Celebrating 90
YEARS OF IMAGINATION, INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION
The School of Cinematic Arts is ninety years young! As institutions go, ninety years is not a very long time. Indeed, our industry is still a very young industry. It was on December 28, 1895, that Louis and Auguste Lumière charged admission to their film shorts screening at the Grand Café in Paris, marking the beginning of cinema as a business enterprise. But even the audacious Lumieres would be astounded by the developments of the last century. As would our School’s founder, Douglas Fairbanks, the silent film star of the early twentieth century.

Our School has proudly been at the forefront of every movement and innovation in the last nine decades of moving image media. From developments in sound and color to genre shifts like dramatic episodic programming to technological advancements like digital cinema, IMAX 3D, and game design. And, importantly, the leader in the development of Cinema Studies as a respected field of academic study. In this issue of In Motion we reminisce about our milestones and the creative storytelling that resulted from those imaginative inventions.

You’ll also find memorable images of the School’s progress, as it moved from one class, to the country’s first Bachelor’s program in cinema, to a Department of Cinema, School of Cinema-Television, and now the School of Cinematic Arts. From developments in sound and color to genre shifts like dramatic episodic programming to technological advancements like digital cinema, IMAX 3D, and game design. And, importantly, the leader in the development of Cinema Studies as a respected field of academic study. In this issue of In Motion we reminisce about our milestones and the creative storytelling that resulted from those imaginative inventions.

Also in this issue, we celebrate achievements of the past year, including our five Student Academy Award finalists, with four won for animation, documentary and narrative filmmaking. Get Me By Your Name, Black Panther, Crazy Rich Asians, and Coco, all with SCA alumni in key creative roles, were among the most celebrated films of the last twelve months. As Christine Adham, our new Assistant Dean for Diversity & Inclusion writes, they are stellar examples of the commercial and cultural impact of diverse entertainment. We visit with Leonard Maltin, who has been teaching his Film Symposium class for twenty years; and celebrate 40 years of the Summer Production Program, which debuted in 1969. We also got to listen in on a conversation between alumni John August and Allison Raskin as they discuss the writing life, especially how opportunities in the industry have changed over the last two decades.

Our actual birthday is February 6th but we will be celebrating throughout 2019. We are planning a full year of homecoming activities, and it wouldn’t be the same without you. I hope you will join us for alumni screenings, exhibitions and panel discussions. For schedules and additional information, go to cinematic.usc.edu. And while you’re there, update your profile on SCA Community. You may also email your questions and comments to communications@cinema.usc.edu, or connect on social media @USCCinema.

Thank you for being part of the journey that has brought us to this important milestone. I look forward to seeing you on campus.

Elizabeth M. Daley
Senior Vice President of Development
CINEMA.USC.EDU • In MOTION • 5

1. Alum Lee Unkrich visited students to talk about the production of Coco with voice actor Anthony Gonzalez who played Miguel in the film.

2. Alum Andrew Rothschild (left) won a WGA for Adapted Short Form New Media for "Starboy" (Zac & Mia). The award was presented by Terry Crews.


5. More than 80 games premiered at the inaugural USC Games Expo presented by Jam City. Students presented games across the entire SCA Complex including a keynote in Norris Cinema Theatre.

6. Teresa Cheng, the first John C. Hench Division Chair and her family.

7. Provost Michael Quick addressing the crowd at the dedication of the John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts Division Chair.

8. Teresa Cheng in front of her plaque.

9. The late Jose Deetjen and his wife Leonor remembering John C. Hench.

10. Alum Tim Dowling (Left) moderates the panel.

SCA STUDENTS AT THE GETTY
12-13 On Monday, April 16 2018, the Getty Center hosted its College Night: A unique event organized to showcase the diverse range of talent being cultivated on college campuses all across Los Angeles. The USC School of Cinematic Arts was the most highly represented university, with four projects on display.

FEIGE AND COOGLER VISIT 14 On June 6th, President of Marvel Studios, alum Kevin Feige, and writer/director of Black Panther, alum Ryan Coogler spoke to students at a 10 year anniversary of Marvel. (From Left) Feige, Coogler, Production Designer Hannah Beachler, editor Debbie Berman, editor and alum Mike Shawnee, costume designer Ruth Carter, and cinematographer Rachel Morrison.

COMMENCEMENT 16 Alum Kevin Tsujihara, the Chairman and CEO of Warner Bros., delivers the Commencement speech.

TIM STORY VISIT 18 On April 30th, alum Tim Story sat for a Q&A as part of the Our Voices series held by the School’s Council on Diversity and Inclusion. (From Left) Student Affairs Manager Benjamin Rola, Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion Christine Acham, and Tim Story.

YEAR in REVIEW
LISA KUDROW HONORED WITH OAKIE AWARD

On April 27th, Lisa Kudrow was honored at the Oakey Masters of Comedy Lecture Series on behalf of the Jack and Victoria Horne Oakey Foundation. (From Left) Jack Oakey Chair in Comedy Jack Epps, Co-Founder of USC Comedy and Robin Williams Chair Barnett Kellman, Lisa Kudrow, Michael Patrick King, and Co-Founder of USC Comedy David Isaacs.

Trustee of the Jack and Victoria Horne Oakey Foundation Charles Collier, and Lisa Kudrow.

Michael Patrick King in conversation with Lisa Kudrow.

JOHN CARPENTER

Director of Programming Alex Ago with alum John Carpenter and alum Nick Castle, who played Michael Myers in the original Halloween, at a screening of Halloween on September 25th.

NEW FORM

The students who took alumni Ron Howard and Bryan Grazers’ New Form class, which taught digital series production.

SCA NETWORK HALLOWEEN BASH

The SCA Network hosted an Alumni Network Member exclusive Halloween party where alumni and students networked and reunited.

PLANET OF THE APES

Director of Programming and Special Projects Alex Ago and Visions & Voices hosted 50 Years of Planet of the Apes from January until May this year. The events included an exhibit in the Hugh M. Hefner Exhibition Hall, screenings from all eras of Planet of the Apes at Norris Cinema Theater, and guest speakers.

(SCA AT SUNDANCE

Alumni Filmmakers attend the School’s 2018 Sundance Filmmaker Party.
CRAZY RICH ASIANS’
USC Homecoming
JON CHU AND KEVIN TSUJIHARA
SPEND OPENING NIGHT ON CAMPUS

Crazy Rich Asians was a cultural phenomenon that blew up the summer box office. On Wednesday, August 15th, opening night in the United States, the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) screened the film for a capacity audience and invited the two USC alums who had significant roles in the film’s development and production—Kevin Tsujihara, Chairman and CEO of Warner Bros. Entertainment (also a member of the SCA Board of Councilors), who greenlit the film; and director and SCA alum, Jon Chu. They took questions from students who filled Frank Sinatra Hall at the Eileen Norris Cinema Theater.

Here are some highlights:

What is it like being back at USC?
Jon Chu: It is so good to be back home at USC! I remember taking classes here. I would always sit in the back!

What were some of the challenges in getting this movie made?
Kevin Tsujihara: What were some of the challenges? I wanted to do the thing that scared me the most, which was making the movie. I always knew that thing I was doing was my passion and my dream. I knew that if I was going to do it, it was going to be big. I was not going to go small. I was not going to say, “Let’s make a movie that no one will see.” I was going to make a movie that everyone will see.

What was the adaptation process from the book like?
Jon Chu: What I related most to in the book was all the funny stuff, but the book was not all the funny stuff. The book also had a lot of serious moments. The book had a lot of heart. The book had a lot of love. The book had a lot of passion. The book had a lot of anger. The book had a lot of pain. The book had a lot of joy. The book had a lot of sadness. The book had a lot of hope. The book had a lot of despair. The book had a lot of love. The book had a lot of pain. The book had a lot of joy. The book had a lot of sadness. The book had a lot of hope. The book had a lot of despair.

What is it like to have made this groundbreaking work?
Jon Chu: It is so good to be back home at USC! I remember taking classes here. I would always sit in the back!

What was some of the impact of making this story relatable?
Kevin Tsujihara: This is such an amazing and international cast, what was the casting process like?
Jon Chu: We need to continue to push for the same diversity in front and behind the camera that exists in this room and in our audience. It is mine and the studio’s duty to make sure that continues to happen. We have to continue to take risks and we have to continue to do things that are bold, or else you aren’t going to get movies like this.

