

MARIN SCOPE

Digital film program opens to success

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The San Francisco School of Digital Filmmaking (SFSDf) has only had its doors open since April 2005. Since that time the staff has been working around the clock to keep up with the demand.

Starting with 6,800 square feet, which includes two sound stages, editing classrooms, a student lounge and student production offices, SFSDf will now add another 6,500 square feet to accommodate additional classrooms for the film and acting school. SFSDf attracts a diversity of students, some of whom want to study film right out of college, and others who have decided they want a career change and have always had a passion for film. Classroom size remains small –SFSDf only accepts 30 students per semester, providing each graduate with a professional certificate of completion (SFSDf is sanctioned by the state of California). SFSDf holds open houses twice a month, free for anyone interested. For more information, call the school at 522-1200 or you can visit the website at sfdigifilm.com.

Combining its educational curriculum with an active production company, SFSDf is an intensive digital moviemaking and acting school located in the China Basin area of San Francisco. SFSDf's focus on high-definition video exemplifies the city's love for art and technology. Students learn the art and craft of filmmaking by engaging in hands-on movie making together, all the time. This unique educational approach of project-based study offers students the rare opportunity to learn moviemaking from working professionals in a real-world environment. Contrary to most traditional film schools, where moviemaking is approached more theoretically, SFSDf students make their own movies, developing their artistic and technical skills and advancing in the world of professional moviemaking. Students each produce five films, learning the nuts-and-bolts craft of movie making from experienced, working film professionals.

SFSDf was co-founded by Stephen Kopels and Jeremiah Birnbaum, who saw the need for more practical training before, during and after film school. Both wanted the school to give students the three most valuable tools a prospective filmmaker needs for starting a career: a reel of one's own work, film credits and contacts within the industry.

"Both Jeremiah and I were working filmmakers when we started talking about what was lacking when we went to film school," said co-founder and Director of Education Kopels. "We both knew that undergrad film programs were great for theory and academics, but when it came to hands-on experience, you had to go to grad school before you could ever make a film of your own."