This summer as audiences headed to theaters to see the blockbusters, films with origins in the School of the Arts captured awards presenting insights into the industry and art at international festivals. Among this summer’s winners were Bertha Bay-Sa Pan, SOA ’97, Kazuo Ohno, SOA ’02, Elias Lewis, SOA ’03, and Patrick Downs, SOA ’01.

Bay-Sa Pan was named best director at the UrbanWorld Film Festival’s Sixth annual film and Screenplay Competition for her feature film The Writer in For Our Man, a film by Kazuo Ohno. The film is adapted from Pan’s thesis short film by the same name, depicting the relationship between a 20-year-old Chinese-American girl and her old-world grandmother, and how that relationship changes when her grandmother discovers she is dat- ing an African American man.

“Face is a very urban film,” says Pan, who was raised in Tai- wan. “I hope it is entertaining and moving for audiences from different cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds.” For Pan’s first feature film has received wide-ranging industry support—winning the “Audience Award” at New York’s GenArt Film Festival, the Critic’s Award for Best Director at CineVegas and was a finalist for the Open Palm Award at September’s Gotham Awards.

In addition to her work on Face, Pan is co-writing an urban, martial arts, romantic comedy with screenwriter Caren K. Wilson, which she will also direct.

“I have been very lucky since Face first premiered in the dramatic competition at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year,” says Pan. “Winning these awards has been an extremely surreal experience, especially since Ethan Hawke is also a finalist for the Open Palm.”

As Face had its beginnings as a student short, the Director’s Guild of America (DGA) recognized Ohno and Elias Leon-Siminiani for their student films with East Coast Student Filmmaker Awards. Ohno won Best Asian American Student Filmmaker Award and Leon-Siminiani won Best Latino Student Filmmaker, extending Columbia’s win- ning streak at these awards. Film students have taken home more than half of the DGA awards over the past four years, culminating in all four prize categories in 1996 and 1998.

Ohno was recognized for his film For Our Man, which also won the Gold Medal for best film in the alternative category at the 2002 Student Academy Awards. Ohno is one of 13 students who also met other highly motivat- ing, selected high school stu- dents from throughout the United States and several other countries come to Columbia for either Session 1 – which is open to all students—or Session 2— which is only open to international students. This summer, 13 students also participated for the first time in a study program in Barcelona, Spain. Instead of academic credit, students receive detailed evaluations from instructors and a unique educational experience in the process.

The Summer Program for High School Students began fifteen years ago in an effort to provide high school students with a non-traditional summer pro- gram on Columbia’s campus, introducing them also to college life in New York City. Through intensive courses—like Trial Advocacy students also meet other highly motivat- ed students from different schools and enjoy Columbia’s unique resources such as the gym, libraries and centers. They return home with an official Columbia statement, new friend and a clear understanding of their particular field of study. And in case of both Bello’s and Siminiani’s students—gained a new perspective on an old child- hood hobby.

Downs is currently completing a feature film on superheroes in the military, entitled Courage. Sometimes Spiders Pump Their Own Selves, based on the charac- ters created by the late Stan Lee. In addition, he is working on two feature screenplays: a high- energy drugs-gangs-terrorism-gifts thriller to be produced in Miami, loosely based on Christo- pher Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta, and a supernatural horror film, titled Ghost In The Machine, about a detective who is trying to solve his own murder. In October, he plans to direct a short film which is called from the supernatural thriller The New Americans. This fall, Downs will also direct the televi- sion pilot The New Americans.