What advice do you have for future filmmakers?
Jon Chu: Focus on the work and on the authenticity of what you are trying to say. I feel like if you have something truthful to say, you are most likely not alone.
Kevin Tsujihara: My mother was a proud Asian mother, and the thing my parents instilled in me is the possibility of doing anything, and that is what I would tell anyone. You will only set your own limits in life, and it is up to you to push through and dream big!
SCA Wins Big at STUDENT ACADEMY AWARDS

FOUR PROJECTS WIN IN NARRATIVE, ANIMATED, AND DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING CATEGORIES

The Student Academy Awards recognize the best projects made by students enrolled in colleges and universities around the world. Out of the more than 1500 entries from 400 schools represented in this year’s competition, four USC School of Cinematic Arts student films medaled in narrative, documentary and animation categories for U.S.-based programs. Here are the projects for each category.

NARRATIVE

Spring Flower Gold Medal Winner

Directed by Gisele Hua Tong (MFA, Film & Television Production), this beautiful film follows Chun Hua, a college-age woman in rural China, who is forced into marriage. Influenced by her visiting cousin, a modern city girl, Chun Hua finds the strength to change her life. Tong, who also wrote and co-produced the film, shot in the Jiangsu province in China with actors who spoke the Jiangsu dialect. She was inspired to tell this story after visiting her father’s hometown, where arranged marriages are common. Tong began to wonder what she would do if faced with a similar situation, forced to pit the part of herself that wants to please her family against the part that wants to be satisfied in her own life. Tong’s film, which was edited and sound designed by two fellow SCA students, is a visually stunning tale about education and freedom. Additional SCA contributors: Mengxue Hou (Editor), Jingjue Zhou (Sound)

Lalo’s House Silver Medal Winner

Kelley Kali (MFA, Film & Television Production) co-wrote and directed this story about the relentless courage of Manouchka, a fourteen-year-old Haitian girl, and her five-year-old sister, Phara, who are abducted and thrown into an underground prostitution network that is posing as a Catholic orphanage. Forced to grow up prematurely, Manouchka fights to save Phara and escape the fraudulent nun, Sister Francine, who holds them captive. Kali, who uncovered a similar orphanage while working in Haiti, drew on her own research to make this captivating and powerful film about social realities too often ignored. Shooting on location in Jacmel, Kali made Lalo’s House to raise awareness of child trafficking. It has already been used as a tool for effecting policies aimed at combating human trafficking (See story on page INSERT NUMBER). Additional SCA contributors include: Yasemin Yilmaz (Co-Writer), Victor Pourcel (Producer), Xing-Mai Deng (Cinematographer), Jeremy Deneau (Editor)

ANIMATION

Daisy Silver Medal Winner

Yu Yu (MFA, Animation) explores themes of fear, desire, and addiction in this imaginative animated short she wrote, directed, animated, and fabricated designs for. Whimsical and compelling, Daisy explores characters pursuing their desires in a disturbing manner. Yu’s intention in the story is to show that while there is nothing wrong with wanting something, how one goes about getting the desired object or outcome is extremely important.

In addition to the four winning projects, a fifth SCA student, Mahshah Ayla O of the Production MFA program, was a finalist in the Narrative category for her film Masks. The film was largely inspired by the 2016 Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando and also draws from her own personal experience as a gay Persian woman and mass shooting survivor. Including this year’s winners, students from the School of Cinematic Arts have earned a total of fourteen Student Academy Awards in the last ten years, including medals in the Animation category the last three consecutive years.

Love & Loss Silver Medal Winner

Nikki Yiying Li (MFA, Film & Television Production) directed this documentary that follows two vibrant, strong women with disabilities. Nicole Evans, born with osteogenesis imperfecta, which causes small stature and brittle bones, and Karen Crespo, who lost her limbs after contracting an aggressive form of bacterial meningitis. In the film they share personal, emotional, and at times humorous stories of how they understand and interact with the world around them. Li was inspired to make the film after watching the struggles of a close friend who lost her vision in a car accident and later died of brain cancer before being old enough to experience the highs and lows of dating and falling in love. She set out to explore the intimate relationships of people living with disabilities, shining a light on the conventional emotional needs of people living extraordinary lives.

Documentary

Masks

DOSSIER

By Phenia Hovsepyan
In 1929, Douglas Fairbanks, the first President of the newly established Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, envisioned a university program that many at the time considered unnecessary: an education in how to create motion pictures. Prevailing wisdom said the people who succeeded in the field, whether as creators or in the executive suites, were born with an innate characteristic called "talent." It was just a matter of whether or not they would be lucky enough to be "discovered" by someone who could "put them in the pictures" or help them "break into the business.

Fairbanks’ proposition required entertaining an altogether different reality. What if success in “the industry” was really a matter of strategic thinking and repeated practice? What if talent was only worth something when coupled with devotion to craft? Fairbanks thought these were ideas worthy of exploration. However, the discerning institutions he first sought out roundly rejected his proposal for a college course in cinema.

Fairbanks pitched the idea to his fencing partner Rufus B. von KleinSmid, President of the University of Southern California that, at only a half-century old, was as young and audacious as the movie industry. Von KleinSmid was on a mission to grow USC in size and riches, and signed on with the caveat that Fairbanks and his Hollywood friends would serve as lecturers. So it came to be that a class called *Introduction to Photoplay* made its debut at the University of Southern California in the same year that the Oscars premiered. Taught by movie greats like Irving Thalberg, Ernst Lubitsch, Mary Pickford and D.W. Griffith, it was the first cinema program established by an American university.

Ninety years on, that solitary class has given birth to an institution that is the best place in the world to discover the full potential of moving image scholarship and artistry. It remains a place of exploration. A place where “what ifs” still result in innovation. What if television was as important as movies? What if video games were more than a fad? What if you could teach anyone to create great comedy? What could be created by ignoring form, rules, reality?

At ninety the School of Cinematic Arts is still young, still curious, still burgeoning. It is embracing technologies, welcoming new voices, auditing ideas, redefining craft. A look through the decades reveals a cycle: imagination takes hold and dispels the norm, causing a new world of new possibilities to emerge. Reality ends here.
Having recently established itself as the leader in the global film industry, Hollywood was in a state of invention, from perfecting sound and color to the launch of feature-length animated films that would become the hallmark of the Walt Disney brand. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), Duddle Dandy, Casablanca (1942), Fantasia (1940), Foracco (1940), Dumbo (1941), and Bombii (1941). The innovations of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1939), which is still the most successful film of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1941), and Bambi (1940), which is still the most successful film of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1941), and Bambi (1940), which is still the most successful film of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1941), and Bambi (1940), which is still the most successful film of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1941), and Bambi (1940), which is still the most successful film of the day all came together in Gone With the Wind (1941), and Bambi (1940), which is still the most successful film.
1950s

The “blacklist” of Hollywood creative suspected of communist activities, led by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, ended many careers. Leftist artists, writers, and directors who found themselves on the blacklist included Dalton Trumbo, Lena Horne, and John Cromwell. The decade also marked the emergence of Asian filmmakers like Akira Kurosawa and Yasujirō Ozu. It was the heyday of both Marilyn Monroe and Doris Day. Television viewership exploded, spurred by the popularity of domestic comedies like I Love Lucy and Leave It to Beaver.

The Paramount antitrust case of 1948, which ran into them wherever I go.”

Television’s popularity also provided opportunities for graduating students. The Cinema program, which had grown to more than 600 students in need of training and the practice of faculty-run projects created by students—had begun with then-Proessor Richard Barrie’s film School’s Out to Quit Smoking (1942)—intensified. When the Screen Producer’s Guild asked the program to film a series of lectures given at the School by high-profile producers, the Film Symposium class was born. Film Symposium evolved into 466 Theatrical Film Symposium in the 1960s and is now taught by renowned film critic Leonard Maltin (see page 28). That class was held in screening room 108, and from then on, all central screening rooms in the School’s main building have been designated Room 108. It is now the room number of the Ray Stark Theatre in the George Lucas Building, which everyone simply refers to as SCA 108.

