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Iron Filmmaker: A Tale of Two Films

By Cathy Tyson



Campolindo team JOLAZ, Oles Bober seated, from left Lucas Silva, Zach Foxworthy and Jonathan Rowland. Ailan Evans not pictured. Photos C. Tyson

Campolindo teacher Justin Seligman

Right after the Saturday morning briefing October 27 at the Rheem Theatre, five Campolindo High School students huddled together in the parking lot, already agreeing to construct a psychological thriller. Team JOLAZ – the name comprised from the first initials of Jonathan Rowland, Oles Bober, Lucas Silva, Ailan Evans and Zach Foxworthy – is one of 23 teams competing this year in the Iron Filmmaker contest, one of the components of the California Independent Film Festival. The teams had 24 hours to make a three-minute-maximum length film using this year's genre and theme – horror and trick-or-treat – announced at the very last minute of the mandatory filmmaker briefing.

"Show us some creativity – that's what we're looking for," said Iron Filmmaker organizer Adam Reeves, owner of event sponsor ITB Designs, as he briefed the teams on what's acceptable and what's not. While clearly spelling out that he believes in free speech, Reeves cautioned against nudity, strong profanity, graphic violence and copyright infringement. With cash prizes for first, second and third place along with "best performance" and "audience favorite," these mostly young filmmakers were off and running with the clock ticking until their 10 a.m. deadline the next morning to turn in their finished films.

Team JOLAZ was ready to rumble inside Rowland's parent's garage in Moraga. By mid-day, the team was filming with some borrowed equipment from the video department at Campolindo, the group clearly familiar with shots, lighting and more, thanks to Campo teacher Justin Selig-

man's video production class. Rowland and Bober discussed whether to use an "over the shoulder shot" or "worm's eye view" of a pivotal coin toss that decided the fate of their two captured actors, Silva and Foxworthy. Evans played the faceless murderer.

Rowland explained, "As we film, we transfer the files and do a rough edit," with Bober looking for gaps and "continuity errors." Both have been serious about film since ninth grade; now that they are juniors, they've already toured some colleges that offer film programs. "I've been working with film since freshman year, and I'm really hooked," said Bober.

Armed with Rice Krispies Treats to snack on and fake blood from the drugstore, JOLAZ worked together, combining roughly 90 shots into the one-and-a-half-minute film.

Thirty minutes after midnight, team JOLAZ's finished product "Gambling Men" was in the can, or rather on the DVD, ready to turn in.

Another Moraga contestant, Stuart Creque – a business analyst/web developer by day who enjoys writing screenplays in his free time – calls his team "Creque's Alley" after family property in the Virgin Islands. It was easy to see the direction he took from this year's prompt, creating the very short film called "All Zombies' Eve."

The making of the film was almost all in the family. Creque credits his wife with the initial idea, inspired by "Night Gallery." Daughter Hannah played a zombie, and daughter Miriam Viess-Creque and her boyfriend Steven Brom played the householders who try to fend off a zombie invasion. Creque came up

with a funny, clever concept and did all the filming which started around 10 p.m. for full darkness effect and to allow plenty of time for costuming and zombie makeup; the crew wrapped up around 11:30 p.m. "The challenging part was editing; that took until 4:30 in the morning," said the elder Creque who filmed on an iPod4 and edited on his laptop.

The end result is only 45 seconds long. Viewers should pay attention lest they miss the cow brain in the film purchased at Lunardi's which Creque describes as "very effective."

You can see how it all turns out for team JOLAZ and Creque's Alley when all of the contestants' films are screened at 9 a.m. Saturday, November 10 at the Rheem Theatre.



Iron Filmmaker Stuart Creque and his daughter Hannah Creque who plays a zombie, photographed on Halloween. Photo C. Tyson

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Proposed Veterans' Memorial Garden at SMC to Honor War Vets and Families

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"This place was covered in knee-high ivy and was nicknamed 'the swamp' because it floods in winter. Alex and I cleared everything and removed dying trees, with the help of SMC's veterans; this was the first step of our project."

Saint Mary's College has many ties with the U.S. military – from those alumni who have served to its use as a pilot training school during the 1940s. Each side of the tall, four-sided narrow

tapering monument will hold a plaque commemorating the different affiliations. "One will recognize those students who have lost their lives serving our country; one will remind us of Saint Mary's past as a Navy Pre-Flight school during 1942-46; one will represent the families linked to the college who lost someone in a war; and the fourth will highlight the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) graduates," said Crowell.

Crowell and Dulwick are now engaged in the most crucial part of their project: fund raising. "SMC veterans and alumni have already expressed their interest and started contributing to the project," said Crowell. The students also contacted local service groups, and had no difficulty finding supporters.

One of the first was Moraga Kiwanis. "Graig Crossley, Barry Behr and I decided to support a project that we found worthwhile and appropriate," said veteran and Kiwanis member John Haffner. "We've met with the veteran's group on campus several times this year and Brother Glenn Bolton, their advisor. Max (Crowell) is scheduled, I believe, to talk to our Kiwanis Club in the near future."

The landscape architect who donated his time to design the project is equally enthusiastic. "My father is a veteran," said Steve Lambert of Garden Lights Landscape Design in Orinda. "This is one of the reasons I support this project. I've enjoyed meeting the two students on campus and designing a site that will match the college's character, will add to its beauty and will be meaningful." The stone patio will require the installation of a completely new drainage system, the planting of many new shrubs and trees, and will be low-maintenance.

"We are very grateful to the college for its decision to give us the 7,000-square-foot centrally-located area on campus," said Crowell. "The scenic patio that will be built here will remain a meaningful feature of the campus."

While the students are still far away from achieving their fundraising goal, Crowell – who is a senior this year – is undaunted. "I would love to see the garden finished by the time I graduate this spring," he said.

For more information about the project, visit www.stmarys-ca.edu/veterans-memorial-garden.

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