

Annual Report

2011

Yangon Film School
Non-profit Association for the Promotion
of Young Burmese Film and Video Artists



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Participants, tutors and trainers of the 2011 Yangon Film School's Art of Documentary Filmmaking Beginners' Workshop

Annual Report

I Summary of Activities in 2011

Year seven for the Yangon Film School saw another busy round of workshops, teaching modules and mentorships and a new intake of multiethnic participants. In 2011, a total of 30 YFS participants (some also working as student trainers) took part in seven workshops, two teaching modules and two mentorships. The beginner-students produced nine new titles, five of which were inspired by the topic of Myanmar's different ethnic groups, and one of which, entitled *Sweetie Pie*, went on to win Best Documentary at the inaugural **Wathann Film Festival**, an event organised by YFS graduates and held in Yangon in September 2011. Alongside these works, three drama screenplays and five fascinating documentary works-in-progress by more experienced YFS filmmakers received mentorship from YFS international tutors. These films range from personal, witty films about the 2010 election and the recent changes in the country to the stigma of divorce; the controversial Myitsone dam project to a portrait, sumptuously filmed in black-and-white, of a family that creates household objects from old tyres.



Sai Kong Kham (left) with fellow winners at the inaugural Wathann Film Festival



Wathann Film Festival, Yangon

YFS films enjoyed continued popularity at international film festivals and other events in 2011, with a remarkable 23 titles screening at 20 different festivals on three continents: Europe, Asia, North and South America. We were delighted that six YFS filmmakers were also able to attend screenings and seminars in venues as diverse as Toronto, Kathmandu, Chiangmai, Laos, Vietnam, Munich, Potsdam and Berlin.



Thu Thu Shein and Thaidhhi (centre) participate in panel discussion at the 2012 Berlinale

Democracy at YFS – one year on

During 2011, the first seven-person YFS Committee worked successfully with YFS Director Lindsey Merrison to identify and interview candidates for the new multi-ethnic intake. The Committee continued to meet regularly to discuss a number of YFS-related issues including student trainers, advocacy, staffing, equipment loans, production and crewing of films for NGOs and other projects. Having ascertained the logistical challenges of gathering seven people on a regular basis, the Committee decided to reduce the new Committee to five members. Three women (Lay Thida, Shin Daewe and Hnin Ei Hlaing) and two men (Pe Maung Same and Thiha Thwe) were duly voted into office in an election held on 1 October 2011 which was organised solely by YFS members, with regular YFS interpreter Aung Myin Tun acting as observer.

The YFS Committee now appears committed to taking ownership and responsibility for the YFS project at the end of the transition period. Its members have also voiced their desire for greater clarity regarding their role in the future infrastructure of YFS. At the same time, however, members seem tentative about the Management recruitment and training programme scheduled for 2012. Working together to create this clarity and confidence in a Memorandum of Understanding that sets out the relationship and *modus operandi* for the school, its production arm and management, will be the first challenge for 2012.

Although uncertain as to the changes that Myanmar's new government will bring and what this might mean for the media landscape and YFS, the Committee concurred with the YFS Director that it is important for YFS to abandon its hitherto low-profile stance and instead advertise its key role as a training centre and production outfit within a burgeoning media sector. The Committee agreed to seek ways for cooperating with other media players, be it other independent filmmakers, MRTV4, the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise, or the newly launched Wathann and Art of Freedom Film Festivals, where several YFS films screened in September 2011 and January 2012 respectively.

In 2011 the Yangon Film School held **seven workshops** and **four mentorships** in two blocks, as follows:

- a) A **'Flying Mentorship'** took place from 20 May to 7 June during which **YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi** completed her mentorship of YFS students during the edit of the two 'true fictions' projects *Bungkus* and *The Bamboo Grove*.
- b) **Basic Training** was held from 28 to 30 July. Led by **Student Trainers Kyaw Myo Lwin, Hnin Ei Hlaing, Aung Ko Ko** and **Pe Maung Same**, with some input from international camera and sound tutors Lars Barthel and Ivan Horák, this training was designed to introduce the new intake to the camera and sound equipment prior to the beginners' workshop proper.
- c) This was followed from 1 to 17 August by the **The Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop**, a three-week residential Beginners' Workshop taught by international tutors in tandem with YFS students as part of the teach-to-train programme. During the workshop, six men and six women received an introduction to the technical, aesthetical and ethical aspects of the genre and worked in teams of three to produce four final films on the topic of **'Ethnic minorities in Myanmar'**.

- d) From 17 to 20 August, YFS cinematography tutor **Lars Barthel** (Germany) and post-production specialist **David Smith** (UK) held an **Advanced HD Camera Workshop** during which experienced YFS cinematographers and talented beginner cinematographers were able to test the school's new HD cameras in various exercises and conditions.
- e) From 17 August to 11 September **Editing Mentorship of Beginners' Films** took place at the workshop venue. During this time, international tutors **Melanie Sandford** (Australia) and **David Smith** (UK) provided daily support as Student Editors **Hnin Ei Hlaing, Kyaw Myo Lwin, Thet Su Hlaing, Zaw Win Htwe** and **Zaw Naing Oo** worked on the edits of the Beginners' final film assignments.

The **second block of YFS workshops** began in October 2011 and comprised:

- f) **Ways of Seeing: History of Film Form**, a one-week course held from 17 to 21 October in which YFS tutor Frances Calvert (UK/Australia) taught 'cineliteracy' and helped students understand the genres and styles shaping world cinema.
- g) A four-week **Introduction to Editing Workshop** from 31 October to 25 November led by YFS film editing tutors **Tuula Mehtonen** (Finland) and **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany), which aimed to introduce the new intake of Yangon Film School students to editing as a complex but fascinating storytelling tool.
- h) An **Editing 'Clinic' for Advanced Editing Students** took place partly alongside the Introduction to Editing Workshop, mentored by **Tuula Mehtonen** and **Jessica Ehlebracht**, continuing for a further four weeks from 5 November to 9 December with Tuula during which students received mentorship to find the most interesting and effective structure for their sometimes complex stories.
- i) The two-week **How Documentary Films Work: Film Analysis Course** from 12 to 24 December led by Tuula Mehtonen, aimed to give emerging filmmakers the ability to distinguish between different editing methods in documentary and to understand how editing can be used to build a film's intensity. The course included classroom teaching and independent analysis in teams.
- j) A course on **Post-Production and Pre-Mixing** from 30 December 2011 to 13 January 2012 was led by YFS Editing and Post-Production tutor **David Smith (UK)** for beginners and experienced students. The course aimed to instil a sense of professionalism in finishing a film's edit technically including credits, subtitles, colour grading, mix preparation, media management and storage.
- k) A **'Flying Mentorship'** took place from 20 February to 27 March 2012 during which **YFS Editing Tutor Regina Bärtschi** supported YFS students during the edit of three films commissioned by Save the Children, local NGO Better Life and Malteser International. She also held a one-week **Workshop on Post-production** of these films and one other title, *Puppets without Borders*.
- l) Ongoing **Mentorship of Screenwriters' projects** conducted via email by YFS screenwriting tutor **Rachel Mathews** continued throughout 2011.

Other activities in 2011:

- 1) From 3 to 5 January, Berlin's Interfilm festival director **Heinz Hermanns** held a short film presentation, **All About Shorts**, at the Alliance (now Institut) Française in Yangon, with support from Goethe Institute Jakarta and Yangon Film School.



Naw Eh Mwee & Burmanologist
Dr Pat Pranke in a snowy Toronto

- 2) Presentation of the work of the Yangon Film School at a conference entitled *New Voices, New Visions: Buddhism, Development and Documentary Filmmaking in Burma* held from 18 to 20 February at the **University of Toronto in Canada**. YFS presenters were YFS Project Director at the time, **Naw Eh Mwee** and YFS director **Lindsey Merrison**.

- 3) YFS filmmakers **Wai Mar Nyunt** and **Shin Daewe** attended the Lifescapes Film Festival in **Chiangmai, Thailand** to present their films *My Positive Life* and *A Bright Future*.

- 4) YFS filmmaker **Maung Okkar** attended the Sehsüchte Student Film Festival in **Potsdam, Germany** to present his *Charcoal Boy* as the festival's opening film.

- 5) YFS Project Assistant **Helke Madry** travelled to Hanoi and Da Nang in Vietnam from 9 to 13 June to take part in the Goethe Institute's first AsiaDocNet meeting.

- 6) YFS filmmaker **Pe Maung Same** attended the screening of his film *Like Father, Like Son* at the second Vientiane Film Festival in **Laos**.

Maung Okkaris interviewed
by German TV in Potsdam



- 7) YFS and Goethe Institute Jakarta supported Burmese filmmaker **Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi's** presentation of his film *Floating Tomatoes* at the Seoul Green Film Festival in South Korea.