The filming of another lecture, a well-known presentation by USC art Professor Merril Cagge in which he sculpted a bust of President Abraham Lincoln in real time while recounting details of Lincoln’s life, would lead to a revolutionary change in the cinematic paradigm. The film, The Face of Lincoln, won the School its First Academy Award in 1956 and led to a steady stream of work for the department, filming and editing lectures that were aired on public broadcast stations. These productions led to the realization that the students, who largely served as assistants to the professors who led the projects, needed hands-on training that allowed them to realize their own vision. The class that was created to allow student productions is still known by its original catalogue designation number—the 460. In 1968, USC launched the country’s first doctoral track in film studies.

NOTABLE ALUMNI: Jack Couffer ’52, William Fraser ’50, Richard Harris ’55, James Ivory ’57, Irvin Kershner ’51, Alan Ladd Jr. ’55

1960s

The post-studio era came into being during a decade defined by political upheaval (the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement), the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr.) and The Beatles (The White Album, Sand Dollar, Yellow Submarine). The studios, seeking to raise revenues, began to diversify. The Universal Studios blacklist tour debuted and plans for Walt Disney World in Orlando went into effect. Corporate conglomerates like Gulf and Western Industries began investing in the industry as the single-mogul studio model, defined by executives like Jack Warner and Darryl Zanuck, came to an end. Importantly, studio investment in independently produced films grew after massive production like Cleopatra (Fox, 1963) and Dr. Zhivago (MGM, 1965) put a strain on their finances. The New Hollywood era yielded influential films like Dr. Strangelove (1964), The Graduate (1967), Bonnie and Clyde (1967), and Easy Rider (1969) that defined both the mood and business model of 1960s filmmaking. On television, the space race inspired series like Star Trek (1966–1969), and in England, Dr. Who (1963– ). And television movies, whether old Hollywood films or made-for-TV dramas, became popular with the success of NBC Saturday Night at the Movies, which was quickly copied by the other networks so that every night could be a night in the movies on television.

Television’s influence also extended to USC, where it was seen as a source of jobs for students. But it was also the era of a group of students whose ambitions were firmly aimed on shaking up the movie business. George Lucas, John Milius, Randal Kleiser, Caleb Deschanel, Willard Huyck, and Gary Kurtz were among the talented group of students enrolled at the School during the mid to late 1960s. Aided by the inventive of the low-cost Super 8mm camera, this era was the true launch of the USC student films as a whole and other classes produced memorable films that were talked about for mastery of both storytelling and technique. Notable student films of the decade include Lucas’ Look at Life (1965), Fantasy, and Herbie (1966) Deschanel’s Viking Women Don’t Care! (1967); and Kleiser’s Summer Days Don’t Last (1968). The first animated student films were also made during this time, including Milius’ Marooned, I’m So Bored (1967) as well as The Bug A-Loths’ Introduction to The Cosmos (both 1967), and The Great Wall City of Xan (1970), all by Hal Barwood.

Michael Patterson, Professor - John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts:

“As a professor, USC opened my eyes to the magic of animation and taught me to create and expand my own practice while bringing fresh ideas to my classes.”

Top left: John Milius, Caleb Deschanel operates the camera for the USC student production Another Thing. Hal Barwood working on an animated film for the 1960s A day short from George Lucas’ USC student production Electronic Labyrinth (THX 1138) (1971). George Lucas while a USC student.
The heyday of New Hollywood filmmaking, 1970s Hollywood produced iconic films across every genre that made the auteur theory mainstream. Directors who became household names include Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, Wes Craven, Mŀos Forman, Martin Scorsese, and USC’s own George Lucas. It was also the decade of guerrilla filmmaking. Low-budget director Roger Corman turned to producing, and as he had done for Coppola a decade earlier, launched the careers of directors who would become major players in the industry including James Cameron, Jonathan Demme, Ron Howard, and Martin Scorsese. The seventies was also the dawn of both the blockbuster and the licensed franchise. Steven Spielberg’s first big-budget film, Jaws (1975), launched the summer blockbuster. Television shows became concerned about revenue. Arcade culture quickly spread to arcades, where Pac-Man found new life as a widely recirculated cult class. Home video rentals added up to billions in annual industry revenue. Arcade culture quickly spread to the mainstream, inspiring music, fashion, and the 1982 cult film Tin. The burgeoning home video game industry had a shaky start to the decade with a glut of inferior products fueling widespread belief that games were a fad, until the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and Sega Genesis generated new excitement and put console gaming on the map for good. By 1980 it was apparent that new facilities would be needed for the USC cinema program. In a column for Variety, for which he was still a contributing writer, Stark Program Chair Art Murphy described the USC film program’s facilities as “a ghetto of one-story sheds” that stood in standing contrast to the program’s reputation as one of the best in the world. The Stables and its annexes, although much loved, were burning at the seams, and many feared that, without an upgrade of its facilities, USC would lose its standing. Cost, of course, was a deterrent to change. Despite this, USC had turned to its most successful alumni and other high-profile supporters to help it move forward with plans to construct new buildings. Primary among them were George Lucas, who was joined by his wife Marcia Lucas, and fellow alumni Randal Kleiser, David Wolper, and honorary alumni Steven Spielberg, Johnny Carson and Jack Nicholson also contributed to the building fund for five new buildings. The George Lucas Instructional Building, the Marcia Lucas Post-Production Building, the Steven Spielberg Music Scoring Stage, the Harold Lloyd Motion Picture Sound Stage, and the Johnny Carson Television Stage. On July 1, 1983, the USC Department of Cinema became the USC School of Cinema-Television. Students moved into the new buildings in 1984 amid the hoopla of the Summer Olympics. With a School came the need to create divisions and Film/Video/Television. In the eighties, the use of computer technology was becoming more prevalent in filmmaking, with films like Star Wars and Iron Man demonstrating the promise of computer-generated imagery (CGI). In 1985, professor Richard Weinberg established USC’s first laboratory focused on computer animation as part of the creation of an MFA concentration in the genre, and Production student Wesley Sewell, who would go on to work in visual effects, created the first computer-animated project, The Time Machine (1980). Sewell would also add animation from Time Machine to a live action film The Quals: George Quantum Mechanics, creating the School’s first live-action/animation hybrid film.

### NOTABLE ALUMNI

- Scott Alexander ’85, Judd Apatow, David Wain ’83
- Brett Ratner ’89, Melina Matsoukas ’89, Rob Marshall ’89
- Moviolas in the Bullpen editing room, 1970s
- Alum Amanda Silver in 1985; Architectural rendering of the USC School of Cinema-Television Center 1981.
The transition from analog to digital technologies paved the way for a new generation of DIY filmmakers, with the phenomenal success of The Blair Witch Project (1999), introducing the found footage horror sub-genre. But it was animation that perhaps benefited the most from this evolution. On the heels of the Alan Menken golden era of Disney animation—Menken composed the music and co-wrote with Howard Ashman the lyrics for Little Mermaid (1989), Aladdin (1992), and Beauty and the Beast (1991), the first animated film to be Oscar-nominated for Best Picture—a startup creative studio called Pixar gave the world the first feature-length computer-animated film with Toy Story (1995), forever changing animated film as an instant industry leader the likes of which we had not seen since the birth of Disney which would acquire Pixar ten years later.


Michael Taylor, Professor, Film and Television Production, Executive Director, Media Institute for Social Change:

“Teaching at SCA is an unequal part privilege, responsibility and opportunity. It is a challenging responsibility to send the most generation of makers into the world with the tools and the confidence to make a difference. As a person who cares deeply about using media to create social change, it is most gratifying when former students call to say they have made a film about a social issue and they are proud that it can have a positive impact on our culture.”

Mike Fink, Karschak Family Endowed Division Chair in Film and Television Production and Geenns Mikes Endowed Chair in Visual Effects:

“There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t walk across campus with a smile on my face. We are blessed to teach students who really want to be here. We are challenged to give them money worth. Co-teaching Directing in a Virtual World with Peter Sollett has taught me as an eye opens students on lessons we direct students surrounded by nothing but a green or blue screen, and they take us to feel looks like to do. Graduates tell us the class saved their bacon out in the real world. That’s one of the reasons why I walk across campus with a smile on my face.”

