



Conference Panel 3

Monday, April 8, 2002

Triangle, Six Years Later

Panel Members

Pavel Jech, FAMU, Prague, Czech Republic

Renen Schorr, Director JSFS, Jerusalem, Israel

Lauri Törhönen, Director, UIAH, Helsinki, Finland

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Malte Wadman



Pavel Jech



Lauri Törhönen



Renen Schorr

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Triangle, Six Years Later

In 1996, CILECT began to address the issue of communication and collaboration among the creative triangle of writers, directors, and producers. Some viewed the Triangle project as a necessary corrective to the 1960's *auteur* ideology that dominated many film schools. Others saw it as diminishing the role of the individual film artist in an increasingly market-oriented system. How has *Triangle* affected the film and television school curriculum, and what lessons can be learned from the process as well as the outcomes?

Lauri Törhönen

Dear friends and colleagues, I will present the panelist. First I present the empty chairs: Bob Nickson is on the agenda but couldn't come. From the beginning Bob has been our outside point of view for the Triangle process. He brought an American point of view to this European process. The empty chair on the left is actually mine, and I am sitting in the empty chair in the middle, which actually belongs to Professor Dick Ross, who has been the soul, if not the body, of the Triangle Project. The poor man has already written two books on Triangle meetings and a third one is coming. Dick wasn't able to attend, so I am sitting in for him.

The other panelists, who are in their chairs, are Renen Schorr, from the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School, Jerusalem. Renen is both a producer and a director, so we can describe him as a Triangle skeptic. Pavel Jech from FAMU, Prague is a screenwriter, and Malte Wadman, from Lillehammer Norway is neither a producer nor a screenwriter nor a director.

I am a director by profession, and I inherited an ancient, old-fashioned film school in which there was a lot of analysis and theory, but very little filmmaking. The motion picture theater was the core of the film school, instead of the studio. The students, who I also inherited, and some of them unfortunately are still there, wrote scripts by themselves for the 10-minute films they were assigned to make, which finally emerged as 52-minute features. As a result, just one student could ruin the budget for the whole year. So my taking the job of running the school was an act of true optimism.

I missed my first CILECT General Assembly because my predecessor wanted to travel to Mexico with his wife. In

Mexico I might have at least met the faces and seen the hair color of the people who were to become my international colleagues before they turned gray, in and during the Triangle process, but I missed the opportunity. So when the original Triangle documentation started to arrive, I instinctively went to Rome to attend the first meeting without knowing much about what was going to happen. I only wanted to see the CILECT people.

The Rome meeting changed my life and my world, and with that, the film school and my point of view towards everything about it. Triangle, as it began, was everything I wanted to happen in the film industry in my country and in the film school as well.

For those of you who don't know anything about Triangle, this is a project sponsored by GEECT and CILECT and it's a European response to Hollywood because somebody noticed that European cinema is overwhelmed by the producer-driven American studio system, and the weak point in European film is the producer. Somebody had to do something about it. I think it was a good idea for the film schools to pick up the ball, and in Rome, six years ago, we decided that the right place to educate film producers was in the film schools instead of the schools of business or university departments of economics. We need film producers, not economists or corporate managers.

We will try to be brief and try to save some time for discussion. I'd like the first round to be about what the film schools did before Triangle, and then we will go on to what happened during and after Triangle. First, Renen Schorr.

Renen Schorr

I cannot give you a full report on the situation of the schools before Triangle because our school in Jerusalem is not the typical "six pack" type of school by which I mean meaning admitting six directing students, six screenwriting students, six editing students, six cinematography students, six producing students, etc. to each of the six departments. Our school, which is twelve years old, admits students who have not yet chosen a specialty. It is only during their studies that they evolve into directors, writers, editors, etc. and all students have the option to direct and to make a second year film or a diploma film, So it's not a typical, European film school in that regard. Our philosophy is that, especially in small countries like ours, a school should have a role in changing the industry, and I

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must say that after our twelve years of existence, it's my belief that we have contributed to a subtle change within the Israeli industry. Yet, without doubt, we failed to bring producers to the industry. Our school, like most of the European schools taught students how to be production managers, or line producers. We've still not succeeded in producing an executive producer.

