

Lights, Camera, Action! at Film School

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published on 2013-09-19 | [archive/search](#)

Eight films in only four days . . . That is the challenge that eight groups of Film students are up to this week. Melissa Myburgh, a first-year student and director of one of the films, let *eTutor* in on the lights, camera, action.

The aspirant filmmakers, taking on roles such as producer, director, director of photography, sound engineer and editor, had to take a short drama scene from the 1987 Stanley Kubrick war film *Full Metal Jacket* and turn it into a three-minute-long movie. *Full Metal Jacket* follows a platoon of US marines through their training and focuses on the experiences of two of the platoon's marines. It received an Academy Award nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay.

The student project was titled *Born to Kill*.



Aspiring filmmakers Melissa Myburgh and Chante Gorlt (second and third from left) with professional actors Lawrence Joffe, Jonathan Pienaar and Xander van den Berg.

Fortunately, each group received a budget. This enabled them to employ professional actors, the likes of Jonathan Pienaar, who portrays the role of Drill Sergeant Hartman, Lawrence Joffe, (Private Pyle) and Xander van den Berg (Private Joker).

The actors were highly impressed with the students' talent. "I was totally surprised when I discovered they were just first-years. I thought that they were fourth-years. They truly are the future," said Jonathan. Lawrence agreed and said: "It makes me very excited about the future of South African film."

The films are shot in a studio in front of a green screen that allows students to literally create any possible backdrop during the editing process. With green screen technology, filmmakers like Melissa can create all kinds of interesting effects. The first *Star Wars* movie was done using this technology. The best example of green

screen from everyday life is the weather person on TV. He/She stands in front of a green wall while a computer can tune into the green colour and replace every green pixel with a pixel from another image.

The student films have to be completed by 4 October.

Aged 30, Melissa is one of the Department's top students and an example that one is never too old to follow one's dreams.

Before enrolling for the course earlier this year, she worked in the advertising industry, but somehow never felt "at home."

She subsequently went for career assessment tests, which suggested film or medicine as possible careers. Melissa opted for film and says that she hasn't regretted her decision one single day.



Student filmmakers remaking a scene from Stanley Kubrick's 1987 war film, Full Metal Jacket, this week.

"Our first production has truly been enlightening; a priceless and first-hand experience of how all the pieces fit together. It has highlighted the absolute necessity of each position in the team and the importance of taking full ownership thereof. Working with professional actors definitely had the team on their toes. We greatly benefitted from their commitment to their roles and their eagerness to share their knowledge with us. Few things are as special as working with passionate people towards a common goal, especially when respect for each other is never compromised. The camaraderie was tangible and is something I can get addicted to," Melissa added.

She acknowledged her fellow team members Adriaan Aldridge (Producer), ChanteGorlt (Director of Photography), Pieter van As (Sound Engineer), Dawid du Preez (Editor) and AsemahleMajola (Production Manager) for their sterling work. They described their experiences of working on the project as "exhilarating", "fulfilling", and "great."

The assignment is part of the subject Motion Picture Production 1, presented by Dr Gerhard Uys, a senior lecturer at the Department of Drama and Film (Film).

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