- 8) During the Beginners' workshop, **Guest speaker Win Tin Win**, a documentary filmmaker and founder of AV Media, spoke to students about his pioneering documentary production company which in the 1990s set about recording life in different parts of Myanmar.

- 9) Presentation of the work of the Yangon Film School film at the **Mekong Country Day** in Berlin.

- 10) YFS filmmakers **Lay Thida** and **Khin Khin Hsu** travelled from Yangon and Prague respectively to Berlin to present *Just a Boy* and the premiere of the 'true fictions' film *The Bamboo Grove* at the **Interfilm Festival** from 15 to 20 November.

1. Breakdown of YFS Management Activities & Project Plan
January 2011 – October 2011:
During this period the YFS Director and Project Assistant undertook:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preparation of financial and narrative reports of 2010 workshop ○ Supervision of subtitling and post-production of 18 films made in 2010 ○ Grant writing and other fundraising activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding missions, visibility actions such as screenings of YFS work to potential clients, festival organisers, NGOs, donors - Creation of YFS website including details of all films and makers ○ Pre-workshop organisation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devising courses with international tutors - Recruitment of participants, tutors and staff - Workshop permit application - Coordinating travel arrangements - Research and purchase of equipment and teaching materials - Cash flow and fund management ○ Coordination of the YFS Flying Mentorship Programme ○ Submitting YFS films to festivals and coordinating YFS students' participation at international festivals and other events ○ Creating individual DVDs and portfolios of students' work ○ Year-round mentoring of individual projects for NGOs as well as individual films by YFS students ○ Year-round mentoring of YFS student-managers and producers in organisational and contractual aspects of running YFS as a media resource ○ Establishing contact with broadcasters, festivals and other organisations to pave the way for co-productions, training programmes and scholarships
26 April – 29 April 2011
YFS Project Assistant Helke Madry travels to Bonn for a workshop on reporting for the European Union
4 May – 12 May 2011
YFS Director travels to Yangon to locate new workshop venue and interview candidates for 2011 Beginners' workshop together with YFS Committee
25 July – 10 September 2011
YFS Workshop Supervisor Helke Madry travels to Yangon to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supervise the 2011 Art of Documentary Filmmaking and Editing Workshops and support tutors ○ Prepare the workshop venue with students ○ Prepare teaching materials ○ Liaise with the Workshop Manager on catering and shuttle service ○ Re-negotiate workshop venue/hotel rates with hotel owner ○ Supervise student trainers in the teach-to-train programme ○ Oversee work of YFS local Accountant, Project Director and Assistants ○ Finalise contracts with tutors, YFS staff and student-trainers in the teach-to-train programme

29 July – 29 August, 2011
YFS Director Lindsey Merrison travels to Yangon to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lead 2011 Art of Documentary Filmmaking Beginners Workshop and supervise teach-to-train programme for student-trainers in directing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meet with NGO clients to discuss progress of commissioned projects and acquire new projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct meetings with YFS Committee to discuss handover plan, current management issues including recruitment of admin. assistant and of long-term local management, job descriptions, structure of school vs. production company, crewing of NGO films, progress of YFS Production Fund projects, ratification of school guidelines, upcoming Committee election, selection of three candidates for British Council language course scholarships
1 September – 10 December, 2011
Preparation in Berlin of Winter Workshops followed by implementation of workshops in Yangon. Project Coordinator Helke Madry supervising in Yangon from 14 October to 8 December 2011; Lindsey Merrison in Yangon from 26 November to 10 December 2011 to monitor progress of projects, present Annual Screening and begin Management Recruitment in consultation with YFS Committee
26 November – 10 December 2011
Management Training Coach Rusta Mizani accompanies YFS Director to Yangon to meet YFS students and Workshop Supervisor Helke Madry, assess YFS management and recruitment needs
December 2011 – May 2012:
Supervision of online edits and post-production of 14 films produced in 2011 (includes fine cutting, subtitling, colour correction, rights clearance, credits in Burmese and English, sound mix, edit of workshop film, production of three individual DVDs for clients, two workshop DVDs, cover design, inlay text; preparation of six financial and narrative reports and three audits



YFS students Isaac, Hnin Ei Hlaing, Seng Mai, Pe Maung Same & Sai Kong Kham

2. Fundraising

The final budget for 2011 was 354,956 Euro. Major funding was received from the EU, the Goethe Institute Jakarta and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) with smaller contributions from the Finnish Association for Media and Development (VIKES), the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Heinrich Boell Foundation, the Norwegian Burma Committee and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the two-year funding from the European Union for the period 2011-2012, and Finnish donor Vikes' funding for 2011-13, the Yangon Film School is delighted to have secured three-year funding for the period 2011-2013 from its regular donor, SIDA. Since the contract with this donor was not signed until November 2011 and funding was not received until December, this created a challenging cash flow situation which required constant and adept reallocations within the budget as well as some rescheduling and/or omission of some of the workshops, postponement of some equipment purchases and finally, non-payment of the YFS Director's fees for a period of six months.

(i) Comments

Although the bid to secure funding for the school for the next three years during its transition to a local entity has been partially successful, a setback has occurred in that the Goethe Institute Jakarta, a staunch supporter YFS since its inception, will as of 2012 no longer be in a position to provide core funding. And so, although current pledges amount to approximately 55% of the budget required to fund the YFS' current activities, a gap of approximately 162,000 Euro needs to be bridged in order to fully fund the project in 2012 and in particular the 18-month Management Training Programme on which the handover is contingent.

(ii) School Building

Identifying and funding a school building is now imperative in order to consolidate YFS as a permanent media resource in Myanmar serving the interests of a wide range of in-country stakeholders and promoting exchange both in Myanmar and the region. Yangon boasts the largest stock of colonial-style buildings in Asia. The Myanmar Architects' Association has recently singled out a number of these buildings for preservation. We believe that, if renovated, one of these impressive historical buildings could serve as the perfect base for YFS; the school must therefore use the momentum of the current changes in order to make this vision a reality.

The YFS Director would welcome suggestions from the school's regular donors as to how funding for this major project could be secured.

3. Schedule, Methodology and Tutors

As a result of the need to make the best use of the six-month lease of the new workshop venue at the Ruby Hotel at Nine Mile Pyay Road, two workshop semesters of seven and thirteen weeks respectively were held, with a short break of four weeks in between. In this way, the first semester from 26 July to 10 September contained the Beginners' Workshop **The Art of Documentary Filmmaking** followed by a short **HD Camera Workshop** and **Editing Mentorship of Beginners' Films** and the second semester, from 17 October 2011 to 14 January

2012, concentrated on **Film History**, the **Introduction to Editing** and **Advanced Editing Clinic**, **How Documentary Films Work Analysis** course and finally **Post-Production and Pre-Mixing** workshops.



As ever, the workshops were taught via a mixture of classroom teaching, practical exercises, screenings, feedback sessions and individual mentorship, culminating in several short exercises and documentary films as well as longer works-in-progress. This year, approximately one third of the workshops were residential.

Student-trainer Thi Ha Thwe leads a classroom session during the Beginners' Workshop

The **Beginners' Workshop: The Art of Documentary Filmmaking** was led by **Lindsey Merrison** (UK) with support from cinematography tutor **Lars Barthel** (Germany), sound tutor **Ivan Horák** (Czech Republic) and editors **Melanie Sandford** (Australia) and **David Smith** (UK); the **Ways of Seeing: Film History Course** was taught by Australian filmmaker and lecturer **Frances Calvert**; the **Introduction to Editing workshop** and **Editing Clinic** were led by editors **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany) and **Tuula Mehtonen** (Finland); Tuula also taught the **How Documentary Films Work: Film Analysis** course. The **Post-Production and Pre-Mixing** course was led by British editor and senior post-production lecturer David Smith. Workshop Supervisor and Project Assistant **Helke Madry** supervised both workshop semesters and continued her ongoing mentorship of YFS producers and administrators. YFS students received feedback and production advice on all projects as well as ongoing tuition in subtitling from Lindsey Merrison.

4. Permits, Participants and Implementation

YFS enjoys a good relationship with the Ministry of Information, represented by the official cinema industry organisation **Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise**, and particularly with the local NGO **Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation**, which acts as a conduit between these two departments. In the past, the Ministry has regularly granted annual permits for YFS workshops in spite of the Myanmar government's inherent mistrust of all media activities.

In 2011 the situation in Myanmar six months after the General Election brought new challenges and opportunities for YFS.

- Details of each international tutor – all well known to the authorities from previous years – were scrutinised afresh by several departments, including the Foreign Affairs Policy Committee.
- YFS also received the first ever official workshop visitation from a **delegation from the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise (MMPE)**. This visitation indicates the increasing impact YFS is having on the media landscape in Myanmar as well as the respect accorded YFS as a serious training programme.
- The MMPE politely suggested that YFS might wish to consider allowing five to six members of this government department to attend some of its workshops. Not wishing

to appear uncooperative and non-inclusive, we agreed to invite two MMPE employees – one of whom, Han Linn Aung, is already a YFS member and the other, Sai Nyi Nyi, is a newcomer – to join the Film History and Film Analysis courses.