Our thinking was that we should proceed one additional step and that's where we are heading now, maybe even one step ahead of Triangle. We wish to make the producer's role in the school more successful, and to take the radical step of fully assimilating the role of the producer into the organization of the school.

Given that until now, the director is the person who is running the show, we would like to do something which is quite dangerous in a film school. We want to select in advance the most promising people to be producers and educate them not only in the basics of production, but especially in story editing, storytelling, costing, and scheduling, and then give them the opportunity put their knowledge to work and to select the projects to be made in the school and actually produce them.

In brief, this means that the school will surrender its artistic power and its funds to five, six, or seven senior producers, with the hope of getting two really outstanding producing graduates. I think we can change the industry, not in a cumulative way, but from above, because in Israel, and I believe many small countries, we lack real producers who can identify a good story and go with it, and find the right director, the right writer and production team, and understand costing and finance and marketing. If our school can educate one or two really good producers every year, it will change the industry and make a revolution.

Malte Wadman

I had no experience of film school before Triangle. My fantastic opportunity was that in 1997 I was asked to start a film school in Norway, from scratch. Of course, there had been many groups and subgroups from the government,

from the ministry, from other film schools, who were setting up the parameters within which we were supposed to work. The groups and consultants had all been traveling around the world for a long time looking at film schools, but unfortunately, I could not get very much out of their reports.

From my own experience of teaching at different schools, I learned about the problems with the existing system. We found that at many schools the cinematographers graduated and went straight out to shoot commercials, the documentary people were all right because they were getting work in television, and the scriptwriters also got nice jobs when they graduated, but there wasn't any producer training at all, and the role of the directing students within the school was very different from what existed in the industry. The film school students were being trained as *auteurs*. The reason for these director-led schools had to do with the historical situation that existed when they were organized. The schools in Western Europe were largely set up just after the introduction of television, which coincided with the invasion of the *nouvelle vague*, the "new wave," and they were mostly school for directors and cinematographers.

The introduction of screenwriting into my school's curriculum came in the 1980's and producing didn't come until the 1990's, initially somewhat outside of what one might consider the core curriculum. This led, for example, to scriptwriters, who were very much aware of the situation in the real world, writing a lot of scripts, but they were never produced, because the directors, living in the obsolete world of the *auteur*, were writing their own scripts and making their own films.

The producing student was reduced to being a kind of production manager or first assistant for the director, who was actually running the show. So, when we began to design the school, we discussed this very thoroughly. This was between the first and second Triangle meeting. I

stole Ian Closson from the Dramatiska Institutet in Stockholm, to be our curriculum coordinator, and he had been to the first Triangle meeting, so we picked up some ideas from there and started to organize our new school in a different

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Schorr

way.

We decided very early to create a “storytelling school” with six equal storytellers, one from each of the school’s departments. They would all be involved in telling the story of the film. At the same time, we introduced the idea of the Triangle.

Lauri Törhönen

I remember that on the first day in Rome, someone proposed the idea of educating creative producers. After all the decades of educating very creative directors, should we start educating creative producers? What is a creative producer? It started that simply. We started by realizing what we lacked in the European film industries and in many other countries in the way of creative producers, and agreed on the need to grow them. We started with many answers, but no good questions, and because there is no trade or profession called “creative producer” in the official vocabulary of film schools, we decided to start educating “producers” who are creative, together with directors and screen writers, as a creative triangle.

Pavel Jech

It’s fascinating to be here in Australia to see this international collage of jet lag. Everyone falling asleep! Once the Australians start to sleep, we know we are in trouble.

Lauri asked us to divide our presentations into two parts: one pre-Triangle and the other, dealing with what happened after the concept was introduced to our schools. As far as I understand Triangle, the goal is not simply to enhance the role of the creative producers, but also to ensure that the education in the film schools accurately reflects the reality of film production. For that reason, the producer needs to have a more prominent role, and if it isn’t that way in some countries, it will need to be addressed soon, because that’s the reality of how more and better films can be produced. The reality of the situation which my school, FAMU, in the Czech Republic, has been in for the last 50 years has been quite different, for obvious historical reasons. Most of its history has been under a Communist regime and the realities of the film industry were very different from the present.

