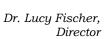
University of Pittsburgh

Spring 2005

The News Reel Film Studies Program Newsletter





From the Director's Chair

I would like to use my column for the newsletter this spring in order to congratulate one of our own faculty members, Dr. Marcia Landy (Distinguished Service Professor of English/ Film Studies) who has won an award for her research in the Senior Scholar Category. The following is taken from the text of what was recently published in the Pitt Chronicle about her work:

"Three faculty members were honored the Senior

Scholar category.

ʻYou have focused your long exceptional and scholarly career in the Cinema Studies field.' [Chancellor Nordenberg Dr. Marcia Landy Markl wrote to Department English professor Marcia Landy, ʻand have shown through your work how the contemporary drive toward

greater and greater specialization need not re-

> sult in narrow intellectual work... Your ability to crosscontextualize your work in a fiercely interdisciplinary translational man-

ner clearly sets your work apart as a singular achievement as a teacher, mentor, speaker, and writer."

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The Lola Project

Students in Film Analysis next semester will have a powerful new tool with which to learn not only the ABCs of film terminology, but also to help develop their interpretive skills. The Lola Project, which Dr. Jane Feuer received funding to develop over the summer and fall of 2004, will take still frames and clips from the German film Run Lola Run (1998/Tom Tykwer) and incorporate them in to an interactive online program that asks students questions about not only the action of the film, but the stu-

the film.

Dr. Feuer's proposal for the Lola Project took into account both the needs of students and faculty: "Recent curdiscussions riculum among Film Studies faculty have centered on achieving a more systematic flow through the curriculum for our some 200 students who have declared a major in Film Studies. The faculty expressed a desire to make sure that students know the basics before proceeding to upper level courses. The faculty has also expressed concern over ways to meet the needs of majors and non-majors in film

dent's interpretation of classes. Ideally, these problems could be addressed by individualized instruction that would ensure that each student has mastered the fundamentals before moving on."

> Run Lola Run is taught in most Film Analysis or beginning

> > "Some might use

the readings; others

SocraTease to accompany

—Dr. Jane Feuer

might prefer to use it to

film classes across the country.

"It's the best film review material after to teach film class, before or after tests $_{to}$ or even during take-home analysis beginners," essay assignments." Feuer says. "The

Lola Project uses fifty per cent of the terms introduced in the textbook they're using, but then

asks students to apply them to the MTV-like slickness of Lola."

After viewing Lola, students will be able to sit down at a computer on their own

> time and answer the questions that will inevitably crop up in classroom discussions. The

questions are in a multiple choice format, and the program isn't so much concerned with

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Faculty Profile

Mark Lynn Anderson

Mark Lynn Anderson, the Film Studies Program's newest faculty member, almost didn't make it to the party being thrown in his honor this past fall. On the way to the location, lost among Pittsburgh's winding, hilly streets, Anderson drove his car off the road while looking at a map. He eventually arrived late and with a newfound appreciation for plotting directions before leaving.

"Being ninety minutes late to a party in your honor is probably not the way to make a good initial impression," he says, "but there's something very 'Hollywood' about having a car wreck on your way to a party."

Anderson comes to Pitt from the Department of Communication at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. As an assistant professor there, Anderson came upon the open position in the Film Studies Program and couldn't think of a better place to work.

"My research and teaching interests matched the department's advertised needs quite well, but that was only a necessary condition," he says. "The film studies program here is undeniably one of the best in the country, and the senior scholars in the program are folks whose research and writing have significantly shaped my own interests in the cinema as an area of scholarly inquiry. When I think about it, I can't imagine a better place for me to work. That's the sufficient condition. But I also grew up in western Maryland, and I have family still living close by; thus, Pittsburgh feels a lot more like home to me than southern Florida. That's the icing on the cake. I applied to only one

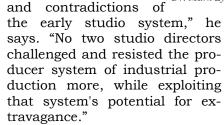
job last year, and here I am."

This spring, Anderson is teaching a section of World Film History and a version of Film Directors. The directors course

is on Eric von Stroheim and Josef von Sternberg.

"While my interest in these two directors is, in part, determined by my interest in fetishism, the course will approach these two directors as a means for investigating the complications

Dr. Mark Lynn Anderson



He did his PhD work at the University of Rochester and, because the George Eastman House (GEH) is in Rochester, his interests took an archival turn.