- These additional steps may have been a result of the YFS' request for a single permit for six months to cover all teaching activities in 2011. This permit was duly authorised and the original hard copy was received during the third week of the Beginners' Workshop.
- Since it was not possible to postpone the commencement of the Beginners' Workshop in order to wait for the permit, tutors and student trainers were obliged to exercise particular care in their choice of filming locations. A high definition camera workshop exercise (albeit with six cameras) conducted at the ostensibly innocuous location of the Shwedagon pagoda attracted particular attention from the local authorities. However, a phone call to the beneficiary's Permit Liaison Consultant succeeded in assuaging their fears. The rest of the workshop was conducted without further incident.

As of 2012, the **YFS Permit Manager Pe Maung Same** has been entrusted with the task of assessing the new media landscape in order to ascertain whether there is a continued need for workshop permits. If so, YFS will once again seek a year-long permit to enable greater flexibility in planning.

(i) Workshop Venue and YFS House

After prolonged research and negotiation, YFS succeeded in securing a new venue for its workshops, the **Ruby Hotel** at 23, Bawga Road, Nine Mile Pyay Road in Mayangone Township in Yangon. Although somewhat further away from the previous mid-town venue in Kamaryut Township, the new venue is in a quiet location next to a monastery. It has a reasonably good supply of electricity, is serviced by a bus route and is very close to the airport and Ocean shopping mall. The hotel's three buildings are in good repair and nicely furnished, although the steps and tiled surfaces leading from one building to another were somewhat treacherous during the monsoon and special mats and a roofed area needed to be installed to avoid accidents.

Current changes in Myanmar, in particular the selling-off of government properties to business associates close to the government, as well as the influx of an increasing number of international development workers and government representatives, have led to soaring property prices. This has affected rental prices in Yangon, which have sometimes risen by as much as 50%. In this climate of fluctuating prices and exchange rates, the monthly rate of approximately 5,000 Euro for the 20-room Ruby Hotel seemed acceptable. Fortunately, we had agreed in 2010 with the owner of the YFS permanent office at 51E, U Po Tet Road, Mayangone Tsp., that the monthly rental price of 1200 USD (900 Euro) for this property would remain fixed for 2011.



Student-trainer Aung Ko Ko (right) with Beginner students in the garden of the Ruby Hotel

5. Training of Trainers

The year 2011 saw the continuation of the school's successful teach-to-train programme as regular trainers **Pe Maung Same** (camera), **Kyaw Myo Lwin** (sound), **Hnin Ei Hlaing** (sound), **Shin Daewe**, **Lay Thida** and **Thiha Thwe** (directing) were joined by new student trainers **Aung Ko Ko** (camera), **Zaw Win Htwe** (sound) and **Eh Mwee** (directing). As an added incentive, and in recognition of the student trainers' contribution to workshops thus far, YFS introduced payment of 5,000 MMK for each session – be it morning, afternoon or evening – to which they contributed.

In addition, YFS student editors **Hnin Ei Hlaing**, **Zaw Win Htwe** and **Kyaw Myo Lwin** were asked to edit the beginner's final films. These editors later also contributed to the Introduction to Editing Workshop by supervising the new intake of novice editors who had just completed the beginners' course, the Art of Documentary Filmmaking.

YFS graduate **Myo Min Khin**, currently YFS Editing Equipment Manager, is now training YFS beginner student **Khin Myanmar** to enable her to be in a position to manage media files and maintain editing equipment from 2013 onwards.

(i) Comments

The teach-to-train programme is a central aspect of YFS' transition to a local-run entity. Involving more experienced YFS students as trainers helps them consolidate their own



Kyaw Myo Lwin demonstrates the boom

knowledge and identify with YFS; it also affords trainers respect and confidence as they transfer real skills to their peers, in their own language. In 2011, the tutors decided to appoint **trainers as mentors** of one of the four beginners' final film assignments. This enabled trainers to go out on location and integrate a practical, hands-on approach into their teaching.

I am happy to participate in the teach-to-train programme whenever they need us. It's a win-win situation for me as well as for the students because by training others I can confirm what I've learned and gain more insight into techniques.

Student-trainer for sound Kyaw Myo Lwin

I loved being a mentor. It was a fantastic experience, a bit like working on my own project. I really enjoyed giving them my suggestions and helping them practically.

Student-trainer for sound, project mentor Hnin Ei Hlaing

6. YFS Management – The Recruitment Process

At the time of writing, the YFS Committee has appointed the following staff at the YFS house, many of whom are YFS filmmakers: **Project Director** (Hnin Ei Hlaing), **Local Accountant** (Ni Mar), **Project Assistant** (Ma Phyu Phyu), **Permit and House Manager** (Pe Maung Same), **Editing Equipment Manager** (Myo Min Khin) and **Camera and Sound Equipment Manager** (Mya Darli Aung).

However, as mentioned in the 2010 YFS Annual Report, there are sociological problems in hiring filmmakers as management, since they are often torn between their administrative tasks and their desire to further their careers as filmmakers.

Hence, the installation of a dedicated **Management Team** which is not merely competent but is willing and able to share YFS's vision and carry it forward towards handover in 2015 is crucial to our sustainability. Such a team must understand the processes involved in filmmaking, but also in funding and running a film school.

At the end of 2011, YFS began identifying its management needs when Management Coach **Rusta Mizani**, a German national of German-Iranian descent, visited YFS Yangon from 26 November to 10 December to conduct an assessment (see Appendix XVII). The trip served as a first point of contact with local operations and enabled the Coach to familiarise himself with staff and students in Yangon. An introductory session was held with the YFS Committee to present a first overview of the proposed transition process and discuss immediate next steps. The general timeline and curriculum for the **Media Management Workshop** to be held in 2012 were also introduced.

At the time of the trip, the recruitment process for new management staff had just begun through **announcements** in the most important local media (*7 Day News, The Voice, The Myanmar Times*) and YFS website. In addition, an information leaflet was designed to address potential candidates within the network of YFS Students and associated organisations.

In order to structure and objectify the recruitment process, the Coach and YFS Committee developed a **formal assessment guideline** to be followed during interviews with applicants for the new management positions. Also, a local volunteer was found to handle incoming applications, liaise with applicants and schedule interviews. The Coach refined the schedule and structure of the **Management Training Programme** scheduled for 2012, using an alternate on-site and tele-support framework based on a succession of milestones on the way to full transition.

The Coach's visit served to 'kick-off' the transition process. Since then, applications have been received and long-listed. Interviews are scheduled for Yangon in April with the participation of the YFS Committee and guidance from YFS Management and Coach to select participants for the **Media Management Workshop** scheduled for May/June. The final team of new managers will commence work in June/July 2012.

7. Legal Status Secured

After two years of negotiations and seemingly endless bureaucratic hurdles, YFS has successfully secured legal status in Myanmar and is now a registered company, known as **Yangon Film Services**. The directors of this local company are YFS Committee Member **Shin Daewe** and YFS member **Myo Min Khin**. This registration marks a significant step forward towards founding a permanent media resource and will facilitate handover in the years to come.

II The 2011 Art of Documentary Filmmaking Beginners' Workshop

A three-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 28 July to 17 August 2011

Workshop led by Lindsey Merrison



Rushes screening during the Beginners' Workshop at the Ruby Hotel

1. Rationale for the Workshop

As with the 2009 edition of the beginners' course, the workshop kicked off with two days of **Basic Training** held by Student Trainers **Aung Ko Ko** and **Pe Maung Same** (camera) and **Hnin Ei Hlaing** and **Kyaw Myo Lwin** (sound) and observed by international tutors Lars Barthel (cinematography) and Ivan Horák (sound). This training serves to acquaint the new intake with the equipment (this was to be the final outing for the school's standard digital Panasonic DVX100 cameras) prior to the workshop proper. Trainers and tutors were surprised to note the group's fascination in technical detail. Impressed with the way Student Trainers acquitted themselves during the training, the international camera and sound tutors stated that student-trainers could 'soon make international tutors redundant'.

As with earlier editions of the beginners' courses in 2005, 2007 and 2009, the 2011 beginners' workshop, **The Art of Documentary Filmmaking**, also comprised a mixture of classroom teaching, film exercises, screenings and discussions, culminating in the production of four final documentary film assignments which this year were inspired by the topic 'Ethnic minorities in Myanmar'. In order to integrate Student Trainers as fully as possible into the teaching, workshop leader Lindsey Merrison asked each of the four directing trainers **Lay Thida**, **Shin Daewe**, **Eh Mwee** and **Thiha Thwe** to prepare a short talk on one of the key introductory topics: **What is Documentary**, **Ways of Seeing**, the **Filmed Conversation** and **Identifying a Protagonist**. In addition, Lay Thida also introduced the topic of **Ethnic Minorities in Myanmar**, during which she highlighted the risk of marginalisation when using the term 'minorities', offering instead the alternative 'ethnic nationalities' or 'ethnic groups'.