FAMU was actually founded in 1946, shortly after the end of World War II and two years before the Communist takeover of the country, and but it’s interesting to note that the same year, both the film industry and the Barandov Film Studio were also nationalized. The system that evolved, and FAMU itself, were very analogous to the realities of film production in Czechoslovakia. At that time there was a pervading ideology that “for us, film is the most important of the arts,” as Lenin proclaimed, because of the propa-

ganda value. Film could reach the mass audience. The film industry at that time was very highly subsidized. There was no problem in financing films, and each year there were 30 or more feature films made in Czechoslovakia. Likewise, the school was a very well funded and a very privileged place to be.

From the very beginning, the school had a system of departments, There were five original departments, including what would become the core of Triangle, a producing department, a directing department, and a screenwriting department, and they also used a system of practical exercises, all funded by the school, which combined the efforts of the departments, so there was a producer from the producing department, director from the directing department, and so on.

Perhaps paradoxically or unintentionally, the system created strong artistic personalities, because the first group of the students who came into the industry after going to school in the 1950’s were those famous names who created the Czech new wave. As I said, FAMU was in a very privileged position. Its graduates were guaranteed jobs in the state film industry because they had been trained by the state. This went to such extremes that when Vera Chytilová, perhaps our most famous female filmmaker, was banned from making films during the 1970’s for seven years, she wrote an open letter to the President of the country stating that, because the state had paid for her education, the people who were preventing her from making films were actually committing a crime against the state. I don’t know if that’s a persuasive argument for other film school graduates, but it actually worked for her and she was reinstated, somewhat grudgingly, but nevertheless, she was allowed to make films again.

Where were the producers under the old system? Like all industries in the communist system, the school and the film industry were centrally planned. Financing was not an issue. The money was there because it was important to the state to have films. The only issue was ideology, and so producers weren’t producers in the sense that we know them today, they were basically production managers, and it was the same in the school. A student at the school was trained to be a production manager, and his or her function in the school on a school production was to be a production manager.

Over the years, some additional departments were

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added, but the main filmmaking departments were directing, documentary, and animation. Each department accepted about five or six students per year. The producing department accepted 15 students per year because they wanted each one of those student to service the productions of the directing, documentary, and animation students. As a result, there was not a strong tradition of creative producers either in the country or in the state's film school.

Now the situation is changing, I will save that story for the second half, the Triangle half.

Lauri Törhönen

When I graduated from the film school, the head of the school was a very well-known director who not only wrote scripts and directed and edited his own films, but he owned the production company. In one case he even fell in love with his female star of the comedy he was making and he just wasn't able to cut his girl friend's performance, so the film was half-an-hour too long for the script. I had an ongoing argument with him about this in my diploma year. I didn't know anything about Triangle, but my simple idea was that two pairs of eyes and two brains are better than one pair of eyes and one brain. Later on, after graduating, I was working as Warren Beatty's assistant director on "Reds." This was Warren Beatty's ultimate performance. He had a close-up taken of himself in 113 takes, because after all, he was the producer, and the star, and the director, and the co-writer of the film, and as a result of this "auteurism", making the film was a production catastrophe. After graduating from film school, witnessing such craziness in this business affected my point of view when I got to Rome for the first Triangle meeting.

Melbourne's wonderful tram system is a useful metaphor. Once you step on the tram there are designated stops and you can't turn the tram away from the track. On the Triangle tram, Rome was stop number one, Terni was number two and Torino was number three, and we asked to have number four as well. Sometimes, trams go from point A to point B and in some places like Helsinki, for example, they make loops or even figure-eights, and I ask myself whether the Triangle track will turn out to be a loop. The *auteur* was abandoned, and then came the Triangle and perhaps *auteurism* will come back at some point. The Swedes had a seminar in Gothenburg last winter which was called "The Return of the *Auteur*," so I suppose that for some film schools, taking up something like Triangle is an act of violence toward film education.

