

FILM FESTIVAL RESPONSE #2

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

Panel attended: “Alumni Panel”

Day and time: 4pm Friday, October 30th.

One of the primary reasons I was initially drawn to the Savannah College of Art and Design (the main being the Dramatic Writing program) is the concept that students from various backgrounds and specialties would grow over the next four years, often collaborating with one another to provide a unique effort that illustrated individual strengths. Whilst the college often preaches about alumni who have gone on to achieve considerable landmarks in their careers, having a chance to speak with them in person was an opportunity to not only network but to provide something greater: to remind ourselves that despite our lows and worries regarding our futures, these men and women are living testimonies that we can accomplish our goals.

The four selected alumni were not in my specific field, but it again solidified the argument of how each discipline was responsible to form a team: Christopher Minard being an art director, Marc Casey serves as a cameraman, Adison Allen supervisors post-production, and Lauren Driskill costumes for famed television show “The Walking Dead”. Being a writer, along with attempting to try my hand as a producer, I have continually been working with individuals from such disciplines and have come to respect how crucial such aspects are to form a successful product.

All four alumni members discussed the usual motifs - staying positive, to network, and shared memories whilst learning their crafts at SCAD. One aspect I noted with some hilarity was the need for communicating with team members during a project; a particular highlight I went into considerable depth in my previous paper as that, to this very day, has proven to be a recipe for disaster.

I went to the panel with a friend who is a costume designer major, and naturally we attempted to speak with Ms. Driskill following the event. Lauren was very kind and approachable, not holding back to discuss her day-to-day responsibilities working on set for

“The Walking Dead” and the three of us shared a good laugh when I told her the story of how I met actor Norman Reedus the year before: we shared a cigarette in the parking lot by Crites Hall, spoke about bars and music, and I left without ever mentioning I knew that he was and not asking for a picture or autograph. I was shocked to hear to hear that Lauren, who often had to fit Mr. Reedus, that he actually joked with her about the same story and remembered me.

Following the laughter, the realization that struck me finally sunk in: my experience with celebrities, be it through the Savannah Film Festival or through a random occurrence, has taught me how to behave and conduct myself to not only keep them relaxed but to also leave behind a positive impression. This was easily the strongest part that I took away from the panel: how to act around others. I myself have a strong, perhaps overtly so, personality that can at times affect people in a negative way: I have no qualms about swearing, being physically affectionate, and hilariously being described by my American mates as “a good ol’ boy” - various professors have often joked that I would have been a leading character from the famed classic comedy film “Animal House”, but often preach to me in private that I need to be a more team player.

This has never rung more truer words as having worked professionally as a writer for film and television prior to coming to SCAD, my personality and sense of humor made me popular amongst colleagues in the office but there were moments that it caused some disdain as I was invited to meetings and formal events that even my immediate bosses were not privy to.

The alumni panel reassured me that it was a positive that I took the proverbial leap to come to America to continue my education at SCAD, witnessing individuals who went through a similar upbringing as I currently am doing so enjoying the fruit of their hard work and embarking on careers that they genuinely love doing. I spoke to all four alumni members individually following the event and we exchanged contact details, and it provided a wonderful sense of comradery knowing that we all are striving to make something out of nothing. If there is one thing I would take away from this experience is that opportunities are not given, but platforms for success are laid for someone to take. Be aggressive. Be polite. Communicate. Don't be an idiot. But most importantly, have fun.