

Behind the Scenes of *Pls Hire Us* **Director Austen Thomas**

The 19 students of Terri Sarris' FTVM 403 Sketch Comedy class collaborated on all aspects of their show: writing, producing, directing, editing, and acting in both live and digital short comedy sketches. A team of producers crafted budget proposals and grant applications to garner a budget of \$2,500. Writers shared log lines and workshopped their sketches in writers' rooms and through table reads. Putting the sketches on their feet, meant hours of blocking and rehearsals for the specificity of this production that blends both live and recorded performances for studio audiences and for camera. Concurrently, the students went into production for ten independent digital sketches that added a variety to the show's aesthetics and humor. Utilizing the communicative power of social media, a group of students marketed the show with Instagram posts and Facebook events to update and excite our audience.

On December 12th and 13th before three full capacity audiences in Studio A of North Quad, the class presented *Pls Hire Us*. An original 70-minute sketch comedy show, directed and recorded in front of an audience in the live multi-camera style of *Saturday Night Live*.

This live multi-camera style meant in the control room, Austen Thomas directed from a monitor with six pedestal cameras, a jib, two servers, and a graphics display. Tasked with the difficult job of making all the appropriate cuts and transitions, Colin Farmer the Technical Director sat in front of the switcher, a huge multi-colored collection of buttons, dials, and levers from which he implemented directing calls on a second-by-second basis. As cameras were readied and taken, assistant directors Margaret Mitchell and Kylie Hoef called audio cues, timed the rundown of the show, and took notes. Via intercom and headset, the director and ADs communicated with Alex Zapien, the show's floor manager who was responsible for all set movement that occurred in the limited time the digital sketches were running. Jamie Fadden, as Lead Camera Operator, managed camera compositions and movements. A flurry of cast and crew moved cameras, struck sets, put up new ones, changed costumes, and readied themselves all in a period of two to eight minutes as digital sketches faded out and live sketches faded in.

From there the talented cast took over. Ian Harris shined as an overzealous superfan with some harsh words for the final game of the t-ball season. Kylie Hoef along with Veronica Slaven and Kyla Cano offered a reflexive look at the writers' room, with a fan fiction twist. Emma Puglia played a hipster daughter with a honky-tonk type secret that Matt Correa and Natalie Anderson played for huge laughs and a touch of broken furniture. We saw the return of Gerty, who was no longer Dirty with Max Linhardt as the absurd but loyal butler. Things got spooky at Camp Tanakwa with the he-shall-not-be-named Squidman and Luke Stevenson featured as an exasperated camp counselor. Erin Burke and Seth Andrews starred as improv group leaders with an unlikely audience, death row prisoners. Gretchen Andrews, Veronica Slaven, and Erin Burke transformed into the mangled and twisted Fourtune Sisters, Jupiter, Alimony, and Calliope, along with their sister Megan, she's adopted. Sam Goldin bossed as Dino Falcone,

making the transition from mafioso hitman to hot dog vendor. And Josh Lank played many roles, but most importantly got to become a Lil' Bitch.

There were chicken cops, reality star retirees, YouTube sensations (get your Mallard merch now!!), baristas, boyband heartthrobs, men with a curfew, wizards, cooks, and, of course, Gwyneth Paltrow.

Pls Hire Us showcased the independent talents of all its students and also made a team of them in millennial pink sweatshirts

Thanks to FTVM studio staff Rob Hoffman, Rob Gingerich-Jones, and Paul Sutherland, Terri Sarris, to the entire 403 class, and to the student volunteers who helped to make the show such a success.