Taking a Meeting with Screenwriter Simon Kinberg

By Sheri M. Whiteley

This isn’t how it usually happens with Hollywood types. His people (manager, agent, publicist) didn’t call my people (there aren’t any). There were no hovering hangers-on who serve innumerable portions for outrageous prices at swank eateries. It was just me and the famously popular screenwriter Simon Kinberg chatting at a small table at an event called Full Throttle and XXX: State of the Union, which recently opened, all benefits to Simon, who was born in London but grew up in California, attended Brown University, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude after studying film and literature. But he credits the exceptional education he received at SOA—and guidance from his professors—as instrumental in the crafting of his skill and in shaping his career.

That non-famous career began with a post-college stint as an intern at Red Envelope Features, the New York-based film production company co-founded by Irna Deutchman, longtime Hollywood producer and adjunct professor of film at SOA. Deutchman, producer of such films as Swimming to Cambodia and Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle, found Kinberg under his wing, nudging Kinberg’s career into action. “The first stage is the hardest to penetrate.”

Deutchman helped Kinberg make that step by coaching him on how to pitch film ideas and by convincing him to attend SOA. “[Deutchman] was both the reason I went to Columbia and the reason I got into the film business. The first dollar I made in film, I made with ira,” says Kinberg. Deutchman sent his protégé’s first-year screenplay to contacts in Hollywood, which opened a lot of doors. Kinberg explains, “The most influential professor for me as a writer was Jamal Joseph, an assistant professor of professional practice and co-founder of the International Black Panther Film Festival, was also his academic advisor.”

He encouraged my bent and passion for film this summer.” Kinberg returned the mentoring favor he received from SOA professors by teaching a master class in film this semester. The adjustment from schoolwork to real work was tough, Kinberg explains, with a chuckle, “Studio executives are strange animals,” he says, “difficult to figure out.” But his professors helped him with the proper Hollywood jargon. The curriculum at SOA also prepared him for working in the industry. “Classes I didn’t like, I felt, were some of the most important. I really didn’t like the [required] acting class. I hated it,” he says. “But the truth is, the lessons I learned in those classes were profoundly valuable.”

Another big influence on Kinberg’s craft was Michael Hausman, adjunct professor at SOA. Hausman is a Hollywood veteran who directed or sexuality—into different aspects of community life. The fund will support student programs that fosters open debate and civil discourse on a wide range of topics, including issues of race, religion and culture. Approximately 150 student leaders, faculty and administrators attended the event. Bollinger and Kraft were part of a panel that included Nobel Laureate and University Professor Eric Kandel and incoming chair of the Noam Chomsky, Chomsky whose ideas on how Columbia can facilitate constructive exploration of important community issues. The fund is a pool of applicants. He expressed his hope and belief that the fund “will lead to an even stronger and healthier campus environment.”

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.

The People vs. Larry Flynt

And the Fabulously Popular Screenwriter Simon Kinberg, right, is Hollywood’s go-to-guy for action-packed scripts. X: X: State of the Union, above, is one of his recent projects.

n April 21, at a special event in Lerner Hall, beloved President Lee C. Bollinger and Trustee Emeritus Robert Kraft, CC’63, announced the establishment of the Kraft Family Fund for Interfaith and Intercultural Awareness. This one million dollar fund, created through a $500,000 gift from Robert and Urs Kraft, and a matching contribution from the Kallman Foundation, will be used to support student and University programming that fosters open debate and civil discourse on a wide range of topics, including issues of race, religion and culture. Approximately 150 student leaders, faculty and administrators attended the event. Bollinger and Kraft were part of a panel that included Nobel Laureate and University Professor Eric Kandel and incoming chair of the Noam Chomsky, Chomsky whose ideas on how Columbia can facilitate constructive exploration of important community issues. The fund is a pool of applicants. He expressed his hope and belief that the fund “will lead to an even stronger and healthier campus environment.”

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.

The fund also will be used to sponsor University programming developed by a committee of distinguished faculty on behalf of the Offices of the President and Provost. The committee includes

Chaplain Davis believes that the Kraft Family Fund “will provide our students with additional opportunities for exploring important issues so that we, as a University community, can continue to learn more about each other and from each other.”

“While I think it is really exciting about the Kraft Family Fund is that it is still malleable,” said Jung. “Students will help determine what issues will be discussed and how those discussions will take shape. What we want to accomplish most is to engage students throughout the University and integrate intersecting identities. Whatever they pertain to ethnicity, culture, religion, gender or sexuality—into different aspects of community life.”

Kandel, Carol Gluck, the George Sansom Professor of History and professor of East Asian studies and culture, Nicholas Lemann, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism and Henry R. Luce Professor of Journalism; and Robert O’Mally, the Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English and Comparative Literature and director of the Columbia University Center for Jazz Studies. The committee will designate three issues for the University’s community to explore each year and will determine appropriate programming that has a public component, including symposia, conferences or lectures and other events and activities that engage students.

The fund also will be used to sponsor University programming developed by a committee of distinguished faculty on behalf of the Offices of the President and Provost. The committee includes

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.

The fund will support student negotiated programs designed to facilitate greater understanding among community members of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It will build upon existing activities organized by various student groups based in Earl Hall and activities organized by various student groups.