As Caterina D'Amico's mother, the great screenwriter Suso

Cecchi D'Amico said in the first Triangle, "the school should exist to teach the skills, the craft. Then, when the students have learned the craft, they can go out and do what they want." That's basically what this is all about. Now we come to what happened after the Triangle concept was introduced into the curriculum and where we stand at the moment.

Renen Schorr

I begin with a very radical idea. I think that Triangle should have more of an edge, because the fundamental problem in the schools is still helping producing students learn how to make decisions. Even if it's collaborative work on the Triangle model, firm decision has to be reached, and the model we are thinking about at our school is to give the student producers the full responsibility of initiating projects and bridging between the writers and directors within the school. I think that we can have real producers coming out of the school in the same way as we now have directors or cinematographers or editors.

Producers trained in this way would certainly be quickly kidnapped by the existing industry, but with proper training they will form an alternative industry.

Malte Wadman

When we began to organize the Norwegian film school, we had a long meeting with all the incoming professors. We agreed that we would run the school on the Triangle model and incorporate Triangle into the teaching system. I think one of the most important things need in order to run the Triangle system is that there be complete agreement among the entire the teaching staff. You can't have strong competition among your professors or heads of departments, because at some later stage it could easily lead to conflicts and antagonisms. We discussed this at length and we designed some exercises to introduce the Triangle concept at a very early stage of the students' film education, because as we all know, students, especially directing students, arrive with very *auteuritarian* ideas. Their self image is that of the director who decides on everything. Most of them have shot some films on digital, and they have edited on Final Cut Pro or something similar, so they have had some practice in this.

When they come to the school, students have to quickly adapt to a collaborative situation. We designed the first film exercise so that the entire class, consisting of six students from each of the six school departments, would form into production teams. That meant that on a particular Monday, each student would come to the school and tell a story that they had written down on one sheet of paper. Interestingly, I found out that they very often, the best story ideas came from sound technicians.

The screenwriting students would pick twelve ideas from the 36 ideas that were submitted, and return in one week with a story outline or synopsis for each one, which they would then present to the group. Then, the directors and the producers would pick the six to be made. In this way, they are introduced to highly collaborative work at a very early stage.

This method is used in all but the last production exercises until the last exercise. In the last exercise, they themselves choose how they work, but whatever they decide, they must use the scriptwriters. This means that the directors can't write their own film, but they may collaborate with a scriptwriter. We ask that producers give us six films of a certain running time over a specified number of months, and that they work with a fixed amount of money from the school. They may also raise more money from outside sources. The producing students are responsible for running both the finances and logistics of the final film exercise.

This has worked rather well, but we've also experienced some unexpected problems. The most important problem is that there is a tendency to shift over to the old television style where you have a clear division between the non-technicians and the technicians, the "creative triangle" and "the rejected triangle" as they call themselves, consisting of the editors, cinematographers, and sound technicians. This is because the directors, screenwriters, and producers are so involved in creating the story and script, that when they come to working with the visual side, they put less effort into it, and the traditionally strong connection between the director and cinematographer has been weakened. We also have had a problem with the scriptwriters, because they have a tendency of doing their thing in the triangle at the beginning, and then jumping out of it, and then returning and saying "I didn't write that film."

Then, of course, there is the producing side. It's very hard, to train producers, because if you are a producer outside the school, you get your idea or your script and you take five to seven years to get financing. In the school, we have precisely the opposite situation. A producing student doesn't

have any idea of what he's going to do in twelve months, except that he has to deliver the film. We have had to include some specific training for producers that uses case studies and development ideas, and to enable them to work on projects outside the film school in order to train them properly.

And then of course, we have a problem, the director. The directors have a problem when they get out of the film school. While in the film school, they were the heroes, and they had all these people running around helping them. After graduation, all these producers get jobs, all these editors, cinematographers, and sound technicians disappear into the industry, and there is the lone director, standing there and wondering what happened to everybody.

