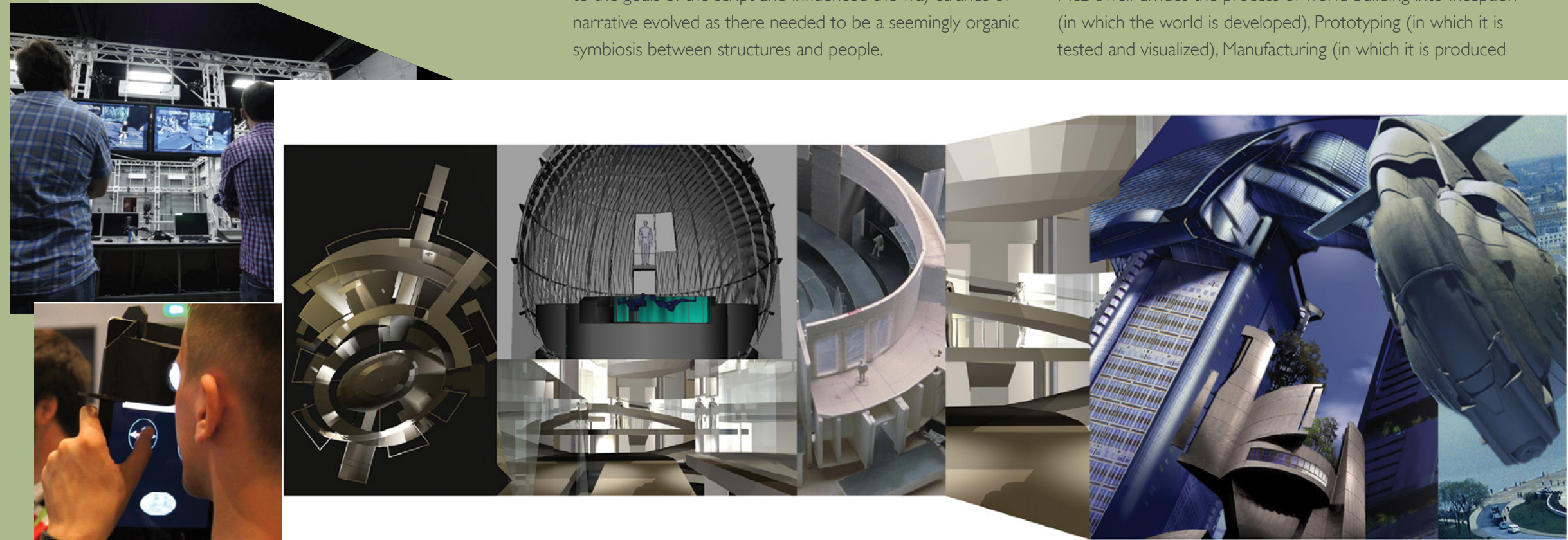
While McDowell's work model was initially based on rethinking the film process, it is applicable to all narrative media. He has now brought the world building discipline to the USC School of Cinematic Arts. As a full-time Associate Professor, he has developed a cross-divisional graduate world building course centered in the new Media Arts + Practice Division and has set up a practice-based research lab called the World Building Media Lab. He has also established the 5D Institute, an organized research unit within the School that serves as a premiere discussion space for new ways of thinking about design in narrative media. "We are moving into

and captured) and Finishing (in which it is completed in post and experienced by its audience). "We need to move into a space where these silos are not constraining our ability to think about new stories and new story space," he insists. "It's about finding the spaces in between and then finding ways to establish a deep cross-divisional collaboration. Last semester, we thought a lot about development, the idea that world building precedes script. We formed small collaborative groups for the whole semester that were tasked with developing worlds which then evolved into stories that in turn 'chose' their medium."

The result was that students from Production, Critical Studies, Interactive Media & Games, and the School's other divisions had to think outside the box and work collaboratively to build virtual worlds that accommodated multiple story lines. "And out of that collaboration, which is really unique in the cinema school at that level, ownership changes, intellectual property changes, and the whole development changes. And also the media platform potentially changes," McDowell says. "There were a lot of Interactive Media & Games students interested in weaving traditional cinematic storytelling with the game space. And there were Production students interested as much in Interactive as they are in Film." In the past year, McDowell's students have created as many as twenty new worlds, each with a unique outcome of the new world building process, and each challenging the notion of traditional process and media outcome.

"It's the discovery of a new, non-linear mind-set," says McDowell. "Even if the director is powerful or there's a strong script at the center, the best directors are the ones that remain open to all the influences around them and form an alliance with their core creative team. My background comes from this linear, script-based narrative space. But if you try to apply that to a trans-media space and multiple platforms, it just doesn't work. The whole point is that the world provokes many strands of narrative that evolve and intersect in different ways, and form different component parts of the storytelling process. It forces one to have to start thinking about story differently; and when you bring in Interactive Media & Games, collide it with Production or even Architecture or Animation, the way that stories evolve really changes."

McDowell was recruited by Dean of Research, Scott Fisher (see sidebar), who was inspired by the way McDowell connected world building with storytelling in *Minority Report*. In addition to installing world building as part of the new Media Arts + Practice Division, Fisher empowered McDowell to create a test bed for trying out new technology. To that end, a new home to the World Building Media Lab is currently under construction in the School's Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts, as a research and practice space for all students.

"I think this is a huge deal for the School of Cinematic Arts in the sense that production has been very successful and Hollywood is populated by many of our alums," Fisher explains. "But typically they come out of here learning the same process, the same workflow, the same approach that's been taught for five decades. As Dean of Research, I'm looking at new kinds of initiatives for the School, new areas we should be exploring. One of the biggest initiatives fueled by hiring Alex is to build a new component in the School focused on world building and virtual production."

McDowell believes Fisher is viscerally engaged in pushing tech and storytelling forward. "We're of one and the same mind with Dean Elizabeth Daley, who is leading the charge to break down the silos," he says. "This progressive approach has the possibility of putting the School ahead of the narrative industries." Indeed, McDowell is creating a proof of concept for the future of the inception process. "How do we evolve stories, how do we organically allow this non-linear, collaborative process to evolve?" he muses. "How do we put the tools to the service of good storytelling, combining an interactive war room with modeling tools, painting tools, rapid-prototyping and a fully immersive performance space where you can put your models in a virtual environment— where you can experience it with a head mount display, with tablets, with a virtual camera. You can do location scouting, performance and put immersive sound right in there from the beginning."

McDowell says the lab can be a democratic space. "And the great thing about the university lab setting is that it's an agnostic space where you can talk to studios and corporate partners and faculty from other departments and bring them
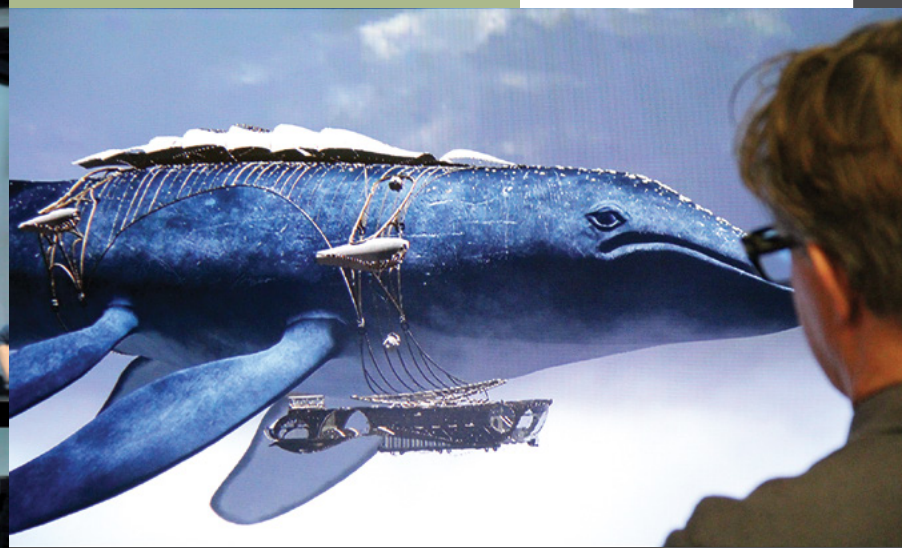
(Clockwise from top left) Recording artist Will.i.am in McDowell's World Building media Lab. McDowell checking the flight of the Leviathan. Members of the World Building Media Lab discuss Leviathan. Will.i.am discussing Leviathan with McDowell.

all together. I hope that people will set aside ownership, to an extent to collaborate on the future of education and the future of work."

