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**Watching the directors**

The Brooks Institute's Documentary Film Festival focuses its lens on issues both local and national

~ By MOLLIE VANDOR ~

**S**tudent filmmakers will take center stage — or screen, as the case may be — as the Brooks Institute in Ventura hosts its second annual Student Documentary Festival.

Brent Huffman, who is a faculty member in the institute's Visual Journalism Department, organized this year's festival. He expects a few hundred Brooks students, staffers and supporters to attend the festivities on Jan. 25 and 26. Both days will feature programs of student films, starting at 4 p.m. and hosted by local filmmaker Ricky Ray. The screenings will be followed by receptions in which the filmmakers will discuss their work with attendees, and films screened during the festival will be eligible for an Audience Award Huffman said could come with a new video camera for the winning filmmakers.

"There are about 20 documentaries in total, and on average, they probably last about 15 minutes each," Huffman said. "And there's a reception after each night, from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., where students and people from the community can meet the filmmakers and ask them questions and that kind of stuff."

All the entries in the festival were made by students, through Brooks' Film and Visual Journalism Departments, Huffman said, and most of the movies were made by small crews of two or three people who funded their films out of their own pockets.

"They're all story-driven films," Huffman said. "They're student projects, created in classes. So the students find something they're interested in, pitch the idea, write a treatment and then follow through and do some

California in charge – for now

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### **Wild in the mouth**

Circle Jerks frontman Keith

research and then make the films within the class structures.”

Most of the movies were made in and around Ventura, Huffman said, but a few of the films tackle more international topics.

“There is a piece about AIDS in Thailand, and there’s a piece about this small community, I think it’s in North Dakota ... where they have this local hero and the film sort of leads you on, sort of not telling you who this person is,” Huffman said. “And then, you find out it’s this rooster that sort of meant the world to this small town. In the course of the film, the rooster gets killed and people get emotional. It’s kind of a bizarre scene.” Locals looking for more familiar fare will also find plenty of films tackling topics closer to home, Huffman said.

“I think pretty much all of them, or the majority of them, are about local Ventura issues,” Huffman said. “There’s a great piece about a young boy, he’s 13 years old, and his mother’s addicted to crack-cocaine. They even call the little boy ‘Tweaky.’ And he kind of grows up in the skate culture and the documentary kind of watches him grow up. It’s a very compelling short.”

Steve Lamme, a recent graduate of the Brooks Institute’s Visual Journalism Department, made the short, called Warner Kids, with fellow Brooks student Drew A. Kelley. Lamme said he decided to make a movie about Ventura’s skate culture after experiencing it firsthand during his time at Brooks.

“I skateboard on the Avenue a lot, at West Park, and so I know some of those kids and I think they’re growing up in a really harsh area of town. But they’re staying away from the gangs and staying out of bigger trouble by skateboarding,” Lamme said. “They’re not necessarily completely out of it, they’re still doing drugs and still getting into trouble, but not to the extent that their classmates and their neighbors are, because they have skateboarding to look to, and I just think they’re a really cool community of kids. One of the kids [the film’s protagonist] went through a bunch of hard times and a bunch of family problems. He just kind of went through some tough times, but his friendship with everyone prevailed through whatever trouble he was having, and that’s what the film is kind of about.”

Warner Kids was made for approximately \$400, which Lamme and Kelley subsidized with borrowed equipment from Brooks, Lamme said. He said he plans to speak a little bit about the film during the festival, but he said he hopes attendees focus on the film and not the filmmakers.

“I don’t necessarily want to stand on a pedestal, but we’ll stand up and say something about it,” Lamme said.

For his part, Lamme said he hopes entering the festival will give him and Kelley some more experience with exhibiting their film, so they can decide what to do with it next.

“We’ll probably put it in some small festivals and see if people want to show it,” Kelley said. “This is either going to boost our confidence to do that stuff or kill it, because if you work on something for six months, eight

Morris pulls no punches, whether talking about his bandmates, his health or

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Ventura filmmaker Josh Landan goes to the Santa Barbara Film Festival with *Against the Grain*

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### Watching the directors

The Brooks Institute's Documentary Film Festival focuses its lens on issues both local and national

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months, 10 months, it's hard to see the magic in it. ... So it will be nice to show it to some people and get fresh eyes on it." ★

*Brooks' Second Annual Documentary Film Festival takes place Jan. 25-26 beginning at 4 p.m. in the campus screening room. 5301 N. Ventura Ave., Ventura. For more information, contact Brent Huffman at 653-8344.*

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**BLOG - SOUR GRAPES**

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