

Setting the Stage for Success

OC Film School students get professional work experience on feature-length film *Rucker*

OC Film School students might dream of Hollywood ambitions, but two Olympic College professors recently brought a taste of Hollywood to Bremerton.

Past and present OC filmmaking students worked on a feature-length horror film shot in Bremerton called *Rucker*. Conceived by OC filmmaking professors Amy Hesketh and Aaron Drane, who are married and frequently collaborate, the film is about a big-rig trucker — and serial killer — named *Rucker*.

The basic idea for the film came to Drane in a dream last winter, he said. Hesketh was enthusiastic when he told her about it, and the pair immediately set to work developing the storyline and characters together.

When outlining the script, Drane left a lot of room for Hesketh to add a personal touch to the story and characters.

"Amy's really good about imbuing the characters with a very strong sense of subtext that brings them to life," he said. "I wanted to provide her maneuvering room for making this film, and I think she did an amazing job of it."

Hesketh said it was an emotionally involved story for her. "I tend to draw upon a lot of personal experiences for my characters," she said. "What I'm always hoping for is that I take something very difficult and painful and through that transformative process, it becomes something else. It takes on a life of its own and I can give it away to other people."

The horror genre is moving away from slasher flicks in favor of more thoughtful fare, relying less on jump scares and more on creating a lingering sense of dread that sticks with viewers long after they've left the theater. *Rucker* is that kind of horror film, Drane said.

"When you watch a horror film, when you participate in the content and the characters, you feel a sense of shared vulnerability," he said. "What we tried to do with this film was tap into the human experience and the underlying fears associated with real-life issues. It's real-life horror."

Hesketh and Drane saw the film as a perfect opportunity to give their students hands-on experience working on a feature film. Although they flew out A-list talent — including actor and Slipknot frontman Corey Taylor and renowned visual effects artist Steve Johnson — Drane estimated that 90 percent of the cast and crew was made up of current students or graduates of The OC Film School.

"All of the students, regardless of what role they took on, showed an amazing dedication and an extreme willingness to learn," Hesketh said. "They had to have this really huge learning curve during the production and they were great. Both current and former students just excelled in their roles."

One of the benefits of The OC Film School is its emphasis on hands-on experience, something Hesketh and Drane both wish they'd had more of when they were in film school. With *Rucker*, OC students got real, professional moviemaking experience that will stand out on their resumes as they seek employment.

"I really was so impressed and blown away," Drane said. "I love how they came together and collaborated. I always talk in the classroom about the necessity of collaboration, but they really demonstrated it."



The Cast and Crew behind the scenes of *Rucker*, shooting in Bremerton with the OC Film School.

Rick Rivera is in the film school's current Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) cohort and has three quarters left before he graduates. He was an associate producer on *Rucker* and worked closely with Drane and Hesketh on things like finding locations and props and helping to put together the film's cast and crew. Once production started, Rivera's day-to-day responsibilities resembled those of any film producer: Walking through each of the departments and making sure people had what they needed for the day's shoots.

Rivera served 24 years in the Navy after attending Washington State University's theater program. When he retired from military service, The OC Film School caught his eye and he met with program coordinator Tim Hagan. "After our talk, I was sold," he said. "It's getting back to what I was originally intending to do with my life before I went into the military."

After he graduates, Rivera would like to further pursue producing and writing. "Writing is one of those ways to get those stories that are in your head out and onto paper," he noted. "But producing has been a pretty easy fit for me."

"This experience fits perfectly into my resume," he added. "With producing you have to kind of know it all, or at least know enough of each section so you know the right questions to ask."

Bryan Braungardt, who is in the same BAS cohort as Rivera, was enrolled in a multimedia marketing program in the greater Seattle area when he heard about The OC Film School. OC's emphasis on filmmaking over marketing was a better fit for him, he said.

"I fell in love with the program, because I wanted to do film more than multimedia marketing," he said.

Braungardt shot all the behind-the-scenes footage for Rucker that will be used in an Electronic Press Kit and potentially as bonus footage after the film is available for purchase. He said he loves all aspects of filmmaking and wants to learn as much as he can.

"That's why I came to this school," he said, adding that he'd like to ultimately work as a Director of Photography on films. "Working on Rucker really helps me because it's getting me a lot of good experience behind the camera. It was a great movie to shoot on. I'm excited for it to come out. Just by being on set, you can tell it's a winner."

Principal photography for the film has wrapped and it's now in active post-production, Hesketh said. Drane said they are seeking international distribution — but the couple also plans to host a screening at a local theater so Bremerton residents can see their community on the silver screen.

Hesketh and Drane hope this won't be the last feature film OC students get to work on. "We look forward to doing it again," Drane said. "We'd like to shoot one movie a year. We have another one ready to go — we just have to get a cast and get it funded."

“ Being a part of Rucker helps me because I'm getting a lot of good experience working behind the camera. ”

-OC Film Student Bryan Braungardt

From Hollywood to Bremerton

Slipknot's frontman Corey Taylor visits Bremerton to join Rucker cast in supporting role.

Corey Taylor has been spitting vocals for metal band Slipknot since 1997. Taylor is also an actor, and that endeavor brought him to Bremerton to appear in Rucker the Trucker, portraying the titular character's trucking buddy.

Taylor had previously appeared in the film Fear Clinic, which was written and produced by OC Film School Professor Aaron Drane.

"It was as easy as Aaron reaching out to me," Taylor said of how he ended up involved in Rucker. "He and I worked together on Fear Clinic, and apparently I left a lasting impression. He sent me Rucker and we were able to make the time work, and it was boom, boom, boom — the rest is history."

Drane agreed that the actor left a lasting impression on him.

"He's a rock star," he said. "I mean that in every sense of the word. He is one of the coolest guys I know, and he's somebody who has to function at a very high level, yet really goes far out of his way to help other people achieve their art." The fact that Taylor — who plays in multiple bands — was able to fit a visit to Bremerton into his busy schedule was impressive, Drane added. "This is a guy who is on tour every week and he made time to come here and do this," he said.

Taylor said he had an awesome time working on the film in Bremerton. "We had a great time," he said. "We found a role for my fiancée as well. We had a great time shooting it."



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Rucker the Trucker Film Crew, Corey Taylor from Slipknot, Cast and Crew on the set of Rucker.