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Summer Internship Report

By Maddie Rubalcava — Recipient of an FMS Out-of-State Internship Scholarship

This past summer, I spent eight weeks in Shanghai, China, doing a dual film and marketing internship. I worked upward of forty hours per week. My duties ranged anywhere from hauling equipment, filming shorts on DSLRs, subtitling dozens of videos, editing live and archived footage, to designing keynotes, presentations, and posting social media posts for celebrities. I had to help create and campaign a tour (ZHU), promote popularity and edit old footage from our company for celebrities who movies had just released in China (Gal Gadot, Wonder Woman), revamp old careers by making marketing strategies for them (Jessie J), or creating a variety of social media posts leading up to a celebrity’s project release/premiere (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Game of Thrones). I worked with around 15+ client projects abroad, including production companies (Prettybird), famous YouTubers (Amanda Cerny), athletes (Shaquille O’Neal), and even companies (ROC Headphones in collaboration with Cristiano Ronaldo).

Mingyian Inc., helped provide me with a few important factors that will help further my career. For starters, I have so many new connections in Shanghai, Los Angeles, and New York - since those are the three locations where the company is based. I also got hands on, professional practice, as well as a letter of recommendation that will help me in my future. My boss actually hired me to continue doing design and subtitling work from back in the U.S. Apart from Mingyian, the experience itself helped teach me more about my personality, lifestyle, and ability to work under pressure. It helped me with many soft skills, communication, and problem solving. I would highly recommend the program to any FMS students.
Out and About

Professor Bob Hurst was in Tonga and Fiji for two weeks in early September screening his documentary The Listeners, about suicide hotline volunteers. He also conducted multiple workshops with university students and professionals in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, and Suva, Fiji.

The trip was hosted by the U.S. Embassy in Fiji, which also has formal relations with the Kingdom of Tonga. The trip was made possible through the American Film Showcase, a cultural diplomacy program funded by the U.S. State Department and administered through the School of Cinematic Arts at USC. Every year the AFS sends films and filmmakers around the world to screen American documentary and fiction films.

Hurst said, “screening and discussing my film and other documentaries and meeting and working with people who are passionate about filmmaking was a truly satisfying experience.”

The full program for this year’s Showcase lineup is here:http://americanfilmshowcase.com/
Out & About

Film professor to collaborate with Spike Lee, Jordan Peele on upcoming film Black Klansman

University film professor Kevin Willmott has been picked as a writer for the upcoming film Black Klansman. The film will cover the story of Ron Stallworth, a black police officer from Colorado who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan in 1978. Wilmott will work alongside director Jordan Peele and Spike Lee, with whom he collaborated on the 2015 film Chi-Raq.

“I’m always looking for movies that talk about certain issues; this one deals with the race issue in a really unique way,” Willmott said. “With the rise of various hate groups again and such, it is going to be a very timely film.”

Willmott described the film as a comedic-drama, rather than satire like some of his previous work.

“It’s based on a true story, which makes it even more interesting,” Willmott said. “It is set in the ’70s, and it actually happened. I feel like it is still happening in some ways. I don’t want to give too much away about the story, but it’s a story that seems to keep happening.”

Willmott has enjoyed his time working with Spike Lee. He says that the partnership between them has been interesting, and that he is excited to continue working with him on their next project after Black Klansman. He also said that he has enjoyed being able to work with Jordan Peele as well.

“Spike and I have known each other for a long time now,” Willmott said. “We met when I made my film CSA: The Confederate States of America. Since then, we had tried to work together on multiple occasions. Eventually, Spike and I wrote Chi-Raq together. He approached me again to work on this new project. It was a rewrite. They approached him to direct it, and then we began the task of giving our take on it. I think they kind of wanted Jordan there to keep it funny. And we have been able to do that.”

Though Willmott could not provide much information about the film’s plot, he was able to discuss its cast.

“The lead character is going to be played by Denzel Washington’s son, John David Washington,” Willmott said. “They have not been announced yet, but there are going to be some more heavy hitters.”

