

QUICK TAKES

A biannual newsletter from the Department of Film & Media Arts at the University of Utah



overstatement to say that this is one of the most consequential developments in the history of our Department. It's also a sign of things to come.

You'll also read about an important step forward in our longstanding relationship with the Slamdance Film Festival that saw us host the festival's "Unstoppable" program on campus. This is a series of films both made and programmed by filmmakers with disabilities.

Like Slamdance, we in the Department of Film & Media Arts believe that film is for everyone. Accessibility has long been one of our values. Even as the Department has grown in size and reputation, we have continued to make our introductory courses available to every student on campus. Our faculty are currently hard at work on some innovative updates to our curriculum that will only enhance the appeal of

our classes. I look forward to sharing more about this in future newsletters.

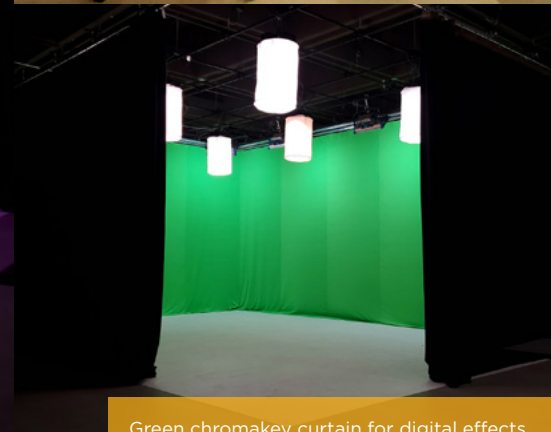
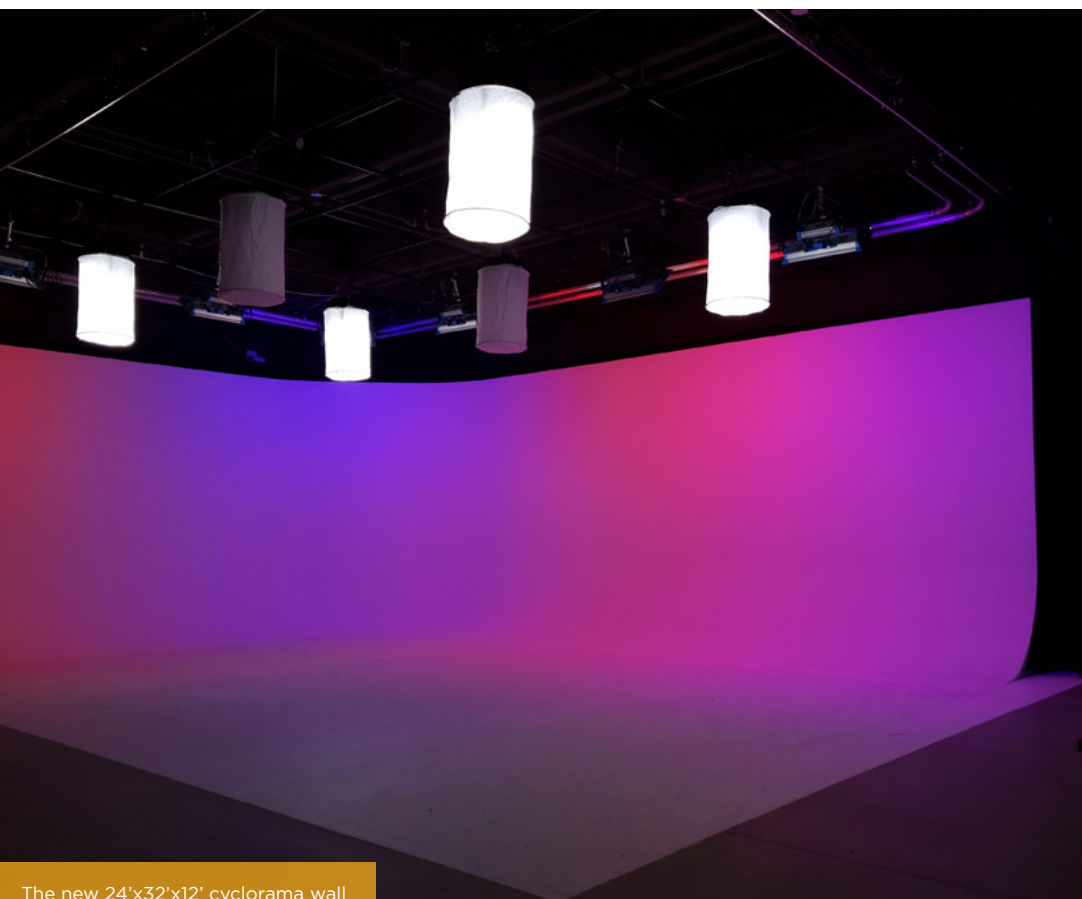
As I write this, we are wrapping up a search for a new faculty member with expertise in virtual and augmented reality media production, and will shortly begin a search for a postgraduate fellow in documentary production. We'll introduce you to these new people in the next issue of Quick Takes.