When directors, who arrived at the school with the idea of being *auteurs*, get into the situation where they are working in a triangle, they become a bit insecure because they are not who they thought they'd be, and they really don't know what to do. Everybody else can hide behind a computer or behind a editing table, camera, or sound console, leaving the director feeling rather lonely. As a result, we have to be much more detailed in the training of directors in the handling of actors and the skills of leadership, and this has to be a very specific part of the training of the directors.

In conclusion, I should tell you that what we will be discussing among our staff, two weeks from now when I get back to Lillehammer and we look back on this year of Triangle at our school, is how we add to this chain. How do we make the Triangle roll, how do we bring this collaborative effort which has worked rather well to function for the rest of the chain as well.

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Lauri Törhönen

I've been observing what happens in Sweden and Norway from the sidelines, as a spectator, and even if Malte is having problems with students of directing, it is fascinating. It seemed at first that the Norwegian school was a Xerox copy of the Swedish school, where Malte previously taught, but it's really a different kind of school. The auteur tradition is very hard to get rid of it, but I must say that Malte has succeeded in his new school in many things so well that I can't agree with him more.

Pavel Jech

As we speak about entrenched traditions, that's definitely the case with FAMU. When communism ended twelve years ago, the film industry had to change almost immediately because it was no longer feasible for the state to fund all these feature films. In fact, the Studio Barandov no longer produces its own projects. It hasn't done so for almost a decade. Films are now the result of co-productions with the Czech Television, grants based on a tax on movie tickets, and some international co-production. The films are generally low budget. But the film school still remains a state institution and it is still funded by the state, and the traditions of how students are taught have also remained the same. The main reason, perhaps, is because it had been so successful in the past.

FAMU remains a strong influence on the national cinema. In the past year, twelve films were produced, and all but three were directed or written by FAMU graduates. Interestingly, two and a half of the three films that weren't made by FAMU graduates, were made on digital video. That's another revolution that is still on its way to FAMU.

The FAMU system, which has evolved slightly over time, still remains fundamentally the same. We have nine departments now, and they are still based on inter-departmental exercises which are led by the directing students. The other departments help out in their respective crafts. There is still this tradition of creating a strong individual film artist.

Actually, the fact that we are divided into departments has helped facilitate this in some way because there is a *de facto* competition among the three departments that create the most *auteurs*. There are the screenwriting department, the documentary department, and the directing department. At least three of the most prominent young director-writers are graduates from the script department. One of them had a Oscar nomination last year. The same is the case the documentary department, where one of the documentary directors won a student Oscar.

What happens in the school is that directing students often write their scripts. They don't accept scripts from and they don't collaborate with screenwriting students. Scriptwriting students prefer to focus on their own screenplays, with the hopes of finishing a feature script which they can later direct themselves. The documentary students usually make quasi-fictional films with the hopes of eventually entering into fiction film directing.

Within this system, the producer is still a production manager for the other students. There has been a little bit of an attempt to train creative producers. In the past, our school had always been a five-year program. Now, consistent with European Union higher education directives, it is divided into a three year of Bachelor's program and a two year of Master's program. At the master's level in our school, producers are expected to find outside sponsorship or other methods to co-produce the projects on which they are working. Usually, that means the school going to Czech Television but they are expected to take on a some of that role.

There's also something at school called "the producer's project." It's competitive, and there is one each year. Producing students are supposed to initiate a project by themselves, find the scripts that they like. put the team together, and produce the project.

Unfortunately the reality is that producing students complain, because there is not enough incentive for them. The school doesn't give them any money, it just gives lends the equipment and tells them to go out and produce a film that the school will co-own. The students want to produce their own films, but if they are going to do that, they'd rather do it without the school at all. So, that needs to be looked at more carefully. As I said, the tradition of the creative producer is not part of the country's film culture, and that is one of the reasons why the school has been slow to change.