In the last decade, Virtual Production has helped improve effects-filled storytelling. The process allows filmmakers to shoot in real-time against virtual worlds that are already realized, replacing green-screen techniques. At SCA, they are beta-testing an interactive virtual camera system and using real-time technology developed for use in the interactive space.

However, McDowell and his team see larger opportunities with corporations outside of entertainment as a vital source of funding and to solve similar workflow problems. With Boeing, they are investigating how to translate engineering language into scenarios for world building and narrative. Thanks to a grant from the Hay Foundation, USC is collaborating with the Salk Institute and UCLA to investigate the future of Neuroscience and Architecture. And with Intel they are developing platforms for using computing and microchip technology in storytelling; and learning how to combine multiple platforms like cinema, animation, theater and interactive media and games into one wholly new experience. The Intel project is based on a young adult novel by Scott Westerfeld titled *Leviathan*, which imagines an 1895 steampunk world where military officers and scientists work alongside fabricant creatures, one of which is a giant whale that can fly. "And we're immersed and creating in a completely immersive world," says McDowell.

For McDowell, adjusting to academia has been an eye-opening experience. In the past year he has been exposed to more technology than in the last decade of moviemaking. For one thing, working on improving fully immersed virtual design, alongside deeply experienced faculty like Scott Fisher and Mark Bolas of USC's Institute for Creative Technologies, is stimulating his instincts as a designer, and leading him to rethink his creative process: "How do I think differently about what narrative means, what editorial means, what a camera is—all of those fundamental questions."

He welcomes the constant questioning and requestioning, and the challenges they present. He works to encourage his students' excitement about innovating a new paradigm. "I think we're all aware of the change in the air and it's a huge responsibility of the students to say, 'Do not conform to traditional methods at this point because it's not going to serve you well.'"

Still, for McDowell and everyone else at SCA, the point is still how best to tell emotionally compelling stories. The goal is simple, even if the technology is inspiring audacity in the approaches. "Storytelling remains pure," says McDowell. "The students are energized and expect the full mash-up of media to be at their disposal and it's our responsibility to create a structure that allows them to negotiate that."

Bill Desowitz is the owner of Immersed in Movies site (billdesowitz.com), a regular contributor to Thompson on Hollywood/Indiewire (http://blogs.indiewire.com thompsononhollywood), and author of James Bond Unmasked (Spies).

Scott Fisher PROFILE

Like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, USC School of Cinematic Arts Dean of Research, Scott Fisher, sees a new world for virtual production and the growth of interactive and immersive storytelling experiences. Fisher is creating initiatives designed to inspire a new production paradigm. This includes the work being done in Alex McDowell's world building laboratory.

"It's ultimately about the new platforms for the entertainment experience," says Fisher, who launched the School's Interactive Media Division in 2002 (it was renamed the Interactive Media & Games Division in 2013). "We think that virtual production is a broader area than entertainment. We're seeing exciting new developments in our research programs that are now expanding to include Boeing, Intel and other consumer electronics companies that are starting to see world building in a broader context. They are having problems with workflow and are seeing possibilities in what digital technology can enable in terms of collaboration over distances and the makeup of the team that builds the technology."

Until recently, the Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts was comprised mostly of classrooms. But as those relocate into the new Interactive Media Building, which opened this summer, Fisher and colleagues are rethinking and refitting the Zemeckis Center to be more of a virtual production research facility that will be a test bed for faculty and students to try new technology.

"We're constructing the World Building Media Lab to go along with the Visual Effects Lab, and the Motion Capture Volume," Fisher continues. "We're also constructing a new IMAX theater with retractable seats that will be a venue for new experiences. It will be a showcase for entertainment and consumer electronics partners to screen the projects that Alex and his team are building."

Additionally, there will be more industry outreach from the Entertainment Technology Center, the School's think tank that brings together industry executives to discuss common issues—which has now relocated from an off-campus space to offices on the Zemeckis Center's second floor. This will give industry representatives greater proximity to the School's research, which will hopefully lead to better understanding of its potential impact on the future of the industry.

What's also exciting, says Fisher, is to see how previously distinct platforms are influencing new work paradigms. "There's a really interesting sweet space between interactive game experiences and the more traditional linear experiences," he says. "Previs, dvis, pitchvis, postvis are allowing this constant iteration around the 3D model. Getting the writer and the director and the design teams all in the same room looking at the same previs or even the whole feature enables so many interesting new developments."

For Fisher, the big question of the last decade has been how to figure out how to create different kinds of story experiences for many burgeoning platforms. "And as a School, we see students wanting to do this. They're immersed in this stuff and we need to tweak our curriculum and our research efforts to think about how we approach this." This kind of interdisciplinary approach is a big focus of the new Media Arts + Practice Division, he says. "We want to open it up and think about these multi-threads to that story world. And the world building approach enables that in unique ways."

Fisher communicates how this might all come together by conjuring and describing a fascinating Holodeck experience: "Using head-mount display, these virtual spaces have multiple characters going about their business in this story world and they're having conversations and you, as a participant, can go check in on these different story threads," he explains. "There are a lot of interesting research questions: Whether you have no agency, whether you're just listening, whether you can start participating in the conversation. That's what we're trying to figure out: How does narrative survive all of this and how do we still make this compelling along with all the visceral stuff?"

At SCA, Fisher has the enviable job of asking the questions, then setting up processes that will lead to answers.

The Interactive Media Building (IMB) is home to some of the most "cool stuff" the School has to offer. From cutting edge interactive labs to touch screens to places to watch others play your games, the IMB has it all.

Mobile and Environmental Media Research Lab
This lab investigates location-specific storytelling, exploring how environments can act as narrative entities. Its projects demonstrate that buildings, cars, city streets, and even everyday objects like benches and podiums, can all deliver stories—showing that everyone (and everything) can have an engaging tale.

Creative Media and Behavioral Health Center
The projects developed at the Center apply the principles and processes used in creating entertainment to behavioral science, medicine and public health.

Student Collaboration Areas
As is the case with other buildings in the Cinematic Arts Complex, collaboration spaces were central to the design of the Interactive Media Building. From small benches to large patios, there are many places for students to meet, work and share ideas.

Screening Room
The screening room is equipped with 4K projection, which will enable screenings in high resolution 4K—approximately four times the resolution of standard HD.

Jury Classroom
This conference-style room can facilitate large seminars and allows students to each have a customizable workspace. It contains the latest equipment for multimedia presentations, including live streaming of remote events.

Render Farm
This state-of-the-art server room has dozens of racks for the most advanced technology. The Interactive Media Building is home to the School's "Render Farm" which features 130 servers for rendering.

Game Innovation Lab
SCA is known for encouraging experimental video games and the work in this lab focuses on bringing game design to a broader audience. There are useful applications for game design in the arts, education, science, politics and other fields.

Fabrication Lab
Interactive projects aren't just about software; physical prototypes are a frequent requirement. This lab contains 3-D printers, arduino electronics kits, and other tools students need to bring their projects to life.

Think Tank
The cinematic arts are all about collaboration but interactive media, in particular, requires multiple group projects on a large scale. The Think Tank is designed in the mode of Silicon Valley group-centric workspaces to facilitate meetings and collaborative work.