Midge Costin, Associate Professor and Kay Rose Endowed Chair in the Art of Sound and Dialogue Editing:

“Teaching at SCA gives me the incredible opportunity to interact with future makers of the world and to teach with the most meaningful and helpful to our students. It is an eye-opener. Students are thrown at directing actors surrounded by nothing but a green or blue screen, and they take us to feel looks like to do. Graduates tell us the class saved their bacon out in the real world. That’s one of the reasons why I walk across campus with a smile on my face.”
Console wars between the Sega Dreamcast (1998), Sony PlayStation 2 (2000), Nintendo’s GameCube (2001) and the newest entry to the market, the Microsoft Xbox (2001) made the rightly business news and the exploding video game industry became firmly rooted in the collective consciousness as the newest form of home entertainment.

Despite its name, the USC School of Cinema-Television was excited about the new media applications, especially in digital media like video games, where games like Grand Theft Auto (1997) and Halo (2001) changed our perception of interactive narratives. The cinema program’s digital future was ensured when alumnus Robert Zemeckis made a gift for a state-of-the-art technology-focused campus just off the USC campus. The Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts, which formally opened in 2001, would house a new Interactive Media Division (IMD) and other technology-driven programs. IMD developed the country’s top-ranked program in video game design and would eventually be renamed the Interactive Media & Games Division (IMGD) in 2002.

The growth in curriculum caused another old problem to emerge—more space was needed. Instead he made another suggestion, a name change to the USC School of Cinematic Arts, in acknowledgement that moving image media change to the USC School of Cinematic Arts, which enables students to concentrate their studies in the large-screen format, as well as re-issues of well-loved films in 2001, would house a new Interactive Media Division (IMD) and other technology-driven programs.

Barbet Kelln, Professor, and Robin Williams Endowed Chair in Comedy: “During my long career directing television and film comedies, I’ve often wondered why so many universities offered students the opportunity to develop their comedic chops. SCAD has solved me to address this gap by creating a unique course on Directing Comedy early in my career as much from my students as they learn from me. Dean Deily has taken this further, challenging me and my Writing Division colleagues, Jack Epps and David Nace, to create USC Comedy, which enables students to concentrate their studies in this most elusive area of human expression. Every day, I come to work grateful to the Dean, and to SCA for being an open, adventurous, and welcoming space for growth, exploration and laughter.”

Georgia Jeffries, Associate Professor, The John Wells Division of Writing for Screen and Television: “I feel it is important to appreciate all that SCA has been to our students and its role in the evolution of our vision and inclusion. The creative power of television and film, the gifted writer-producers who have shaped our cultural landscape, is now recognized. It has been an honor to help construct our writing division: exceptional MFA and BFA Writing curriculum which, like our feature studies, is second to none. Our school has always taken pride in a professional focus that directs students to opportunities in the marketplace. In the 21st century that small-screen marketplace, defined by a plethora of distribution systems, employs significantly more women and minorities than features.”

Dave O’Brien, Adjunct Professor, School of Cinematic Arts: “When I came to SCA as a grad student in 2001, I was terrified I’d be shunned for wanting to tell LGBTQ stories. What I found were allies among the faculty and my fellow students who supported me in learning how to apply the universal language of cinema to the specific stories I wanted to tell. Today, as an educator, I’m incredibly proud of our beautifully diverse student body and colleagues dedicated to supporting and challenging them to find their unique voices.”

NOTABLE ALUMNI: Gaz Alatraki ’01, Jenova Chen ’06, Jon Chu ’03, Megan Ellison, Dana Fox, David Gelb ’06, Soo Hugh ’06, Angela Kang ’09, Erin Levy ’05, Tina Mabry ’03, Susanna Ruiz ’06, Ari Sandel ’05, Kelfee Santiago ’06, Allison Schroeder ’06, Freddie Wong ’08


Opposite Page (Top left) The Steven Spielberg and George Lucas Buildings which opened in the 2000s; (Top Right) Alum George Lucas at the groundbreaking of the USC School of Cinematic Arts Complex in 2006.

2000s millennium began with fears of computer meltdown, but Y2K proved to be a non-crisis. Instead the decade would come to epitomize just how much we trust our technology. In 2004, we officially entered the era of Web 2.0, which marked not only a new sharing culture of social media, but also the emergence of streaming platforms that would revolutionize media for the foreseeable future. Personal computers gave way to BlackBerrys and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the foreseeable future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future. Personal computers gave way to smartphones and, in 2007, the iPhone. The decade of the future.
The New Golden Age of television, the decade started with a movie industry that worried there was so much good stuff to watch at home that a trip to the multiplex would be too much of a hassle. The Marvel Cinematic Universe all but single-handedly assuaged those fears. With 20 movies between 2008 and 2018, and three more scheduled for 2019, Marvel has provided the decade's most popular theatre experiences, taking in almost $17 billion in revenue. The studio to shoot a feature film entirely with IMAX cameras—Avengers: Infinity War (2018)—was the first major studio to enter the special effects business, and was the first studio to shoot a feature film entirely with IMAX cameras—Avengers: Infinity War (2018).

Small, critically acclaimed films continue to struggle but a focus on diversity and inclusion stirs up more interest in Hollywood. Although the game industry lacks the populous star power of red carpet events and televised appearances—games began outselling films around 2010 and have not let up. Grand Theft Auto V (2013) made $800 million in its first 24 hours, racking up $1 billion in sales in its first three days, making it the fastest selling entertainment product in history. When it comes to delivering the kind of expansive, interactive narrative worlds that audiences crave, gamers are truly in a league of their own. At the School of Cinematic Arts, the winning formula has been to simultaneously elevate all the entertainment industries—Film, Television, Interactive—and to do so under one roof, across seven divisions. The past decade has also offered opportunities for niche, nuance, and collaboration. The Division of Critical Studies, the School’s oldest program, changed its name to the Division of Cinema & Media Studies to communicate both its focus on scholarship from a critical perspective, as well as the breadth of today’s cinematic source material.

Interdisciplinary programs like USC Comedy, dedicated to teaching the art of cinematic comedy, and USC Games, with a commitment to both AAA and independent games and “everyone plays” as its motto, are populated with students from across the university. Designations like “emotional games,” “social change media,” “low budget filmmaking” and “web series writing”, coexist and convive. Technologies like virtual and augmented reality create challenge and excitement. And the School realizes a new interdisciplinary approach that makes room for yet another division, Media Arts + Practice, which was established in 2013 to allow work that equally prioritizes scholarship and creativity.

The School of Cinematic Arts now marches towards its centennial with future-focused assurance. Reality ends and is reborn here.

NOTABLE ALUMNI: Victoria Aveyard ’12, Ryan Coogler ’11, Stephen Caple Jr. ’14, Aneesha Chaganty ’13, Nonny de la Peña, Meera Menon ’11, Sev Ohanian ’12, Tracy Oliver ’10, Erin Reynolds ’12, Asher Vollmer ’12, Davey Wreden ’11

Lisa Mann, Associate Professor of the Practice of Cinematic Arts / Exhibitions Director: John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts

“I always treat my stop motion students to Art Clokey’s animation film, Gumby, that he made as an SCA student. After he graduated, he (and his wife Ruth) shaped a handful of green clay into an iconic character named Gumby, and some red clay into a little pony named Pokey. Clokey started an entertainment company while thoroughly exploring the surreal aspects of clay animation. It also taught us SCA alum Ray Harryhausen’s pioneering stop motion puppet films like Clash of the Titans. The students are super inspired by these two trailblazing pioneers and their lasting impact on stop motion animation.”

Todd Boyd, Professor and Katherine and Frank Price endowed Chair for Study of Race and Popular Culture:

“To me, my classes are like being on stage or standing in the arena. There is the preparation, there is the performance, and then there is what I call the ‘post-game.’ The post-game involves after-class discussions that I have often held with individuals and groups of students who want to talk further. Discussions may begin on one topic, but end up being far ranging. It’s in these less formal settings where I’ve had the opportunity to really ‘chop it up,’ as they say, with amazing people about incredible topics. The discussions may begin on one topic, but end up being far ranging. It’s in these less formal settings where I’ve had the opportunity to really ‘chop it up,’ as they say, with amazing people about incredible topics. The people I’ve met and the conversations I’ve had under such circumstances, this is what really stands out for me.”

Aniko Imre, Professor, Cinema & Media Studies:

“As a Cinema & Media Studies professor, I have really come to appreciate working along many colleagues in the practice-based divisions who are brilliant and generous, and who think of media arts beyond business and technology as socially-embedded and thoroughly ethical practices. Our students benefit a great deal from this unique learning environment.”