Andrew Patrick Nelson
Chair, Department of Film & Media Arts

FROM THE CHAIR

Another newsletter, another update about our ongoing renovation of the Film & Media Arts Building.

In these pages you'll read about our new Film Production Studio, which opened in the fall of 2022. It's not an



The new 24'x32'x12' cyclorama wall

Green chromakey curtain for digital effects

FILM STUDIO

Last semester, Film & Media Arts students began to reap the rewards of years of the Department's hard work as they stepped into the newly finished Film Production Studio on the top floor of the Film & Media Arts Building. "The completion of the studio is the most significant step to date in our comprehensive renovation of the Film & Media Arts Building," said Professor Andrew Patrick Nelson, Chair of the Department.

The studio, which had been in the works for many years, is part classroom space and part production space. The production side features a 24'x32'x12' high cyclorama wall that is lit with 6 ARRI SkyPanel lights and

6 Mole-Richardson Vari-Space lights. Surrounding the cyclorama wall are black curtains that can create a black box, as well as a green chromakey curtain for use with digital effects, making the space highly versatile. On the classroom side, there is a screening space with a 135" screen, a 4K UHD laser DLP projector, and Dolby 7.1 surround sound on Polk speakers. All of the tables and chairs are on wheels and can nest, again allowing for ultimate versatility.

The studio is for students, first and foremost, and with many Film & Media Arts classes taking place in the space, students get the opportunity to work in an industry-level facility on a daily basis. "This is the type of professional production space that, for most of our

Department's history, students would experience only after they'd graduated and moved to Los Angeles for work. Now they're in it their first semesters on campus."

"It was a real joy and honor of mine to design and realize the cyclorama studio and its classroom," said Equipment and Facilities Manager, Jen Humphreys. She added that the new studio emphasized the Department's "ongoing effort to provide our students with facilities that not only promote learning and student success, but those which our students and faculty can be proud of."

A SPACE IN PHASES



UNSTOPPABLE

The University of Utah Department of Film & Media Arts has a long and rich collaboration with Park City's Slamdance Film Festival, the premier film festival "by filmmakers, for filmmakers," dedicated to fostering a community for independent emerging artists. And this year, the relationship became even deeper.

In January the Department of Film & Media Arts presented the festival's first in-person Unstoppable Program, a showcase of new films by creators with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Launched in 2021 and founded by Juliet Romeo, Asha Chai-Chang, Gabriel Cordell, Chris Furbee, Steve Way, Peter Baxter and Taylor Miller, the Unstoppable program has been a key launching point for filmmakers with disabilities, including Doug Roland (2021) whose Unstoppable short film "Feeling Through" was nominated for an Academy Award.

"Unstoppable is excited and grateful for this collaboration with the University of Utah because it allows for a safe space for disabled filmmakers, and an opportunity to bridge the gap between accessibility and film," said Unstoppable programmer and co-founder Juliet Romeo. "This is a beautiful first step to creating real change in how films are made and consumed, and we are proud to be a part of it."

