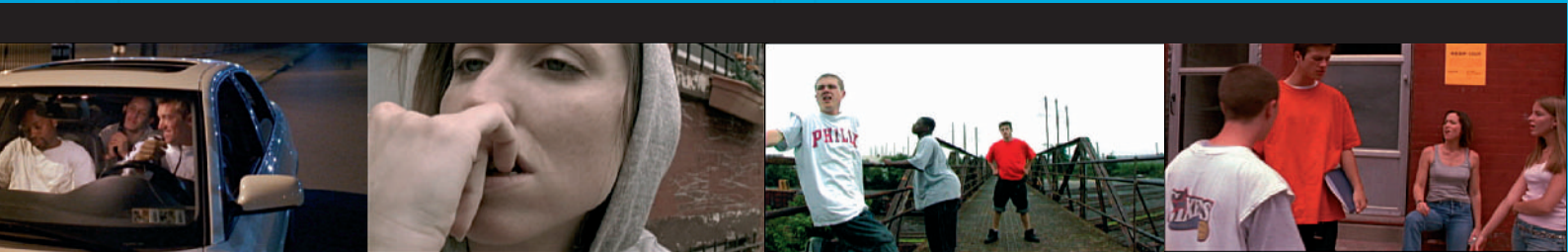


Discipline and risk-taking pay off with award-winning student film

In May of 1998, in an attempt to curb the traffic of illicit drugs, Philadelphia's 25th Police District barricaded an entire inner city neighborhood. In 2005, Temple University film professor Eugene Martin and his students filmed a dramatization of that event that has garnered attention across the industry.

The first phase of the project, titled **Angel Brothers**, is a 20-minute narrative directed and shot by Temple University film

Martin also notes that the students began to take risks, particularly after the first day of shooting. One day in late afternoon, for example, a rainstorm passed through. "I like to shoot at magic hour," Martin recalls, "but with the rain, it looked like the day was going to end. Then suddenly the rain cleared and there was a cut of sunlight on the campus." At that point, he continues, his students did something one isn't supposed to do—they chose to shoot into the sun. "They shot the scene



students from a script that Martin wrote. The five-day shoot took place on the University campus. It was processed at NFL Films at 16:9 standard definition, and edited on an Avid Xpress Pro at Temple, then output to a DigiBeta master.

From the start, Martin says, he knew he wanted to do the project on film. He chose Kodak VISION2 500T Super 16mm 7218 color film. "**Angel Brothers** is a hard-hitting story," he says. "It had to be very dramatic and emotional with a lot of close-ups." Martin knew film would capture the requisite emotional range while helping his students learn valuable lessons about the aesthetic of making movies. "I try to convey that my students are designers, in the modern sense of the term," Martin says. "The project has to have an overall aesthetic, a point of view. I knew that using film would help teach my students how to get a particular look."

Using film also enabled the students to attract a strong group of actors, including Sean Nelson (**The Wood, The Corner, Fresh**) and Ryan Carmody (**Edge City, Cold Case**).

As a teacher, Martin also believes that shooting film imposes discipline on his students, helping him to impart key lessons about the craft. "With film, you need to be well-prepared before you begin to shoot, because once you're in the cutting room, you've got what you've got. Using film for this project helped my students understand this lesson. It's an important learning process because the best films are those that have been thoughtfully planned. It makes my students better filmmakers."

That discipline also extended to the actors, who knew the students would have to capture the scenes in only one or two takes. "The actors know you're arcing toward the first two takes, so they are very focused."

This isn't to say that the students didn't improvise as they went along. Quite the contrary, Martin says, "because we handled this as a field project, there was a lot of dynamic problem-solving."

from multiple viewpoints as the sun was going down," he said, "and we ended up with a very powerful scene because of the risks they took."

"The results were stunning," he adds. "When we put it in the telecine, everyone just jumped out of their seats and said 'look at that!'"

It wasn't only the students who recognized the achievement. A 14-minute work-in-progress version of **Angel Brothers** was screened at the University's Diamond Screen Festival and then included in a touring package featuring the best entries from the event. Among the people who eventually saw that trailer was Dan O'Meara, whose production credits include **Jailbait**, and casting director Susan Shopmaker (**Mean Girls**). Both O'Meara and Shopmaker have since signed on to help with the full-length version of the film. The project was also one of 10 US officially selected entries featured in the "No Borders" Independent Feature Market section.

The film also garnered the 2004 Kodak Faculty Scholar award for Martin, who welcomed the award's \$5,000 production grant. The money will help him move forward with the full-length version, resulting in more opportunities for his students. "This project has more legs than anything I've ever done. There's footage from the project all over the building and across three departments. We've used footage for our editing classes, intro to production classes and even senior projects and my directing courses. We've also put together another version of the film for our local PBS station, WHYY-TV12."

"A full-length version will also give the students a broader audience for their work," he adds. "It will allow the students' voices to reach an international audience."

"There is so much life to this movie," Martin says. "It's an incredibly vibrant piece. The approach we took, including using film, truly challenged the students, but as a result, the students truly pushed themselves as filmmakers—and it shows." ■