LEVEL 3

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 1

Lobby Gallery
Designed to feature large installations of state-of-the-art touch screens, the gallery will showcase faculty and student projects. It is the main conduit to the entire building so its exhibitions will serve as an introduction to cutting edge interactive media with a high "wow" factor.

Advanced Game Development Lab
Advanced Games is the flagship course of USC Games—a partnership between SCA and the Viterbi School of Engineering. Students taking this class now have a dedicated workspace.

Multimedia Labs
These customizable spaces allow students to create work groups around multiple screens. They were designed to facilitate the unique teaching paradigm of the Media Arts + Practice Division, which encourages students to continuously showcase and workshop the projects they are developing.

Collaboration Lab
This lab allows students to set up workstations for advanced projects and offers enough space to test kinetic, space-intensive projects like gestural games utilizing Microsoft Kinect.

LOWER LEVEL
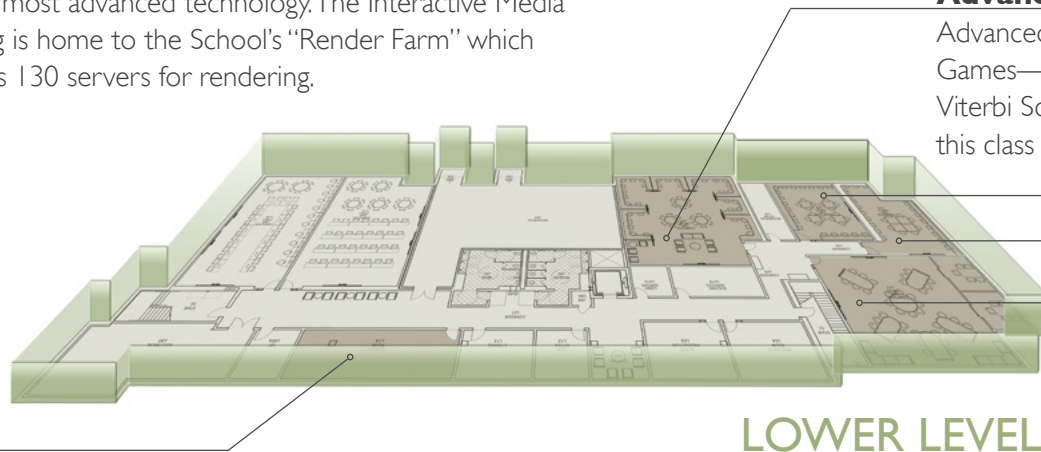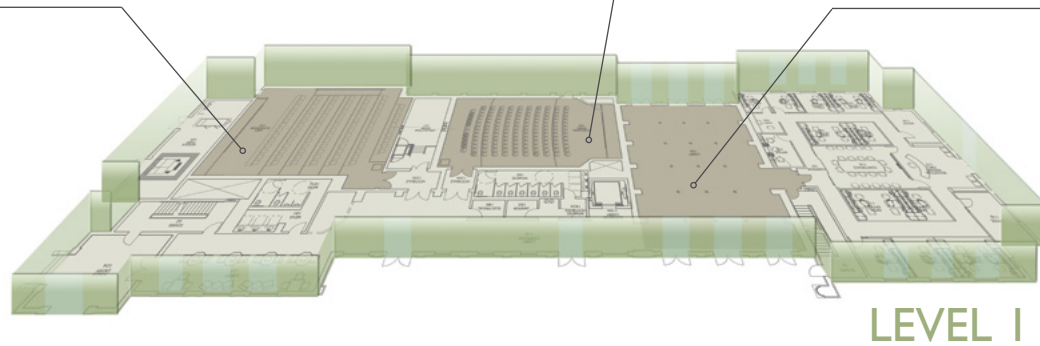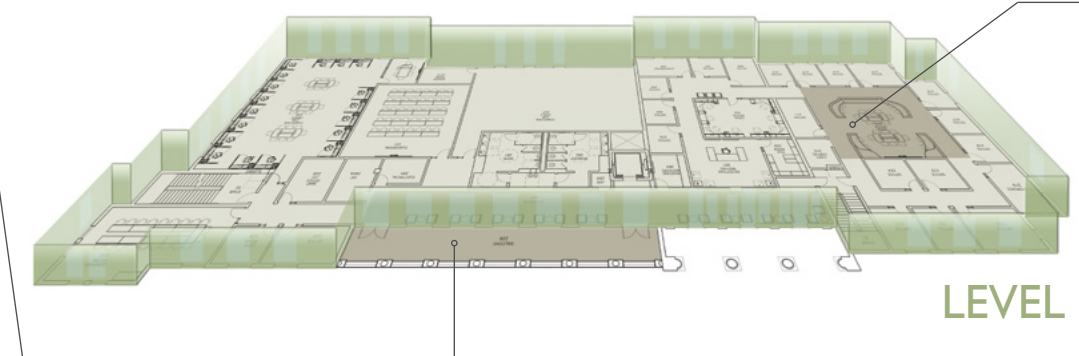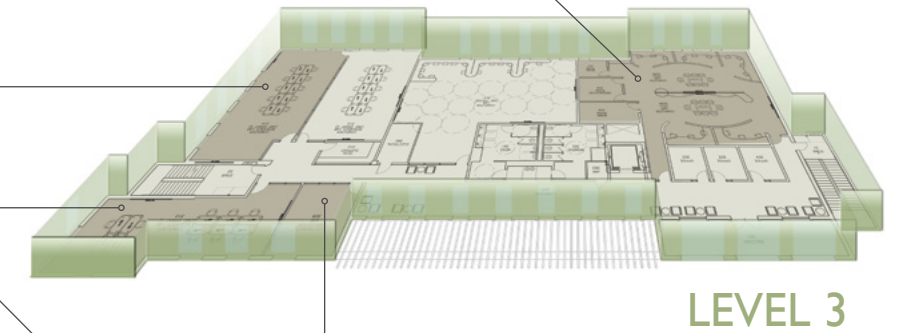
the etc
Moves Closer to Home
by Scott Stephan

SCA'S TECHNOLOGY THINK TANK SETTLES INTO
NEW SPACES, AND A MORE PUBLIC ROLE

ETC Executive Director Ken Williams (left) presents Chuck Dages, who oversaw emerging technologies at Warner Bros., with the Bob Lambert Technology Leadership Award

For years, the Entertainment and Technology Center (ETC) at USC operated in a number of off-campus buildings, giving it an under the radar feel that belies its extraordinary importance not only to the university, but to the cinema industry as a whole. Founded in 1993 with support from George Lucas, ETC acts as a kind of entertainment technology United Nations, a neutral ground for technology and media companies to meet and discuss issues surrounding the technical side of the industry. Recently, the organization moved into the Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts. With this new, prominent campus location, ETC's groundbreaking work will be a lot more visible, especially to SCA students.

In the early 2000s, Charles Swartz, the noted technologist who was then ETC's Executive Director, worked to position the Center as a leader in establishing digital cinema standards. Swartz, who died in 2007 and was commemorated this year with an Endowed Chair in Entertainment Technology, wisely saw the need for a neutral facilitator in the process. During this time, ETC provided a safe, collegial space for media competitors to meet and discuss the technical issues around converting to digital, and also helped coordinate testing of the new technologies at the Hollywood Pacific Theatre (originally the Warner Bros. Theatre) in Los Angeles. "People had ninety years of successful experience with 35mm and no one wanted to give it up unless the digital solution was well conceived as a global standard," says Ken Williams, the Center's current Executive Director. "The idea of digital cinema coming up as a series of vendor solutions on an uncoordinated basis—just imagine the chaos that would have replaced the stable, 35mm environment if somebody hadn't stepped in."

Williams says the organization specializes in situations where "the benefits and needs for interoperable, scalable solutions outweigh the benefits for some kind of secret sauce." For

example, ETC's Production in the Cloud project brings together a core group of key media and cloud-resource leaders to develop guidelines and accelerate innovation and adoption of next-gen, cloud-based content creation, production, and distribution tools and processes. The project is looking at the entire life cycle of film and media production, from pre-production collaboration and production, all the way through archiving.

