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STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: THE TURN OUT & INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING IN OHIO

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Written by Andrea Pierson



All photos courtesy of Kramer Ditty, MFA first-year student.

Former COFA, Division of Film professor Pearl Gluck had a successful summer production of her feature *The Turn Out*. Many

graduate students in the MFA program comprised the muscles of the crew, gaining valuable experiences and fond memories from the twenty-day shoot—from live ammunitions on set, to a full day cramped inside the hot cab of a truck, to filming in Glouster, Ohio and the week in humid West Virginia.

The Turn Out was conceived about a year and a half before a six to eight month research project was initiated by Gluck, which consisted of interviews with social workers and documentary research of the truck stop culture and atmosphere. To paraphrase MFA Thesis Candidate, Jorge Samson Blaires (D.I.T.): shooting on location at a truck stop was interesting in

that there was a documentary quality to the narrative film. It made the experience on-screen more authentic because the material in the script that we were shooting was happening right beside us. The food was also interesting.

For many students this was their first feature film. Jorge says that the best aspect of working on a feature film is networking. You meet a lot of new people and see how they work. About one-third of the people he met and worked with on *The Turn Out* are now crew for his own [thesis production](#) (principle photography is set for mid-November).

Second-year MFA student, Sam Stewart (2nd AD), enjoyed his first real producing gig and commented that the difference between working on a short versus a feature is twofold. First, since filmmaking is a “collective enterprise,” the more hours on set the more you bond with the cast/crew. Second and most important, the stakes are much higher. You need a solid crew of people you can depend on and labor and costs (especially food) are higher. Expectations are higher and you must meet these high standards for a



The Turn Out was the first production to use Ohio University's new Red, Scarlet Mysterium-X cameras.

quality film. Shorts can get away with a lot more—in a short, cast and crew may agree to work longer hours if production falls behind; a feature becomes tiresome and exhausting fast. Expectations for comfort and efficiency are higher and logistics are more detailed (parking and transportation, hotel accommodations, etc.) and the days are more intense.

MFA Thesis Candidate, Iryna Zhygaliuk (Wardrobe), adds that dedication, pre-production and continuity are more important. Iryna's job was essentially to take Gluck's ideas and research and maintain continuity across eleven story days. Keeping track of wardrobe continuity gets hectic with a twenty-day shoot and going back and forth between day and night shoots. She admits that she messed up quite a few times and even had a shirt come up missing. But the art department and other crew members were able to change scenes around and came up with ways to shoot around the mishaps. It all worked out. It's physically and mentally exhausting but you have to strive to maintain continuity.



Sam's advice is to “remember: it's just a movie. But never say that in front of the director,” he laughs. Just take a step back and relax.

For others, the ten days at a decadent truck stop in Parkersburg, West Virginia, two days in Glouster, Ohio and the remaining in the Athens area were an exercise in technique:

“The film was one of four productions I was on over the summer, but I was happy to have the opportunity to really start to display and hone my skills in lighting. Lighting design is one of my

favorite things to do on a film set and it was a pleasure to be able to walk on to set every day and know that is my job. It was my third feature film that I've worked on, but this definitely was an experience to remember." Matt Herbertz, Gaffer, MFA second-year student

"I was DP on the set with fellow classmate Stephen Blahut (a rare co-DP situation). I love working with Steve so this project was kind of a dream for us in some ways. He and I would also trade off between operating and focus pulling/first AC work. The shoot was arduous and stressful, but the crew made it all worth it. We bonded quickly and worked exceedingly well together. I made a lot of new friends on this project, which is always great in this industry." Jon Coy, Director of Photography, MFA Thesis Candidate

OHIO UNIVERSITY STUDENT CREW:

- Stephen Blahut, MFA Thesis Candidate – Director of Photography
- Jon Coy, MFA Thesis Candidate – Director of Photography
- Michael Greene, MFA, 2014 – Assistant Director
- Sam Stewart, MFA second-year student – 2nd Assistant Director
- Dylan Dyer, MFA first-year student – Assistant Camera
- Matt Herbertz, MFA second-year student – Gaffer
- Mladan "MJ" Jurkovic, MFA Thesis Candidate – Location Sound Mixer/Recordist
- Jorge Samson Blaires, MFA Thesis Candidate – Digital Imaging Technician
- Iryna Zhygaliuk, MFA Thesis Candidate – Wardrobe
- Kramer Ditty, MFA first-year student - Grip
- Tom Wade, HTC second-year student - Art Department PA



Stephen Blahut, MFA Thesis Candidate

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