(i) Participants – an Ethnic Mix

A total of 50 Myanmar nationals from different regions, backgrounds and ethnicity followed the call for candidates placed on the YFS website and via word-of-mouth. These candidates were interviewed by the YFS Director and YFS Committee for 12 places on the beginners' course. Participants were aged between 22 and 40 and hailed from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds including Myanmar, Shan, Shan-Kachin, Chin, Karen, Rakhine, Lahu, Mon, and Myanmar-Muslim. They included two filmmaker-photographers, one photo-journalist, one fine artist and video artist, one sound engineer working in radio, two film editors, two members of an interfaith organisation, one member of a development organisation, one ethnic community leader and one English graduate. With six female and six male participants, gender parity was maintained.



Myanmar Muslim
Jue Jue Than



Myanmar Buddhist
Khin Myanmar



Mon Christian
Thet Su Hlaing

A total of 20 graduates of previous YFS courses returned to take part in advanced courses and/or participate in the YFS teach-to-train programme (nine people).

(ii) Comments

Although this was not the first time that YFS had involved participants from different ethnic groups (earlier intakes had included members of the Jinghpaw group in Kachin State among others), in 2011 a particular emphasis was placed on enrolling as diverse an ethnic mix as possible in order to meet the school's self-appointed mandate of inclusivity and pluralism. In earlier editions which had included members of different ethnic groups, a slight undercurrent of prejudice was perceived in some Myanmar participants vis-à-vis participants from northern Myanmar, whose pronunciation of Burmese and line of questioning during lessons were sometimes the target of derision. During this year's course, Myanmar participants and Myanmar student-trainers alike seemed to take a genuine interest in their peers from different ethnic and religious groups. But whilst the relaxed yet concentrated atmosphere of the residential workshop certainly helped form bonds, evaluations revealed that some of the bonhomie may have veiled deeper socio-cultural differences. One Chin participant commented: "I've always suspected that my compatriots don't have much of an idea about the different ethnic groups in their country. This has been confirmed during this workshop. It's become more obvious to me that people just tend to pay us lip service but aren't really interested in us and don't know much about us."

One interesting phenomenon is that many of the socio-cultural problems that affect the country as a whole are often reflected in microcosm during our workshops. This might include: lack of trust, reluctance to express opinions and feelings due to the behavioural code 'ah-na-de', an unwillingness to take the initiative or take on responsibility, inherent divisiveness, and the tendency to form cliques. Nonetheless, over the years we have observed that with each workshop participants become more confident, more vocal and more committed to acquiring the professional and life skills that will carry them forward as individuals.

What I found interesting was that we all had different comments after watching a film because we all come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. I like that very much!

Zon Sapai Phyu, workshop participant

I'm very excited about having made some new friends from significant minorities like Lahu, Mon and Muslim. I've now got a friend from Thanbyuzyat and another from Theini. I'm delighted about that.

Salai Tial Awi, Chin participant



I admire those from other ethnic groups at YFS. They are really good. Especially the Chin and Lahu students, they speak English so well.

War War Hlaing, Muslim workshop participant

I am a Lahu from Lashio. After this workshop I'll go back and make some documentaries about the Lahu people to record their way of life. I'm also determined to help other Lahu by sharing the knowledge I've gained about documentary filming and training them.

Workshop participant Isaac



2. Week One – Initial Training

Day One of the **Art of Documentary Filmmaking** course began with an introduction: **What is Documentary?** by student-trainer **Ko Thiha** supported by Lindsey. Having screened the witty yet humane Latvian documentary portrait **The Egg Lady** the evening before, student-trainer **Aung Ko Ko** screened the film again and provided a shot-by-shot analysis of camerawork, framing and composition. On **Day Two**, student-trainer **Lay Thida** presented the topic **Ways of Seeing** and described the documentary filmmaker's quest for truth. During the afternoon the participants were put into crews of two (lots were drawn) for the 'Cherry' exercise, during which camera-and-sound crews enter a room and an unknown situation and took turns to film five minutes of a woman named Cherry performing certain actions. This exercise enabled tutors and student-trainers to observe the beginners and find out which participants displayed an aptitude for cinematography, directing or sound recording. On **Day Three**, student-trainer **Eh Mwee** described the dos and don'ts of the **Filmed Conversation** and elaborated on the unique and privileged journey one undertakes with an interviewee. Workshop leader Lindsey also described the need for the documentary director to examine their own past and personality and asked participants to share a personal memory. As has often happened in the past, this session once again gave rise to an unexpectedly emotional outburst on the part of one participant, who used the session to talk about her changing

relationship with her parents. During the afternoon, participants took turns to interview each other and the results were screened to the group and evaluated by tutors and trainers.

Other screenings during this first week included Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel's cinematic poem *Middle of the Moment* and Michael Glawogger's *Megacities* but also a

number of films by student trainers: Wai Mar Nyunt's *My Positive Life*, Tay Zar Win Tun's *Thursday's Child*, Shin Daewe's *An Untitled Life*. Aung Ko Ko, Eh Mwee and Ko Thiha also screened and discussed their YFS-produced films *Beyond the Light*, *Dreaming in Colour* and *Far From Home* with the group. These screenings generated much discussion among the participants – particularly with regard to the question of ethics and how to make one's protagonist feel relaxed – and filmmakers clearly enjoyed answering questions about their work.



Beginner students film the 'Cherry' exercise

Day 4 saw three-person crews (selected by drawing lots) filming five-minute portraits of a) a young monk at the nearby monastery who hopes to return to his remote village to teach (*A Young Monk's Dream*); b) a Kayin washerwoman working at the Ruby Hotel workshop venue (*My Bad Boy*); c) an old man and his grandson (*Sweetie Pie*); d) a young girl working at a garment factory (*Factory Girl*). On **Days 5 and 6** student editors **Kyaw Myo Lwin**, **Hnin Ei Hlaing** and **Zaw Win Htwe** began editing these exercises mentored by international tutors Melanie Sandford and David Smith. The end of the first week culminated on **Day 6** with an introduction to the topic of the final film assignment – **Ethnic Minorities in Myanmar** – by **Lay Thida** and a screening of her film, *Unreported Story*, a shocking tale of domestic abuse in Shan State edited by **Eh Mwee**. Participants and filmmakers discussed the importance of tackling social taboos and the filmmakers described how they would like to use this film to promote women's rights in Myanmar.

(i) Comments

The tutor and student-trainer group met regularly during the first week to discuss the progress of individual students on the beginners' course. This year, **Khin Maung Kyaw** exhibited the most assured eye on camera, while Lahu cleric **Isaac** and performance artist and photographer **Seng Mai** both demonstrated good potential as cinematographers. A photographer and photojournalist by trade, **Tun Lynn** struggled at first with the demands of filming moving 'targets' and at one point resorted to setting up shots in an attempt to control the documentary situation. Screenings and discussions in the group soon revealed how wooden and *un*-lifelike such an approach can be. Lessons were duly learned and, by the end of the final filming assignment, all cinematographers' work had begun to take on a more relaxed and authentic feel. As ever, announcements of crews and roles within crews for final films caused disappointment for some, but student-trainers and tutors were able to impress upon teams the need for a constructive working relationship in order to produce a good final film. This year, student-trainers rather than international tutors were appointed as Mentors to each crew.

3. Weeks Two and Three



I'll never forget when the protagonist's daughter refused to allow us to continue filming even though her mother had already given us her consent. It was a great loss for us because we'd done all that research and filming and put a lot of energy and hard work into the project. I felt as if I'd been dropped from a great height. I thought I'd failed utterly. It's hard to recover from something like that.

Thet Su Hlaing, director of *The Bag* and *My Family*

The second week of the beginners' workshop began with a talk by student-trainers **Shin Daewe** and **Pe Maung Same** on the topic of **Finding a Protagonist** followed by a screening of Pe Maung Same's short documentary *Stepping Up* about how a water pump changed the life of one farmer in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta. The rest of the week was reserved for the research and filming of the beginners' four final assignments on the topic of **Ethnic Minorities in Myanmar**. While directors searched for protagonists and wrote a short treatment about their chosen subjects, camera-and-sound crews rehearsed their roles by filming the classic film school documentary situation 'changing a tyre'. Directors discussed their treatments with Student Mentors and Lindsey, and Workshop Supervisor **Helke Madry** and mentor **Eh Mwee** also introduced Directors to their dual role as director/production-managers and showed them how to draw up budgets. Student-mentors **Eh Mwee**, **Shin Daewe**, **Hnin Ei Hlaing** and **Pe Maung Same** guided their beginner crews throughout the pre-production and filming process. Although they were not encouraged to accompany teams to locations, they often did so; this meant they were able to discover for themselves how far they should intervene as mentors in order to assist their protégés, learning in the process that sometimes allowing students to make mistakes can be more valuable than helping them avoid them.