"I became very interested with not only the film collections at GEH, but the paper collections of stills, letters, and films publications as well," Anderson says. "I volunteered at the library there, and I also later worked there as a film programmer for the Dryden Theater, GEH's 520-seat repertory cinema. One of my first jobs at the library was inventorying and measuring their collections of early fan magazines for custommade archival boxes. I spent hours perusing Photoplay and Motion Picture and my interest in early Hollywood and film audiences was soon secured. This loafing on the job became the foundation of my dissertation research."

Anderson is finishing revisions to his book, *Twilight of the Idols: Hollywood and Human Sciences in the 1920s* (forthcoming, University of California Press), and has an article

forthcoming on the importance of Chicago School sociology in the formation of film studies in the 1920s and 1930s. The piece is entitled "Taking Liberties: The Payne Fund Studies and the Creation of the Media Expert," and it will appear in an anthology entitled Forming Film Studies, edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee

Wasson and published by Duke University Press.

"In early June, 2004, I presented a paper entitled "Reforming Authority: The Film Authorship of Dorothy Davenport Reid" at the Women and the Silent Screen Congress in Montreal," he says. "Davenport Reid was a film actress, director, producer, and writer who worked in the industry from 1911 through the end of the studio system in the 1960s. My presentation was on her social problem films of the 1920s. I am just beginning a critical biography of her, tentatively entitled The Hollywood Life of Dorothy Davenport Reid.

In January, Anderson attended the American History Association Conference in Seattle he presented a paper on labor politics and film censorship in New York State during the 1920s entitled "'A Pretty Little Nest of Vipers': Americanization and Organized Labor's Fight Against Motion-Picture Censorship in New York State, 1919-1923."

"This paper was a continuation of my research on the history of film regulation and censorship," he says. Anderson has developed a course on film censorship, and hopes to find a home for it in Pitt's curriculum.

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Library Notes

By Ann Ronchetti

Among the publishers expanding their list of titles in film studies in recent years is the London-based firm of I. B. Tauris, an independent publishing house currently among the foremost publishers of titles on the Middle East. In the late 1990s, Tauris began publishing an increasing number of books in international film studies, with a growing concentration on British, Soviet, and Russian film.

Starting in 2000, Tauris began to publish the KINOfiles Film Companions series, which the publisher describes as consisting of "accessible, illustrated paperbacks" that examine "Russian and Soviet films in their historical and aesthetic context, both as major cultural forces in Russian history and Soviet politics and as central to the development of world cinema." This year Tauris is launching KINOfiles Filmmakers' Companions, a new series geared toward students and general readers that aims to provide, according to the publisher, "introductions to and analyses of the most important filmmakers emerge from Russian cinema." Initial volumes will treat filmmakers Nikita Mikhalkov, Alexander Medvedkin, and Kira Muratova, among others.

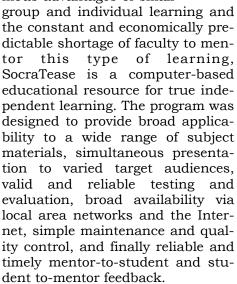
Also in the works is a new series that continues Tauris's British Film Guides series that it is developing collaboratively with Turner Classic Movies. The Turner Classic Movies British Film Guides will examine key British films, placing them in their historical context and reviewing their reception by critics and filmgoers alike.

Lola (cont.)

pushing students to choose the correct answers, but to heighten their overall understanding of the choices made in making the film.

The program is based on Dr. Gregory Naus' SocraTease pro-

gram in the pathology department of Pitt's medical school, and Feuer acknowledges the technical difficulties she has encountered in formatting this program around film. Developed in response to two well-recognized and often conflicting educational realities: the enormous advantages of small



"This wasn't an easy project," she says. "Getting the clips off the DVD was difficult." Dr. Feuer's proposal explains why SocraTease is a good fit as a supplement to film scholarship:

"In particular, the program's visual, audio and graphic capabilities lend themselves especially well to Film Studies. Many of the field's foundational concepts such as continuity editing are designed to go unnoticed, and are thus difficult for students to perceive in class, let alone analyze. Use of SocraTease would save much of the class time spent on

basic concepts that constitute film language and syntax; for instance, shot, fade, dissolve, zoom, match cut, jump cut, 180 degree rule. Students learn these concepts at different rates, so an online men-