Among the major media companies to utilize ETC are Disney, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Twentyfirst Century Fox, Paramount, Universal Pictures, Warner Bros. Entertainment, DTS and Lucasfilm Ltd. "We've become a place where content and technology players can really sit down and convene around issues that have traditionally involved the facilitation of high level architecture," Williams explains.

While the mission of ETC was for a long time strictly technical, it has recently begun to broaden its focus on the intersection of issues that affect both the business and the consumer side of the industry. Williams described research the Center is doing around 4K and Beyond viewing, explaining that some of the questions being discussed include whether the industry should "be moving towards spending more money on more pixels or better pixels" and "would higher contrast 2K have more impact than 4K." This kind of consumer-facing research is a new direction for the Center, which in the 90s focused more on secure networking protocols, digital file formats and a bevy of technical standards now in wide-use. "All these things now seem

old hat, but frequently we were dealing with brand new ideas and technologies for the very first time," says Williams.

ETC has also begun a number of public-facing forums, leveraging its long-standing industry connections to give students and faculty a glimpse of where entertainment technology is heading. They recently wrapped up a two-day event dubbed "Silicon Beach@ USC," a joint conference developed with the Marshall and Viterbi Schools, where more than seventy USC student and alumni teams pitched business concepts, and some five hundred students and industry professionals showed up for keynotes and panels on the intersection of digital technology and Hollywood. In October, they held their quarterly Digital Town Square, a new series initiated this year which Williams explains as "eighty or ninety content experts who convene around a specific topic." The latest town square focused on the use of metadata in archiving materials.

In short, for an organization that has only recently found a permanent home on campus, the Entertainment and Technology Center has had a long and influential history here at USC. From their new home, they are looking forward to another 20 years of innovation.

AMERICAN FiLM SHOWCASE

BY SCOTT STEPHAN

SHOWING OUR TRUE SELVES

The American Film Showcase brings the American experience to audiences around the world

By the end of 2013, the American Film Showcase will have visited 47 countries on 51 separate trips. They will have traveled to places as small as rural Malawian villages and as large as the great, sprawling metropolis of Seoul, South Korea. And yet, within the SCA, they keep a low profile.

Started in 2011 with a grant from the State Department, the American Film Showcase (AFS) exists to bring a unique offering of American documentaries and independent films to countries around the world. They begin with a list of recommendations provided by film experts, industry leaders and other media organizations. From there, the American Film Showcase and the State Department work to select the films they think are the most interesting.

What's unique about the AFS is what happens next. Instead of simply touring the films around the world, individual embassies choose a selection of films and work with the AFS to create an event. The AFS then sends films, filmmakers and content experts to participate in presentations and workshops. For example, in 2012, Mexico hosted a showing of Steve James' *The Interrupters*—a film about violence and poverty in inner-city Chicago—with former gang members. in attendance. The discussion following the film revealed that many of the viewers were surprised to learn that such levels of violence can exist in the United States and, to some extent, took comfort in knowing that

their problems are universal and not unique to Mexico.

This kind of cultural exchange via film is at the very heart of the American Film Showcase's vision. Often called "soft diplomacy", it seeks to encourage person-to-person contact, to reduce the kinds of misunderstandings that cloud cross-cultural communication. Rachel Gandlin, the Project Administrator of the AFS, says that films are often selected for their "more nuanced view of American life", adding that "we have films that take place in rural, poverty stricken parts of America. Lots of normal, average people. No Iron Man, no Superman, just this sort of regular life that people have no idea about."

Gandlin goes on to note that part of the mission of the AFS "is the idea that film can serve as a tool of social change. Documentaries in particular have this element of having some kind of impact." While many film festivals and showcases are intended as promotional vehicles or red carpet prestige events, the American Film Showcase looks to show the world more than just the blockbuster, Hollywood vision of American culture.

Among the selections for the 2013 showcase are *45365*, a slice-of-life documentary about the small town of Sidney, Ohio (the title is the town's zip code), and *Brooklyn Castle*, about a chess team in a poor Brooklyn neighborhood. The showcase also includes several animated shorts and a small number of independent narrative films.

Although it keeps a low profile, the American Film Showcase, has been a sleeper hit, already having been fully funded for the 2012-2013 year and Gandlin is optimistic that they'll be back for 2014. When the program first started, she says," we had to explain it to filmmakers and ask them to be part of it. But now we're getting a lot of filmmakers coming to us saying 'How do I get involved? How do I do this?'" And while many filmmakers are initially wary of working for a government-funded

film showcase, the AFS runs a two day orientation to dispel fears of censorship or interference, noting that "You're not representing the United States government, but rather yourself as an American."

The American Film Showcase represents some of what makes SCA such a unique and extraordinary institution—that it is not just a program devoted to supplying high quality talent to Hollywood, but to exploring the power of film in all of its forms. The mission of the AFS is to "bring award-winning contemporary American documentaries to audiences around the world, offering a view of American society and culture as seen by independent documentary filmmakers." Judging from their progress, they're well on their way to being yet another unique SCA success story.

Lunch With Larry

CATCHING UP WITH THE CHAIR OF THE **PETER STARK PRODUCING PROGRAM**

by Ryan Gilmour

THE PETER STARK PRODUCING PROGRAM HAS MANY REPUTATIONS. TO SOME, IT'S THE "BUSINESS" PROGRAM AT THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS **(SCA). TO OTHERS, IT'S THE SOURCE OF AN INCREDIBLE PERCENTAGE OF HOLLYWOOD'S INTERNS. TO THIRTY YEARS WORTH OF ALUMNI, IT'S HOME.**

Tucked away on the third floor of the George Lucas Building, a small, four-office suite has been launching the careers of some of SCA's most successful and well-known graduates. From Robert Greenblatt '87, President of NBC, to *Twilight* writer Melissa Rosenberg '90, to Producer Ed Saxon '84, who won an Oscar for *Silence of the Lambs* to Paul Gerard '99, Creative Director of DisneyToon Studios—Stark success stories are as diverse as the entertainment industry itself.

To understand how the Stark Program is evolving, In Motion sat down with **Larry Turman**, Chair of the Peter Stark Producing Program, whose fifty-year career includes films such as *The Graduate, American History X* and *Short Circuit.* Turman also wrote one of the benchmark books on the art of creative producing "So You Want to be a Producer."

Our conversation ranged from the philosophy and practices of the Stark program, to the future of the entertainment industry and the success of the musical *The Book of Mormon* (which he loves), with Turman articulating his views with his characteristic intensity and charm. It was easy to see why he is such a legendary producer.

Right away, Turman wanted to make it clear that the Stark program is not an entertainment industry MBA. He said the program got a reputation for being business-focused because of its founder Art Murphy, who was a mathematician by training and, as the lead film critic for *Variety,* pioneered the practice of reporting on grosses. Murphy recruited producer Ray Stark, who endowed the division in honor of his son Peter. Turman said Murphy approached the Stark curriculum as training for the entertainment business. "He was one of those visionaries who brought a brand new perspective to the business," he said. "He was one of the first people to articulate the business with statistics— a great business mind."

When Turman joined Stark in 1991, he changed the program to approach producing as a creative position, broadening its spectrum to include courses that focused on the creative challenges of making movies. "The main difference from my tenure has been philosophical," said Turman. "My primary philosophy is to train creative and entrepreneurial producers."

Essentially, Turman believes that today's producers have to be knowledgeable about the whole process, because they are frequently the people who are moving everyone forward. "Producing, I believe is a noble profession," he stressed. "Most of the movies that get made only get made because a producer kept pushing and pushing and pushing and never gave up. Stark business courses are very focused on how the theories are actually being employed in the business, and are taught by people who are currently working on those deals. Turman explained it this way: "I preach art but I teach commerce. There are hundreds of film schools in America. All of them will teach you how to make a movie. I teach how to get a movie *made*."

