



# News

## Directors Guild-Producer Training Plan



*welcome aboard!*

### *Class of 2007*

Shanice Anderson  
 Alicia Cho  
 Imhotep Coleman  
 Gary Cotti  
 Heather Epps  
 Jose Fikes  
 Jenna Kehrli  
 Cecilia Mak  
 Robert Morrone  
 Nathaniel Murphy  
 Kendall Nichols  
 Alexis Olsen (not pictured)  
 Marie-Helene Riverain  
 Nicole Rodgers  
 Erin Rutland  
 Alexis Schmidtberger  
 Elisabeth Winter  
 Lisa Zugschwerdt

## Presenting the Class of 2007

**On July 26 Walt Disney Studios hosted our annual dinner welcoming the 42nd class of trainees into the DGPTP's Training Program.**

DGPTP Administrator Janet Dyer began the evening by welcoming the Class of 2007 and thanking Walt Disney Pictures Pictures and ABC Studios for hosting the evening. From Walt Disney Studios thank you to: Bruce Hendricks, President, Motion Picture Production; Whitney Green, Senior Vice President, Motion Picture Production; Jerry Ketcham, Senior Vice President, Motion Picture Production; Paul Steinke, Senior Vice President, Finance; Robert W. Johnson, Senior Vice President, Labor Relations; and Krysten Brennan, Vice President, Labor Relations and Training Plan Trustee. From ABC Studios thank you to: Barry Jossen, Executive Vice President, Production; Gary French, Senior Vice President, Production; and Marc Sandman, Senior Vice President, Labor Relations.

Ed Milkovich, Chair of the Board of Trustees, took the podium and asked each of the trainees to stand and introduce themselves to the group. "We're proud of all of you," said Ed. "The Training Program exists because of the success of people who go through it. This is why your success is vital to all of us."

Offering their words of welcome and advice were Sr. Vice Presidents of Production for Walt Disney Pictures, Whitney Green and Jerry Ketcham.

Whitney reminded the trainees "to be on your game." She continued by saying, "Do your job well, do it tirelessly, keep your sense of humor and we'll see you again after your 400 days."

Jerry added to those words, "Everything you do is a learning experience. Be ahead of the problems so they won't be problems when they come up."

*(Continued on back page)*



# Don Zepfel Shares *The Process*

**I**t's been said that all you need to work in film and television is a lucky break. The Directors Guild-Producer Training Plan (DGPTP) has been giving aspiring assistant directors and producers that break for more than 40 years.

In the program, trainees build a sense of camaraderie with fellow classmates and have the opportunity to meet and make contacts with working ADs and UPMs on movies and shows. Upon completing regular curriculum seminars and 400 days of paid, on-the-job training through participation in the DGPTP, graduates are eligible for the DGA and ready to work as Second ADs.

"The DGPTP has been around a long time and we produce the most qualified graduates," says Don Zepfel, Class of 1974 and Chair of the Screening and Admissions committee for the DGPTP. "While it's a hard program to get into, it is one of the best opportunities for aspiring ADs to get their foot in the door."

Zepfel explains that the DGPTP Screening and Admissions committee receives more than 700 applications a year and only accepts 15-20 trainees into the program. While previous film/television experience is not required, the committee's first step to narrow the applicant pool: weed out aspiring directors, screenwriters and actors.

"We're not looking for people who want to be stars," Zepfel said. "We want people interested in the art of producing the movie itself. Potential candidates love to put together puzzles and follow up on details because that's what the AD does—makes sure everything is where it needs to be to make the movie."

Another critical element of the DGPTP is the outreach efforts by graduates to spread the word about this unique opportunity. Zepfel said alumni are strongly encouraged to speak to people in their hometowns, colleges and even at job fairs.

However, referral by a DGPTP graduate is no guarantee of admission, as applicants are chosen anonymously by the committee to avoid any potential for favoritism.

"We're always looking for really good people," Zepfel said. "It's our way of encouraging graduates to give back to the program."



Don Zepfel

# *It's Goo*

**T**he DGPTP is proud of all its graduates, so we thought we'd take this opportunity to share with you what some of them have been doing since graduating.

## Don Zepfel, Class of 1974

Don Zepfel may have gotten the movie making bug as a film and broadcast major at Stanford or during his years as a documentary cameraman in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. But everything he learned about working on film and television sets, he got from his time as a DGPTP trainee.

"When I entered the DGPTP, I didn't know a soul in the industry," said Zepfel, who spent most of his trainee time at Universal Studios where he later became a Second AD and then moved up the ranks to eventually serve as Executive Vice President for Physical Production. "I knew how to deal with a camera and about editing. The DGPTP program really provided me with an education about how Hollywood works. I also got to know people there."

