

## Shorttakes Festival to feature student filmmakers



Courtesy of Chris Eska

A scene from graduate film student Chris Eska's thesis film "Doki Doki," which he made in Japan.

By [Howard Ho](#)

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The newest crop of student filmmakers are not necessarily students of film. As the tools of movie making are becoming more available, film is increasingly just another thing to do to express yourself.

"I think in the late '80s and early '90s, a lot of young artists wanted to be in indie rock bands. Now the same people that would have been in indie

rock bands want to be directors," said third-year graduate directing student Chris Eska.

Two of Eska's films along with other student films will be shown in Ackerman Grand Ballroom tonight as part of the annual Shorttakes Film Festival. Another finalist in the event, fourth-year theater student Billy-Vu Lam, actually is in an indie rock band.

Lam is guitarist in the band Thomas' Apartment, a group that played last year's Spring Sing. The famed apartment is home to guitars, drum sets, a mixing board, speakers and a big-screen TV. It's this smorgasbord of technology that has allowed student artists to make indie rock bands and now films.

Lam's six-minute film, "All in a Day's Work," was made for \$600. He borrowed a camera from the Film and Television Department, purchased all the 16 mm film he used, and shot his friends doing martial arts sequences in a study lounge in his apartment complex. Though it was his first film, he has a good martial arts movie vocabulary gleaned from watching Jackie Chan and Jet Li films and studying Tae Kwon Do and Capoeira.

"It really helps to know how to work the angles," Lam said.

But Lam only got into filmmaking last quarter, when he took the cinematography class where he made the film. He's studying acting, and also currently helping to stage the recent Vietnamese Culture Night. Likewise, third-year digital/media arts

student Gabriel Dunne views filmmaking as one of many things he's involved in. He's considering studying architecture in graduate school or specializing in various forms of graphic design.

"The one thing I love and hate about my major is there's no solidity and direction," Dunne said. "You learn everything: video, multimedia, programming, web designing, flash designing, 3D animation, interactive media. My problem is that I love all of it."

Dunne's film, "The Mirror," was shot in three days for \$300, at the Molecular Science building among other local spots. Rather than telling a story, the film explores the idea of alternate realities. To achieve that, Dunne used a cocktail of computer tools, including After Effects, Avid, Maya, Combustion and Light Wave. One shot features traveling through a wall to a reverse reality in a red wash done digitally.

"It used to be restricted to the big filmmakers with huge budgets. Now if you have a crazy idea, you can pull off an effect like that," Dunne said.

Like Lam, Dunne has musical capabilities. He composed the score to his film as he does for most of his other animated works.

"For me, the music should be the first thing I do because I can write visuals around it," Dunne said.

But not everyone is a multimedia artist. Chris Eska entered the graduate film school having only taken an undergrad course in film. He didn't know much about films and originally wanted to be a sociology professor. Consequently, his films are tinged with his first love and traveling. He took a year off of school to go to Asia: Myanmar and India were his favorite places.

Just as William Carlos Williams wrote his poetry on prescription note pads, today's young filmmakers explore their passions through low-budget technology, allowing fuller lives for these celluloid-loving creatures.

"I don't want an interesting career to get in the way of an interesting life," Eska said.

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