Happily, there has been some influence from Triangle. FAMU has been to several of the Triangle conferences. As was pointed out to me by one of our deans, in 1992 we had a GEECT conference in Prague in which the nascent ideas of the Triangle was explored. As some of you are aware, FAMU is a bit uncertain about where they belong in CILECT, because of the changes in our society. In the past, CILECT was an organization that allowed FAMU and many of the other Eastern European schools to have international contacts. That is no longer necessary, and now they are looking for new rationales.

What would be good for FAMU are activities that would more directly benefit the students. One way in which CILECT has directly benefited at least one of our students is that we had one of our best producing students attend the

“Producing Producers” conference in Helsinki. She was strongly influenced by what was discussed there and she is now writing her diploma thesis about Triangle. Her supervisor, the dean of our school, is also a producer, and her ideas will be officially presented to our school and to our producing department. It’s at a nascent stage but the seeds of influence are there right now.

Questions and Answers

Q. I am one of those Australians who has been traveling to CILECT events for some years and who have fallen asleep while the rest of the world talked. My question relates to something that happened a few years ago when a party from China came to our school, led by a Chinese actor. We showed them some of our films, and they couldn’t speak in English, so the dialogue had to be translated. When the screenings were completed, the actor who was the leader of the group said to me, “you don’t have acting in your school do you?” and I said, “no, we don’t, but how can you tell?”. And he said “you can tell by the way every single department is trying to dominate the frame.”

And in terms of the issues that have been discussed here in relation to Triangle, and the necessity for creative producers to be able to bring the departments together whether they be the other two in the creative triangle or the ones in the rejected triangle, I wonder whether this is an issue for film schools. It seems to me that many students see film school as a way of producing films that they can take out of as their show reels or calling card. As a result, you always seem to have a set designer trying to develop a very extravagant and noticeable set design, a sound designer and an editor trying the same kind of thing, and so forth.

I think that in some ways, what we ask of producers in our school is something more difficult than what they are being asked to do in the industry, and that is to produce a film that will also exhibit the characteristics of the other departments so that those students will have as much opportunity to get positions in the industry as possible. I wonder whether that has been discussed at any of the Triangle meetings?

A. Lauri Törhönen

There is an article written by Joost Hunnigher, who gave it to me yesterday. He has quoted the first Triangle book, in which the British director Stephen Frears, when asked to give a lecture at the British National Film and Television School began his talk saying something like “I was asked to talk to students about collaboration, but I could not think why I had to talk about it. It seems obvious, however I have noticed that students find it very, very difficult.”

I suppose that is because of 35 years of the *auteur* theory. This is a European point of view as is another quote in the same article from *Le Monde* in France. The headline read “Has the auteur killed the French cinema?” Even the French cinema is becoming aware of this problem now. The smaller countries and probably England were already aware of this issue.

Comment – Malte Wadman

I totally agree with you. There is a problem because our goal should be to give each student the best possibility of developing and displaying his or her own voice and talent. On the other hand, I have been working in the industry for quite a lot of years, and the most horrible thing when you are working on a film is where you notice that the cinematographer is doing one film, the sound guy is doing another film, and so forth. You get this splitting of creative efforts, each of which in itself is very good, but which in combination fail to develop the story or serve the idea or the theme of the film.

Comment

It strikes me is that in the film industry, when you work on a production in a way you are working for two masters. One is the producer who controls the money, and the other is the director who, to a certain point, controls the artistic identity of the piece. It may be that this is too complex and there are too many evolving relationships to be handled in a film school context. It seems that unless you give the producer the money and the creative control of the movie, you probably can’t control the rivalry be-

He then wrote an article about how the school might influence the industry itself. He spoke to the filmmaker’s union and to the ministry, and told them that something is wrong, that we underestimate the abilities of the producers, and that the producers are not sufficiently involved in the script development. I think that Triangle is very important for giving students opportunities.

Stordhak

tween the director and the producer, within a film school context. I don't know how you would get around that.

Comment – Zuzana Tatarová

I would like to add something about the past of socialist cinematography. The scriptwriting department was really not a scriptwriting department, it was “screen dramaturgy,” which meant script editing, and script editors were in part creative producers. They were responsible for the whole film. They chose the themes, following them to the editing room, and then organized the advertising and the distribution and so on. They

were midwives for film.