> toring program SocraTease would be particularly helpful. Students might employ SocraTease at different times: some might use it to accompany the readings; others might prefer to use it to review material after class, before or after tests or even during take-home essay as-

The book used in conjunction with The Lola Project is Bordwell and Thompson's Film Art: An Introduction and Film Viewers Guide (Seventh Edition). Since this text is now available online from McGraw Hill, it will be possible simply to link to relevant sections. "The questions I developed were based on quiz-type questions similar to the ones I currently use to encourage students to complete the reading assignments before class," says Feuer.

The Lola Project was implemented in all Film Analysis classes this spring.



Coming in the next installment of The News Reel

A profile of professor Marcia Landy

An interview with screenwriter Ron Nyswaner

Faculty and student accomplishments galore!

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An Interview with Bob Kusbit

Born in Pittsburgh, Bob Kusbit cut his teeth on local news programs and programs like *The Gordon Elliot Show*, working his way up the ladder to Senior Vice President at MTV. He's best known for founding One Louder Productions, housed at MTV in New York, which produces shows such as *Boiling Points*, *Made*, *Camp Jim*, and *Spring Break*.

In February 2004, Pitt in Hollywood brought Kusbit to speak to students about his career in the industry and to offer advice to aspiring television producers. Professor Carl Kurlander interviewed him.

Carl Kurlander: Tell me a little about how you got into the business.

Bob Kusbit: After listening to me, you'll realize that there's absolutely no magic to making it in this business. It's a little bit of guts, taking chances, thinking outside the box, a lot of luck stumbling into the right people. And as you go along, you figure out what works and what doesn't work, and lo and behold, I look back now at twenty years and realize that I survived.

It's something I never thought I'd get into in the first place. I don't know if a producer knows what a producer does. I have my own company now, One Louder Productions, which is housed at MTV, right in Times Square, but I live here in Pittsburgh. I left my job as Senior Vice President of MTV a few years ago because I like to wrap my arms around the TV shows—create an idea, pitch it.

This morning, I was on the phone talking about *Made*, about our next eight episodes. The kids are already cast and are in the throes of being pushed around, being pushed by coaches and

screaming at coaches and crying and throwing up and trying to make their goals come true. We talked about where the stories are, and we talked about a marathon on MTV—MTV loves marathons. When we do a marathon, I just sit and pray for rain. Hope and pray for a rainy Saturday or Sunday. Or when Spring Break is on, I pray for snow.

CK: Tell us about Made.

BK: It's basically a life makeover show for kids. I wanted to follow them after their hair was cut, and they had new lives and see how they fair. There's no incubator or test tube better than high school. It's basically a world crammed into a hallway with lockers. You have the jocks on one side and the rednecks and freaks and hip hoppers on the other; and everyone's willing to pick on each other, no matter what, and everyone knows each other so well.

The idea was to find these kids who have a dream who think that's everything they need and give them the tools to achieve that dream. But I didn't want to give them the dream. We give them the coaching, and they have to have the guts to go after it. In the very first episode, the cheerleader episode, my bosses said to me, "What happens if Diana doesn't make the cheerleading squad?" And I knew that she would have learned a lot about herself and even if she didn't make it, she learned that you couldn't just put on a cheerleading outfit and be a different person. It doesn't mean you have different friends and doesn't mean people treat you differently.

CK: How do you cast and how do you shape a story?

BK: Made took shape as we were doing it. We had no idea the kids would narrate their stories, and the graphics just took shape. These kids just have so much to say and everyone around them has so much to say. If we were doing a story about adults, we'd never get neighbors to say, "He's a dork." The story just really tells itself. But at the same time we compare it to movies. We sit down and say, "This is our Rudy." Is there a love interest? What if they want to quit? We try to weave it together like a movie. There are five acts and each act needs tension and movement. At the end of the first act, it has to look like they don't have a chance to make it, and at the end of the second act maybe he does have a chance.

CK:What makes good casting?