Beginner Student Zon Sapal Phyu outside the Ruby Hotel

(i) Comments

The task for Myanmar beginner-directors Khin Myanmar, Zaw Naing Oo and Thet Su Hlaing was particularly challenging since they were asked to identify and film protagonists in ethnic communities about which they knew almost nothing. **Khin Myanmar** and her crew of Shan-Kachin cinematographer **Seng Mai** and Shan sound recordist **Sai Kong Kham** were at first inspired by their larger-than-life Kachin missionary protagonist and his orphanage. No sooner did they view their footage however, than they began to read between the lines and became aware of the ambivalent nature of what they had captured on film. On paper, the Chin café owner identified by **Zaw Naing Oo** and his crew **Tun Lynn** and **Salai Tial Awi** seemed to possess all the ingredients of an interesting protagonist (single mother and entrepreneur); however, the tiny café proved to be an extremely difficult location in which to film (not helped by the generator chugging away or the cars shunting in and out of the garage next

door); moreover, the lady herself was rather dreary and expressionless on camera. After three days and endless lackluster footage, they decided to instead concentrate on another protagonist: one of the café's lively customers. Filmed at this Chin lady's interesting home, her touching story – having to part from all of her five children who have sought better lives in other countries – soon came to life in all its universality.

Working on this film has been completely unpredictable and that's what I like about it. It's like finding out an answer to something you never knew you cared about; you learn something completely unexpected, about something you knew nothing about.

Khin Myanmar, director of *The Dream*

I adore documentary filmmaking. It's a hundred times much more pleasurable than set-ups. In documentary you have to concentrate on capturing the moment. It's very important to wait and watch with extreme patience. You need to catch the moment because humans are fascinating, original creatures.

Seng Mai, cinematographer on *The Dream*



Myanmar-Muslim beginner-director **War War Hlaing** was more fortunate since the female Muslim protagonist of her film was well known to her, as was the Muslim community in which she had grown up. Nonetheless, she too encountered difficulties during the shoot, since the more conservative members of Yangon's Muslim



community would not allow her non-Muslim cinematographer (Khin Maung Kyaw) and female Muslim sound recordist to film inside the main mosque located near Sule Pagoda; in addition, filming openly downtown was still difficult in August 2011 and strategies needed to be found for filming several establishing shots of the street and the market where the protagonist shopped.

Studio shoot for Beginners' Film *Koran and Karate* directed by War War Hlaing

Mon filmmaker **Thet Su Hlaing** was delighted with her nimble-fingered and soft-voiced Lahu protagonist, a lady in her seventies who was more than happy to allow the crew to interview her as she created her intricately-patterned traditional Lahu bags. It came as all the more of a shock to this novice director when the protagonist's daughter stormed onto the location mid-shoot and called a halt to filming, complaining that director and crew were intent on 'exploiting' her mother by presenting her in a bad light. Sadly, all of Thet Su Hlaing's efforts to disarm the situation were to no avail; she was obliged to search for another subject which she duly found in the shape of two boarding school girls from far-off Putao who became the focus of her portrait *My Family*. The story of the bag-making lady does have a happy coda however: Thet Su Hlaing decided to use the material she had shot to edit a dialogue-free observational short. When she took *The Bag* back to show protagonist and skeptical daughter *both* were delighted with result.

Beginner student Khin Maung Kyaw
receives advice from
student-trainer Shin Daewe



(ii) Completion of the Films

Whilst the Beginners' Workshop doesn't include editing tuition (this was the focus of the Introduction to Editing workshop in the second semester in 2011), student editors **Zaw Win Htwe, Kyaw Myo Lwin** and **Hnin Ei Hlaing** were able to complete the edits of the beginners'

films under the aegis of international mentors during the subsequent Editing Mentorship of Beginners' Films (see below). **Thet Su Hlaing** was also given the opportunity to edit the project she had been obliged to 'abandon' after the protagonist's daughter refused to allow her to continue filming. During the mentorship, post-production lecturer David Smith provided student editors and cinematographers with a taster workshop on the principles of colour grading in preparation for a workshop he would hold later in January 2012.

(iii) Guest Lecture

During the last week of the Beginners' workshop, veteran Burmese filmmaker and documentary pioneer **U Win Tin Win** of AV Media came to the venue to give a talk to workshop participants, student-trainers and tutors about how to survive as a documentary filmmaker in Myanmar. He also showed a number of short films that he had produced in locations all over Myanmar during the nineties. Several YFS students (Thiha Thwe, Pe Maung Same, Shin Daewe) had started their filmmaking careers working for this company and it was touching to see them begin to find their feet as presenters and interviewers. It was also interesting to see how little rural Myanmar had changed in the past fifteen years. The students were fascinated by Win Tin Win's contribution to Myanmar documentary and YFS purchased DVD copies of all fifty of his titles for its library.



Guest speaker Win Tin Win with Pe Maung Same & Khin Maung Kyaw during the Beginners' Workshop

(iv) Benefits for the Students

As the intense three-week Beginners' workshop drew to a close, feedback and evaluations were once again canvassed from both participants and student-mentors. Here are some of their comments:

I'm really driven now. This course has made me determined to do something to promote rights for ethnic groups, either by writing or by making documentaries.

Workshop participant Salai Tial Awi Thang

Before the workshop I didn't even know what a documentary was. When I started watching the documentaries in the YFS library, I began to realise that they contain messages beyond what people are saying. It has made me see things differently (...) now whenever I go out I've got a pair of trained and sharp eyes for documentary.

Workshop participant War War Hlaing



I've learnt so much about directing. I thought it would be easy to find a location, subject and protagonist, but I found out how wrong I was when I worked as a director myself with my crew and saw how hard we had to work. It's not enough to identify a protagonist; you have to make them cooperate with you!

Thet Su Hlaing, director of *The Bag* and *My Family*



This workshop has changed so many of my perceptions. (...) There are so many things I learned but one thing that struck me was that you need to get under the skin when you do an interview. You also have to respect your protagonist on both a personal level and also in the way you use the camera.

Workshop participant Isaac

When I edit films for local audiences I just put things together without much preparation or discussion. I've now learned the value of good preparation in order to make a film to international standards; this includes writing, research and social skills. This is what I've learned from the workshop.

Workshop participant Zaw Naing Oo

I'm going back to my work in the countryside. I've decided to research the people who live on my island. If I can save enough money to finance a film, I will start filming a documentary. I am addicted to documentary making now.

Zon Sapai Phyu, sound recordist *My Family*



I thought documentary was just a matter of recording a person's daily life, their actions and activities. But now I know about the role that emotion and expression has to play.

Tun Lynn, cinematographer on *Empty Nest*



Beginner students and student-trainer Hnin Ei Hlaing (centre) on the shoot of *A Young Monk's Dream* at a monastery

III Editing Mentorship of Beginners' Films

A three-week mentorship held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 17 August to 9 September 2011

Report by Melanie Sandford, YFS Editing Tutor
with comments from YFS Post-Production Tutor David M. Smith

1. Aims and Methodology

Whereas in previous years, the beginners' first film exercises and final film assignments have always been edited by international editing tutors, in 2011 the aim was to enable trained YFS editors to gain more experience editing a short documentary portrait within a given timeframe so that they will eventually be in a position to take on all manner of editing tasks and train others to edit.

Editors were encouraged to work independently in their own edit rooms as international Editing Mentors went from room to room offering assistance and discussing any problems that arose throughout assembly, rough and fine cut stages.

2. Weeks One and Two

During the 2011 Beginners' Workshop that preceded the Editing Mentorship, **Hnin Ei Hlaing** worked as a student trainer for sound. She was also Student Mentor of one of the final film assignments. She had a very difficult task editing *Sweetie Pie*, one of the beginners' first film exercises; in fact, it would have been a challenging film even for an experienced editor. Initially, she wanted to try 'going it alone', so I left her to it, popping into the editing room every day to ask if she wanted any help. Eventually she asked me to come and have a look at her first rough cut. This was a rather conservative edit in the portrait style and was long, dull and lifeless. Recognising this, she admitted: "Mel, the heart has gone out of the material". I agreed and suggested she forget this first rough cut and start again by putting onto the timeline everything she loved in the rushes. This method appealed to her and, after some wrestling with the material, she managed to create what turned out to be a charmingly

humorous and successful short film (which won **Best Documentary Award** at the first **Wathann Film Festival** in September 2011). To see how the same material can either lead to a dull, lifeless piece or make a wonderfully amusing film is a priceless learning experience.

