

LESSONS IN

# Filmmaking



## Students screened short films at the SLO International Film Festival

During the 23rd SLO International Film Festival last March, a crowd of more than 100 people packed into the Mission Cinemas in downtown San Luis Obispo to see a screening of seven new short films.

The films were written, produced and directed by Cal Poly students over the winter quarter as a collaboration between two classes, ISLA 341: Cinematic Process, which is taught by award-winning film editor and screenwriter Randi Barros; and Art 483: Digital Video II, which is taught by Professor Jim Werner. Ranging from heartwarming to bone chilling, the students' short films convey stories of self-discovery, sibling rivalry, inescapable danger and humor shared between friends.

History senior Cooper Peltz wrote "Kick the Dickens," a film that chronicles the day a reclusive man must leave his house to respond to a letter about winning a large sum of money. English senior Karley Kemble handled most of the scheduling and communicating with the actors as the executive producer. Alyssa Doughty, also an English major, was the associate producer, and art major Jacob Izzo was the cinematographer and director. With only four people on the team, each member took on several other roles as well. One of them would have to jump in if they needed a boom microphone held, a light adjusted or an extra in a scene.

"At first, we weren't all that comfortable working with each other, but we had to learn to communicate," said Doughty. "By the end, we had a shorthand with each other, and we all spoke up and shared our opinions."

They also realized the value of preparation. "We learned the hard way how important it is to have a shot list," said Peltz. "The first shoot was hectic. It took a lot longer than we expected," added Kemble. The team adjusted their approach, and they had a



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— Alyssa Doughty

**Opposite page:** Actress Austine De Los Santos with director Cecilia Seiter on the set of "Last Call," a short about a final conversation between a former couple.

**Top:** Jacob Izzo, with camera, and Cooper Peltz film a scene with "Kick the Dickens" actor John Marrs.

plan the next time they were on set. "It felt really good that day," said Doughty. "It felt like we were actually going to be able to pull this off."

Knowing their film would be shown at the SLO International Film Festival motivated the filmmakers to work even harder. "It made it more stressful, but it was also more exciting to know that more than just the students in our class would see the final product," said Kemble.

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Barros credits the quality of the films to the interdisciplinary collaboration. Each team had students who knew how to develop stories in addition to students who knew how to handle the camera and the more technical aspects of filming.

Like many students in the two classes, Doughty, Kemble and Peltz are working toward minors in media arts, society and technology. Kemble said her project management and communication skills were strengthened through this experience, and she would consider taking a job as a production assistant on a film in the future. "It definitely gave me a greater appreciation for all the work that goes into filmmaking!"