BK: It's has to be someone that you root for or that you really root against. You want someone at the beginning who looks like they're not going to achieve his goal. If vou get someone who's going to make it in the beginning, it's not good television. We get kids who are great characters and are highly watchable. They're optimistic and willing to go through anything to achieve a goal. Then you look for a coach who's really going to add something to the mix, someone who's the opposite of the kid. It's like casting the lead actor and then the supporting cast.

CK: What does an executive do at MTV?

BK: The beauty of working at MTV is that you have to think like an 18-year-old your entire week, which can get you into trouble on the weekends. You'd like to be-

(Continued on page 6)

Our Higher Faculties

These faculty members have rently giving a new graduate shared some of their most recent course on American Cinema in the accomplishments.

Jazz Age, which concerns film in

Carl Kurlander's "The Steeltown Entertainment Summit," a onehour television special which he produced with WOED Multimedia was nominated this fall for a Mid-Atlantic Emmy. In June 2004. Kurlander was named one of Pittsburgh's Top 50 Cultural Forces by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. He was cited for his involvement in helping to link Pittsburgh and its successful film and television expatriates in order to foster a thriving entertainment industry here. He was also involved in a losing battle in trying to bring the latest George Romero Dead movie to shoot in Pittsburgh; it is now shooting in Canada. Kurlander is also teaching a Topics in Film course next spring about Pittsburgh and Film that will look at film related to this city from the early roots of the first Nickelodeon to filmmakers who have been inspired by the city. Finally, he was part of a panel discussion, "From Pittsburgh to Hollywood" at 412: The Pittsburgh Creative Nonfiction Festival along with Pitt alum and screenwriter Dennis Palumbo (My Favorite Year, 1982) who is now a therapist to screenwriters and author of Writing from the Inside Out (Wiley).

Lucy Fischer presented a paper entitled "Beyond Adaptation: The Case of the Filmmaker/Writer" at the meeting of the Modern Language Association in Philadelphia in December. She also published a review of Pavel Lungin's *Tycoon* in the on-line journal *KinoKultura* #7. In November, she led a discussion session of David O. Russell's film *Flirting with Disaster* at the Oaks Cinema. She is cur-

rently giving a new graduate course on American Cinema in the Jazz Age, which concerns film in the 1920s. In February she gave an invited talk at the University of Pennsylvania entitled "The Shock of the New: Electrification, Urbanization, Illumination and the Cinema." She will deliver the same talk at Pitt for a March session of the Pittsburgh Film Colloquium. In late March, she will travel to London to present a paper to the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Xinmin Liu recently published "Play and Being Playful: The Quotidian in Cinematic Remembrance of the Mao Era" in *Asian Cinema* (spring/summer 2004, p. 73-89).

Adam Lowenstein had two pieces published in KinoKultura #6 (October 2004): a review of Valerii Todorovsky's My Stepbrother Frankenstein (2004) and "David Cronenberg and the 'Face' of National Authorship." The latter was a contribution to a roundtable session of the Pittsburgh Film Colloquium on national cinema last year that also featured Marcia Landy and Nancy Condee (both of their pieces are included in this KinoKultura issue as well—see www.kinokultura.com). Lowenstein is also serving this year as chair of the Student Writing Award Committee for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. He taught two upper-level undergraduate courses during the fall 2004 semester-Advanced Seminar in Film Studies: Theories of Genre and Spectatorship, and Hitchcock's Films: Cinema in Suspense. Lowenstein also participated as a discussion leader at the Oaks Theater in Oakmont for their screening of David O. Russell's Three Kings (1999) and Soldier's Pay (2004).

Phil Watts' article "Roland Barthes' Cold War Cinema" is coming out in the journal Sub-Stance in this spring. In 2004, Watts gave six lectures: "Paris, Hollywood and France's Memories of World War II" at Washington College (Nov. 2004): "Cinematic Realism and the Rhetoric of Proof" at Conseil International d' Etudes francophones, Université de Liège, Belgium (June, 2004); "France's Far West 1950-1970" at Contemporary French and Francophone Studies, Florida State University (April 2004); "Preparing For and Landing a Job" at the Ninth Annual Preparing Future Faculty Conference, Indiana University (February 2004); and "Jacques Rivette's Classical Illusion" at the 29th Annual Conference on Literature and Film, Florida State University (January 2004).

