



YOUTH CULTURE

STUDYING AT THE LONDON FILM SCHOOL

Interview with Brian Dunnigan, a senior lecturer in Screenwriting at the London Film School, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. We asked him to give us an insight of the course he runs and the atmosphere in the school, located in an old warehouse in Covent Garden

Q: Mr Dunnigan, how do you teach screenwriting?

A: By hints, by offering clues, by giving people confidence, by showing them good examples of good and bad practice. But mainly by giving them practice in discussing other people's work and developing the skill of analysis, which can be applied to their work. Mainly you encourage people to write and give them feedback. You make them understand that screenwriting is very close to film making on the page. The more you know how a film works for the audience, the better screenwriter you will be. Also, in teaching you learn. I think the most important part of teaching is helping people discover for themselves.

Q: Are there some tips for writing a successful script?

A: I think the most important tip is having something to say, being passionate about a subject or a character. You are going to spend a long time on a project, so it

has to be the best you can do. If you are not interested in what you are writing, why should anybody else be?

Another tip is joining a writing group, doing a course for learning to meet deadlines and get feedback from other people. Screenwriting, like anything you do, comes from practice. Arnold Palmer, the great American golfer, said 'The more I practise, the luckier I get'.

Q: Someone said that 'less is more' is a golden rule...

A: 'Less is more', I guess, points to the idea of the jazz musician Miles Davis, where you don't need to fill all the spaces in.

A good script is elliptical, in other words there are gaps, not everything is stated.

The writer in the film should show just enough to make people curious and want them to stay around to find out what is going to happen next.



From the point of view of the audience, the gaps between the characters, the scenes, time and place, make them work on the connections.

So 'less is more' conveys the idea that you don't spell everything out, and that the characters don't say everything to each other.

Q: How does this rule work on the screen?

A: In cinema you can tell things just by people looking at each other, by movements, by looks and glances, by atmosphere, by the play of light, by the use of visual metaphors. By not making things obvious, because obvious is boring. So the only rule is to be interesting.

Q: Is the London Film School open to everybody?

A: Yes, and our students come from all around the world. However, the school requires presenting a portfolio.

Q: When can people apply?

A: We recruit three times a year: in September, in January and in May. On average there are between 25 and 30 students per class each term.

Q: Which courses does the London Film School run?

A: There are two post-graduates courses, an MA in Film Making and an MA in Screenwriting. The first one is the core course and has been running for fifteen years. It lasts two years, six terms in overall, and it also requires working in groups. Every term comprises a cycle of pre-production, production and post-production. Students have to make about 60 movies per term, from a three-minutes silent movie to a documentary.

Q: How do these groups work?

A: For instance, if in term one there are 30 people, then six groups of five, everyone writes a script for a three-minutes silent film. The group decides which is the best script and who is going to direct it, whilst everyone else plays a different part. Whether you end up by directing or editing, or being a camera person or even being a producer, if you have experience of all the different jobs in a film, you will be a better producer, camera person and so on.

You learn about films by making them and by having practical experience of all the jobs. These are the main principles of the course.

Q: Finally, what's your advice for those who are thin-

king of pursuing a career in film making?

A: It's a difficult career and there's a lot of money involved in it. So think twice, do your research, look at different courses, and if you can, visit the institution. We do conducted tours of the LFS every Thursday. What we offer is something very interesting and special. The LFS is a small and independent institution, the people are very knowledgeable, and there's a great atmosphere.

Ada Antonini



LONDON FILM SCHOOL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Minimum qualification for an application to be considered are a three year university degree or equivalent professional experience in a relevant area.

English language requirements:

Minimum TOEFL at grade 550

Minimum IELTS with a score of 6 and no element below 5.5

Minimum Cambridge Proficiency Grade C
Other evidence of spoken or written fluency

Spring Term (8th January 2007) Application

Deadline: 1st November 2006

Email: info@lfs.org.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7836 9642

Fax: +44 (0)20 7497 3718

Write to:

Admissions London Film School

24 Shelton Street

London WC2H 9UB - UK

Course forms:

www.lfs.org.uk/courses/downloads.php