Turman's philosophy is in line with the evolution in the industry as increasingly producers are seen both as the creative forces behind projects, as well as among the main benefactors of their success, so they have input both creatively and commercially. Ironically, many of Art Murphy's former students helped re-shape the industry in this new mold. Consider that people like John Wells '82 (*ER, Shameless*), Stacey Sher '85 (*Erin Brokovich, Django Unchained*), Ed Saxon '84 (*The Silence of the Lambs*) and Neal Moritz '85 (*Fast and Furious* franchise), are all seen as creative collaborators.

Turman also included television, and eventually interactive media to a curriculum that was previously all about film. He said television offered "more job opportunities and more opportunity to do serious content." And the program's students are increasingly as likely to be working on web animation projects or a multi-player video game. They also increasingly become multi-genre practitioners, like writer John August '94 who wrote both the film and broadway musical scripts of *Big Fish,* and was nominated for a Grammy for writing the lyrics of "Wonka's Welcome Song" from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*—one of several of director Tim Burton's films that he has scripted.

The Peter Stark Producing Program is a two-year graduate program that admits twenty-five students a year. Students take courses in writing, marketing, budgeting and all other aspects of the entertainment industry. In the second year, all Stark classes are in the evening so that students can either work jobs in the industry or, if they are more interested in independent producing, can focus on their creative work.

And what does Larry look for in a Stark student? "It's ineffable. You know when you see it. There's no way that someone can prepare other than his or her life. What I look for is entrepreneurial spirit, someone who is smart. Some people have one or the other. I have turned down straight A students from Harvard and taken a B student from Southwest Texas State who, on his application said in his junior year he started a car wash business on fraternity row and had five kids working for him."

As lunch wound down, I asked Larry for some parting wisdom for the next generation of entertainment industry luminaries. "I've learned how much I don't know," was his reply. "I'm still looking for wisdom myself. Wise decisions come from making several poor decisions." But then he offered this: "Here's my wisdom: Follow your bliss. As they've said for years in the entertainment business, if someone can talk you out of it, you don't belong in it."

Food for thought.

Matt Arnold '02 has written and sold Emerald City to NBC.

John August '94 wrote the book for the Broadway musical adaptation of *Big Fish*.

Iram Bilal '07 Her project, *Forbidden Steps* was selected for Film Independent's 14th annual Screenwriting Lab.

Paul Boardman '93 and **Scott Derrickson '95** wrote *Devil's Knot*, slated for a 2014 release by Image Entertainment.

Jose Bojorquez '02 was nominated for Best Screenplay and Best Director, as part of 8 total nominations for his film *Hidden Moon*, at Mexico's prestigious Silver Goddess Awards.

Christopher Boyd '06 won an Emmy Award for Best Sports Documentary for *The First Padres*.

Bryan Burk '91 will executive produce the **Marc Silverstein '96** and **Abby Kohn '96** comedy pilot Main Street for ABC, **Athena Wickham '02** will co-produce. Burk will be executive producing *Westworld* for HBO.

Sheldon Candis '02 and **Justin Wilson '98** will write and co-executive produce the 12-hour limited series *A Slave in the White House* for ABC. Candis also directed the short film *Crooked Smile* by Grammy nominated artist, J. Cole, and directing the YouTube web series *DANCE SHOWDOWN— SEASON 3*.

Christopher Cantwell '04 sold an original television series, *Halt & Catch Fire*, to AMC.

Stephen Chbosky '92 will direct *While We're Young*.

Helen Childress '91 will write the comedy pilot *Reality Bites* for NBC. She'll be producing with Ben Stiller; **Stacey Sher '85** and Michael Shamberg.

Jarrett Conaway '09 and **Tim Kring** will produce *Exp* for The CW.

Karen Croner '87 will adapt the Korean comedy *Hello Ghost* for star Adam Sandler and director Chris Columbus.

Ian Dallas and **Max Geiger '08** created *The Unfinished Swan*, which won two BAFTA awards in 2013 for Game Innovation and for Debut Game.

Michael Davis '04 is writing an action/comedy script for IFC based on the graphic novel *Trigger Men*.

Caleb Deschanel will direct the Elvis Presley biopic *Growing Up Graceland*.

Ross Dinerstein '05 is producing *The Pact 2*, sequel to 2012's *The Pact*.

Susan Downey '95 will produce *Pinocchio* for Warner Bros.

Daniel Dubiecki will produce the indie drama *Money Monster*.

David Ellison is executive producing *Manhattan* for WGN America.

Megan Ellison will produce *Sausage Party*, an animated film written by Seth Rogen.

Paul Feig '84 will direct the half-hour comedy pilot *People In New Jersey* for HBO.

Debra Neil Fisher '80 will direct *London Calling* for Millennium Films.

Gary Fleder '93 is directing *Homefront*, based on the Chuck Logan novel of the same name, Sylvester Stallone penned the script adaptation.

David Freedman '10 started the online movie and TV review series *Just Seen It*, which has been picked up by NETA for national distribution to 370 PBS affiliates.

Jay Gammill '07 directed *Free Samples*. The film's cast includes Jesse Eisenberg and Tippi Hedren

Paul Gerard '99, Director of Creative Affairs at DisneyToon Studios, developed *Planes*.

Josh Goldsmith '95 and **Cathy Yuspa '95**'s pilot, *More Time With Family*, landed at CBS with executive producers Ben Affleck and Matt Damon.

David S. Goyer '88 teamed up with Daniel Cerone to write and executive produce the feature adaptation of *Constantine*.

Brian Grazer is executive producing *My Ex Life* and an untitled family drama set in the world of a hip hop empire for FOX, written by **Danny Strong '96** and Lee Daniels; and *No Way Back* for ABC, a drama pilot based on Andrew Gross's bestselling novel of the same name. He is also executive producing the film *Get On Up*, with Mick Jagger, and will executive produce the film adaptation of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* for Imagine Entertainment.

Robert Greenblatt '87, Chairman of NBC Entertainment, has signed a contract extension to keep him at NBC through 2017.

Kevin Greutert '88 directed the gothic thriller *Jessabelle*; is currently in production on *Saw VII* in 3D. and in preproduction on the supernatural thriller *Visions*, all for Lionsgate.

Jacob Hatley '06 has directed the documentary *Ain't In It For My Health: A Film About Levon Helm*. **Mary Posatko '07** and **Ken Segna '07**, producers; **Emily Topper '07**, cinematographer and **Phil Davis '07**, sound mixer.

Stewart Hendler '01 will direct *Max Steel* for Dolphin Entertainment and Open Road.

Ron Howard will be inducted into this year's TV Academy Hall of Fame.

Leslie Iwerks '93, is working on a documentary about Disney's Imagineering division.

Aaron Kaplan '90 produced *Instant Mom* for Nick at Nite. He's executive producing the pilot *Strange Calls* for ABC and the comedy pilot *Last Night* for FOX. Also executive producing an untitled comedy pilot written by Liz Vassey; *The Mysteries Of Laura*, written by Jeff Rake; an untitled workplace comedy pilot penned by Justin Spitzer; an untitled family comedy from Aseem Batra; a half-hour comedy written by Neil LaBute; and Harmony House, all for NBC. Kaplan's Kapital Entertainment closed a two-year deal with Venezuelan cable network Radio Caracas Television. Kaplan is partnering with Warner Bros. to develop and executive produce *Dead Boss*, for FOX; and with Michael Alaimo to develop Alaimo's drama pilot *Spec* for NBC. Kaplan developed an idea for an untitled comedy pilot written by Josh Siegal and Dylan Morgan that sold to CBS.

Evan Katz '86 will executive produce *24: Live Another Die*. Also signed a new two-year deal with 20th Century Fox and will write and executive produce the pilot *Trial of the Century* for Fox.