Clockwise from bottom right: Writer/director and alum Ryan Coogler (left) and Sylvester Stallone at special advance screening of Creed (2016); Susan Downey, the Mary Pickford Alumni Award recipient with husband, Robert Downey Jr., in 2014; John Wells and William H. Macy during the celebration of the endowment of the John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television; Alum Kevin Feige during an advance screening of Captain America: The Winter Soldier, September 2013; Mark Horwitz visits The Star Wars Phenomenon class, June 2017.
The excitement as I entered the theater to see Black Panther was palpable. While I enjoy superhero films, you will not typically find me standing in line for a Thursday midnight screening, but for many this summer, including myself, superhero fandom was not the only lure of Black Panther.

For the first time in the Marvel Cinematic Universe a black superhero was the protagonist of a film and he was surrounded by a view of nuanced, smart and powerful black characters—women and men, heroes and antiheroes. Ryan Coogler created a world where everyone could see empowered and multi-dimensional black characters and significantly black children could envision themselves as being at the forefront of the superhero universe. I watched the domestic and international box office results of the following weeks with a great sense of satisfaction. The financial success of the film—Black Panther is the second highest grossing film of 2018 thus far—is yet another indicator that the long-standing industry adage that super hero fandom was not the only lure is correct.

Coco, the most successful film in twenty-five years to feature a primarily Asian folkloric language, is evident and appreciated by audiences. The film's cultural specificity, the use of music, story from its origins to one told from the perspective of a young Mexican boy, Miguel. The film's cultural specificity, the use of music, folklore and language, is evident and appreciated by audiences. Coco has become the highest grossing animated film in Mexican history while making over 807 million dollars worldwide.

More recently Jon Chu's Crazy Rich Asians became the first major Hollywood film in twenty-five years to feature a primarily Asian cast. Quickly climbing the box office charts, the effervescent and charming film has become the highest grossing romantic comedy in over a decade, again proving there is an audience for films that incorporate the many cultures and communities that make up this world. Across a multitude of genres—superhero, drama, animation and romantic comedy—these films champion the humanity in their characters and touch audiences all over the country and the globe.

Is the production and distribution of award-winning, popular and diverse films such as these sustainable? Historically, Hollywood's interest in films from diverse creators or about "non-mainstream" topics has often been short-lived. The popularity of these films is often seen more as a trend than actual proof of a viable audience and market. Also, if one such film should underperform, it's perceived as evidence that these films are not sustainable. For example, throughout US film history one can observe the peaks and valleys in the production of African American film: the rise and fall of the Blaxploitation era in the 1970s, and the similar embrace and dismissal of black film in the 1990s.

This is why the role of SCA as a pipeline to the various media industries is so critical. As an institution, we recognize our central role and potential as a force for change within the industry and are making the effort to create an inclusive community for all of our students. The SCA Council on Diversity and Inclusion an organization made up of faculty staff and students, was reestablished in 2016, and I am honored to be the School's first Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. SCA continues to offer classes that encourage our students to understand Hollywood's uneven history with issues of representation and to consider possibilities for change. One of our roles as an institution is to provide an environment with faculty and staff support, that allows our students to grow into artists who can create stories that more clearly represent the true dynamic makeup of this country and the world. As our students graduate they bring with them open minds and new ideas that will continue to impact the face of the industry for generations to come.
Leonard Maltin is a celebrated film critic, historian, and Professor at the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA). Aside from being a great teacher and an active listener, it’s hard to say what he’s most known for: The thirty years he spent reviewing films for Entertainment Tonight? The movie reference book he published for forty-six years, where he was, “that guy smiling on the cover of his own movie guide?” Or, maybe, for his voice work on South Park, where, as Ultra-Maltin, he joined Sidney Poitier and Robert Smith of The Cure to defeat Mecha-Streisand in mortal combat.

Maltin’s expertise is in endearing his audiences to other people’s stories, both those he discovers on the screen and the ones he coaxes out of his interview subjects. He has a particular skill for locating those members of the entertainment industry who haven’t been interviewed so many times that their answers are worn out. As he puts it in his 1978 book, The Art of the Cinematographer, they aren’t yet “talked out.” He likes this phrase as much as I do, and uses it when describing a costume designer or sound artist he’s interviewed as a guest in Film Symposium, the courses he teaches at SCA.

Leonard Maltin isn’t “talked out.” Here are five of his stories. In his own words.
I. FINDING THE BEST CARTOONS

Maltin grew up as a precocious reader and film fanatic in the suburbs of New York City. His first, primitive “ranking system” was about the cartoons shown before kiddie matinees. There’s a first hint of the future Rotten Tomatoes “Featured Critic” in the boy going from theater to theater to find the right cartoons every Saturday morning.

PROFESSOR LEONARD MALTIN: I was born in Manhattan, which gives me a life-long credential as a native New Yorker. We lived there until I was four and then my family moved to the suburbs—Teaneck, New Jersey. However, it was only five miles to the George Washington Bridge. I was in New York all the time.

My father was an immigration judge. He was a thoughtful, oftentimes kind immigration judge. My mother had been a nightclub singer when she was in her teens. She gave it up when she started raising a family but as things often go, never gave it up completely. She played club dates and things. We had a musical home.

I was a baby boomer. We were the last generation that had Saturday kiddie matinees and I was a habitual attendee. I even knew which theaters showed the better cartoons. The Ortianni Theater in Hackensack, New Jersey. They had Warner Brothers cartoons whereas my hometown theater, the Eonsel, would show Cooper the Friendly Ghost, and the Fox Theatre in Hackensack dared to show Tony Toons, which was the lowest of the low to me.

Many years later, Maltin was reluctant to put simple “star” rankings in his Movie Guide, but grew to love them after he was pushed by an editor. He sees the rankings as a shorthand system often connected with a good essay. This extends to the often-maligned Rotten Tomatoes. Maltin is happy to be a tomato. He’s not a “reluctant tomato.”

2. IS THAT “DAY LEWIS” WITH A HYphen?

Maltin began his trajectory as a critic and author while in high school and early in his time at NYU. He grew to be a top contributor and eventual editor of film fanzines with small circulations of dedicated fans. Through the kindness of teachers, he began writing books and found a small following, eventually, publishing his first book with his signature capsule reviews. The Movie Guide was a hit and I was acquiring a staff of freelancers. They were people I knew who “got it.” Who understood what this book required. My publisher very wisely hired someone to proofread who was a film fanatic.

Every pair of eyes catches something else. Mistakes of omission and commission. Spelling of actors’ names. Sometimes it’s trickier than one might imagine.

I was the guy who walked up to Daniel Day-Lewis or the LA Film Critics Awards Luncheon and said, “Hello, I know this is going to sound odd but I edit a reference guide and we’re trying to determine if there’s a hyphen in your name.”

He said “I’m happy to put the record straight once and for all. There is.” It was from the source. I appreciated it.

Leonard Maltin’s Movie Guide wasn’t always “Leonard Mal’tin.” It took the power of television for his smiling face and name to become synonymous with short movie reviews. After becoming the on-camera film critic for Entertainment Tonight, Maltin got a call from his publisher asking if he would allow his picture and name to be on the cover. After years of toiling as a niche writer, the power of television put him on the cover in less than a year.

3. HER FIRST IMPRESSION THAT I WAS UNRESPONSIVE

In the early ’70s, Leonard Maltin was traveling in the growing circles of New York film nerds. Before DVDs and streaming, film buffs would travel great distances to see rare prints and hear conversations about motion pictures. It birthed an eccentric and electric scene. Maltin was in the thick of it. He began guest lecturing and holding a course on cartoons through the New School. Maltin’s cartoon class attracted a cult following of young animators, including legendary executive and author Ed Catmull and future Disney animators (and SCA Animation professors) Tom Sito and Eric Goldberg.

Maltin met his wife Alice while making the rounds of classes and film societies. Her first impression of him wasn’t the stuff of rom-coms, but it was the start of a life-long love and partnership.

“I’m unresponsive.” She will never let me forget this. At the Society, my friend said, “Look out for that girl from my class.” He said, “You’ll remember her.”

I saw her come into the room and waved hello. She came and sat with me and we watched two silent films. Two rare silent films. Two obscure silent films. They were Maurice Turner’s The Whirl and Paul Burns’ Open All Night.

Not every girl you meet is going to willingly admit two obscure silent films. It was an excellent start to a dating relationship and immediately talked about getting married. There was just something right about it. And that was forty-four years ago. Just passed our 44 year anniversary.

