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Film School

By A Digital

In Europe, the cost of the passage from analog to digital has not been evaluated yet. Studies have been made as from 1997, among others by Eurostat*. Some of these studies have already been published (It is the case for digital TV), but we will have to wait for a while before knowing the exact cost of digital revolution in fields such as education and, in the present case, film schools. Yet, the case of film schools tells us a lot about the changes due to the passage to digital, since, most of the times, the budgets of film schools are partly granted in equipment. For instance, many film schools have just been delivered an analog equipment ordered beginning of the 1990. It goes without saying that this equipment is already out of date, since we have just entered a new era: the one of digital film production.

The teachers are now facing a difficult choice: either let this equipment rot in some corridor, waiting for some hypothetical collector to buy them. Or, keep training their students on an equipment that does not correspond at all to today's standards, the ones students will have to work on when they complete their studies. New film schools fortunately don't fit in this pattern, for they buy solely digital equipment from the start.

THE PORTRAIT OF AN NEW DIGITAL FILM SCHOOL

In 2003, two digital film schools opened almost simultaneously in Europe (Brussels) and in Asia (Yangoon). Indeed, The number of SAE training centers dedicated to audio engineering, multimedia and digital film is in constant growth: SAE now counts more than 40 schools in 20 countries, half of which are ASEM** members.

A visit of the Brussels SAE brandnew training centre with Anna Christin Mallon

Anna Christin Mallon recently inaugurated the new Digital Film Department of the European capital based SAE School. It's got quite a different look than other Belgian film schools. The street door opens on a comfortably equipped room with design furniture, bar-corner and shaded lights. A bit further, a reclining Persian is reigning over the secretary office; the imposing cat makes me think of a mocking Orson Wells with his peculiar demeanour.

You can tell from surrounding high tech and comfort you are entering a well equipped film school. Anna Mallon notices my surprise and reacts immediately: "All of our schools are not like this one. The decoration of SAE schools is adapted to the cities in which they are founded. Here in Brussels, it is rather bourgeois; in Berlin, it is more underground" Tradition and high tech live here side by side: next to a good old notice board with timetable and pinned up ads is a tactile screen computer with magnetic card controlled access. "Everything is booked

through this computer” says Anna. “The blue key room, the dolly or any equipment students are taking out. The software has been specially developed for SAE. It enables to check the availability of equipment and studios, as well as the latest changes in booking”

BACK TO SCHOOL, MARCH 2004

The three departments, audio, multimedia and digital film, occupy a 1000 sq meters surface altogether. The equipment is an amazing one: the very first Apple G5 in Belgium are still being tested. A total of 18 computers for the digital film making department, two of which are connected to 20” Apple cinema display screens to constitute final cut prostations. The other computers are located in the new classroom dedicated to digital film training. The students will have access to some of this equipment in august 2004 only. It is the case for the post production equipment AvidIt is indeed necessary to acquire sound skills and experience to be able to work on this machine. Now, the digital film department is four months old only. The students just completed their “Basic Media Certificate”, a compulsory training for the three school departments: audio, multimedia and filmmaking. This joint training replaces the admittance exams and is meant to ensure the leveling of the new students.

WHO ARE THESE DIGITAL FILM STUDENTS?

There is no typical student’s profile: for the next start of the academic season (twice a year, in March and September) some students will have a five years experience in film making, some never used a computer before and there will even be a 57 years old student. Some of the students take advantage of the SAE schools network: they begin their training in a city and complete it in another one.

WHAT ABOUT THEIR TEACHERS?

Anna Mallon has a very good team around her. Marijke Van Kets for instance is one of Belgium’s best chief operators. She teaches lighting at the SAE in Brussels. Anna Mallon teaches too, but like all other teachers, she keeps working outside the school.

“my outside work is directly connected to film making. I work on diverse productions every now and then and also have my own project called [CitrusTV](#) to take care of besides my duties at the SAE. »

It is very interesting for the students, since they cope with the reality of the profession.

Is there a typical profile for the heads of the Film Department, like e.g. ACM?
([read the interview with Anna Christin Mallon](#))

* Eurostat

The [database of Eurostat called "NEWCRONOS"](#) includes a chapter devoted to the audiovisual sector. Data from "NEWCRONOS" are available off-line in the form of CD-ROM and printed publications.

** The ASEM countries are: 10 Asian (Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) and 15 European (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom).

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