

Meghin Delaney: Welcome to this week's edition of CSN Subject Matter, the College of Southern Nevada's weekly radio program in conjunction with KNPR. I'm your host, Meghin Delaney, CSN's Communications Coordinator and I appreciate you being here with us. CSN is Nevada's largest and most diverse higher education institution, so naturally, we've got plenty of great stories to share.

On today's show, I talk with John C. Aliano, the director for CSN's videography and film program, about videography, film and the long-standing tradition we have at CSN of students taking home Emmy awards each year. In the second half of the show, we'll welcome two film students. They've both been won awards for their projects made at CSN and I hear they often feature each other in their work, so we'll talk to them about that.

Hi John thanks for being with me today. I was hoping you could start by giving our audience a brief introduction? A little bit of who you are and what you do for CSN?

John Aliano: Sure, I'm the program director for videography in film and that's a subset in the media technologies. We have also graphics and photography and CAD, and it's about 325 students. I've been program director now for 8 years and been at the school for 9. I also teach a number of the production classes, we're really invested in technical training with the students and helping them learn equipment really from their very first semester to their last. It's very intensive that way.

Meghin Delaney: And since we're an education institution, I always love to ask folks their education story, their educational background and how you ended up at CSN, I think you said nine years ago. can you share a bit of your education story and how you got to CSN??

John Aliano: Quite a journey. The first time I began being interested in being a teacher was when I was at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, I was getting my MFA in film production and I just happen to be at the right place at the right time and ask for the job and the instructor gave it to me and from that moment I just kept showing people gear and how it works and getting excited about it and I really enjoyed it. I had been a practicing cinematographer up to that point filming a lot of projects outside and inside the school and by the time I graduated I had actually had a commercial on local television that I produced, directed, shot and edited. That was fun to watch at like 2 a.m. between weird commercial and some else, but I guess they saw something in me.

The chair hired me to teach, I know it sounds strange and it was, but advanced cinematography before I finished my MFA at the school so that was my first class in the actual teaching back in 1995. So it's been quite a journey. From there, I ended up moving up Bay Area and teaching more workshops in cinema. It was a good time, the internet boom had everybody wanting to learn more about film. I taught at various, I taught at companies, film arts foundation. I taught at Pixar Animation Studio, Pixar was great. Those people, what is a wonderful group. I was able to teach PU, that's what they call it, Pixar University, so they allow people to come in and teach you unique classes, it could be yoga, could be film could be anything, and when I first started I guess The Incredibles, the first Incredibles had come out and then by the time I stopped doing that for them for years later it was Wall-E, so it was amazing to be there every year and and see the win an Academy Award each time, it was just like clockwork. Great group of people to work with and then after all of that, I decided that I really wanted to give teaching a full-time effort.

I was hired by the College of Santa Fe in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and so I moved out there with my wife and we decided to see how that goes and Santa Fe is a beautiful place, visually stunning, and I love the school because it was so diverse in many ways, but unfortunately they had a huge amount of debt, it

was right at the height of the debt crisis, and so they imploded. Everybody lost their jobs, students faculty, everybody which is very sad, but through the loss of something often times you find that there's great advantages to be had and in leaving there I got a phone call from the chair of the department here at CSN and he said we're looking for somebody to come in and we're losing our program director, this professor is moving on and and you've been recommended.

I almost hung up the phone because I thought this is got to be a joke, these aren't jobs people ask you to step into, you normally have to go through quite the application process as I did for Santa Fe. But I met with him and, Tom Myers, wonderful guy, we got along great and next thing I knew I was bringing my wife out, she was a little hesitant about the whole thing, but I think after a year we really found our groove here in Las Vegas, I think it takes everybody some time, it's very different and it's been wonderful being able to work with all the different students that we are going to hear today and the others and the success that's been built up from this. So, my first year was just full-time teaching and I started cinematography cause we didn't even have that within our program, so it's an element that we needed and then when I became a program director, I wanted to highlight the success the students have been having and just have a venue so I started the short film showcase.