For the Beginners' final films we were one advanced editor short. **Zaw Naing Oo**, a director of one of these films, was invited to have the chance to learn to edit, working on his film, *Empty Nest*. This was a chance he jumped at. Another beginner, **Thet Hsu Hlaing**, shot two films (the first one having come to an abrupt end when the protagonist's daughter demanded the crew stop filming and leave). Thet Hsu Hlaing managed to find another protagonist and shoot a second film but we offered her the chance to edit the material she'd shot for *The Bag*, which she immediately accepted.



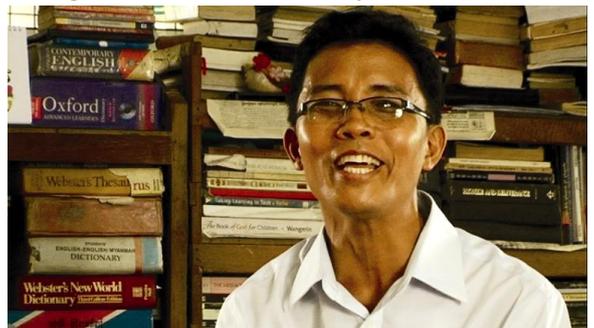
I set up two Final Cut Pro work stations for these novice editors and we shared the edit room with our translator, Kyaw Soe Latt, who sat working with his laptop perched on top of the fridge. I was often obliged to interrupt his translations of transcripts to communicate with Zaw Naing Oo and Thet Hsu Hlaing, neither of whom spoke much English. It was a very busy and productive room.

Still from *The Bag*

The Bag, edited by Thet Hsu Hlaing, contained no dialogue and was more of an observational 'mood' piece. Zaw Naing's film *Empty Nest* on the other hand was dialogue-driven; with a protagonist talking in heavily accented Burmese and also in her native Chin language. We had to get a Chin translator in to help with some of her dialogue. Luckily one of the other beginner-students, Ko Awipi, was a native Chin speaker and could help us.

Meanwhile, after finishing the edit of *Sweetie Pie*, Hnin Ei Hlaing was in an edit room next door, trying to cope with the challenging rushes of beginner-director Khin Myanmar's final film assignment, *The Dream*, which Hnin Ei Hlaing had mentored. Since the film's Kachin protagonist was a rather unemotional, even unlikeable religious zealot, we spent a lot of time talking about how to deal with a protagonist one doesn't necessarily warm to, and the ethical and emotional problems this causes for a filmmaker.

The Jinghpaw protagonist of *The Dream*



In addition to this problematic protagonist, Hnin Ei Hlaing was also confronted with working in not just two but three languages: Kachin, Burmese and English. Although we had asked a translator to come to help us with the Kachin dialogue, none of us were aware of just how many different languages are spoken in Kachin State, and that this particular Kachin translator didn't speak the Kachin dialect spoken in the film (we later managed to find a translator who did).

Once again, Hnin Ei Hlaing was keen to create the rough cut without my help. For this reason I only visited her edit room from time to time to discuss a possible structure with her and the film's novice director, **Khin Myanmar**, who I had asked to work on a paper edit. This novice director was amazed by how much she was able to learn. Clearly fascinated by the editing

process, she never once left her editor's side. These two women were tireless workers and I believe formed a firm friendship through their shared experience.

Sound recordist and editor **Kyaw Myo Lwin** was a very focused and committed editor for *Koran and Karate*, a film portraying a young Myanmar-Muslim woman directed by beginner-director **Wai Wai Hlaing**. However, he worked himself into a corner by making the film too tight and too fine, too soon. Co-tutor David and I explained that he should keep the film broader and fatter at the beginning and only begin to shrink it down once he had a working structure. To his credit, **Kyaw Myo Lwin** was able to take this advice on board and experimented with alternative storylines. It was always going to be a difficult film to cut. In essence we were confronted with a protagonist who was intelligent, attractive and in control of her life. She had a variety of interests and an active social life. Where is the drama, the human interest in this, we asked ourselves? Ultimately, **Kyaw Myo Lwin** was able to extract an interesting portrait of this impressive young woman; it was hard work but both student director and editor learnt a lot from the experience, particularly that it is always a mistake to try to build up a film shot by shot.



Student-trainer Kyaw Myo Lwin shows the edit suite to Beginner students Jue Jue Than & Khin Maung Kyaw

Beginner-director **Thet Hsu Hlaing's** final film assignment *My Family* was edited by YFS editor **Zaw Win Htwe** who last year surprised everyone with a rather successful piece of poetic editing, *Rain*. Co-tutor David and I were initially concerned as to whether this student would be able to finish the film, as he appeared somewhat tentative about embarking on the edit. When he did begin, his work was very strong at times but otherwise somewhat erratic, and we found it difficult to assess his abilities. He seemed to perk up when I sat with him and offered guidance, but would soon revert to a rather safe and linear approach. He did not appear to understand the possibilities offered by the footage. In the end the film was a workmanlike effort but one we tutors felt did not fully capture the protagonists' life experiences. I guess we all need a bit of direction sometimes!

3. Week Three – Fine Cut, Post-Production and Screenings of Final Films

The last week of the Editing Mentorship was incredibly busy for students as well as co-tutor David and myself. We could both see that the films weren't working as well as they could, and were obliged to step in to help student editors realise the full potential in their material.

The screening of *The Dream* at the end of the Editing Mentorship confirmed that the film that Hnin Ei Hlaing had created succeeded in making a difficult protagonist accessible to an audience. By telling the story of the protagonist's tyrannical father, she was able to explain at least in part how his complex character had formed.

When Thet Hsu Hlaing showed *The Bag* to her protagonist and her daughter, both were very pleased and the daughter's fears were completely allayed.



One of the protagonists in *My Family*

The film *My Family* received a good reception from the co-students at its screening. What shone through was the quiet courage of the main protagonist and her younger sister.

Although the film lacked the compelling human dramas of the others, *Koran and Karate* was warmly received and reflected in a positive light the confidence and ambition of the film's Muslim protagonist.

4. Observations and Recommendations

David and I would recommend curtailing rushes screenings during the beginners' workshop by viewing selected rushes only and limiting screenings to 30-45 minutes for each crew. It is exhausting for everyone to spend several days watching rushes, especially when they include long interviews which are not understood by the tutors. It is clearly useful to screen rushes but I would recommend editors control the rushes screenings by selecting representative material for the group to assess.

This would create more time for rough and fine cut screenings of edited films, for which, sadly, there was barely any time during the 2011 workshop.

I would however insist that individual crews and their student mentors watch *all* their own rushes.

IV High-Definition Camera Workshop

A four-day workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar from 17- 20 August 2011

Report by Lars Barthel, YFS Cinematography Tutor

1. Aims

In 2011, YFS purchased two new HD camera systems: the Panasonic AG-AF 101 and the Sony HXR-NX5. These cameras will now replace the school's outmoded standard digital mini-DV camcorders. They were also the focus of the HD camera workshop, taught by myself (cinematography tutor **Lars Barthel**) and by British post-production tutor **David Smith**. The aim of the workshop was to:

- explore the theoretical and practical dimensions of the term 'high-definition'
- enable participants to familiarise themselves with the new equipment
- compare the two new cameras with each other and with the older mini-DV cameras as well as the DSLR Canon EOS 60D, which we had purchased for the school in 2010 and used to shoot the 'true fictions' film *Bungkus*.



Sai Kong Kham, Isaac, Khin Maung Kyaw and Seng Mai at the Shwedagon Pagoda

2. Participants

The ten **participants** of this course comprised of four women, three of whom were graduates of previous YFS courses (one a director-producer-editor and the other a cinematographer) and one a promising beginner from the recently conducted Art of Documentary Filmmaking course; and six men, two of whom were graduates of many YFS courses (one director, one cinematographer) and four of whom had displayed potential as cinematographers during the recent Beginners' course.

3. Content and Methodology

Day One: the workshop began in the classroom where we examined the menu functions of the new HD cameras. Using the projector, we took a closer look at the images produced by the cameras. We also compared this image to that produced by the Panasonic DVX 100 and the Canon EOS 60D.

In his Power-Point presentation 'What is HD?', David Smith analysed the theory behind high definition and pointed out some common misconceptions and myths about HD video. His talk generated a great deal of interest and questions and served to illustrate how complex the technical aspects of the format are, and how little is known about HD.

Days Two and Three: on these two days I took the students out (sometimes in the midst of a monsoon downpour) to a range of cinematic locations, including the Shwedagon Pagoda, but also other locations within and on the peripheries of Yangon, to test the various HD systems. We were in particular exploring how to control light, contrast, colour and focal lengths.

Tutor Lars Barthel with students during the HD Camera Workshop



Day Four: on the last day of the workshop the participants used our panoply of cameras to create, in a controlled interior, a stunning opening sequence in black-and-white, for Beginner student War War Hlaing's final film *Koran and Karate*. The protagonist of this film, a young Muslim woman, was invited to a makeshift studio created at the workshop venue in order to film stylized karate scenes.



