

# Film courses

As a continuation of the course in music the school has offered some students a course in making short films. Music and moving images are in our time almost inseparable and it is important that the students learn how to make images work with their music. Halden College offers three different courses in film; short film making, documentary film making and music video making.

## Goals

The National Framework for Higher Education (*the Core Curriculum*) and the school's own plan for activity is the foundation on which we base our goals. There is a focus on the use of *computers* in all subjects and in consequence the method becomes a goal on its own.

The plans set as goals that the students learn how to "plan, produce and present texts, sounds and stills, living images and the combinations of these in the formats and standards of the printed press and other types of media". Students should use "state of the art tools, software and other types of technical equipment in a useful manner" (from goals in the subject media production)

The students should apply "relevant methods for the achievement of quality in the assessment of own work processes and products"

Furthermore it becomes a goal that inmates can strengthen the message or expression he wishes to convey through the use of images.

In much the same manner as in the music course it becomes a pedagogical goal that the inmate works his way through a simplified line of production. This is to give the inmate the experience of mastery.

## Method

### Assessment of work process

It is important that students experience the completion of the task at hand within the given frame concerning time, economy, and the wider frame of resources available. A part of this work is to plan the work process. The work is divided in to main goals and part goals. The main goal is the finished product, whereas the part goals are built in to phases towards the finished main goal. This plan should include information on what should be done when, the resources available, how to follow the time planning etc. Every day ends with the writing of a log with details about the process.

### Different types of courses

Halden College has so far offered three different types of courses in film making; one (A) has been limited in time for a group which makes short films. The other (B) has been made up out of students who have finished the production of CDs and who now want to make music videos. The third (C) has made documentaries. In the case of (B) the students have achieved a level of competence working with the computers in connection with music production. This makes working with film editing software easier.

### Music Video (B)

The film becomes an expansion of the expression already created with the CD. The product establishes both a visual and an auidial expression, where the video guides the viewer through the music. In many ways it could be said it becomes an instruction as to how to experience the music. It is therefore of great importance that the visual supports the artists ideas as to what he wants to convey both music and image wise.

Another area that begs attention is the question of the focus of the video; is it image, music or lyrics. What do these different parts of the expression say on their own? And how do they work together?

Finally, there needs to be an awareness of video technical aspects, mis-en-scene and choreography.

### Phase 1: Theme and Story

Unlike the other film courses the school offers, this course has already one part of the finished products ready; the music. The song already has a theme that will put certain restrictions to the visual expression. The length of the film is also given, a song is normally 3-5 minutes.

In the creation of the story the artist has to choose a mode of expression. This could be the filming of a live performance or it could be the illustration of the lyrics through people or situations (widely used). Alternatively, the use of association through contrasts etc. that do not directly engage with the lyrics.

The task becomes to create a story that somehow interacts with the music within a given framework. This is set by the teacher and includes setting, props, equipment, time etc.

### Phase 2 Storyboard

When a decision is made about theme and story, the time has come to draw and decide which scenes should be shot. This is done on a storyboard. In the storyboarding process, most technical details involved in crafting a film can be efficiently described either in picture, or in additional text. Technical details would encompass camera use, composition, symbols, mis-en-scene, costumes, props, choreography of movement/dance etc. the better the work done in this stage, the easier stages 4 and 5.

### Phase 3 Filming

All scenes are shot. The storyboard is followed systematically. The music is played in the background to match image and sound. Image and sound are put in synch in stage four. At this stage attention must be put towards lighting and sound.

### Phase 4 Editing

If phase 2 and 3 have been successfully completed, it makes the editing of phase 4 easier. The film is edited using *Adobe Premiere* where the footage is shortened dramatically to match the length of the song. Sometimes the use of external sources of sound can be used to highlight certain effects. This could be doors slamming, chatting, sirens etc.

The title of the film should be presented in writing at the very start of the film. Credits at the end should include producer, actors, camera operator, editing, thanks, date and place. The film is burnt on to DVD.

### Phase 5 Performance

It is important to find arenas to present the product and the work process. During the work in the shot film course, a documentary was produced that documented the work process and that accompanied the screening of the film in the school. Products have been shown to classes within the school, larger social gatherings within the prison, in courses, external and internal conferences, the in-house TV channel, Youtube etc.

### Security

All public display of the inmates must first be approved by Halden Prison and the inmates themselves.

### **Sum up**

After a course in film making the student should have knowledge and skills on how to use modern video editing software to convey a message. They should know how to use camera technique and presentation methods to present their message efficiently. They should know how to storyboard to prepare filming in the best way possible.

Furthermore, they will have experienced how to ensure quality in the work process and how this has helped toward achieving the main goal through planning and logging.

My experience is that students experience a sense of mastery and achievement through the completed work process and with finished product in hand. When the product is screened to the cell block or sent out to family and friends it is a signal that the student has knowledge outside being a criminal.

The challenges have been that students are suddenly moved. Also, you must be prepared to guide and help groups that get stuck in the work process. The students often have problems narrowing down their expression. Experience also tells that editing takes longer than expected. A cause for this is probably too little work on the storyboards.

The courses have been popular – both students and teachers have enjoyed them. They are, however, hard work for both teachers and students.