Meghin Delaney: For folks who are unfamiliar, who don't really know what this program means or does can you give us a basic rundown, if I'm coming in and I want to be in this program what does that look like for me as a student, what am I going to learn?

John Aliano: You're going to learn a lot. We, for instance, have classes you can take in cinematography and color correction and ADR, which is automated dialogue recording, foley which is where you step on gravel and make noises in punch heads of lettuce to make it seem like somebody's punching somebody, editing, film history and studies, grip, makeup for film, producing, production design, screenwriting, sound, visual effects, there's so many things you can learn there. Of course there are core classes that are essential that you'll take for the major, but you can branch off and then decide if you really like screenwriting, well take screenwriting two or cinematography, cinematography two, so we have other elements where you can gear so that your electives help support that unique interest you have with in this industry.

Meghin Delaney: And I think it's always helpful to describe what a career path would look like for a student, so can you talk to me about some of the jobs that your graduates have gone on to do after they've left CSN?

John Aliano: Absolutely, it's very interesting because I always get asked what the job like, I have to say it depends on what track you choose, because it can be so different for everybody. For instance, an editor can work anywhere, they can work at home, they could work at the studio, they can work here in Las Vegas, Austin, Texas, New York, wherever. Cinematography, in contrast, has many branches and depending on what you choose, theatrical or TV, more opportunities definitely exist now than ever before and that's due to the explosion of content from companies like Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, so they need crew they need people to help in the industry and content that is just exploding for what they're doing and it's a great. great time to get into film and television. to explore that and to see what it is you like to do within that and make that work.

Meghin Delaney: I think probably one of the best parts for your students about this program is that it's hands-on. Your students are starting, their making projects from their very first courses, why is that so important in this field to have your students do that work?

John Aliano: Well I think it's important because there are many film schools out there and really great ones all over the U.S. but I found from my experience that the ones that inherently teach you the way in which to properly use things and in a safe fashion as well, because sometimes you're using high amperage electricity and it can cause problems and even serious injury or death, you need to know these things and you need to have instructors that are qualified in doing that. What I've helped students do and these two who are here today have been a part of that is, I create QRG's, quick reference guide, so I'll take a camera and I'll break it down into a page or two or if it's really advance three and tell them point-by-point, this is what you need to do to make this work, and work in a way that's going to help you so that even if you sort of freeze out of fear and you're in the field, you're going to be able to open this up, go all I need to do is this, I need to press this button and you'll be able to do your project.

I've never seen that at film schools, but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist or that others haven't developed their own techniques and ways, there's many brilliant instructors out there, but it's so important to have students be able to, depending on how they learn things, take on those tasks and do it in the most successful way possible.

Meghin Delaney: I have here in my notes that in the last five years, your students have been nominated more than 70 times for student production Emmys from the Pacific Southwest National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and of those nominations, they've won more than 30 awards. How does that happen? That's amazing, is really all I can say, so how do you work with your students to get them in that process, to produce the high quality films and documentaries and features that that win these awards?

John Aliano: Thank you for that, it's a great plug for us and to be exact it's 73 nominations and 38 wins in the last five years and we're very, very proud of them, they're doing great work, I think you get the success by listening to students, because they'll tell you what they need and often times, I've seen it from school students go up to individuals who might be able to influence changes within the program or department, and they don't really listen to them, so you know when students come up to me and say we need to have financial aid help us out because they are considering everything in one bundle and we need it broken apart and say video instead of you know photo or this or that I jump in and I'm like OK let's do this and it may take two years.