Student Accomplishments

Matthew Teichman (doctoral student and teaching assistant in English) has an article, "Prelude to the Philosophy of Hollis Frampton," in *Film-Philosophy*, online at www.film-philosophy.com.

Daniel Wild (doctoral student and part-time instructor in English) assisted in the research for the republication of Siegfried Kracauer's works on film in "Inka Mülder-Bach," ed. Siegfried Kracauer Werke: Kleine Schriften zum Film, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004. He was invited to deliver a lecture on "Imagining and Imaging Berlin" for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Conference "Thinking Berlin: Global Cities, German Topographies, Agitated Times" at Cornell University in October 2004.

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Suzanne DeLaurentiis

"Scripts are a dime a dozen," said combination DeLaurentiis said she 10th and Wolf Executive Producer Suzanne DeLaurentiis recently to a group of Pitt Film Studies students and faculty. "I don't care what you've done."

DeLaurentiis took time away from the set of the mafia drama, filmed in Pittsburgh last fall, to speak about breaking into Hollywood, packaging yourself as a writer, filmmaker, or producer, and getting your work seen. The talk was co-sponsored by the Film Studies Program and Pitt in Hollywood.

Early in DeLaurentiis' career she made karate and horror films in New Jersey, her home state. Creatively raising funds is her specialty: "I had them financed by landscape owners and dump truck companies." She told students about how Rocky was financed through a dentist, and explained why it was important that, though her work covers the gamut of film genre and her production value has been upped from the Pine Barrens, it's still extremely important to her to keep her financing private. Her work includes While You Were Waiting (2002, producer), Adjustments (2001, producer), A Month of Sundays (2001, producer), Out of the Black (2001, producer), The Vegas Connection, (1999, producer), Pocket Ninjas (1997, associate producer), Mutant Man (1996, producer), Manneguin: On the Move (1991, associate producer), and Rocky V (1990, associate producer).

"It's important to tell financers who else is coming to the party," she quipped. "Get a name, any name, attached to your project, and that name will bring in more names." 10th and Wolf features an ensemble cast including Giovanni Ribisi and Tommy Lee, a

didn't have in mind from the beginning of development. "The first actor attached to the script was Johnny Depp. He eventually what your resume is; it's about backed out, and I don't really know how Tommy Lee got interested."

> DeLaurentiis stressed the importance of getting a good cast for a student film project, saying that it isn't always the quality of the acting that will make the film work; sometimes it's enough that they show up every day on time. "You can pull great performances out of dedicated people."

> Dedication is important to DeLaurentiis. After 25 years in the industry, she's still working with many of her original crew. Calling them hard workers, fast learners, and good people, she advised students to get a team together to make a film-editor, producer, etc.—before going to investors. "It not only makes you seem legit, but it also lets an investor know that you're not in charge of every aspect. No one can do everything."

"Have something in your slasher movies she made in the hand to show them, too," she continued. "A short will do, even if its

(Continued on page 7)

Kusbit (cont.)

lieve that it's just two guys in an office with loud music saying, "Dude, that would make a great show!" But really, there's a huge research department who keep in touch with kids every day. I know what people are watching

CK: How did you shape the network?

BK: I got to MTV when they were building the Times Square studio, and the idea was to build a new audience and to really try to create a buzz about MTV again. After the grunge era, MTV's ratings

were really down, and there wasn't anything musically coming onto the scene just then. In my first week, my boss came to me and said, "You're going to fire all the VJs tomorrow." So I fired Simon Rex and other people I didn't know. And then I had to hire all new people. It's all luck; Carson Daily was luck. We launched the live studio, and for about a year nothing worked. First there was MTV Live, and that wasn't consistent. And then I did Spring Break and brought on Jerry Springer. It was this weird mix. The ratings took off. And then the pop music thing hit. And then TRL took off.

CK: How do you figure out how to mix music and videos and programs?

BK: It's all about you, and the people you watch. If you want Headbanger's Ball, we'll bring it back. But if there are no ratings, well, what are you going to do? You take a chance on things, and you put them on television. If nobody watches, they're going to go away. Straight video hours don't get ratings.

CK: Did you watch MTV a lot before you worked for it?