Willmott also reflected on how he was able to reach such a point in his career. He emphasized the idea of creating things based on what you believe in.

“I tell my students sometimes, the old cliché/saying is, ‘Write what you know,’ but you should also write what you believe in. I have always tried to write what I believe in. It has taken a while, but it has paid off.”

Copied from the University Daily Kansan:
Out & About

John David Washington will star in the adaptation of a memoir by an African-American police detective who infiltrated the KKK.

Spike Lee is teaming with Get Out filmmaker Jordan Peele for Black Klansman, the true story of an African-American police officer who infiltrated the KKK.

Black Klansman tells the story of Ron Stallworth, a detective in Colorado Springs, Colo., who in 1978 answered an ad in the local newspaper seeking new Klan members. He not only gained membership, but rose through the ranks to become the head of the local chapter. Stallworth, who is black, was able to gather all sorts of intelligence by pretending to be a white supremacist on the phone or via other forms of correspondence but sent a white fellow officer in his place for any in-person meetings. During his undercover work, Stallworth managed to sabotage several cross-burnings and other activities of the notorious hate group.

The screenplay adapting Stallworth’s autobiography was penned by the writing team of Charlie Wachtel and David Rabinowitz as well as by Spike Lee and Kevin Willmott.


The 15th Annual Tallgrass Film Festival, held in Wichita, KS from October 18 – 22 will be well represented by KU FMS: Hunter Harding, Laura Kirk, Kevin Willmott and recent alum Savannah Rodgers all have films in the line-up. In addition, FMS senior Amber Brown is a staff member at Tallgrass and has worked at the festival for several years. Find the schedule here: http://tallgrassfilmfest.com/

Germaine Haleboua (FMS), Michelle Reed (former KU Librarian), and Philip Duncan (KU Department of Linguistics) co-authored a book chapter for the anthology, Undergraduate Research & the Academic Librarian: Case Studies and Best Practices. In their chapter, “Engaging Our Student Partners: Student Leadership in a Library- Initiated Experiential Learning Project” the authors reflect on the process of researching and creating a library-initiated and student-led project aimed at advancing educational initiatives in the realm of open access and scholarly communication. The student-led project evaluated in the chapter was partially completed in Germaine Haleboua and Meg Jamieson’s Digital Storytelling class in spring 2016. The chapter is available through a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license and the book will be available for purchase later this month.
Out and About

Lecturer Laura Kirk was selected to present her research on Joan Didion on a panel at the Citizen Jane Film Festival, October 26-29th in Columbia, Missouri. Additionally, Laura can be seen in the film, The Tree currently on the festival circuit. It premiered in Vail and won Best Feature in Lyons International Film Festival, CO; the Critics Choice award at the Iowa Independent Film Festival; the Audience Choice: Kansas City Film Festival; Audience Favorite: Knoxville Film Festival; and will be at St. Louis International and Heartland Film Festival among others upcoming. The cinematographer for The Tree is KU alum Michael Lopez, ’06.

World Premiere: The Vail Film Festival
Best Feature Film: Lyons International Film Festival (Lyons, Colorado)
Critics Choice Award: Iowa Independent Film Festival (Mason City, Iowa)
Audience Choice: Kansas City Film Festival
Audience Favorite: Knoxville Film Festival
**Out & About**

Professor's 2013 satirical film screened at Liberty Hall

Jokes about wanting to escape Earth to inhabit another planet are nothing new, but the motivations behind them are. In the film *Destination: Planet Negro!,* a time-travel film based on the 1950s films *Destination Moon* and *Rocketship X-M* Earth's people do exactly that. *Destination: Planet Negro!* was screened in September at Liberty Hall.

Kevin Willmott, a professor of film and media studies at the University, wrote, directed and starred in the satirical science fiction film in 2013.

“I've always liked science fiction films that had a social point of view like *Planet of the Apes* and *The Twilight Zone,*” Willmott said.