We joke at CSN, if you want to change it's two years so but it happens because you know you're going to make it work for the students. Student success is important, we lock in on that, what do we need to do to make this work. So for me, I saw that it was very important to build the showcase and to help them, and it was a rough going in the beginning let me tell you Meghin, like 50 people showed up the first time and the projection system was so bad you couldn't even really see the credits or anything like that and the sound was horrible but that's how you start. You start rough and then you polish the diamond and after a while the films and their content became stronger, we got a new venue cuz you couldn't house anybody in that old room anymore. Now we are in the Horn Theatre which seats 500 and sponsors are coming to us left and right go and saying how can we help you and so last year we gave it over \$17,000 in prizes to be student, so it's created this incredible competitiveness, but in a good way, where students are saying to each other, let's be the ones in that showcase, so that's elevated the quality of the films by that competition, which is good, and thereby we have product and then we can go to the Emmys because I'm a member of the National Academy and the local Emmy so we help facilitate them into that and say, you really should enter into this one or these categories are really good, I think this to be most successful for you, and then it's up to the student students to take that step and do it, and fortunately for us, a lot of them have and fortunately for us, again, a lot of the moving extremely successful in doing that. So you know when I go to the Emmys and we had what 19

nominations last year, it was incredible to be sitting at two tables of 10 with them, and you know that anticipation, that excitement, everybody's really just locked into that special feeling that they can be the one and they can, any one of these people can be those next people who are making the films for television for theater you know, whatever it is that needs to happen. So I think that success starts where you listen to them, you help facilitate their dreams and goals and you nurture that process all the way through and it's not easy, it takes time, it takes a lot of effort, and a lot of follow-up but it's possible it's possible.

Meghin Delaney: That's an amazing honor for your students and if you are just joining us, you're listening to CSN Subject Matter, CSN's weekly radio program in cooperation with KNPR. I just finished chatting with John C. Aliano, the director of CSN photography and film program, that's our subject today the film program and the amazing honors and awards our students have won, and I'm excited now to be joined by two of our award-winning students in the studio with me, Randy Sly and Dylan Schultz. I'm going to let them introduce themselves and tell you about the awards they've won, but thanks for being here with me, guys would you mind introducing yourselves first?

Randy Sly: I'm Randy Sly, I just recently graduated from the program and the film that I'm going to be talking about is my exit course film called Swipe, which won a student Emmy this last circuit.

Meghin Delaney: And before you go on and before Dylan weighs in, tell us a little bit about Swipe.

Randy Sly: Swipe is a story about your average, pop culture kind of awkward guy. It's a love stories, he's love with the girl down the hall, and it's kind of his journey of self-discovery that he doesn't necessarily need to be what the world thinks he should be to achieve his goals and dreams, and then it kind of ends with that lesson, that realization, and he finds out the girl's been in love with him, too and it's a nice coming together story, you know, learning who you are.

Meghin Delaney: How about you Dylan, can you introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about you?

Dylan Schultz: Yeah, so I am Dylan Schultz, I am currently still a student in the film program at CSN, still working on a degree right now. The film that I'll be talking about today is a film that's actually a couple years old now, but it's called Those Were the Day and I won two student Emmys for that back in 2017.

Meghin Delaney: And can you tell us a little bit about Those Were The Days?

Dylan Schultz: So basically the same as Randy, I'm just kidding. It's the story of a guy who basically is a nobody, he's kind of used to be the man back in high school, but now he's kind of lost that mantle. There's a female figure that ends up causing him to go down this coming-of-age path, where he ends up sort of seeing himself from high school and he's like what's up man you're a loser now like what happened and so it's kind of his journey into becoming that confident person again that he lost somewhere along the way.

Meghin Delaney: Like I did with John, I want to ask you guys a little bit about your journey and how you got to CSN, Dylan?

Dylan: So I was never really sure about what I wanted to do especially when it came to college and Randy and I both known each other for a long time and we were making films in high school just a little dumb, goofy ones we put on YouTube. Then when I started going to CSN, I actually went as a

marketing major and I was like I'm just trying to figure something out. Then I was like I actually want to do film because you know, we both came from an acting background and I figured why don't I learn how to actually make it look decent. That was kind of my how I got into the program and then from there just was not expecting all the things I would learn and all the people I would meet and all the awesome teachers I had, but ended up being a really good experience so far.