Zack Keller '07 created and wrote *Dick Figures*, the highest viewed animated web series on YouTube. *Dick Figures: The Movie* was released in September 2013.

Abby Kohn '96 and **Marc Silverstein '96** have written and will executive produce the ABC comedy pilot, *Main Street*.

Lee Toland Krieger will direct the MTV pilot *Happyland*.

Melissa Lee '07 produced *Bends*, which premiered at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard category.

Michelle Lee '05 will executive produce the comedy pilot *Former Fat Girl* for NBC.

Garrett Lerner '95 and **Russel Friend '95** are executive producing *How To Lead A Life Of Crime* for FOX.

Barry Levy '96 will write the film adaptation for John H. Scully's novel *Preemptive Strike* for Mandalay Vision. He also co-wrote *Paranoia*.

Joseph Levy won the Audience Choice award at the 28th Santa Barbara Film Festival for the culinary-themed documentary *Spinning Plates*.

Shawn Levy '94 closed a three-year overall first-look deal with 20th Century Fox where he'll produce the comedy *True Freshman* and the drama *Domain*. Levy will also executive produce an untitled comedy feature project for Fox Searchlight with **Billy Rosenberg '00**. He will also executive produce the comedy pilot *Paroled* for FOX.

Xuan Li '13 His MFA thesis project *Blowing Blues* was exhibited at the Games for Health conference in Boston in June 2013.

Doug Liman is executive producing the drama *Time To Time* for NBC.

Teresa Lo '09 wrote *Hell's Game*, one of the Top 20 bestselling young adult horror novels on Amazon.com.

Katie Lovejoy '09 has written the pilot for *Trust*, based on the telenovela Pura Sangre.

Steven Maeda '92 will serve as showrunner of Syfy's upcoming thriller *Helix*.

Jason Mathias '13 won the People's Choice Award at the Educational Game Arcade of GLS 9.0 for *Covalence: An Organic Chemistry Puzzle Game*.

Joseph Mazzello '05 will direct and executive produce *Undrafted*.

Kevin McCollum '89 will oversee day-to-day operations of a joint venture with 20th Century Fox to turn its films into stage musicals and plays. Kevin will also produce the musical *Motown*.

Meera Menon '11 directed *Farah Goes Bang*, which won the Nora Ephron Prize at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Steve Michaels '93 will executive produce the REELZ reality show *Beverly Hills Pawn*; FOX crime drama *Whitey Bulger*; and the ESPN documentary, *30 For 30—Tonya & Nancy*.

Thomas Miller '94 is producing, directing and co-editing the documentary, *Limited Partnership*.

Matthew Miller '95 will write the pilot *Forever* for ABC.

Alexander Mirecki '09 directed *All Together Now*, which premiered at the 2013 Los Angeles Film Festival.

Neal Moritz '85 signed with CBS Television Studios to develop and executive produce half-hour and one-hour television series.

Jeni Mulein '05 has been hired as Vice President of Event series at FOX.

Don Murphy '88 will produce the film *Blood Sisters*, based on the book series, "Vampire Academy."

Hank Nelken '95 is writing *Sister Whipped* for CBS, a comedy pilot following a young man raised by his sisters.

Joe Neurauter '09 and **Felipe Marino '04** will produce the music drama *Always on My Mind*.

William Olsson '06 won the Jury Grand Prix, Best Screenplay, and Best Cinematography at the Golden Goblet Awards for his feature *Reliance*.

Jack Orman '93 and **John Wells '82** wrote the pilot *Outbreak*, based on the feature of the same name, for NBC. They will executive produce.

Nick Osborne '97 wrote the drama pilot, *Damascus*. America Ferrera will both star and executive produce with Teri Weinberg for CBS.

Michael R. Perry '94 wrote *The Voices*, a psychological thriller starring Ryan Reynolds.

Ben Queen '96 wrote *Unthinkable* for FOX. He also wrote the pilot *A To Z*, that landed at NBC.

Erin Reynolds '12, was a finalist at the ACM SIGGRAPH Student Research Competition for her thesis *Nevermind*. It was also a finalist for the Most Innovative Award at the Games for Change Festival.

Kevin Reynolds '81 will direct Patrick Aiello's *Resurrection* for LD Entertainment.

Shonda Rhimes '94 will executive produce three projects: *Just Rewards*, *How To Get Away With Murder* and *Show & Tell*, for ABC. She was also appointed to the Kennedy Center for the Perform Arts' Board of Trustees by President Obama for her accomplishments in television.

Ransom Riggs '06 wrote the best-selling children's book, *Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children*.

Jay Roach '86 directed the comedy pilot *The Brink* for HBO.

Billy Rosenberg '00 has been promoted to Senior Vice President of 21 Laps.

Melissa Rosenberg '90 will produce *Clandestine* for ABC.

Chip Rosenbloom '87 will produce an as-yet-untitled documentary about the murder trial and conviction of college student Ryan Ferguson.

Charles Roven will produce the spec script *The Bermuda Triangle*.

Ira Rubenstein '92 was named to the board, and appointed CEO of MeeMee Media.

Ian Sander sold two dramas, *The End* and *The Edge*, to FOX and NBC respectively.

Eric Schrier '98 was named President of Original Programming for FX Networks and FX Prods.

Josh Schwartz '98 will produce the drama *Laurel Canyon*, written by **Karen Croner '87**, for E!. Schwartz sold the crime drama pilot, *Jigsaw*, to CBS; *Prodigy*, a teen drama written by Diablo Cody, to Fox; as well as the thriller *Social Circle*; the pilot, *First Timers*; the limited drama series *The Astronaut Wives Club*; the drama *Sisterland*; and an Ali Adler-penned untitled project, all to ABC.

Inon Shampanier '07 wrote and will direct the thriller *The Strategist*, acquired by Millennium Films.

Stacey Sher '85 will produce, and **John Wells '82** will direct *Chef* with Bradley Cooper. Sher will also executive produce the adaptation of the John Grisham best-selling novel, *The Racketeer*.

Ian Shorr '08 wrote *Capsule*. The spec was acquired by 20th Century Fox.

Amanda Silver '89 will write *Jurassic Park IV* for Universal Pictures.

Brian Singer '89 and **Jason Taylor '00** will executive produce *Creative At Bay*.

Srdjan Stakic '12 executive produced *Yellow Face*, an adaptation of the play of the same name. The film was especially constructed to play on small-format/mobile devices.

Barbara Stepansky '02 has been selected as a 2013 Nicholl Fellowship winner for her screenplay *Sugar In My Veins*.

Kirk Sullivan '06 directed *The Dead Men*, produced by **Christopher Boyd '06**.

Chris Terrio '02 wrote *The Foreigner* for Paramount.

Suzanne Todd and **Jennifer Todd** will produce the sequel to Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*.

David E. Tolchinsky '88 was included on New City Film's *Film 50: Chicago's Screen Gems 2013* list for his work in the industry. He is currently Chair of the Radio/TV/Film Department at Northwestern University.

James Vanderbilt '99 wrote the action comedy *Murder Mystery*.

Pam Veasey will executive produce the NBC comedy pilot *The Bass Player*, *His Neighbors*, *Their Landlord & Their Lovers* and an untitled FOX cop drama based the Alex Delaware series of books.

Matt Venne '00 wrote an untitled family drama for NBC based on the novel *Never Look Away*.

Sam Wasson '06 wrote the best-seller *Fifth Avenue, 5 AM: Audrey Hepburn, Breakfast at Tiffany's, and The Dawn of the Modern Woman*. Sam's next book *Fosse*, a portrait of the eponymous dancer and director, will be published in November 2013.

Andy Weil '06 is Vice President of Comedy Development at Universal Television.

John Wells '82 will executive produce *Bright Young Things* for ABC.

Max Winkler '06 has teamed with Jake Johnson to form The Walcott Company at 20th Century Fox TV.