This movie is set in 1939, as African-American leaders look at the imminent problem of segregation. Their solution is to build a rocket ship and inhabit Mars. On the way to Mars, they travel to the future by mistake. In the scenes to follow, their adventure criticizes America and its culture.

“When President Obama was elected, I really wanted to tell a story that showed how far African Americans have come and how far we still need to go,” he said.

John McCluskey, an assistant technical director of film and media studies at the University, plays Mama Mau-Mau, a white rapper in *Destination: Planet Negro!*

McCluskey, also known by his rap persona Johnny Quest, has been a part of the hip-hop community on a local and national level since the late 1990s, so he said this role was an easy transition for him.

McCluskey's character helps bring some comedy into the film by teaching the time travelers how to fit in.

“The joke of my character in particular is that when they come into the future, modern day Kansas City, I, as a white rapper, am teaching them how to be black in the modern sense,” he said.

McCluskey said that Willmott was trying to touch on social issues that happened four to five years ago. He said that there have been more outward demonstrations of racism in the United States and that the divide in this country has gotten more prominent.

“I think what [Willmott] wants people to realize is that even post-Jim Crow, post-Civil Rights Movement, it is still very difficult for black people in America,” McCluskey said. “In a sense, I think it's gotten worse since Trump has been elected.”

Copied from the *University Daily Kansan.*

HAWKS TO WATCH  Barry St. John (BGS, 2004) was a member of the ground-breaking visual effects team for Oscar winner The Jungle Book, so there’s that. He uses his KU Film degree every day as a visual effects producer at Disney. During his career, Barry has worked at the cutting edge of film technology, contributing his many talents to some of Hollywood’s biggest blockbusters, including Men in Black 3, Fast and Furious 7, The Jungle Book, and The Great Gatsby.

Jason Badgett (FMS BGS 2010) is directing Not My Fathers Child, a documentary surrounding Nate Phelps, the son of Fred Phelps, the infamous “God Hates Fags” preacher at the Westboro Baptist Church. The documentary encapsulates what it was like growing up under such scrutiny, and what it was like for Nate to leave his family cult on his 18th birthday. Badgett and Nate Phelps were in Lawrence on September 7 to speak about the film. Phelps talked about the abuse that occurred in his father’s household and how he is now speaking out against his family’s message and is working as an activist for the LGBTQ+ community. Nate’s story has inspired a lot of hope in people who can relate to feeling like the world hates them simply because of who they are.

“Never tell yourself that something is unreachable. It is all about believing in yourself and aspiring to hit the goals you set. Luckily I did learn this at a young age, and have practiced it at each step of my career.”
- Barry St. John
Alumni News

SUA and the Kansas Union debuted the Roll20 Esports Lounge

Nolan T. Jones (TH&F BGS 2007), one of the three founders of Roll20, the world largest tabletop gaming platform, was in town for the cutting of the ribbon ceremony to open the gaming space. Roll20 is a company dedicated to enabling gamers to unite across any distance via easy-to-use gaming tools. They strive to lessen the technical burden on the participants, facilitate the formation of new gaming groups, and to make barriers to entry as few as possible when gathering around a table for camaraderie.

The Roll20 Esports Lounge is now available in the union. The space features flat screen TVs, console gaming to reserve (PlayStation 4, Wii, N64, and 3 Xbox 360s), computer stations for PC gaming, and board games to rent as well. Student Union Activities’ new Tech and Games committee will host events in the space throughout the school year. Roll20 Esports Lounge, located on level 1 of the Kansas Union, has been made possible in partnership between the Kansas Union, SUA, and Roll20. To reserve a console or board game, visit the Kansas Union Welcome Desk on level 4 of the Kansas Union, 11a.m.-7p.m., Monday-Friday. KUID is required for use. To allow groups to use the technology and gaming resources, the space is only able to reserve in partnership with SUA, for intended gaming usage, after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

Recent FMS graduate Savannah Rodgers (FMS BGS 2017) took home a Director’s Choice Award for Best University Film for her film Politically Correct as well as Best Short Documentary for Out Here In Kansas at the Austin Revolution Film Festival.
Alumni News

Paul Shoulberg (TH&F BA, 2004), a screenwriter and director from Lawrence, screened his first feature-length film at Liberty Hall on September 14.