Alice and Leonard’s daughter, Jessica, was born in 1986. He named his production company JessFilm after her.

4. CAN YOU RIDE A HORSE?

Maltin’s profile as an author continued to rise. As part of his book promotions, he was invited to appear on several New York chat shows. The hosts found him charming and his natural, conversational manner on television ended up impressing some very important people.

They wanted to do an audition. I had the worst cold, the most awful cold but I wasn’t going to say no. So, I got on a plane and came out here and I met Tim Bellow, the legendary newspaper editor whom Barry Diller had convinced to try his hand at television.

So, he said, “Can you do two movie reviews tomorrow morning?”

I’ve read about the silent movie era where the assistant director would come out early in the morning to the front gate. There would be a swarm of people that wanted extra work. He would say, “Can you ride a horse?” Of course you said “yes” whether you could or not because you wanted to make those three bucks a day.

When they said, “Can you do two movie reviews tomorrow morning?” I said, “Yes sir.”

So, the next morning we taped in Men Giffin’s old studio on Vine street. I got on a plane and...
Matlin had signed a contract saying that using the two reviews was perfectly acceptable for the AFTA minimum he had been paid. No one had told him they were going to be used, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite one had told him they were going to be used, no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite the AFTRA minimum he had been paid. No one had breached a contract. Despite the early chaos, his reviews were a hit and rode the cultural wave of TV film criticism that was washing over America. Maltin describes his time at ET as fun, experimental, but no one had breached a contract. Despite

**5. SHE DIDN’T WANT TO DISAPPOINT AN AUDIENCE**

Most Trojans think of Professor Leonard Matlin as the teacher of the Film Symposium class—the Thursday night fixture in Frank Sinatra Hall. Every week Matlin screens a film and invites a guest associated with its production for a Q&A session. Stories from Film Symposium could fill several books. Countless film, television, and interactive artists and executives have sat in Matlin’s class as guest speakers and as visitors. Sometimes Matlin screens a classic film, and, on such one occasion guest Angela Lansbury anwered an unusual request with her usual grace and charm.

LM: I showed Frank Capra’s State of the Union (1940), and she sang the song for them! She knew never about magic. It was classy. And you know why? Because she’s the one Trojan on it is an anomaly. Many of the life-long collaborators that sit on Leonard Matlin’s stage met in Leonard Matlin’s class. Leonard Matlin has had many roles. But in the history of legendary SCA classes, Professor is the most important.

DON HALL RETIRES

Don Hall is always a quiet presence in every room. But in the world of sound design, Hall has been making noise for more than sixty years. Hall, who started reaching at USC in 1995, retired this year.

In a career of more than ninety credits in film and television, Hall worked with some of the industry’s most influential directors—among them Otto Preminger, Robert Wise, Arthur Hiller, Hal Ashby, Peter Bogdanovich, Mel Brooks, Robert Altman, William Friedkin and John Frankenheimer. Among his credits you’ll find Paddy and the Beast (1959), The Alamo (1960), The Best Man (1964), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969), Young Frankenstein (1974), The French Connection (1971), Firestarter (1984), Single White Female (1992), both iterations of +TMPSH+ (the film in 1970 and TV series in ’72), Lost in Space (1965-68), Borndy Jones (1973), Charlie’s Angels (1976) and The Love Boat (1977). Hall worked at Goldwyn Studios, 20th Century Fox, Spelling-Goldberg Productions, and was Vice President of Post Production at Walt Disney Studios. His work has been honored with a BAFTA (Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid) and two additional nominations; five Cinema Audio Society (CAS) Awards, three Motion Picture Sound Editors (MPSE) Awards, two Emmys with three additional nominations, and The Publicity Award for excellence in television series for MAPS*M. Other recognition includes an MPSE Career Achievement Award in 2004, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences John A. Bonner Medal of Commendation and the Editor’s Guild Fellowship and Service Award. Hall served on the Academy’s Board of Governors, the Executive Committee for the Student Academy Awards and the Scientific-Technical Council. At SCA, where he taught Intermediate to Advanced Sound, Production Recording, Sound Design, Sound Editing and Mixing students relied on his expert advice and willingness to help them hone their work. His legend quickly spread among incoming students—the small, quiet man with the resounding reputation.

CONGRATULATIONS DON!

By Rich Hyland

Little did I know when I came to USC what an impact Don Hall would have on my life. His presence made me a better person both personally and professionally. It didn’t take long to see what a passion he has for filmmaking and particularly the art of sound. His extraordinary leadership as head of the sound track set a positive tone for everyone in the sound department. He is also one of the most generous people I have ever known. Generous with his time, knowledge and talents. Don’s good nature, pleasant demeanor and subtle humor made him a joy to be around.

His professional resume reveals a clear indication of his abilities and achievements, but more importantly the sincerity of his actions towards everyone person that he has encountered has truly been an inspiration to all and give us the opportunity to see the possibilities of what we could accomplish.
Since graduating from the Peter Stark Producing Program in 1994, John August has had an eclectic career as a writer of films (Go, Big Fish, Charlie’s Angels, Corpse Bride, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory), young adult novels (the Arlo Finch series), short fiction, and a Broadway musical (Big Fish), and as a director (The Nines). He’s also a screenwriter of films (the Arlo Finch series), short fiction, motion picture, and a Broadway musical (Big Fish), and as a director (The Nines). He’s also a screenwriter

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

John August and Allison Raskin

Writing a Living

By Desa Philadelphia

Why California?

JOHN AUGUST: What’s weird about screenwriting is, that it was invented here, in California. They started shooting movies and then realized they should write down what they were doing. It was just a plan for shooting a movie, and then it became this art form because people got better at describing things got hired more often. It is an art form we created.

ALLISON RASKIN: I actually came to California (from New York), mostly to be in California. They started shooting movies and then we had a novel. I realized that, what they were doing. It was just a plan for shooting a movie, and then it became this art form because people got better at describing things got hired more often. It is an art form we created.

AR: The web series stuff you are doing that did not exist when we were starting out. That is the strange thing we are doing. It was just a plan for shooting a movie, and then it became this art form because people got better at describing things got hired more often. It is an art form we created.

AR: Performing exposes people to your voice. Even though your voice on the page is not the same, the reason I got jobs is because people read my scripts and heard my voice and thought my characters were real people. What I learned from acting was that I had this following and I had the ability to produce scripts.

AR: After selling three shows and it not going anywhere, my comedy partner and I had an idea for a YA novel. Literally a day after meeting with an agent we had an offer and a bidding war and then we had a novel. I realized that, for me, storytelling was the most important. And writing in general. That is what helped me get into the scripted podcast space, the most rewarding project I have done. I wrote, directed, and starred in a twelve-episode comedic soap opera podcast, Gossip. Getting to have my show on television, but it was not on screen, was amazing.

AR: When I came through USC, there was a screenwriting program for directors and editors, there was a popular scriptnotes podcast. Allison Raskin graduated with a BFA from the John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television in 2011, and is also in search of variety.

AR: What’s weird about screenwriting is, that it was invented here, in California. They started shooting movies and then they realized they should write down what they were doing. It was just a plan for shooting a movie, and then it became this art form because people got better at describing things got hired more often. It is an art form we created.

AR: You can have that Black List script, most people are not going to be buying that script. But if you have that Black List script, you have a better chance of getting your story out.

AR: What’s your thing?

AR: When I was allowed to hire writers for my podcast, I wanted a female only writers room. It was a show for women so I wanted women to be writing the show. Something I think about a lot is, what kind of stories am I qualified to tell? When I was here I wrote a script about an All-American college couple and then the AR: When I came through USC, there was a screenwriting program for directors and editors, there was a popular scriptnotes podcast. Allison Raskin graduated with a BFA from the John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television in 2011, and is also in search of variety.

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There are films that serve purely to entertain, and there are those that captivate the audience through artful storytelling, while also shedding light on tragic elements of the human experience in an attempt to advocate for social justice. “People are often times more inspired by watching a film about a subject matter than listening to a politician. As filmmakers, we need to realize the influence that we have on viewers. My crew and I choose to use our influence to bring awareness to the issues of human trafficking,” Kali says. “I want people to watch the film and feel connected to our characters so much that they want to learn more about what they can do to help in their own communities.”

