

Brooks Institute brings professionals to campus with Kodak 35mm Project

Imagine a student film project with some 50 crew members using the latest tools on a crane shot with three 35mm cameras rolling while industry professionals guide them. That's not a dream. It's a picture of what happened during the production of *Love's Devotion Forever* at Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California.

"The difference between this and a normal student film is night versus day," says Jesse Hagy, the Brooks Institute senior who directed the film. "Most student films are lucky to have a dozen on the crew, and you never have enough money to do what you want."

The production was supported by the Kodak 35mm Project. Each year, a select number of schools receive a Kodak film grant in support of a 35mm production that typically involves large student crews working hand-in-hand with professional mentors.

Faculty sponsor Tracy Trotter, a cinematographer who has taught at Brooks for the past five years, used the Kodak grant as a springboard to gain more industry involvement.

"I wanted to create some excitement not just within the school, but among people I know in the industry," he says. "The school contributes by bringing in professionals in every major craft to mentor the students for a few days. It's a real shoot with real talent. The 35mm Project closes the gap between education and industry."

This year's professional mentors included producer Steve Traxler (*Out of Time*), cinematographer Chuck Minsky, ASC (*The Producers*), director Perry Lang (*Everwood*), and electrician/visual effects mentor Devik Wiener (*Honey I Blew Up the Kid*). The film was cast with professional talent by Linda Lowye (*Grey's Anatomy*).

Other industry sponsors included Mole-Richardson, Chapman Cranes, Clairmont Camera, FotoKem, J.L. Fisher, Dolby, Otto Nemenz, Mix Magic, NT Audio, and TNT Opticals.

Some 150 students applied for 35 crew positions. "It's a real competition," says Trotter, "and when they get the position, they really learn from the professional mentors. The students coming out of the project are the ones best prepared to work in the industry."

Love's Devotion Forever was written by student Jessica Kalin. It's a dark, romantic comedy about a screenwriter known for making dark, brooding films. But, when she falls in love with a handsome model who is her opposite in every way, she gets writers' block and can only script sappy, romantic comedies.

Hagy and director of photography Matt Walla, another Brooks student, agreed on a straightforward, colorful look for most of the film. Walla used KODAK VISION2 500T 5218 film for interior scenes. "I love 5218 for its versatility and true colors in a variety of lighting," says Walla. "It also gives me a lot of latitude."

Walla chose KODAK VISION2 50D 5201 film for daylight exteriors. While Walla's crew had access to a full lighting truck throughout the production, courtesy of Bullet Grip and Mole-Richardson, he and Kalin discovered a filmmaking truism: gremlins are everywhere.

"We had a lot of roadblocks along the way, so I found myself having to adapt to the situation a lot of the time," Walla

recalls. "We shot one scene set in the interior of a radio station. Thirty minutes before we were going to shoot, the power went out. I ended up lighting that entire scene in a few minutes using nothing but battery-powered light panels." The light level was below T1.4, so the scene was nearly a half stop underexposed. "But, it looks stunning," says Trotter. "The film really held up."

Walla used an ARRI 535B camera with a selection of Zeiss Superspeed prime

lenses and a Zeiss 10:1 zoom for the crane shots. He slightly underexposed 5218 film at EI 400 and had it processed normally at FotoKem in Hollywood. LaserPacific, a Kodak company, did the telecine.

"I've just found that that little extra bit of exposure gives me a brighter look, which worked well for this project," he says.

The project was great preparation for ultimately working on a professional set, Hagy adds. "We were in a professional environment and forced to make a lot of decisions we might not have faced on other student productions," he comments. "Our mentors were able to help us think things through and answer our questions. It was the best of both worlds."

Love's Devotion Forever was in post-production at print time. The first Brooks project produced with a Kodak 35mm Project grant, *Help Wanted*, received a CINE Golden Eagle Award for outstanding student filmmaking. Other schools that have made films with assistance from the project include San Diego State University, University of Arizona, Zaki Gordon Institute (Sedona, Ariz.), Scottsdale Community College, American Film Institute, California State University Northridge and California State Long Beach. ■



L to R Executive producer/instructor Tracy Trotter of Brooks Institute, with his wife and assistant director mentor Judy Trotter on *Love's Devotion Forever*.