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Writer, Director Lillian Wang, Courtesy of Carol Petersen

The Skills are Alive with “The Sound of Movies”

by Janet Jung

UCLA’s Lillian Wang shows us a part of the movie-going experience that we all take for granted--the anticipation.

A finalist for the 2004 Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker Award competition, UCLA Film School alumni Lillian Wang shows that the cinematic experience is all about joyful anticipation in her short film, *The Sound of Movies*. From buying tickets to popcorn, to searching for good seats, Lillian focuses the 50-second film on the movie-goer’s preparation for watching the movie as the noises from these experiences compose a symphony. The film ends as the film within the film begins and the faces in the audience light up as the picture flickers.

The Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker Award is a film school competition where students submit screenplay ideas for a 50 second short film about movies or the movie-going experience. Ten finalists are chosen nationwide, Lillian among them, and are given \$5000 to produce their short film. It took her three months to accomplish, but filming only took one day.

Lillian says she wanted her story to step away from the mundane narrative format and step toward something more unique. Thus, the element of sound as a unifying element in the film became her focus. “I love the idea of having your senses filled with the familiar sights and sounds of a movie theater when you go to the movies. The sound of popcorn popping, the sound that the seats make when you sit down, the sound of someone slurping a soda--these are all wonderfully recognizable as part of the entire movie-going experience. I envisioned all these sounds coming together to form a catchy percussive

soundtrack. So *The Sound of Movies* came about, and it was partly inspired by *Stomp* (the theater group), whose work I admire.”

Inventive and exuberant, this film pokes fun at the eventfulness of the movie-going experience as films today have come to serve a social function as well as entertainment. Workers and audience members alike dance to everyday theatre noises as Coca-Cola product placements humorously abound. Of all the things to epitomize anticipation, Lillian focuses on sound. And it makes sense because we often hear things before we see them in the movies. A common horror flick technique of inciting apprehension, the audience usually hears an ominous sound before encountering the villain. What makes us say “what’s that sound?” is used to the fullest capacity with Lillian, yet she’s not trying to scare us. “I wanted the sounds (as music) to evoke this familiar feeling of excitement and anticipation. The music composed for this film was made up entirely of real sounds and sound effects of things you would hear in a movie theater. Except for the musical fanfare at the end, no other musical instruments were used...the result I wanted to achieve was one that was both real and hyper-real--real sounds creating a stylistic score of rhythm and movement.”

What is also refreshing about Lillian’s take is her choice to include people of all races and ages. “It was very important for me to depict ethnic diversity in this film. If we take a look around us, in life, we are surrounded by people from a rich diversity of backgrounds and this is what I wanted to show.” This rich diversity includes an Asian teenager among her multi-ethnic friends, as well as an Asian mother and daughter buying tickets.

Hopefully, we will hear more from Lillian Wang in the future as this accomplishment of Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker finalist only shows the potential for what is to come.

If you'd like to view this film, please go to www.cosmostreet.com/la/ccrf and click on "cokefinal.mov". For more information on the 2004 Coca-Cola finalists, visit: http://www.youthdevelopment.coca-cola.com/art_refreshing_winners.html.

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