The people on top who were making decisions hadn't any idea about film. They were purely administrators. They were not creative. They closely watched the films from an ideological perspective. I began as a script editor and worked at it for ten years, but without any power. There was some important advice that Lenin gave us and it is that there needs to be a last word. Who is the last person who makes the decision? You have the example of David O. Selznick, the producer who re-wrote and re-edited the script for “Gone with the Wind.” This was a nice struggle in the history of film between the creative producer who really wants to be an *auteur* as well, the scriptwriters, director, and editor. In that situation, it was clear who the person was who made the last decision. It was Selznick. He owned it.

Comment – Joost Hunnigher

I have found it very interesting how different schools have adapted the issues that were brought up in the Triangle meetings and have made them their own, and I find it very interesting that the little article that I wrote and that came out of this idea did make us focus on a way of working which we hadn't done before. I want to come to Rod Bishop's point about a competition within the triangle. I think that if it's done properly, there need not be competition of that kind. On our most successful film last year, the designer got a very high mark. You would think it was just a student's flat and a designer shouldn't have any trouble doing that, but she thought about it very carefully and I think she served both the script and the film.

There is one quote from Caterina's mother in Dick Ross's book, which is my favorite, and I am going to read it to you. Writing about the early neo-realist films in Italy, she says, “the collaboration was so tight, in those first films that it was very difficult to understand who was doing what. The director was not an isolated figure. He was one among the many who collaborated in the making of the movie.”

She felt that if the director became involved in the scripting too early, he wouldn't have anything new to add when the shooting started. He would be bored with the story. If he was bored he would want to invent something, and this moment of invention could lead him astray. Ideas born out of boredom lack richness.

Q.

I would like to ask a question, Lauri. You mentioned working with Warren Beatty on “Reds” and the madness and craziness and so forth. My question is, to the extent that Beatty is representative of typical Hollywood production excess, how could you make these concepts and principals of Triangle more relevant to Hollywood production community?

A. Lauri Törhönen

I can't. I think the Triangle is more relevant to those schools and those countries that have a tradition of film being art and culture instead of business. For example, in my country there was a very strong producer's tradition before the Second World War, but television killed off all of it. We are trying to revive the traditional film industry in many countries in Europe, but money talks. If you own a film, you can do whatever you want with it. As a director, I am sort of the skipper of the film anyway, Triangle or no Triangle, I am responsible for it, I have to make the final decisions, I have to be important enough to do it.

Comment – Tatiana Storck

I would like to support the idea of Triangle forever. I think that Russia is in the same position as the rest of the Eastern European countries. What surprised us greatly this year, or last year, as we have been changing our film industry, is that the producer is not in our trade ministry's register of job titles, so we cannot give the diploma of “producer.” We may give the title “management” to financial activity and so on, but what happened this year is that we had a very big discussion about who is the producer, which we derived from Triangle. A lot of things are changing but a lot of things are not, so we sent a delegation to the Triangle meeting. There were two students and two teachers, and one of the teachers was a very well-known Russian director. He came to Triangle in Italy and he did some exercises with the students. He found out that the student from the directing department were weaker than the students from the producing department, and when he returned he said that something is wrong.

He then wrote an article about how the school might influence the industry itself. He spoke to the filmmaker's union and to the ministry, and told them that something is wrong,

that we underestimate the abilities of the producers, and that the producers are not sufficiently involved in the script development. I think that Triangle is very important for giving students opportunities. These are vitally important activities for my school. Thank you very much for those people who organized Triangle.

Comment – Annabelle Sheehan

I want to agree with what Malte was saying about the rolling Triangle. At the AFTRS that notion of the Triangle moving along slowly as the story gets carried by all the players. It's been an important image for students to work with, about the way the way the producer, director, and designer, or other kind of triangles that form as time goes by work, until you get to producer, director, editor.