4. Results

The filmed exercises and tests produced during the HD camera workshop were a great surprise to all and very convincing. It was most gratifying to receive confirmation that we had made an excellent choice of new equipment for the school. The Sony HD camera's comfortable handling and good resolution is a robust replacement for the standard digital mini-DV cameras. These cameras will not overtax beginners during basic training and will allow YFS students to make films to internationally accepted standards.

Lars Barthel and camera student Seng Mai

(i) Recommendations

- The Panasonic camera has a larger sensor and demands more technical know-how and experience to handle properly. I would suggest that this camera be reserved for more experienced YFS cinematographers and for projects that are visually more demanding and require higher production values.

Camera student Isaac with the Canon 60D HD camera



- YFS should purchase a set of prime lenses for this camera in 2012.
- I would also recommend that a short HD workshop, with an emphasis on the theoretical aspects of the format, be integrated into the YFS foundation course for all students.
- In 2012 this course could be taught in tandem with YFS graduates as part of the teach-to-train programme.

V Ways of Seeing: Film History and Film Language

A Yangon Film School Workshop held in Myanmar
from 17-21 October 2011

Report by YFS Film History Tutor Frances Calvert

1. Aims

The aim of this one-week course is to teach 'cineliteracy', i.e. to study films critically so that, by the end of the course, students are better skilled at watching, describing and explaining how films work. It also aims to give participants a sense of the development of film language, technical innovations, authorship and genres throughout cinema history, from early silent cinema to modern-day works.



It's not enough to operate the camera, shoot images and have ideas. We need to know what has come before. Some people might question the point of film history. But it's essential to inform our own work. If we learn what our predecessors did and how new trends developed, we'll have a much fuller understanding of our own work.

Shin Daewe, Workshop participant

Shin Daewe in discussion with Frances

2. Methodology

This course was classroom based, included illustrated talks, screenings and homework assignments, and took place on six consecutive days. It was developed with practicing filmmakers in mind, and concentrated on the practicalities of camera, composition, editing, sound, etc. Students received a course outline (photocopy) together with a dossier of stills illustrating many of the topics covered in the course. Film clips illustrating the topics, film form, style and themes were screened as appropriate throughout. Students used their newly acquired analytical skills to undertake their own detailed analyses of clips from films such as Fritz Lang's *M – eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* and Orson Welles' seminal film work *Citizen Kane*. Their presentations were assessed by the tutor.



3. Content

The topics discussed during this course included:

- cinematography: shots, angles, use of colour, light, dark, realism vs. formalism.
- mise-en-scène – composition, proxemic space, open and closed forms, dominant and subsidiary shapes, use of symbols, metaphors, emblems, etc.

- movement – pans, tilts, swish pans, crane shots, effect of editing – classical cutting, historical development of editing, subjective time, thematic montage.
- Soviet montage – Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov.
- Sound – characteristics of high/low, soft/loud, fast/slow. Music in drama, voice in documentary.

4. Results

Students embraced the course enthusiastically and were not afraid to ask questions. It was a very intensive course, packed with information and illustrations in the form of stills and clips and naturally geared towards the canon of western film.

After a packed day of taking notes and watching illustrative clips, participants often asked to watch full-length films. On Day 1 they watched Brian McKenzie's *Ironing Man* and *Crab Boy*, set in India, and on Day 4 they watched all of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*. On



Day 5 they worked in groups analysing the marriage breakdown sequence from *Citizen Kane*. Their summing-up of the course and feedback followed with a request for more detailed study of the work of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky (from a screenwriting student) and sound (from a sound student). On Day 6, students used everything they had learned to analyse Hana Makhmalbaf's *Buddha Collapsed Out of Shame*.

Tutor Frances Calvert with participants of the Film History Workshop

(i) Recommendations

- A slower-paced, two-week course would allow even more detailed analysis of clips and stills
- Screen more Asian films
- More poetic documentaries
- Tarkovsky's films (use of time, symbols, synecdoche, emblems, movement, territorial space)
- Effect of sound and music in film (ask students to score their own soundtracks to silent films e.g. *Rain*, *Pearls and Savages*).
- Continue using the translator, who is invaluable.



Tutor Frances Calvert with long-term YFS translator, Aung Myin Tun

Frances led the discussions but there was plenty of room for our own opinions. Sometimes we disagreed with her and contrasted our views with hers as a Western tutor. Her explanations made things clear that hadn't been clear before. She helped us identify the aims of the filmmakers. Before the workshop, we just regarded films as entertainment.

Frances should definitely run this Workshop at YFS on a regular basis. Lots of young people in Myanmar are interested in filmmaking but there are very few places where they can learn things like this systematically.

Film history is a must. Analysis like this will help us strengthen our own work and really make it shine. I want everyone who is interested in filmmaking to take Frances' Workshop. It's an essential part of Yangon Film School.

All quotes from Shin Daewe, Workshop Participant

VI Introduction to Editing Documentary

A four-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar
from 31 October to 25 November 2011



Report by YFS Editing tutors Tuula Mehtonen and Jessica Ehlebracht

Before the workshop I didn't have a clue about editing. I thought it would be easy. Now I realise it's really hard!

Sai Kong Kham, participant, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

1. Aims

The aim of the four-week **Introduction to Editing Workshop** held by the film editors **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany) and **Tuula Mehtonen** (Finland) was to introduce the new intake of Yangon Film School students to the key storytelling element of documentary filmmaking: editing. Participants would gain a first impression of the great range of possibilities, challenges and tasks faced by professional documentary film editors everywhere. Students



who had indicated their interest in specialising in directing, cinematography or producing would develop an understanding of the complexity of the film editor's job and learn how to communicate and work with them; those who were thinking of becoming film editors themselves were invited to take a closer look at this profession to discover if they were suited to this role.

Editing tutor Jessica Ehlebracht, translator Aung Myin Tun and students study the paper edit

2. Participants

There were four female and five male participants in this workshop: a female Shan performance artist and photographer (winner of the Yangon Photography Competition); a female Muslim car engineer and passionate Red Cross volunteer; a female Mon film editor making videos for the Baptist convention; a Burmese feature film editor; two Burmese film laboratory workers; a Shan sound engineer working in Myanmar; a camera person and photographer from Mon State making his living by producing wedding videos; and the daughter of a Burmese feature film editor keen to step into her father's shoes.

3. Course Structure and Methodology

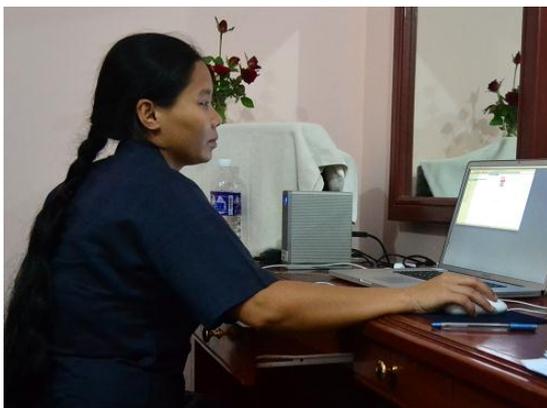
The workshop was taught via a mixture of classroom lectures on the technical and organisational aspects of film editing (the workflow, setting up an editing suite, creating a new Final Cut Pro project, capturing) and hands-on editing exercises, as well as one-to-one



tutoring in the editing rooms. It culminated in a number of exercises and longer assignments and included screenings and discussions of work edited by the tutors alongside useful examples of skilful editing. A film about the role of the editor was also screened and the tutors assessed each student's work in individual tutorials.

Editing Workshop students with tutors Tuula Mehtonen and Jessica Ehlebracht (back row) and Workshop Supervisor Helke Madry (front row)

Week One: in comparison to the participants who had joined the Introduction to Editing workshop in 2010, the batch of students taking part in the course this time were all new to the documentary field and to filmmaking since they had only just finished the YFS Beginners' Workshop a few weeks earlier. One goal of the first week and the **Introduction to Editing Course 2011** was to show and analyse a variety of strong and creative documentaries in order to broaden the participants' minds in terms of film language, topics and ways of shaping stories. The screening of the philosophical short documentary *One Day Today will be Once* (directed by Anca Miruna Lazarescu, edited by Uwe Wrobel), for example, was meant to show how editing is capable of doing much more than simply reconstructing the continuity of an event. *Holding Still* (directed and edited by Florian Riegel) – a portrait which dares to hide the



film's protagonist from the viewer – turned upside down the participants' concept of what a portrait film should look like.

I really enjoyed the film screenings. The filmmakers were so creative and talented. They gave me new ideas and perspectives. Seeing how these filmmakers thought and felt emotion made me understand how I can think and feel emotion in my own work. You can learn so much by watching other people's films.

Thet Su Hlaing, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

The second focus of week one was to introduce students to the technical side of film editing. In the classroom we looked at the components of the digital editing suite and their correct installation. Students learned the basics of using Apple Macintosh computers and the editing software Final Cut Pro as well as the steps needed prior to editing, such as logging, capturing and organizing filmed footage. These lectures were combined with hands-on exercises in which participants were asked to prepare material on their own for the first editing exercise and work on their first assembly.