Indeed, Lalo’s House has inspired change both in the United States and in Haiti. When Fabienne Pierre, a member of the UNICEF Next Generation Steering Committee, came across a trailer for the film, she was inspired to use it as a tool to spark an important conversation about child trafficking legislation in the US. According to the International Labor Organization, trafficking generates an estimated $150 billion in annual profits, with approximately ten million children subject to modern slavery. Human trafficking has been reported in all 50 of the United States, and New York was one of only two states (the other being Alabama) that require proof of force, fraud, or coercion when prosecuting child traffickers. Pierre held a screening of Lalo’s House in New York City and invited local elected officials to participate in the discussion, shedding light on the legislative loophole which required children to testify against their traffickers. “After the event, New York State Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte went on to co-sponsor a bill which would put an end to the loophole, and quickly delivered a press conference about the importance of anti-trafficking efforts,” recalls Pierre. “After months of tireless advocacy, the legislation was passed in both the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate in June 2018.” The impact didn’t stop there. A representative from the United Nations who attended the screening, is now using Lalo’s House as an advocacy tool on the international stage. Professor Michael Taylor, who oversaw the MFA program in the Film & Television Production Division in 2018, learned the film premiered at the Pan African Film Festival in February 2018, where it won the Student Academy Award for Short Film. Since then, Lalo’s House has become an international change agent for a global problem too readily ignored.

The School of Cinematic Arts student film Lalo’s House, which won a 2018 Student Academy Award in the narrative category, is testament to the powerful the connection between filmmaking, entertainment, and social advocacy.

Director Kelley Kali’s thesis included more than a dozen other SCA students. The film premiered at the Pan African Film Festival in February 2018, where it won the Programmer’s Award for Best Short. Since then, Lalo’s House has become an international change agent for a global problem too readily ignored.

Filmed on location in Haiti in the local Creole dialect, Lalo’s House is the story of two young girls who are kidnapped into human trafficking and older sister Manouchka’s struggle to preserve the innocence of her sister Phara. Kali, who graduated from the MFA program in the Film & Television Production Division in 2018, learned about the child trafficking issues in Haiti while studying anthropology during her undergraduate years. She subsequently went to Haiti and investigated a Catholic orphanage where a nun was putting girls as young as 12 years old out for prostitution. Harrowing documentary footage, which Kali used as her application to SCA, also inspired the back story of the narrative short.

There are films that serve purely to entertain, and then there are those that captivate the audience through artful storytelling, while also shedding light on tragic elements of the human experience in an attempt to advocate for social justice. “People are often times more inspired by watching a film about a subject matter than listening to a politician. As filmmakers, we need to realize the influence that we have on viewers. My crew and I choose to use our influence to bring awareness to the issues of human trafficking,” Kali says. “I want people to watch the film and feel connected to our characters so much that they want to learn more about what they can do to help in their own communities.”

Indeed, Lalo’s House has inspired change both in the United States and in Haiti. When Fabienne Pierre, a member of the UNICEF Next Generation Steering Committee, came across a trailer for the film, she was inspired to use it as a tool to spark an important conversation about child trafficking legislation in the US. According to the International Labor Organization, trafficking generates an estimated $150 billion in annual profits, with approximately ten million children subject to modern slavery. Human trafficking has been reported in all 50 of the United States, and New York was one of only two states (the other being Alabama) that require proof of force, fraud, or coercion when prosecuting child traffickers. Pierre held a screening of Lalo’s House in New York City and invited local elected officials to participate in the discussion, shedding light on the legislative loophole which required children to testify against their traffickers. “After the event, New York State Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte went on to co-sponsor a bill which would put an end to the loophole, and quickly delivered a press conference about the importance of anti-trafficking efforts,” recalls Pierre. “After months of tireless advocacy, the legislation was passed in both the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate in June 2018.” The impact didn’t stop there. A representative from the United Nations who attended the screening, is now using Lalo’s House as an advocacy tool on the international stage. Professor Michael Taylor, who oversaw the MFA program in the Film & Television Production Division in 2018, learned the film premiered at the Pan African Film Festival in February 2018, where it won the Student Academy Award for Short Film. Since then, Lalo’s House has become an international change agent for a global problem too readily ignored.

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LEARNING THE CRAFT AT THE SCA SUMMER PROGRAM

On a sleepy afternoon in July, it was baking hot outside but very cool inside instructor Jay New’s “Beginning Filmmaking” classroom on the third floor of the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) building. There, sixteen teenagers energetically tuned in to the importance of “voice” in filmmaking as New projected YouTube clips that playfully dissected Wes Anderson and Chris Nolan’s cinematic obsessions.

Next, New (MFA Film & Television Production ’10) noted that his own classmates, Ryan Coogler and The First Purge director Gerard McMurray, had already defined their signature themes just a few months into their studies at SCA. “From Fruitvale Station to Creed to Black Panther, Ryan’s dealing with black families, and he started doing that in his first semester at USC,” New told the students. “Gerard and I didn’t have a clear idea of how all the pieces come together with a film crew. At USC, it’s been great working with all these other people who are just as interested in movies as I am.”

For a month and a half, Qian, Hu, and Araiza drilled into the art and craft of filmmaking alongside hundreds of other like-minded peers enrolled at the School of Cinematic Arts’ Summer Program. Organized as two separate six-week sessions, the 2018 program attracted a record 349 participants, including 141 “minors” (ages 16 and 17) and 101 international students. The draw? More than 30 college-credit courses in cinematography, editing, animation, writing, directing, producing, computer graphics, virtual reality, interactive game design, and entertainment business, taught largely by members of SCA’s regular academic-year faculty. The focus? Hands-on filmmaking experience.

Summer Program Director David A Weitzner said, “The vast majority of our classes are production-related because students who come here want to take something home with them.” The Program also gives young filmmakers an opportunity to explore campus life at USC. Weitzner noted, “Attendance does not guarantee admission to USC but over the years, we’ve seen a number of Summer Program students matriculate into the main body of the film school, and that to me is pretty thrilling.”

A Focus on Professionalism

Weitzner, a former movie marketing executive, instigated major changes when he took charge of the curriculum thirteen years ago at the invitation of Dean Elizabeth M. Daley. Among his improvements, Weitzner fostered partnerships with Warner Bros, Disney, and Universal. Weitzner recalled, “I’m a marketing guy through and through, so when I got here, I called my friend Alan Horn, who was then President of Warner Bros, and I pitched him on creating a production class for producing and directing. He went for it!” In 2012, when Horn moved on to run Walt Disney Studios, Weitzner re-connected with the executive and set up a production class at the company’s Burbank complex. Expanding further, Weitzner got on the phone with his pal Ron Meyer, Vice Chairman at NBCUniversal, and together they organized a summer production class offering students access to the Universal Studios lot.

Summer Program’s studio-affiliated production courses have provided invaluable practical experience for young filmmakers, according to David Maquiling, who oversees the USC-Warner Bros. producing and directing class. “They’ve been incredible partners because one day a week, we go to the lot,” he said. “Directors, editors, and cinematographers introduce the different departments and show the students how a studio really works.” The Warner Bros. set visits culminate with a labor-intensive weekend shoot in which students work in teams of six, shoot their projects on French Street (where Casablanca was filmed), MidWest Street (backdrop for TV’s Gilmore Girls), New York Street and the so-called “Jungle” set.

“My approach is, you learn filmmaking by doing it.” Maquiling explained. “I’m here to set the students up with all the basic knowledge they need to become professionals, but they have to go out and cast the actors, do the paperwork, get the permits and make the films. My standards for the Summer Program are exactly the same as the regular year except that what we normally cover in 15 weeks, I do in six weeks. It makes the students understand the importance of deadlines and not being too precious while still doing the best work they possibly can.”

Summer Program’s compressed time frame lends a sense of urgency to course work that Weitzner holds of the Mark Burnett Endowed Chair, sometimes finds astonishing. Describing the origins of David Balkan’s Advanced Screenwriting course, he said, “I remember...
when David took me out for drinks and pitched me a class where students would create a three-act screenplay in six weeks. I’m a student of the studio system. I’ve been in the business forever. I told David, ‘No, it can’t be done. Writers need a half year to a year.’ He said, ‘Well let’s just try it.’ So, we told David, ‘No, it can’t be done. Writers need a half year to a year.’ He said, ‘Well let’s just try it.’ So, we did, and now Advanced Screenwriting is the most popular writing class we’ve got.”

