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**MY BIG FAT AMERICAN MOVIE**  
**First ETSU Film Boot Camp to offer tools, techniques**  
**for independent filmmakers to take action**

The future of filmmaking lies with the independent *auteurs*, rather than the billion-dollar blockbuster developers, say cinema professionals Jodi Nelson and Pat Cronin.

“It’s the only way you can become famous ... by your own rules,” says Nelson, the founder of Hip Chik Productions.

As a result, Nelson, a Los Angeles auteur and actor herself, and Cronin, a longtime stage and screen actor who is now head of ETSU’s Theatre Division and Honors College arts program, are collaborating to offer and instruct a new summer course at ETSU, Film Boot Camp Intensive: Make Your Movie in 2 Weeks. The class will start Aug. 3 and last through Aug. 14.

“We will teach them how to write a script, run auditions, find a crew,” Nelson says. “Then there’s shot selection, line production or organizing a shooting schedule, art direction, music, royalties, promotions, finding an audience, distribution through DIY and various channels finding and securing ‘good’ mentors and social networking.”

Nelson, Cronin and broadcasting division head and filmmaker Tom Headley will share their years of expertise, as well as bring in other experts in various aspects of filmmaking and marketing. “Jodi, Tom and I come from a lot of years of filmmaking,” says Cronin, who has done independent work in addition to years in episodic television, such as *Home Improvement*, *Seinfeld*, *Star Trek* and *Alice*, and films such as *Splash* and *Rocky V*.

Headley is best known for his documentary prowess, including a series on snake-handling religious practices in the rural South and more recently *Appalachian Diaries* for public television, while Nelson has not only made her mark in television, theatre and music, but also has written and produced several independent films including *Chasing Life* and *Man. Woman. Blackbird*.

“Our goal for this course is to not only teach students and emerging filmmakers the technical skills, but give them the courage and resources to find their own original voice and make it the very best it can be,” Nelson says. “A roadmap to their future career as professional filmmakers and storytellers.”

“At the end of two weeks, we can’t guarantee you get into Sundance [Film Festival],” Cronin says, “but we will guarantee you’ll have a finished product and it will be showcased online.”

In fact, Nelson conceived her independent film *Chasing Life* on a napkin at a two-day film school, she says. “The information and resources are out there, sometimes you just need a knowledgeable, experienced teacher to show you the way.”

The cost of this intensive filmmaking experience, however, is not in line with other camps or academies that cost \$400 for a couple days or thousands of dollars for a few weeks, Cronin says. “We wanted to make this affordable, as well as useful,” Cronin says.

The tuition for the two-week camp is \$850 for early registration and \$1,000 after July 17, with the only extra costs being housing, if needed, and a course workbook, which students will be able to use as a resource tool to make future films. Prospective filmmakers can be ETSU students, non-regular students and online students, who follow the class streaming on the Internet, and the class can be taken for credit or non-credit.

One of the glories of the new wave in independent filmmaking is that location is not as limited or limiting as it once was, the instructors say. “You don’t have to go to a city like Los Angeles, New York or Chicago anymore,” Nelson says. “Because of the availability of digital equipment and the Internet, now you have the tools to stay local, collaborate with writers and actors and tell the stories of that local area, which makes much more vibrant filmmaking.

“Fifteen years ago, it was the resources that were lacking outside of a major city. That’s no obstacle now.”

Budgets, too, do not have to fit the Hollywood mold. “It’s quality, not quantity,” Cronin says. “It’s not how much you pay. It’s what you’re going to get. I’m not doing this for the money, nor are Jodi and Tom. We’re doing this because we believe in making movies.”

“... Ethical, responsible movies,” Nelson says.

Although ETSU’s first Film Boot Camp Intensive is consolidated into two weeks of jam-packed days and evenings, the art and craft of filmmaking is a lifelong process, Nelson says. “You can’t come out of the womb and expect to be a filmmaker, and we can’t teach you a life’s worth of information in two weeks,” she says, “but our goal is to, in that time frame is to instill confidence, to educate, to inspire and to provide the tools and help these potential filmmakers take action on their ideas.

“We will be compressing a lot of information into two weeks. It’s going to be information overload, but they will have the course workbook, all of the paperwork, all of the forms, so they can take this knowledge and information and go off and repeat it.”

The intensive time will also be a “litmus test,” Nelson and Cronin say. “They’ll learn,” Cronin says, “whether they have what it takes to be a real filmmaker.”

It’s an exciting time to be a filmmaker, Nelson says, and this class is riding the crest of the “indie” wave. “The doors have swung open,” she says. “It’s not about making *Napoleon Dynamite* and making millions of dollars. It’s about being able to have creative control over your own artistic vision and being a sustainable artist over the long-term. It can change your life and those fans that you build over the years.”

For more information on the camp, go to ETSU Filmmaking Boot Camp on Facebook [www.Facebook.com/FilmBootcamp](http://www.Facebook.com/FilmBootcamp), or find the links to register at [www.filmbootcamp.ning.com](http://www.filmbootcamp.ning.com). Follow the camp instructors on Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/FilmBootCamp](http://www.Twitter.com/FilmBootCamp).