Davey Wreden '11 created the game The Stanley Parable, which became the #1 game on Steam

Jared Yeager '02 will executive produce the *Ghostbusters* video game for iPhone and iPad.

Robert Zemeckis '73 will executive produce the one-hour series version of *Death Becomes Her*. He will also produce the film adaptation of *The Execution of Noa P. Singleton: A Novel* and is set to direct the drama series *Billy Ray* for FOX.

Banshee — Greg Yaitanes, Executive Producer/Director

Bates Motel — Mark Wolper '83, Executive Producer

Beauty and the Beast — Gary Fleder '93, Executive Producer/Director; Brian Peterson '97, Executive Producer; Kelly Souders '97, Executive Producer

The Blacklist — Jon Bokenkamp '95, Executive Producer

Bones — Carla Kettner '83, Writer/Co-Executive Producer

The Carrie Diaries — Josh Schwartz, Executive Producer

Castle — Andrew W. Marlowe '92, Writer/Executive Producer

Catfish — Marc Smerling, Executive Producer

Dallas — Aaron Allen '09, Story Editor

Defiance — Norman Morrill '77, Co-Executive Producer

Elementary — Nelson Cragg '03, Cinematographer

Falling Skies — Heather Regnier '08, Writer

Franklin & Bash — Jason Ensler '97, Executive Producer/Director

Grey's Anatomy — Shonda Rhimes '94, Writer/Executive Producer

Hart of Dixie — Jason Ensler '97, Director/Executive Producer; Josh Schwartz, Executive Producer

Hostages — Jeffrey Nachmanoff '94, Writer/Director/Executive Producer

House of Cards — Joshua Donen '79 Executive Producer

Mad Men — Matthew Weiner '90, Executive Producer; Marcy Patterson '02, Co-Producer; Erin Levy '05, Writer/ Producer; Jonathan Igla '05, Writer

Melissa and Joey — John Ziffren '78, Executive Producer

Mistresses — Jenna Richman '09, Writer; Chad Gomez Creasey '03 and Dara Resnick Creasey '03, Writers/Co-Producers

Mighty Med — Jim Bernstein '91, Executive Producer

Mind Games — Kyle Killen '97, Writer/Executive Producer

Nashville — RJ Cutler, Executive Producer/Director; Dana Greenblatt '02, Writer

New Girl — Brett Baer '88, Executive Producer; Erin O'Malley '96, Producer

Person of Interest — Bryan Burk '91, Executive Producer

Revolution — Bryan Burke '91, Co-Executive Producer; Eric Kripke '96, Writer/Co-Executive Producer

Rizzoli & Isles — Darin Goldberg '91, Writer/Consulting Producer; Shelley Meals '91, Writer/Consulting Producer; Sasha Alexander '97, Actor

Scandal — Shonda Rhimes '94, Executive Producer/Writer

Shameless — John Wells '82, Executive Producer/Writer

Siberia — Michael Arnold '02, Writer; Dorian Hess '10, Writer; David Paster '11, Writer

Sons of Anarchy — Paul Maibaum '75, Director of Photography

Spartacus: War of the Damned — Joshua Donen '79, Executive Producer

Switched at Birth — John Ziffren '78, Executive Producer

The Tomorrow People — Pam Veasey, Consulting Producer

The Vampire Diaries — Charlie Charbonneau '07, Writer

Wendell & Vinnie — Aaron Kaplan '90, Executive Producer

Wipeout — Matt Kunitz '90, Executive Producer

2 Guns — Paula Patton, Actor

August: Osage County — John Wells '82, Director; Grant Heslov '86, Producer

Black Nativity — Forest Whitaker, Actor; Terilyn Shropshire '85, Editor

Blackfish — Gabriela Cowperthwaite, Writer/Director; Jonathan Ingalls, Director of Photography

Baggage Claim — Paula Patton, Actor

Despicable Me 2 — Cinco Paul '93, Writer

Ender's Game — Lynn Hendee '81, Producer; Josh Comen '95, VFX Producer; Tim Carras '03, VFX Supervisor

The English Teacher — Dan Chariton '97, Writer; Stacey Chariton, Writer; Craig Zisk, Director

Epic — Lori Forte, Producer

Fast & Furious 6 — Neal Moritz '85, Producer

Fruitvale Station — Claudia Castello, Editor; Ryan Coogler '11, Writer/Director; Gerard McMurray '11, Associate Producer; Sev Ohanian, Co-Producer; Haroula Rose, Associate Producer; Michael Shawver '12, Editor

The Hangover Part 3 — Debra Neil-Fisher '80, Editor

The Heat — Paul Feig '84, Director; Bob Yeoman '79, Director of Photography

Hidden Moon — Jose Pepe Bojorquez '02, Writer/Director/Producer

The Internship — Shawn Levy '94, Director

Iron Man 3 — Kevin Feige '95, Producer; Jeff Ford '91, Editor

Jack the Giant Slayer — Bob Ducsay '86,

Editor; Ori Marmur '93, Producer; Neal Moritz '85, Producer; John Ottman '88, Editor/Music/Associate Producer; Bryan Singer '89, Producer/Director; Jonathan Stein '07, Associate Producer; Jason Taylor '00, Co-Producer

Insidious, Chapter 2 — Joe Dzuban '04, Supervising Sound Editor

Kick Ass 2 — Jeff Wadlow, Writer/Director

Last Vegas — Jon Turteltaub, Director

Man of Steel — David Goyer '88, Writer; Charles Roven, Producer

RIPD — Ori Marmur '93, Executive Producer; Neal Moritz '85, Producer

Runner Runner — Stacey Sher '85, Producer

Rush — Ron Howard, Producer-Director; Brian Grazer '74, Producer

Smurfs 2 — Karey Kirkpatrick '87, Writer; David Weiss '87, Writer

The Spectacular Now — Shawn Levy '94, Producer

Star Trek: Into Darkness — Bryan Burk '91, Producer; David Ellison, Executive Producer

This Is The End — Jason Stone '08, Executive Producer/Story

Thor: The Dark World — Kevin Feige '95, Producer; Robert Rodat '83, Story

The To Do List — Jennifer Todd, Producer

The Way, Way Back — John Bailey, Cinematographer

We Are the Nobles (Nosotros Los Nobles) — Gaz Alazraki '01, Writer/Director/Producer

We're The Millers — Rawson Marshall Thurber '99, Director

White House Down — James Vanderbilt '99, Writer/Producer

World War Z — Marco Beltrami, Music; Matthew Carnahan, Writer; David Ellison, Executive Producer

A Tangled Tale
Cut Out Fest 2013 (Mexico)
KLIK! Amsterdam Animation Festival
Woodstock Film Festival
Corrie Francis Parks '06

Bob Hope
2nd Annual Berkeley, Video and Film Festival
Ruby Moutain Film Festival
Careen Ingle '12

The Collector's Gift
Chicago International Children's Film Festival
LA Shorts Festival
Napa Valley Film Festival
Savannah Film Festival
Ryan Kravetz '12

Danger Island
Cut Out Fest 2013 (Mexico)
Andrew Malek
Ryan Gillis

Dance For Your Life, Puny Human
Cut Out Fest 2013 (Mexico)
Justin Connolly '12

The High Five Apprentice
22nd Annual Berkeley, Video and Film Festival
Thomas Kanter

Ladies Knight
22nd Annual Berkeley, Video and Film Festival
Joe Rothenberg '12

Mei
La Femme Film Festival
Margaret To '13

Passer Passer
KLIK! Amsterdam Animation Festival
(Contemporary Cartoon Modern program)
Louis Morton '13

Register Rap!
22nd Annual Berkeley, Video and Film Festival
Joshua Weisbrod

Semáforo
Adobe Achievement Awards
Cut Out Fest 2013 (Mexico)
Simón Wilches Castro

Sumo Roll
Chicago International Children's Film Festival
Jay Kim '12

Tailypo
Cincinnati Film Festival
LaMar Ford Jr.

