JOCELYN RUSSELL  
BCOM ’12, INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCER, VICTORIA, BC

Business Class: What was your favourite film to work on? Why?

Jocelyn Russell: The first film I worked on was Joanna Makes A Friend. It is a short drama about a lonely girl who has trouble making friends and instead ends up building herself a robot friend, Edgar Allen Poe-bot, out of leftover electronics found in the garage. It is a “gothic and stylized film that explores the desire for love and acceptance we all share” (indeed), and in the end Joanna learns that you can’t just make a friend, you have to be one.

My role was business development/media producer. As a team we had the opportunity to successfully pitch the MPPIA Short Film Award at the Whistler Film Festival 2010, which kicked off funding for the project and offered us invaluable mentorship in the industry. The film screened at TIFF Kids, was selected for Canada: Not Short On Talent by Telefilm at Cannes, and culminated in a sold-out screening at the Victoria Film Festival, where Kids, was selected for Canada: Not Short On Talent by Telefilm at Cannes, the opportunity to successfully pitch the MPPIA Short Film Award at the

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BC: What was the first film you ever worked on? What was your role?

JR: The first feature film I was a producer on and it was truly an epic undertaking. It became my favourite almost instantly because of the stellar cast and crew assembled. It’s a story about evil changelings and Samantha, a troubled teenage orphan, who is trying to fit in with her foster family. But when her foster sister, Olivia, goes missing and then suddenly reappears, she realises there’s something wrong with Olivia! Locations were one of the bigger challenges. We needed an eerie set of woods and monster masks and the procurement of a massive supply of Halloween decorations in the middle of spring.

BC: Are there any advantages to being a business grad in a creative industry?

JR: Yes, the intensive day-to-day class teamwork that was part of the BCom program prepared me for the more senior roles on a film production by helping me to grow as a person and develop my own authentic leadership style. The practical skills I gained gave me the self-reliance to take on any task that might come my way during production.

BC: What’s one film (genre/topic/etc.) you aspire to make?

JR: A few years back I was a field producer on a Sobreros product demo, ’Madeline’ with Ty host Jon Montgomery, and it really did whet my appetite. I enjoyed working with the food stylist, as well as the intimacy of the crew size and what that afforded in terms of set location flexibility. It would be a dream job to do a travel food show or chef documentary.

BC: And most importantly, what’s your go-to movie night snack?

It sounds far too easy, but it really is popcorn! My favourite way to spice it up is a little salt and grape seed oil (which gives it a subtle nutty flavor).
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Shelby Manton: We are a content studio helping to create visuals and tell stories for some of Canada and the USA’s coolest brands. I love the work we do in the commercial world, but every so often we get the chance to produce independent narrative content. Everything from music videos, to short films and web series. In today’s day and age of advertising, those two worlds are starting to blend more seamlessly. And this is extremely exciting for us.

In 2018, we had the opportunity to work with an amazing Vancouver ad agency, 123w, on a spot for St. George’s University in Grenada. Filming in the Caribbean was a surreal experience and definitely the highlight of my career so far, but the most exciting part about this project was the creative collaboration.

It is technically a commercial, but the final product feels like a mini short film. It’s raw, gritty, fast-paced, shot in black and white, and — for all you film buffs out there — we were able to film on Panavision C-Series Anamorphic lenses. This is the same set that lensed the original Star Wars films. It’s raw, gritty, fast-paced, shot in black and white, and — for all you film buffs out there — we were able to film on Panavision C-Series Anamorphic lenses. This is the same set that lensed the original Star Wars films.

SM: Definitely. When I graduated from Gustavson, my brother Geoff and I decided to join forces. He has a film degree from Simon Fraser University and I always loved pursuing film projects outside of my business studies. Jointly we decided to open a production company. Geoff brought the film experience and I brought the business plan. We needed each other. BOLDLY would not be what it is today if we had not initially had diversity in our skillsets and education.

Business and creative industries go hand in hand. You can work hard every day creating art, but if you do not know how to sell it or get it out into the world, how will you ever make a living doing what you love?

BC: What’s your favourite part of your day-to-day work?

SM: Nothing beats a long day on set, surrounded by a talented, passionate, hard-working crew pulling together to bring a scene to life. I’m lucky to work in an industry that focuses so heavily on collaboration and teamwork — it’s an inspiring environment to experience.

BC: And most importantly: what’s your go-to movie night snack?

SM: There’s nothing better than the classic — popcorn with butter. I prefer the unhealthy movie theatre kind.

SM: I focus on three things leading up to a presentation: knowing my content inside and out, practicing with a small audience and most importantly — being authentically myself.

SM: I am reading Brené Brown’s book Dare to Lead and she says exactly what I would say: “People often ask me if I still get nervous when I speak in public. The answer is yes. I am always nervous. Experience keeps me from being scared, but I’m still nervous.” Again, the nerves don’t go away. But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t get up and speak.

Stefanie Grieser (left) on set filming a commercial for St. George’s University.