No longer working full time at Universal, Zepfel now works as a freelance line producer and UPM on feature films for many studios.

## WANTED: Your Ideas

Please enjoy this latest edition of the *DGPTP News*. If you'd like to get involved in the next issue, we welcome your letters and story ideas. Simply send the information to the Training Plan at [mail@trainingplan.org](mailto:mail@trainingplan.org), and we'll take it from there.

# Good To Be A Graduate

## Alain Silver, Class of 1975

Alain Silver always knew he wanted to work on the production side of filmmaking. He first applied to the DGPTP program in 1970 after being referred by someone from a cold call at

Paramount Studios. While he wasn't accepted on his first try in 1970, he headed to grad school and came back to be accepted on his a second try.

"Film school gave me no idea what to expect on the set," Silver said. "My first day on the set as a trainee, I was dressed inappropriately and I had no idea what a call sheet was."

As a DGPTP trainee, Silver worked on the set of "Police Woman." Although he spent much of his early career as a Second AD at various studios, in

recent years he has worked primarily on independent films. Throughout his career, Silver has written and edited 20 books about motion pictures.

"The DGPTP program provides people with two opportunities," Silver said. "First is an entree into the industry. The second is a structure for learning how movies are made. Working as an AD gives you an unparalleled understanding of production. The best producers are the people who have that perspective."



Alain in Albuquerque, N.M. on the set of a short he directed in 2002—"Fish in the Desert."

## Fernando Castroman, Class of 1988

While Fernando Castroman worked as a cinematographer and directed commercials in his native Puerto Rico, it didn't prepare him for his experience as a DGPTP trainee.

"Even back in Puerto Rico, I knew I wanted to be involved in the business somehow," said Castroman, who applied to the program on the advice of high school classmate, Ricardo Méndez Matta, also a fellow DGPTP graduate. "The program changed my life. My previous experience wasn't suited for what I was doing as an AD."

As a DGPTP trainee, Castroman worked on the set of "China Beach." He reunited with fellow "China Beach" crewmates when he accepted an assignment to work on "ER" seven years ago. He is now the show's First AD.

"It was fun to run into the crew from "China Beach" because we already had a rapport," Castroman said.

It's developing and maintaining that rapport with the set crew that Castroman tells other aspiring ADs is the key to success.

"If you recognize people's contributions and seek out their opinions, they will bend over backward for you," Castroman said.



Fernando on the set of ER—a little end-of-season fun.

## Shawn Pipkin, Class of 2002

From a young age, Shawn Pipkin knew she wanted to work behind the scenes in television and film.

"I drove the guys I dated crazy because I always wanted to stay for the credits at the end of the movie to watch all the names," said the Houston native.

Before applying to the program, Pipkin worked as a PA on television and movie sets in Houston. She learned about the DGPTP while working as a production secretary on the set of the ABC-TV movie "King of the World" with Darrell Woodard, a DGPTP graduate and trustee.

As a trainee, one of Pipkin's assignments included 103 days on the set of "Haunted Mansion." Her most recent job was working on the film revival of "Get Smart." Besides the on-the-job training, contacts and friends she made through the DGPTP, she learned an important key to being a successful AD.

"You can't take things personally," Pipkin said. "That's something I learned early on because 99 percent of the time when someone is yelling at you, it has nothing to do with you. Once I came to that realization, everything was fine."



Shawn Pipkin

# Presenting the Class of 2007

(Continued from front page)

Next, Gary French, Sr. Vice President of Production for ABC Studios, reminded the trainees that a very few select applicants get into the program. With more than 700 individuals applying, only those seated here tonight were chosen. "You are representing not only the production you work on, but the studio and the guild." Gary then announced that he was about to say something he has been wanting to say to a group of aspiring ADs for a very long time—"That's lunch, 30 minutes!"

Following a delicious dinner and decadent dessert, Donna Lee, Administrator of the DGA Contract Administration,

shared a story with the trainees about a comment made by Sir Anthony Hopkins at a 1978 graduation ceremony at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. "He (Hopkins) took the stage and looked out over the group and remarked, 'I'm so envious of each and every one of you. You have so much ahead of you. Remember in this business you have two enemies. The first is egotism and the second is hopelessness. The first will get in the way of your career and the second will get in the way of your life. Enjoy this new beginning.'"

We wish the Class of 2007 the best of luck and we expect you all to do well during the next two years.



Whitney Green and  
Jerry Ketcham



Gary French



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## DGPTP Makes A Move

The DGPTP is moving to a temporary location from Aug. 31-Oct. 31. You can continue to use the same address on all mail as it will be forwarded from our current address to that location. Starting on Nov. 1 we will move into our new, permanent home. Please visit our Web site for future details. Our phone numbers will remain the same.

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