There is creative tension within the Triangle, and one of the things that we have been trying and that some other schools may also have tried, is to introduce instruction in "conflict resolution." We are trying to come up with a better name for it. It is not about compromise, but rather about members of the triangle mapping the way to drive the project forward, so that they can define their objective and the stakes.

Malte Wadman

I think that one of the side-effects of Triangle is that we are now putting a lot of effort into teaching students how to speak with each other in language that expresses their visual or creative thoughts. The students have to do this with each other within the triangle, and they have to learn to express their ideas to the cinematographer and later on to the editor, and to make people actually understand and accept their ideas and to work with them. When the director was a lone wolf and was not taught anything about explaining his ideas, he became very isolated. Now he is asked to explain or discuss his project and it's no problem. I never had problems with the producer running over the director, but it is a tension at the beginning in the writing of the script even if it is, as it very often is in our school, the director's idea written by the scriptwriter.

Renen Schorr

Students think that the secret of their success is in the school's selection process, and since the myth of the director is still very deeply rooted, especially outside America, we have very few role models of producers. When students apply to the schools, or choose their intended specializations, most of them still choose directing and then, perhaps writing. Producing is less attractive. I think that with the importance of Triangle, the schools could make the role of

the producer more significant and prestigious, so as to attract more of the best people, those who would otherwise go to directing and screenwriting.

Comment– Allison Wotherspoon

I just spent five years teaching, and as a graduate of AFTRS where I specialized in producing, I went into a university where we spent five years working in collaborative teams, and it is really encouraging for me to listen to this discussion of Triangle and know that we are on the right track. To go back to the question about the Hollywood model, our first year students start with a case study of the making of "The Big Lebowski." First we read the book of the film that actually goes into an interesting study of collaborative work and the different specialized role of the collaborative creative team. The students are very much aware of the collaboration of the Coen brothers. It is also working in a way that's much more in keeping with the Triangle idea by recognizing the contributions of different skills.

Comment

I don't know how this would work in other countries, but I would say that the influence of the people in the film industry can do a lot to help the status

of the producing faculty in the eyes of the students. Students are extremely susceptible to the models that are put forward in the film industry. Our school actually built classrooms on the on the stu-

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Sheehan

Panel 3

dio lot of CBS Television in Hollywood. We didn't have a producing program until we had access to the film industry, and at that point, producing became very sexy. The contact that the students have with the profession can do a great deal to change the dynamics within the film school. It's very difficult for the faculty to do it, but it's much easier for the industries to do it.

Malte Wadman

The problem is when we look for producers in the Norwegian industry, we find one special effects guy, one fellow who had been selling loans, one former bookkeeper, and if I go on like that you will understand that the producers of today are not very good role models. I think that in our situation we first have to change that. Triangle also will change the industry and ensure that the producers are not just guys who manage to fiddle some money for some film at some time. The new producers are also people who are dedicated to film, because that's what happens with the producers in the school. At least they are dedicated to the cinema.

Q.

We know that one main aspect of the Triangle approach from its very conception, was to revitalize and rebalance creative collaboration, and from what you are saying it sounds like that's an arduous piece of work, but at least it's fairly straightforward. My question is how has the Triangle approach affected the other big creative balance that exists, the tension between the need to train people for the compromises of a professional career and the need to develop their individual voice. In your experience, has Triangle been of benefit to the creation and individuation of students' creative voices, or of benefit primarily as preparation for professional careers in the industry?

A. Lauri Törhönen

I guess there is not yet an answer. The process that started in Rome six years ago was the first loop of this tram. We need to come back after six more years, when the first Triangle producers start pushing the amateur producers out of the frame. And then we need another two loops of the tram when they come back to the film schools as honored lecturers, and then the culture of Triangle will be fully mature in the film schools. Like anything else, it needs time to ma-

ture. Until about 100 years ago, nobody could fly. Then some amateurs started flying, and later on one needed a pilot's license to fly, and further down the line, other things happened with airplanes. We are building the basement of a big house which is going to be an old and established house one day.

I think that one of the side-effects of Triangle is that we are now putting a lot of effort into teaching students how to speak with each other in language that expresses their visual or creative thoughts.

Wadman