

## Student Filmmakers Start Revolution

LA MIRADA, CA, December 7, 2004 – A small team of student filmmakers at Biola University have set out to change the way students make movies. Calling themselves the Monsters of Efficiency (M.O.E.), this innovative production crew has spent the last two years in pre-production on a suspense-packed, feature-length motion picture called *Project X*.

"A student-made feature film isn't all that unusual," explains writer and director Joshua Sikora, "but what we're setting out to do is somewhat revolutionary." Sikora and his crew want to tackle a genre and style that students rarely attempt.

An organization of boundless energy and big ideas, M.O.E. has already made a name for itself producing projects of different genres, including westerns (*Sundown*), screwball comedies (*Golf a la Carté*), and psychological dramas (*The Green Leaves of Autumn* and *CandleLight*). With Sikora at the helm, the forthcoming *Project X* will be their most ambitious undertaking to date. A suspense film with sci-fi undertones, *Project X* tells of how power plant workers are put to the test, when a genetically engineered creature escapes from a government facility.

Sikora and producer Eric Hann dreamed up the idea as a short subject more than two years ago, but it wasn't until visual effects supervisor Brian McKelvey took them on a tour of their university's private power plant that they decided to set it in that unique location and expand to feature length. Sikora initially tackled the immense job of writing the screenplay, but over the last few months, fellow M.O.E. writer Joshua C. Cullum has been instrumental in revisions.

Inspired by the work of M. Night Shyamalan (*The Sixth Sense*, *Signs*), Sikora promises that *Project X* will be an honest-to-goodness character piece, as well as a pulse-pounding thriller. "This shouldn't just be an ordinary suspense film," Sikora explains. "It should be about the people." But that doesn't exclude edge-of-your-seat thrills. In fact, Sikora plans to use the script as an opportunity to deliver a fun ride in the best Hollywood tradition. "No one walks out of *Alien* saying, 'that was a great story,'" Sikora says.

The task of making any film, let alone a feature, is indeed daunting. But the M.O.E. crew considers themselves well-trained for such an endeavor. Much of the crew cut their teeth working on Biola University's *Blank Slate*, which earlier this year was a regional competitor in the Student Academy Awards. *Blank Slate* was shot on high-definition video by Eric Hann, who hopes to revisit the same technology for *Project X*. Viewing their experience on the set of *Blank Slate* (which ran over 50 minutes in length) as a training ground for future projects, M.O.E. feels adequately prepared to meet the challenges of a full feature.

M.O.E. also found a way to beat what could normally prove to be a student filmmaker's greatest challenge: the lack of time resulting from being a full-time student. In order to make room for *Project X* in the middle of a busy school schedule, Sikora proposed a three-unit upper division production class at Biola University to be created specifically for the film. Craig Detweiler, chair of the film department, was more than happy to oblige. Meeting every Friday, the *Project X* class includes 13 of the film's 30 crewmembers.

As of this week, the M.O.E. members remain in the throes of an ambitious fundraising campaign, which has lately proved the greatest obstacle the team has faced. Anticipating a budget of \$15,000, by mid-December M.O.E. has devised a number of fundraising events under the supervision of associate producer Kenny Ryan. "We've found our greatest success though in the generosity of friends and family," Sikora explains. "Like the artists of old, we find our best support in patrons of the arts--those people willing to donate their money so that we can produce great art."

Money will remain a challenge throughout production and into the long post-production on the film (the anticipated premiere will be October 2005), but Sikora seems unfazed. He views the project as a wonderful experiment. "I know why students don't tackle feature-films--it's difficult. Almost impossible. But I also know this crew--they're used to working the impossible." Whether a success or not, all of the students will have learned a lot about filmmaking. For professor Craig Detweiler, who also serves as supervising producer on the film, that's the whole purpose of this--he says, "Whenever I see students going out and taking risks, I get excited--because I think that's exactly the time and the place."

To learn more about the Monsters of Efficiency and *Project X*, visit their website at [www.the-moe.com](http://www.the-moe.com). You'll find a plethora of information about the crew and the production as well as multimedia and behind-the-scenes videos. The crew also continues to seek for donations and fundraising opportunities are available through the site.

### **About Monsters of Efficiency**

A team of student filmmakers full of boundless energy and big ideas, the Monsters of Efficiency (M.O.E.) are committed to creating quality motion pictures using the most efficient means available. Founded in 2002, this group has produced seven short films, including the award-winning productions *Sundown* (2003), *CandleLight* (2003), and *The Green Leaves of Autumn* (2004). The Southern California team's next film is the suspense-filled feature film *Project X* (2005). For more information on M.O.E. and its productions, visit their website at [www.the-moe.com](http://www.the-moe.com).

### **About Biola University**

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