

FILM FESTIVAL RESPONSE #1

Your name and class: Sharad “Sasha” Vemalanathan, Survey of Art and Theatre II

Panel attended: “Show Me the Money: How to Fund and Finance Your Film”

Day and time: 2pm Wednesday, October 28th.

This specific panel instantly jumped through the page upon my initial research as it delved into one of the primary reasons as to why I originally moved to the United States. Through my background experience, having worked in both Malaysia and the United Kingdom in the entertainment industry, I eventually grew weary with the lack of opportunities provided as production funding and subsequent distribution was a particularly blasé market; unless you were employed by conglomerates such as the BBC, ITV, or Astro, gaining finances would be a near unmanageable task; even then, creative input was exasperatingly narrow unless you had the ear(s) of the more influential members of said corporations.

With growing Internet programs such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo providing artists with a platform to deliver their craft was the first real introduction I was given when arriving to SCAD – having never heard of such programs offered previously, I was instantly gratified that leaving my prior world behind was a road well taken. Having an opportunity to glimpse into the minds of Adam Leipzig, Peter Stathopoulos, Judy Cairo, and Mia Bruno was an astonishing experience: all four, particularly Judy and Mia, accentuated my beliefs.

All four were polite, articulate, and refreshing simply told us what we already knew: to use your common sense and never to be afraid to communicate. Such administrative and legal matters were touched upon, however, a greater emphasis was placed upon remembering how to financially structure a project in its pre-production phase and to be in constant communication with members of your team. This certainly made several members of the audience to chuckle as something as simple as that has been a bane of many a college student’s forays into the entertainment industry.

This was expanded upon as I unexpectedly entered a private conversation with both Judy and Mia following the panel as both women kindly chatted with me when I was smoking a cigarette outside. I suppose whilst smoking will eventually kill you, it certainly does provide unique one-on-one experiences with award-winning actors and producers: a fair trade, if you ask me.

Both producers laughed when I explained how despite how every team I have joined for a short film purpose have agreed to be in constant communication with one another in a respectful work environment, only once was that ever the case with the exemption being a professional advertisement I wrote and produced for the Chatham County Sheriff’s Department during my Sophomore Year.

Judy kindly, but firmly, explained that as an aspiring writer and producer, I had to not worry about being “an asshole”. She went on to add that while fostering a friendly and motivational environment was key, that without establishing respect and authority, members would inevitably begin to lose their focus – every team, she maintained, needed a shepherd and every once in a while, that shepherd needed to be “an asshole”. Judy cackled as I sheepishly admitted that I had once yelled at a SCAD professor to “f*ck off” as he was provokingly disrespectful to my practicum team in front of dozens of students and other personnel (which I would NEVER encourage others to repeat), only to later discover that following this exchange, he eventually became more courteous towards future production teams. Judy claimed it was a brave decision but extremely risky, accentuating that I should be more careful in picking fights I know that I can definitely win.

Mia, a producer of a marketing and distributing company, solidified every suspicion I had: to never be afraid to communicate. People, especially inexperienced individuals attempting to break into the industry, often live in fear and are worried about upsetting others which immediately sets them up to fail. She explained to always be talking to one another in any form, via email or text messaging. This repeatedly back and forth would not only foster a similar work ethic with those you are liaising with, but also, it protects you should anything go amiss. Common sense dictates that you always have to be moving forward but in order to do so, you couldn't be afraid of talking to others.

In conclusion, this panel made a remarkable impression on me as not only were my fears allayed about moving to the United States but that I also got to let my mask down and speak with the panelists in a colloquial manner that few others got to share. A wonderful experience!