Meghin Delaney: So far so good, we got a little bit left to go to get you over the finish line. And so for you Radny, how did you end up in our film program?

Randy: It was pretty similar. Like Dylan said, we actually met in a theater class way back in like sixth grade and did theater theater middle school and then I really fell in love with that and went to Las Vegas Academy, as a theater major there, and during that time I kind of started migrating towards the directing side and loved directing for stage and everything and but those films that we were making in high school, you know, I've really felt like that was just a better medium for me, as a storyteller to be able to go in, to tell stories, be a director for film and and stuff. So Dylan was already going to CSN at that time he taking a semester in the film program and we're kind of talking about it and so I started the following semester and never looked back.

Meghin Delaney: So now I have to ask you, these little films you're making a high school and putting on YouTube and one of you take me through what one of those films look like?

Dylan: Back in that time, YouTubers was on the rise and I feel like everyone was like, at least in our age group was looking up to these big YouTubers, who are nobodies, and just making crappy little films ended up getting millions and millions of views and it kind of was really motivating for like me and Randy, because we looked and said if they could do it, we could do it, of course we didn't get millions and millions of years, but we ended up a camera called a flip camera that shot I think 7:20 and they had like a little USB to flip out and plug it right into your computer and you'd be good to go.

So we just started making videos from that and I think they were just little short skits that we would put up online.

Randy: Yeah we have an idea and talk about it and be like yeah let's do it right now and in like four hours we'd have it all filmed and everything. So they were very low, low production standard point-and-shoot.

Meghin Delaney: And you guys know that once it's on the internet, it never comes down, so I assume we can go find these very early productions somewhere if we needed to.

Dylan: I will not share my username from both during that time.

Meghin Delaney: I'm sure what you guys do now is of a much higher quality, and so I do want to ask you about a favorite project that you've done at CSN and maybe it's Swipe and Those Were The Days, the ones we talked about, but it might be something else and so I'm curious to hear from you guys or even just an experience you've have here in the film program. Randy, do you want to go first?

Randy: Yeah, I'd probably definitely have to go with Swipe. You know, earlier in the program, I was kind of the octopus filmmaker, I wanted to have everything in my corner, do everything, and be in charge of it all and I never really got a chance to like come into my own as a director in that sense, and Swipe was by far, the longer project, it needed more attention than I could get it individually, and so it was the

first project that I really, you know, let go of and let other students come in, take bigger roles in it, and so I got to really focus on you know, the writing aspect, the directing aspect and solving those problems as a director. So, for me, that's why that was my favorites to work on because it really like helped me find the path that I want to follow.

Meghin Delaney: And the way you've described it to me, and you will correct me if I'm wrong, but Swipe refers to the motion people use when they're on a dating app now right, is that where Swipe comes from?

Randy: Yeah, essentially, the main character that Dylan played, he was my main character in this, the awkward quirky guy, he'd been in love with this girl for like 5 years, and his best friends was just a total you know you're like classic Ladies Man and bad Ladies Man, like he was awkward and awful in his own right, but he really wanted to help his friend get over this, so he set up an online dating profile for him, totally fake, didn't like reflect him as a person at all and the and that's what gets him into his antics like going on all these date with people that clearly aren't actually match just for him, but matches for this fake profile. But yeah. that's where the title comes from is that swipe motion.

Meghin Delaney: I know, I think in Those Were The Days that Randy stars in your project as well right?

Dylan: He was, yes, he was the same, I don't want to say it was the same character, because it wasn't the same character, but you know awkward and at the time, I was still brand new at CSN, I think I took Vid2, which is when I did that project, my second semester, and so I didn't really understand how like casting worked yet, but I was like I like my best friend is really good at acting, and like all my other friends are good at acting, so I can just have them all come in and ended up working out really well and then you know the rest is history.

Meghin Delaney: Well, I don't want to pigeonhole you into that being your favorite project, I just brought that one up because I know that Randy had been in that as well, so do you have another project?