Tin
Philadelphia Film Festival
Brandon Lake '13

IN MEMORIAM

Ray Harryhausen
(1920—2013)
USC Alumnus, SCA Lecturer and Visual Effects Pioneer

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Harryhausen's groundbreaking work in visual effects would influence filmmakers like Steven Spielberg and George Lucas.

Harryhausen was greatly influenced by *King Kong* (1933), a film that both fascinated him and sparked his love for the cinematic arts. Harryhausen conducted his own experiments, which included borrowing a 16mm camera to film his handmade marionettes as they "came to life," even before he studied filmmaking at USC.

Harryhausen began taking night classes while still a high school student. While his primary passion was in visual effects, he took classes in art direction, photography and editing under the newly formed Department of Cinematography. In 1942, Harryhausen worked with USC staff member Richard L. Bare on the short film, *So You Want to Give Up Smoking*.

In 1949, Harryhausen took home the Academy Award for Visual Effects for his innovative work on *Mighty Joe Young*. His breakthrough effects featured in the film *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953) inspired the monster movie genre.

Other memorable works include *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and the original *Clash of the Titans* (1981), his final film before retirement.

Numerous modern-day films have paid homage to Harryhausen's work, including *Mars Attacks!* (1996), *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed* (2004) and *Corpse Bride* (2005). In 2005, Harryhausen was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame. The 2013 film *Pacific Rim* was dedicated to Harryhausen and fellow filmmaker Ishiro Honda.

Harryhausen is survived by his wife, Diana Livingston Bruce, and their daughter, Vanessa.
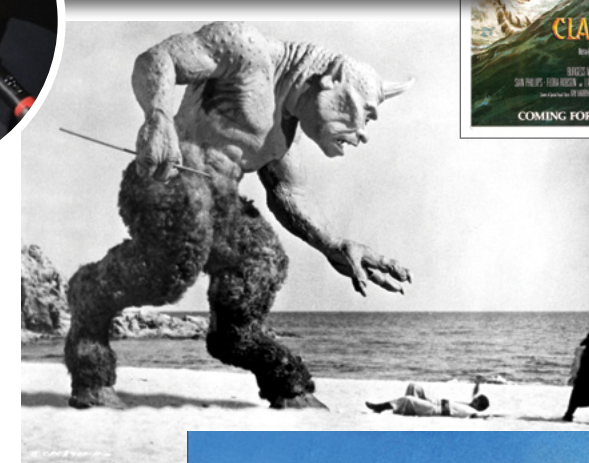
Les Blank
(1935—2013)
Documentary Filmmaker

Born in Tampa, Florida, Blank attended Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, earning a B.A. in English Literature and an M.F.A in Theatre.

He then studied film at the School of Cinematic Arts and in recent years had been a frequent visitor to the School's documentary classes, talking to students and encouraging their work.

A renowned independent filmmaker whose work has spanned more than five decades, Blank's documentary films focused primarily on the lives, culture and music of those on the margins of American society.

Blank's *Burden of Dreams* (1982) chronicled the moviemaking process of Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), shot in the South American jungles. The documentary was honored with a British Academy Award and was acclaimed by Roger Ebert as "one of the most remarkable documentaries ever made about the making of a movie."

Blank is survived by his sons, Harrod and Beau, and his daughter Ferris Robinson.

Photo by Harrod Blank

Mona Kantor
(1928—2013)
Educator and SCA Advocate

Wife of former Cinema Department Chair, Bernie Kantor.

Mona Kantor was the widow of Bernie Kantor, the long-time Department Chair when Cinema was still part of the School of Performing Arts. She will be remembered as a true partner to her husband, helping him in mentoring students and strengthening ties to the Hollywood establishment. With the DKA honorary cinema fraternity, she hosted glittering tribute events to icons like Mary Pickford, Harold Lloyd and Frank Capra that drew big names—Hitchcock, Welles, Hope, Sinatra— to campus, and helped raise Cinema's profile.

Born in Los Angeles, Kantor earned a Master's degree from the Rossier School of Education in 1959 and was employed by the Los Angeles Unified School District for more than forty years.

Mona Kantor met her husband at USC. They established the Bernard Kantor Scholarship in 1975. She named the School of Cinematic Arts the beneficiary of her estate, to endow the Mona and Bernard Kantor Chair in Production, which will be established in 2014.

Irene Sics
(1968—2013)
Entrepreneur & Alumnus

Sics was born in Lincolnwood, Illinois and graduated from the USC School of Cinematic Arts in 1989. She was noted for her calm, cheerful demeanor, no matter the task.

She was a lifelong fan of Disney and after her graduation from USC, found a job at the studio working on movie previews. Even with her dream job in hand, she found that she missed the midwest and returned to Evanston, Illinois in 1992. There, she opened a coffee shop modeled on the ones she'd loved in California. Kafein became an Evanston landmark, noted as much for its eclectic menu and acerbic wit as its celebrity clientele.

She is survived by her husband of 15 years, John Sics.

Lee Thompson Young
(1984—2013)
Actor, Writer & Director

Young was born in Columbia, South Carolina and graduated from the USC School of Cinematic Arts Magna Cum Laude in 2005.

While primarily remembered as an actor, Young was noted for his interest in all aspects of cinema production. His acting career began at age 10 when he portrayed Martin Luther King in the play *A Night of Stars and Dream*. Soon after, he moved to New York City and landed the lead role in the Disney Channel's *The Famous Jett Jackson*. He would go on to have guest roles in shows as diverse as *Smallville*, *The Guardian* and *Scrubs*. His film work included roles in *Akeelah and the Bee* and *Friday Night Lights*. At the time of his death he had a recurring role on *Rizzoli & Isles*.

He is survived by his parents Velma Love and Tommy Scott Young, and his sister, Tamu Lewis.

Getty Images

cinema.usc.edu

SCA NETWORK MEMBERSHIPS

The **SCA Network** is a great way to stay connected to fellow SCA Trojans and make a difference in the School's future. Through exclusive screenings and mixers, the SCA Network provides an outlet for USC School of Cinematic Arts alumni and current students to gather and network. Best of all, Network benefits are complimentary with an annual donation to the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Recent screenings have included *The Heat, This is the End, Fruitvale Station, Elysium, Pain & Gain* and *Don Jon.*

$25 Level
Invitation to exclusive SCA Network only screenings and mixers plus website recognition

$50 Level
SCA Military Style Cap*

$100 Level
Print SCA Alumni Directory (printed annually) and access to the online SCA Alumni Directory through Community*

$250 Level
SCA Network Athletic T-shirt and Reality Ends Here History book*

$500 Level
Exclusive SCA Embroidered Fleece Jacket and Reserved Seating at SCA Network screenings and events*

$1000 Level
Invitation to SCA Special Events as part of the Annual Leadership Circle membership*

*Denotes you also receive gifts from lower levels. For a full list of benefits and more information please visit us online at **cinema.usc.edu/Network**

Make a gift online at **cinema.usc.edu/onlinegiving**
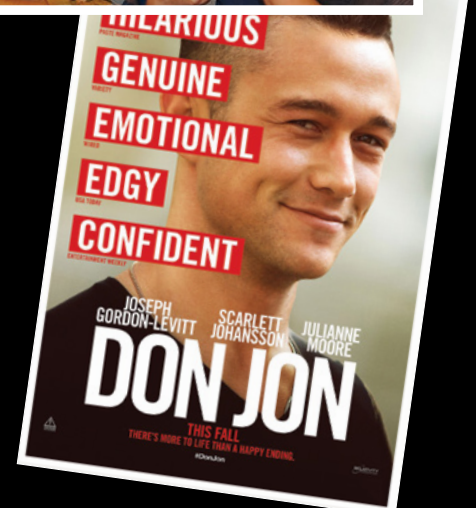
sca▶network
Your School. Your Community. Your Network. Are You In?

cinema.usc.edu/Network