BK: I'd like to say I did, but I really didn't watch. I played in a cheesy rock band like everyone else in college—there's a picture of me somewhere with a guitar strapped around my neck. I didn't know what I was going to do in college, but I stumbled into this dorm room one day and these guys were taking pictures of piles of beer cans and I said, "What major is this?" And they said, "Communications." I ran across campus that day and talked to my guidance counselor immediately.

Upcoming Events: 2005

March 22

Lucy Fischer spoke at the Pittsburgh Film Colloquium *Info: pitt.edu/~ppc*

March 31—April 17

12th Annual Jewish/Israeli Film Festival Info: pjiff.net

April 5

Screenwriter Ron Nyswaner will speak to students *Info: pittinhollywood.com*

April 14

Professor John Belton will speak to students *Info: pitt.edu/~filmst*

April 14-16

Chinese Film Festival *Info: pitt.edu/~filmst*

April 15

Leah Loyd will screen and speak about her film "At Highest Risk" *Info: pitt.edu/~filmst*

Cinema News

Newly Released to DVD and VHS

- The Motorcycle Diaries
- Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War
- I Heart Huckabees
- My Architect
- Around the Bend
- Heat: Special Edition
- Cowboys & Angels
- P.S.
- The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air: The Complete First Season
- The Grudge
- Bright Young Things
- Miami Vice: Season One





2004 Abstracts of Award-**Winning Student Papers**

Graduate Award: Charles Warner \$500 TItle

Though the cross-cultural remake occupies a site of extreme tension in debates on national cinema, filmmakers have begun to explore its potential as a progressive mode of film practice. One such example is The Good Thief (2003), Neil Jordan's refashioning of Jean-Pierre Melville's Bob le flambeur (1954), itself a cross-cultural emulation of American crime cinema.

Instead of supplanting or ironizing its source (maneuvers common to Hollywood remakes of foreign cinema). Jordan's film delivers an autocritique of remaking by weaving together a complex maze of facsimiles and transfigurations. Images, characters, and plot structures are doubled relentlessly, and the film even highlights reproducibility issues between separate exhibition technologies with its quick, transitional freeze-frames that stylistically mimic (and metaphorize) DVD dual-layer changeovers (unsettling pauses that occur when the disc shifts between layers of data storage).

Aesthetics aside, the film's multiethnic, international cast counters the homogenizing tendencies of U.S. transcultural makeovers. In short, if Hollywood uses the remake as an instrument for cultural and economic imperialism, then The Good Thief emerges as a metacritical response from a polycentric viewpoint.

Undergraduate Award: Jessica Fike

Sorry to Burst Your Bubble: Illusion in the Cinema of Attractions and 3-D Film

This paper applies Tom Gunning's concept of the "aesthetics of astonishment" to Arch Oboler's 3-D film The Bubble (1966). The paper demonstrates how 3-D films compare to and contrast from the cinema of attractions that appeared in the period from 1895 to around 1904. The paper observes the publicity phases and exhibition phases of these two forms of cinema and questions what is at stake with regards to the illusion/s created by the cinema of attractions and 3-D

Undergraduate Award: Claire Litton \$125 Title

A Diaspora usually develops its own identification separate from the original land of residence. A diasporic imaginary is a particular image of the homeland that represents diasporic residents as how they would like to be. In many cases, this imaginary is positive, reflecting a glamorized view of the mother country that is often arrested developmentally at the point when diasporic residents left. In the case of Deepa Mehta's Fire (1996), the imaginary is negative and allows Mehta the opportunity to support the very image of "home" she claims to be reviling.

DeLaurentiis (cont.)

tone doesn't match your script. When we in the industry can watch something, we can get into it. It makes it real to us."

She also advised students to get their work into film festival circuits, even if it's your first short. There's money to be made from selling a short film to an independent production company; Quentin Tarantino often cruises festivals looking for shorts to buy. "They may want to develop it into something bigger, or nothing may ever come of the sale, but at least you have money in your pocket to finance the next one. When it comes to Hollywood, It's not what you have, how you do it, or what you do. It's about getting it done."

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Other related Web sites: www.pitt.edu/~slavic/slovak.html www. globalservicelearning.org Pitt Alumni, Students, and Faculty: Have something to toast?



Let us know about it! E-mail your film studies accomplishments to acamp@pitt.edu

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