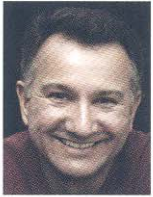


COAST TO COAST: GAIN EXPERIENCE RIGHT HERE IN LOUISIANA

BY GARY MICHAEL SMITH GUEST COLUMNIST



Over the past couple years many involved in the New Orleans film industry have scattered across the country. While some followed the work to Shreveport, others—cast and crew—traveled from the Gulf Coast to the West Coast. Some still share their time between New Orleans and Los Angeles to hone their skills, gain new knowledge, and share their perspective of Hollywood back in Hollywood South.

Such differences can be quite varied, from educational opportunities to actual working jobs. Christopher Brown, producer of the feature-length film *Couple on the Side* and other productions, spent five months in Los Angeles

recently, working on a number of projects. He finds that, like anywhere, L.A. crew such as assistants, interns and PAs work the longest hours and get the smallest pay, which he finds results in a high turnover rate at most jobs. Plus, it's difficult to acquire such positions.

"I find that most bosses and owners will not talk to you until you have worked at a job for at least six to eight months," said Brown. He also observed that parking is a nightmare, and planning rendezvous with friends and colleagues takes much planning since the city covers so much area and film industry personnel work up to

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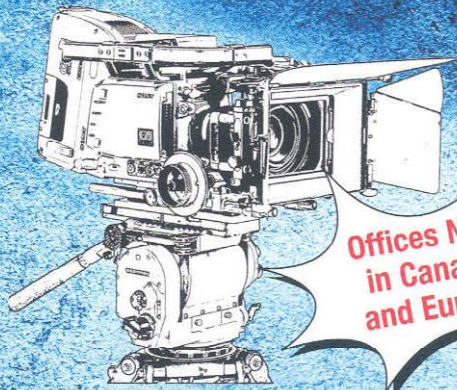


Ed Holub filming documentary.

seven days a week in this competitive environment. The overall mindset, however, seems to be appropriately professional.

"One thing I particularly like about Los Angeles," added Brown, "is that because so many financiers came up through film themselves, they often

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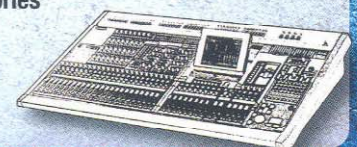
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"There is no reason to charge straight to Hollywood. You can get much valuable experience right here in Louisiana."

Coast to Coast,

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are artists with an open and approachable mentality because they can remember when they had a youthful spirit, and they harness that energy of youth and hunger."

Other L.A. transplants particularly like the educational opportunities—both academic and on-the-job training. New Orleans independent filmmaker Ed Holub spent as long as a year in L.A. recently and appreciates the availability of film schools as well as acting classes.

"Film schools in Los Angeles crowd every area of town," said Holub, "and if you need to learn the basics of filmmaking, Los Angeles City College near Silver Lake offers classes for \$100 per semester. And Chapman University in Anaheim is probably the

best university program going, being well-funded and supported by the industry."

On the other side of the camera, acting classes have proliferated in New Orleans, ranging from instruction for children to transitioning from stage to screen to succeeding in an audition, all taught by talented and credentialed instructors in an array of class formats and acting styles. While New Orleans maintains its standard acting coursework under university drama curriculums, courses are taught by everyone from former daytime drama stars to local television, film and stage actors. Some talent agencies provide acting instruction as well. Holub, who had his own acting school before Hurricane Katrina, appreciates the West Coast offerings.

"There are some great acting

schools in Los Angeles," he says, "and I feel the craft is being taught much better than it has been in the past." He finds TV is changing to reflect consumer tastes, which seem to be headed towards acting that feels real and emotional. Another important aspect of traveling outside the South to learn more of the trade is what the traveler can bring back.

"I'm a faster editor now," said Brown, "with more post-production knowledge about formats and digital turnaround for cameras such as the Red, the Viper, and the Sony F23." He also feels that he has gained better organizational and time management skills, as well as a better business knowledge of the film industry.

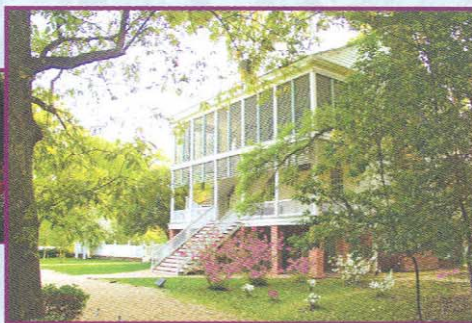
It is no secret New Orleans provides excellent training opportunities, being a city of numerous theatrical playhouses and plans

for a theatre district. New Orleans may never replace Hollywood since, as producer Mike Hausman once stated, producers will always want to be able to drive a few miles to a studio to oversee a project rather than having to live away from home in another city for the entire post-production process. However, New Orleans provides fertile ground for learning.

"There is no reason to charge straight to Hollywood," added Holub. "You can get much valuable experience right here in Louisiana crewing for some of the feature films and made-for-TV productions that flourish across the state from New Orleans to Shreveport, and all places in between."

Gary Michael Smith teaches and writes in New Orleans. He can be reached at Publisher@ChatgrisPress.com.

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