Feature Story

PROJECT DU F.I.L.M. AND HAPPY F-ING VALENTINE’S DAY: ONE YEAR LATER

By Associate Professor Sheila Schroeder, Creator of Project DU F.I.L.M. and Co-writer of ‘Happy F-ing Valentine’s Day’

In 19 years as a University of Denver professor, I’ve never worked so hard, had so much fun, or felt like I made more of an impact than this past year. Collaborating with a dozen alumni, an equal number of students and over 30 community members, we created an award-winning short film, Happy F-ing Valentine’s Day, a comedy with heart. This was the first collaborative experiential filmmaking experience through Project DU F.I.L.M. (Film Initiative Linking Mentors).

Our alumni gave over 3,000 hours to the making of this film and subsequent mentoring hours. For example, our Director of Photography, Frazer Lockhart, hired students and fellow alumni to work throughout the state and overseas with him. Our Director/Editor, Jeremy Dehn, consulted with student filmmakers on their own narrative projects. Our Chief Gaffer, Aidan McCarthy, directly mentored one of our students on set learning the craft of lighting. Our Social Media Coordinator, Kayla Coburn has worked tirelessly throughout the year to build our fan base and keep our friends updated about everything from Valentine’s Day traditions around the world to promoting our cast and crew. The enthusiasm and leadership shown by these eager and generous alumni has been nothing short of stupendous.

As for the students, the experience was, in the words of one student crew member, “life changing.” Our students did everything on set from dressing the tables and restaurant under the tutelage of former DU professor, Angela Forster, production designer, to serving as our Assistant Director to production assistant. And they were stellar! Despite some dicey wind and cold - it was December in the Rocky Mountains - they were up for every challenge. I could not be more proud of them all.

I started Project DU F.I.L.M. with several goals in mind:

- Generate mentorships by pairing students with professional alumni filmmakers practiced in collaboration
• Work toward leveling the filmmaking playing field for women, LGBT individuals and people of color both in front of and behind the camera
• Expose students to the entire lifecycle of short film creation - development, preproduction, production, post-production and distribution
• Repurpose footage from the film throughout the curriculum as students learn editing, sound design, set construction, etc. in classes ranging from Advanced Editing, Introduction to Field Producing & Editing, and Intermediate Sound Design
• Raise departmental and divisional profiles with the completed short film and through the behind-the-scenes documentary of the process

Thus far, the film has been accepted into 13 film festivals across the country, winning two Audience Awards (Longmont, CO and Lyons, CO) and a Best Short Comedy Award from Out. Here. Now. The Kansas City LGBT Film Festival. We’ve screened in Tampa, FL, Dallas, Texas, Paducah, KY and at the Denver Film Festival, just to name a few cities.

We’ve accomplished these goals and are looking forward to Project DU F.I.L.M. - Phase II in 2017-2018. Check out our Behind-the-Scenes documentary produced by alumni from Hidden Woods Media to hear from students, and alumni and to see some footage from our award-winning short film Happy F-ing Valentine’s Day.

Find out more at:
• http://happyf-ingvalentinesday.com/
• https://www.facebook.com/happyfingvalentinesday
• http://www.facebook.com/projectdufilm