The Good Catholic follows a priest named Daniel, played by Shoulberg’s best friend Zachary Spicer, who believes that he has his whole life figured out. But when he comes across a young woman during a confession, all of that is thrown out of the window.

“My father was a priest and my mother was a nun. They met at the church and they left together,” Shoulberg said. “After my father passed away, I became more curious about him and their story in general. It led me to directing a script inspired by that story.”

A question and answer session with Shoulberg and University film professor Kevin Willmott will follow the screening. Shoulberg said that the inspiration for the film came from his late father and his life before and after meeting his mother. After the first read-through, Spicer believed that the script was the best thing Shoulberg had ever written. Spicer said he wanted to be a part of it in any way that he could.

“[Daniel] very much enjoys the life that he has created for himself in this small, college town in the small rectory of this Catholic Church,” Spicer said. “He seems to have everything figured out. All of that is disrupted when he meets this young woman in confession one evening.”

Shoulberg and Spicer said it was easy to work with one another. Both said that the experience provided a lot for them to learn from and use in the future. Shoulberg said that there was a mix of crewmembers who had never worked on a feature-length film before and seasoned professionals.

“It was an environment where learning was happening and where we were able to share ideas in a very productive way, which is not always the case on bigger sets,” Shoulberg said. “Then the cast, having some heavy hitters like Danny Glover and John C. McGinley was such an honor for me. There was never a moment that I got used to it.”

Spicer said that it was nice to work with so many friends on such a great project. From initially getting the film started to the actual production, he believed that the whole environment was the best that one could ask for.

“He was thinking of making a Kickstarter and raising all of the money for the film there,” Spicer said. “I said ‘What if we were crazy and started our own production company?’ And that’s what happened.”

Having the movie premiere in Lawrence at Liberty Hall is an honor, Shoulberg said. Before and during his time at the University, he had promised himself that he would try to get a movie of his own showcased there.

“Liberty Hall is where I developed my love for independent films,” Shoulberg said. “Even before I was in film school at KU, I remember how my friend, who was a filmmaker, and I would go see movies at Liberty Hall all the time. Back then I had the thought that it would be great to have something of mine play here. I feel very lucky to now have that opportunity.”

Along with following through on the promise he made to himself, Shoulberg wanted to make a film with elements that were similar to those that made him fall in love with the art form in the first place. He said he hopes to express a personal story and allow the audience to connect to it as well.

“This movie is for anyone who wants to go into a movie theater, or watch it at home, and see a story about humans,” Shoulberg said. “Real people with real emotions, real questions being asked in this film. This is something that they can connect to personally and think about for a little bit.”

Copied from the University Daily Kansan. http://www.kansan.com/arts_and_culture/lawrence-filmmaker-reflects-on-his-father-s-life-in-first/article_ee50d100-998f-11e7-a29f-733ca0223144.html#tncms-source=article-nav-next
October 2017

Academic Calendar

October 14 – Deadline for Credit/No Credit
October 14 - First Day of Fall Break
October 17 - Last Day of Fall Break

Equipment Check-in:  10:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
Equipment Check-out:  1:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Sign-up to check-out equipment in the binder on the counter in 230 Summerfield.

Sign-up for editing rooms by signing the edit room schedule posted on the editing room door (418b Summerfield). Pick up the key in the FMS office (230 Summerfield).

Check with your instructor or John McCluskey, Assistant Technical Director, for more information.

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Are you a Film & Media Studies (or Theatre & Film) alum? We’d love to hear from you. Click https://film.ku.edu/alumni-submissions to update your information with us, so we can add you to the impressive ranks of our alumni.

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