Dylan: Yeah, and just on Those Were The Day, it was wasn't my favorite, but looking back it was a good experience, because like I think Randy kind of touched on it, when you first start making films I think it's just automatic that you feel like you have to do it all yourself. But I think the beauty of being in film school and especially at a place like CSN ,where the teachers are awesome in the sense that not only will they teach you, but they're also help you out, but also you start identifying really early on who's good at what, as far as the other students go and who is focused and who doesn't mess around on set. So by the time I rolled around to portfolio, which is the exit class, and I did that project I had it almost an arsenal of just people I knew were good at certain things and so I would say that was probably my favorite because like Randy said, I got to sit back and kind of take more of just the director seat in it, instead of you know having to put out all the fires myself, so to speak, and it was a it was a really good learning experience, we still had a lot of problems on set, but I'd still say it's my favorite for those reasons.

Meghin: And that was your portfolio? What's the name and sort of a little bit about that?

Dylan: Yeah, so that project was called Searching for Sue and it's basically about a guy who is trying to prove himself at an online magazine, kind of like the Review-Journal or you know BuzzFeed or something like that. The workplace is really, there's a lot of quirky people, in fact, Randy plays a really quirky character, not a main character, but basically a character that sort of stole the show, I'll put it that way. And basically, he is just trying to fit in and he wants to make a name for himself, so then he goes

to this coffee shop and they have a live music deal going on, people doing some acoustic sets, just in the coffee shop, and this girl plays and he ends up being mesmerized by what he sees and immediately wanting to find out about her, but then she takes off, and you know he kind of like stumbles around, knock somebody's food into them, so he misses her, the only thing he got was her first name, when they announced her name was Sue.

So then he starts at column at this online magazine called Searching for Sue and it sort of ends up exploding, going viral, and it's kind of like his journey to determine what is most important to him, because then there's also this like girl at work that he butt heads with, and I won't tell you how it ends but that's all I'm going to say on it.

Meghin Delaney: No spoiler! This is a spoiler alert free radio program. So it sounds like this is been a really big time of self-discovery for you guys, figuring out where you're going to fit in this industry and what your strengths are, what you'd like to do, where you can let go of some of that control, so as you finish up your time at CSN and you move into the quote-unquote real world, have you guys figured out some next steps, what you'd like your career to look like, what you would like to do in 10-15 years down the road, Dylan you want to go in the first?

Dylan: That's a big question. The thing I would probably want to do most in this industry is either direct or write, because I do like doing the other stuff, I love being on set and I love being in the atmosphere of doing whatever, if that's bringing somebody their coffee or its operating the camera or it's calling the shots, I like it all, but I would say at the end of the day and I think I'll speak for Randy on this one two, that we're both storytellers and we both have these crazy ideas in our mind and CSN's really taught us how to project that onto a screen properly and make it look good, and so I would say probably directing and writing are at the top there, where we will go from there I'm not sure yet.

Meghin Delaney: He spoke for you, was he correct?

Randy: Yeah, I definitely see myself in the writing and directing sphere in the long run. I love being on the set and you know, there's a ladder to climb, and so absolutely I would love to get you know those jobs, moving equipment, lighting stuff, and you doing whatever needs to be done and in the filmmaking industry, but for myself I've actually taking Swipe, I've adapted it into a pilot, about a 35-page pilots that I've sent into a couple of contests and I just sent it into a writing fellowship program, so fingers crossed I find out November if they accept me as a fellow in their program or not, but even if they, that's where I want to be. I want to be in that that writing sphere, so I've got scripts and I'm planning on selling them all

Meghin Delaney: Thank you guys for joining me. You've been listening to CSN Subject Matter, the College of Southern Nevada's weekly radio program in conjunction with KNPR. I want to thank John, Dylan and Randy for joining me in the studio today. As always a big thanks to KNPR for helping produce this show I couldn't do it without them. I'm Meghin Delaney from CSN's Communications office, you can learn more about CSN by visiting CSN.edu or you can find us on your favorite social media site as well. We look forward to helping you succeed, and I'll see you next time.