The feeling of excitement is reciprocal. "We were thrilled to welcome

Slamdance back to campus and to host this pathbreaking program of films," said Andrew Patrick Nelson, Chair of the Department of Film & Media Arts. "Film & Media Arts is one of the most diverse and inclusive departments at the University of Utah, and we share Slamdance's commitment to empowering people from all backgrounds to tell their own stories through moving images."

The lineup for the 2023 Unstoppable program included feature films and shorts of various genres. The three-day event included screenings, filmmaker panels, and Q&As which were all free and open to the public. The program marked a return to the University of Utah campus, which hosted Slamdance's first ever festival in 1995, and is a testament to the successful ongoing partnership between the two organizations.

Unstoppable was presented by the Department of Film & Media Arts and held at the Student Union Theater. "2023 represents a new era for the festival, one that integrates online and in-person events to create a more inclusive festival experience. With our in-person showcase of Unstoppable for creators with visible and non-visible disabilities and the great support of the University of Utah, we felt it was essential to create a free event for the public and make Slamdance as accessible as possible," stated Lily Yasuda, Festival Manager and Michael Morin, Festival Producer.



Matt Maxey, EP of Feature Doc SIGN THE SHOW



Queen Moorea Howsen in the Student Union



Q & A after Unstoppable Shorts Block, Student Union Theater

FACULTY UPDATES

Sarah Sinwell has had publications in *Flow: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture*, *Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment Media*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, and the book *Ryan Murphy's Queer America*, among others.

Also Sisters **Miriam and Sonia Albert-Sobrin** have screened their short film "FACE NOT RECOGNIZED. TRY AGAIN" at 20 festivals, in 15 countries worldwide, and their short film "AURA" has screened at 11 festivals. "FACE NOT RECOGNIZED" won Best Editing at the SPASM festival in Montreal, Canada.

Trent Harris' *Beaver Trilogy* screened at the Winnipeg Communique and New York's Le Cinema, and will soon screen at the Night Hawk in Brooklyn, NY. Locally, his films *Rubin and Ed*, *Echo People*, and *Plan 10 From Outer Space* screened at Broadway Centre Cinemas.

Emelie Mahdavian has successfully returned from a trip to Antarctica, where she was filming her upcoming project *Untitled Thwaites Film*, which has received funding from Catapult Film Fund.



The Also Sisters' *FACE NOT RECOGNIZED. TRY AGAIN*

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

Beth Kearsley ('21) was an Additional Editor and Associate Producer on the 2023 Sundance film *Plan C*. She is also a recipient of the 2022-23 Karen Schmeer Editing Fellowship.

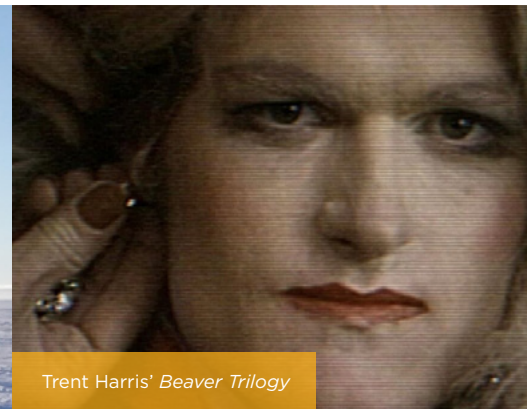
Jerry Shandy ('99) is a working writer in Los Angeles. Most recently, he was a writer on CW's *Batwoman*.

Connor Rickman's ('12) film *The Whole Lot* premiered at 2022 Philadelphia Independent Film Festival.

Dana Ware (MFA '19) is currently working as Creative Director at The VOID, developing experiences that combine virtual and physical realities. She also serves as a VRDC Summit Advisor for The Game Developers Conference.



Emelie Mahdavian and John Sutter's *Untitled Thwaites Film*



Trent Harris' *Beaver Trilogy*

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

SEND YOUR UPDATE TO
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