International Reach, Local Connectivity

The Summer Program prides itself on welcoming cinephiles from around the world. Aspiring filmmakers from China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, India, South Korea and sixteen other countries flock to USC during the off season eager to immerse themselves in American-style movie instruction. Additionally, SCA now exports its curriculum overseas. Funded by donations from media entrepreneur Tom Freston and Saad Moosani, the annual USC/MBF Filmaking Workshop in Dubai brings together six film and television talents from Ethiopia and six from Afghanistan for a week-long boot camp. Maquiling, who runs the workshop, said, “These editors, directors and producers are all professionals but they don’t necessarily know the American system for scheduling and putting together your day. Ethiopians and Afghans prep, shoot and edit in the hotel rooms where we stay. For me, it’s inspiring to see that kind of cross-pollination.”

SCA’s Summer Program also engages with young filmmakers in USC’s own backyard via the Neighborhood Academic Initiative. Funded mainly by the Berdakin Family Foundation (established by SCA adjunct professor Diego Berdakin), the NAI Filmmaking Workshop offers 60 local teenagers a free month-long course in filmmaking. “The kids edit downstairs and use the exact same equipment as our regular students,” said Maquiling. “Even though most of them never edited video or touched a camera before, they pick up the technology very quickly. It’s only four weeks but these guys have so much energy, they work really hard and find great stories.”

A Legacy of Success Stories

Attracting high-caliber talent as the off-season adjunct to the nation’s number-one ranked film school, Summer Program has yielded numerous success stories. They include Jean de Meuron, who earned an Oscar nomination for executive producing the 2016 short film La Femme et le TGV. On the local front, Nod Flores joined the Neighborhood Academic Initiative at age 14, then attended USC on a full-ride scholarship and graduated last year with a BFA in Film & Television Production.

Then there’s Fatema Hussaini, who traveled from Kabul to study at SCA several summers ago. “The students voted her documentary number one on the last day of school,” Weitzner said. “But she didn’t want to go back to Kabul.” After escaping from handlers at Kennedy Airport, “Fatema wandered the streets of New York with her suitcase and her broken English,” Weitzner recalled. “She ended up in a shelter and called me, hysterial that she’d be arrested and put in jail. I sent her a ticket back to Los Angeles.” Hussaini lived with Weitzner and his wife for seven months. She eventually secured a green card through an immigration lawyer hired by SCA donor Mark Burnett. “Fatema now lives in Arlington, Virginia, and just signed a contract with ‘Voice of America’ as a segment producer,” Weitzner said. “She’s a credit to everything the program stands for!”

All the indications pointing to success stories in the future could be found in the promising work showcased at the Summer Program’s grand finale in August. Gathered inside the Fanny Brice Theatre, student filmmakers screened shorts films selected by their peers as the cream of the summer crop. Inventive genre pieces included exorcism horror (Shot in the Dark, directed on the Warner Bros. lot by Julián Cortiz), time travel (Continuum, directed on the Warner Bros. lot by Julián Cortiz), and psychological thriller (What You Left Me, directed on the Warner Bros. lot by Julián Cortiz). Instructor Jay New’s Beginning Filmmaking student Connor Hu and classmate Adrian Wong made the cut with their character-driven slice of life/ thriller (Was Up All Night Day Dreaming). Comic relief arrived in the form of zany TV spots for hot sauce that were created by students in the Commercial Directing class.

After the screenings concluded, students mingled one last time around the SCA courtyard’s Douglas Fairbanks fountain for a flurry of fond farewells. “A very significant part of our success with the Summer Program comes from word of mouth,” Weitzner observed. “Our students talk to each other, they stay in touch, they create communities and make friendships. At the party after we screen the films, it’s amazing to watch how these kids have bonded.”
In MOTION

SCA lost a legend this summer when the beloved Ken Miura, sound instructor and eventually Associate Dean, passed away peacefully at his home in Torrance on June 4th at the age of 89. In his 49 years at USC, Ken inspired generations of student filmmakers and launched the careers of many of the most successful cinematic sound professionals in the world.

When I came to USC as a grad student in the fall of 1982, Ken was on sabbatical helping to wire the stages at Skywalker Sound. I’m of the belief that it is the reason George Lucas stayed in touch with his alma mater. Legendary sound designer Ben Burtt’s career was made when Lucas, on the verge of shooting Star Wars, called Ken to ask if he had another Walter Murch. In SCA alum Raymond C. La’s short biopic Ken Miura Unheard Of, Burtt says, “I came to USC in 1971 and met Ken Miura and took his class in sound. Ken is charming, friendly, easy to talk to and has a great sense of humor. You felt you could sit down and belong to him if you needed to.”

Seven-time Academy Award winning sound designer Gary Rydstrom says in that same documentary, “Behind the scenes Ken would set up the world so we could thrive. He was always bucking you up even after you graduated. The only reason I ended up at Skywalker with this career is that Ken set me up.”

It was Ken’s like as much as his classes and support that inspired us all. A native Californian, Ken and his family were among the approximately 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry who were relocated to internment camps in the 1940s. Upon release, his family’s residence had been tended over to his house for dinners. He created a family atmosphere in the place the sound department was. Ken would invite the Sound T.A.s and mentorship. He was very clear about always putting the students first.

As a student, I was always so impressed with what a friendly and inviting member at USC. He is survived by his wife, Lauren Glassman, and two daughters, Miranda and Annabella. His grandchildren Tyler & Dylan Thompson, Malia and Alana Conklin (Gary Rydstrom remembers buying Girl Scout cookies from them); his grandchild Deri Leong-Miller, Miura at a recording session in 1956 demonstrating a state-of-the-art David-Hoffman magnetic recorder. Miura at commencement having his robe adjusted by long-time staff member Deri Leong-Miller, Miura holding court with professors David Howard and Ted Braun (center).
Scott Alexander ’97 and Larry Karaszewski ’95 – Are writing the screenplay for the film adaptation of Tad Lincoln: Patrol of the Bravest.
Gregg Araki ’87 – is set to write, direct and co-produce an executive new show for Starz titled Now Apocalypse.
Lisanne AI ’82 – Has accepted a tenure track position at UC Davis in their Department of Cinema and Digital Media, with a focus on the intersection between interactivity and the American experience.
Thembekile Barkley ’17 – is one of the three winners of HBO Access’s Directing Fellowship.
Jason Michael Berman ’03 – is producing the rom-com comedy Happy Trouble starring Angela Bassett and Patricia Arquette, for Netflix.
Brittany Beldianman ’18 – Has taken a position working on Destiny as an Associate Level Designer.

In MOTION

Scott Derrickson ’95 – Will executive produce X-Men: Apocalypse. The four-hour miniseries is based on Derrickson’s award-winning novel of the same name through Fox 21, a sister channel to the FX Networks, Entertainment Arts & Culture Department at Occidental College.
Dana Fox ’01, Dana Resnik ’03, and Jon Chu ’06 – Jon Chu has been tapped to direct the story of the Thai soccer team’s cave rescue. Chu is also slated to direct the story of the original screenplay for 20th Century Fox.
Troye Sivan ’13 – Will costume the crime drama film Thug which has been picked up by Tpeuder Tooley Entertainment.
Samantha Gorman, Julian Culpak ’17, Lex Rhodes ’18, William Anderson ’17 and the entire team at Tender Class – Have released Smolll, a mixed reality experience for mobile using Microsoft’s innovative ARKit technology that examines our relationship with intimacy and technology.
Jason Grossman ’98 – Has been named as the new Executive Director of Original Films at Netflix.
Jon Chu ’03 – Is attached to direct the story of the Thai soccer team’s cave rescue. Chu is also slated to direct the story of the Thai soccer team’s cave rescue.

We apologize if we missed anyone. Please contact Justin Wilson at 213.740.2804 or alumni@cinema.usc.edu for more information or updates.
Fat Diabeke Made Me Do It (Más sabe el Diablo Made Me Do It) - [Image 39x230 to 156x407]

El Diablo - [Image 234x550 to 352x727]

Kusama – Infinity - [Image 673x317 to 791x493]

Krypton - [Image 882x561 to 999x736]

A Million Little Things - [Image 1011x71 to 1129x246]

The Kids are Alright - [Image 1140x561 to 1257x736]

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