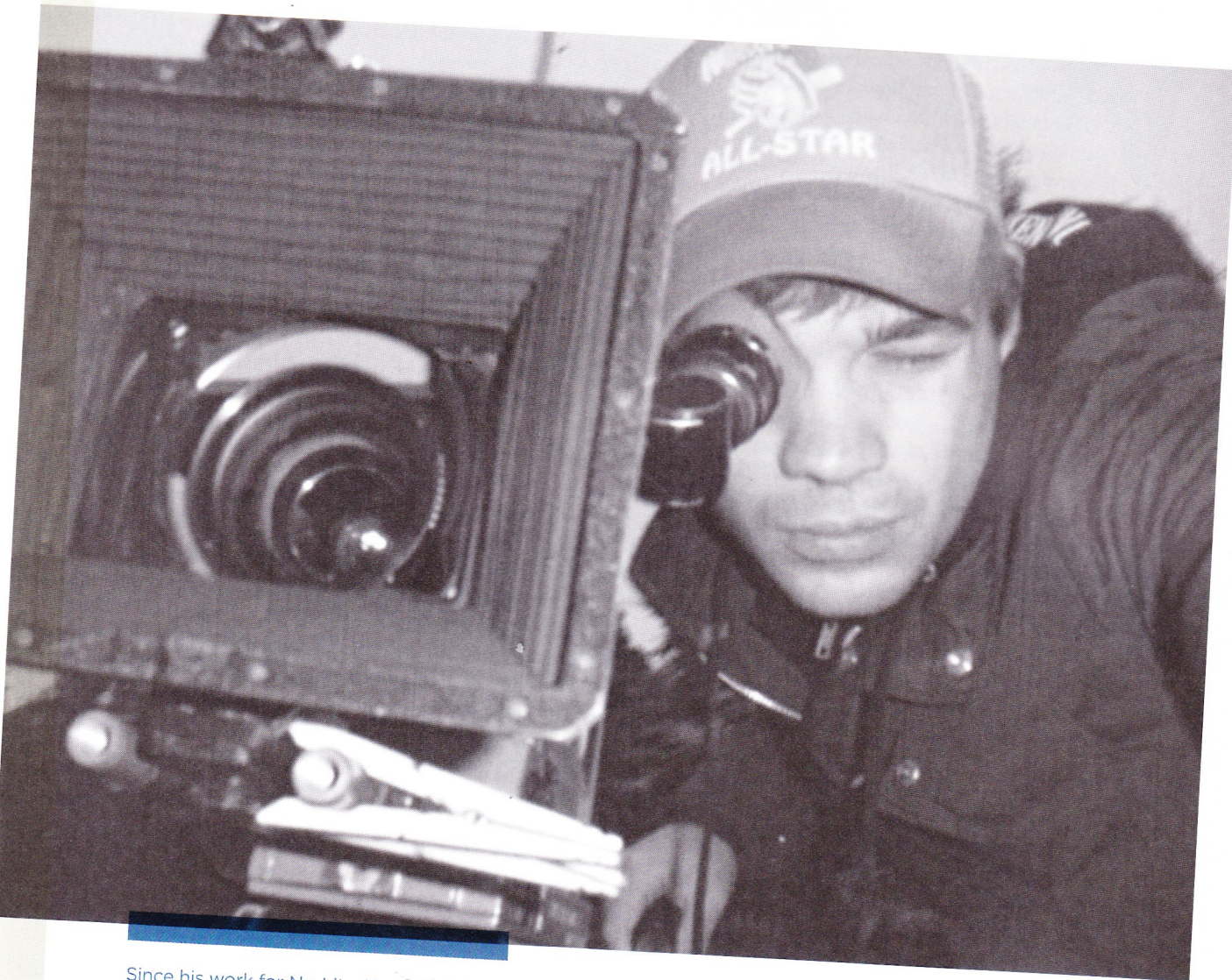


A ROUSING ACT ONE

LAFSC ALUM PETER HARMON SOLD A SCRIPT, MOVED TO L.A. . . .
AND THE REST IS BEING WRITTEN. BY MIMI WIGGINS PERREAULT



Since his work for Nu-Lite, Harmon has been a production assistant for *American Idol* and reviews and writes transcripts for the A&E show *Intervention*. In addition, he has recently been writing short scripts for a company that produces edited acting reels for aspiring actors, SmartReels. SmartReels provides industry-quality short films for professional actors, tailor-made to their acting style and range.

It's been a busy year for Los Angeles Film Studies Center (LAFSC) alumnus Peter Harmon, but with two fully produced screenplays under his belt, he's not complaining. ¶ "I've been working as hard as I can and challenges have arisen," Peter said. "The challenges have really tested me—and so far I feel great about how my career and my family life have gone since I moved to L.A." ¶ Peter loves to write, but his time at LAFSC allowed him to try all different parts of movie production. For his final

project, Peter directed a short film with a group of classmates, and at the LAFSC premier party he spoke with a woman who really liked the film his group produced.

"I had no idea it would ever lead to anything," said Peter, a graduate of Towson University, who attended the program in spring 2008. "So when she called me when I was back home in Maryland about possibly directing a film for Nu-Lite, I was really surprised."

Nu-Lite, a film production company which produces films for a Christian African-American audience, bought a screenplay Peter wrote and commissioned him to do more work. A few weeks later, he loaded his car up and moved back to L.A. He started working for Nu-Lite as a director for a planned film and when that fell through he started writing.

During the time he worked for Nu-Lite, Peter wrote screenplays for two movies produced by Nu-Lite, *Johnson Family Christmas Dinner* and *Jones Preaching to the Choir* (also called *Pastor Jones Heavenly Voices*)—and he was given a springboard for his career. The movies were made for an audience primarily of African-Americans who are Christian and religious, and were great settings to play with dramatic dialogue as well as humor.

"As far as writing for a black audience (as a white guy), it wasn't very different from the usual stories I write," Peter said. "It was comedic with dramatic elements, or vice versa depending on how you look at it, and had to do with a wide variety of different relationships. Yes, there are inherent differences in cultures intrinsically but the emotion was pretty much the same."

LAFSC offers professional screenwriting as one of its electives for the semester. Students learn about screenwriting elements by examining scripts and instructors also emphasize Christian faith and values as they relate to script content.

"Many come in with a desire to write screenplays but have never gotten around to doing it," said Kris Young, the course instructor. "The biggest screenwriting technique I teach is simply to FINISH one. More can be learned from

doing that in one semester than reading or thinking about it for years."

Young said as a student, Peter was "very disciplined and took writing seriously." That focus and drive might be just one reason he was able to dive into screenwriting.

Peter continues to write. He has recently been writing short scripts for a company that produces edited acting reels for aspiring actors, SmartReels. SmartReels provides industry-quality short films for professional actors, tailor-made to their acting style and range. In addition, Peter married Ashlea Shelton, whom he met at Towson University, in July 2009.

In other words, he's staying busy. ■

For more information about a semester at the Los Angeles Film Studies Center, visit www.bestsemester.com/lafsc.

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TEACH IS SIMPLY
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—KRIS YOUNG, COURSE INSTRUCTOR