The material used for the **first editing exercise** was thirty minutes of observational material from the YFS-produced film *Rice: Towards a Better Future* – the same footage used for the exercises the year before. This material described two different ploughing methods: one using buffalos and another using a tractor. After watching the rushes together on the big screen, the students were asked to cut a short sequence lasting between 2-5 minutes.

At first, I was afraid to be in the room by myself. I felt the same way during the Beginners' workshop. But once I started editing, I lost my fear. I immersed myself in the work and forgot everything else. I was determined to finish the exercises.

War War Hlaing, YFS Editing Workshop 2011



In **Week Two**, the students worked on their **first editing exercise** while the tutors circulated from one editing room to another viewing the cuts and giving feedback on content and providing technical input wherever required. It soon transpired that although these new students were quick to grasp the technical aspects of editing (and in some cases were more computer literate than some members of previous cohorts) they lacked experience in storytelling and an ability to read images. In order to help students unlock their imagination we interrupted the exercise for a day to talk about storytelling structure and basic editing rules.

The main challenge is that editing has to come from the heart. It doesn't matter how advanced the technology is, the most important thing is to be true to your emotions.

Sai Nyi Nyi, employee at Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise & Workshop participant

At the end of the week we met in the classroom to screen the results of the first exercise. The students benefitted deeply from the discussions. Even though criticism is sometimes a bitter pill to swallow, the atmosphere in the classroom was constructive and committed. Each student learned how important it is for an editor to put themselves in the audiences' shoes and find out if their storytelling is working.

Also during week two we screened the documentary *The Cutting Edge – The Magic of Movie Editing* (directed by Wendy Apple, edited by Daniel Loewenthal and Tim Tobin). In this lively film famous American directors such as Steven Spielberg and Quentin Tarantino talk about their key collaborators during the filmmaking process – their editors. The film also introduced the students to the history of film editing.

At the beginning of Week Three we moved on to **the second editing exercise** which was designed to help the students learn how to edit interviews. The students received 15 minutes of images in which a rice farmer worships the field spirits and were given a choice of three conversations in which the protagonist talks about: 1) the tradition of *nat* worship, 2) his

family life and 3) his experience of Cyclone Nargis. The students were asked to select one of the interviews, edit it and use it as voice-over or on camera to accompany the scene of the protagonist making an offering.



I want to learn much more. I don't just want to know about the cut but also how to build a sequence and climax, how to inter-cut. I'm greedy for knowledge! I'd like to learn about the role of colour in editing. Colour, tone, sound, the effect of wide shots. I definitely want to continue studying editing. And I'd like to apply my knowledge to the creative works I've got in the pipeline.

Seng Mai, artist & participant, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

Jessica introduced the students to the 'paper edit' – a method in which the editor cuts up the paper transcript of the interview – and showed participants how to overlay an edited interview onto a cut sequence and how to create subtitles.

During the rest of the week, the participants worked on their second editing exercise, overseen by the tutors mingling. This time, since the interview could be used as a base for the storyline, most of the students had less difficulty in finding a way to put their sequence together, and some even tried editing the material in several different ways. When this exercise was screened at the end of the week everyone was astonished at the variety of emotions and meanings which can be expressed by the same footage.



Editing Workshop students collect material for the paper edit



I'm still unclear about what editing truly is. But I'm beginning to understand the essence and art of it. It's something I was already working towards but it's become much clearer after meeting the tutors and benefiting from their international approach.

Zaw Naing Oo, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

The Face of Death – a feature length documentary edited by workshop tutor Tuula Mehtonen (directed by Kiti Luostarinen) – was screened and discussed at the end of this week. The students were fascinated by having the opportunity to talk to the film's editor and had plenty of questions about Tuula's role in the creation of this multilayered work; Tuula also talked about the use of symbolism and the ethics involved in filming people who are close to death.

Week Four started with a screening of the rushes of the **third and final exercise**. Making use once again of 45 minutes of footage from the *Rice* film, we gave students the opportunity either to edit a two-minute film about the process of rice transplantation, or to try to assemble 3.5 hours of rushes of several scenes (about a spirit festival, rice growing and rain) into a free associative sequence lasting between 5 and 7 minutes. Students were also allowed to make use of music in this exercise and the topics of importing and converting music, and also copyright issues, were discussed. Students battled with this large amount of footage and worked hard to complete their assignments.



Editing tutor Tuula Mehtonen during the Editing Workshop

Towards the end of the week we held individual tutorials with each student in order to discuss their progress throughout the course and make suggestions for their future development.

The screening and discussion of the final exercises revealed that students had taken on board the ability to see and analyse each others' cuts fairly well. Tuula and I also emphasised that, among an editor's many challenges and responsibilities, they also need to open their minds to new experiences.

The course was rounded off by a day addressing the topic of High Definition (HD) footage in order to prepare the students for the YFS's transition to the new standard format in international filmmaking.

The workshop was great. I'd like there to be more so we young people can become professionals like the tutors. I realise we need to put in a lot of work and effort.

Sai Nyi Nyi, participant, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

I really hope there will be another editing workshop. This one has given us the fundamentals – something we couldn't have taught ourselves. But now we need to go further. And for this we need the tutors to share their knowledge and encouragement.

War War Hlaing, participant, YFS Editing Workshop 2011

Editing is essential for my future work as a filmmaker. It's one of the items on my 'must-do' list! I've embarked on the study of editing now and I'm determined to keep at it.

Khin Maung Kyaw, camera student & participant, YFS Editing Workshop 2011



4. Tutors' Recommendations

The Yangon Film School needs more qualified film editors. YFS is growing and an increasing number of projects are being produced, both under the aegis of the school but also independently of YFS courses – more so now Myanmar seems to be opening up more rapidly. These projects deserve to be shaped with creativity and expertise. Film editing cannot be learned overnight; it requires a great deal of dedication, concentration and passion. Since most of the YFS students who took part in this year's **Introduction to Editing** workshop were keen to learn more about editing, they should be given opportunities to gain more experience a) as assistant editors on advanced YFS projects and b) by taking part in more workshops and lectures presented by film editing professionals.

In addition, a six-eight week editing workshop in 2012 could give new editors at YFS the chance to edit a short documentary themselves with tutorial support. A Documentary Filmmaking Competition – similar to the one held at YFS in 2006 – could perhaps provide the material for this course.

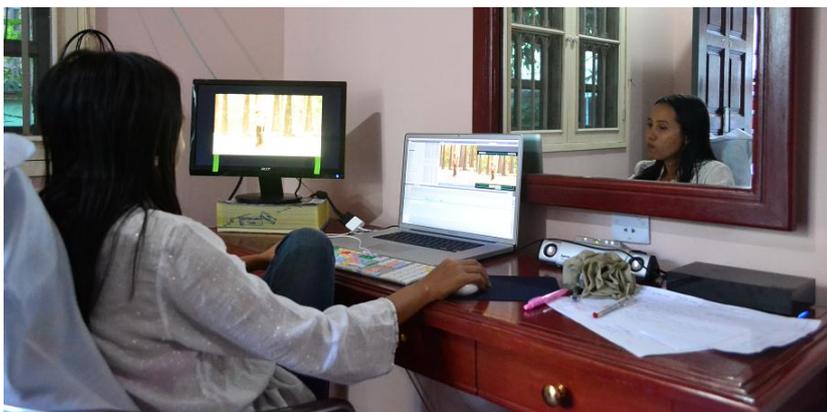
VII Advanced Editing Clinic

A four-week YFS mentorship held in Yangon, Myanmar
from 5 November to 9 December 2011

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1. Aims

Initially, the 4-week **Advanced Editing Clinic** was intended as an editing workshop for students working on independent projects full-time at the workshop venue. However, since there were not enough advanced editors and projects to warrant a structured workshop, we decided to hold a 'clinic' instead, which involved students making appointments to screen and discuss their films with the two mentors **Jessica Ehlebracht** (Germany) and **Tuula Mehtonen** (Finland).



As with last year's advanced editing workshop, the focus was not on finishing the editing during the course, but on using the time given to experiment with the raw material and find the best way to tell the film's story in an interesting and engaging manner.

Shin Daewe works on her documentary *The Collector* during the Advanced Editing Clinic

2. Course Structure

The first part of the **Advanced Editing Clinic** was held every Saturday during the Introduction to Editing Workshop. Students were able to make an appointment with Jessica in order to show their material or a cut, or whatever stage their project was at. This was something new

for the students and it took quite a while for them to warm to the idea. But once they did, we actually ran out of time at the end to cope with all their requests for feedback. After the **Introduction to Editing Workshop** was over, Jessica and I continued the Clinic one week together, and then I had another week alone before holding the **How Documentary Films Work: Film Analysis Course**. Towards the end of the workshops the students began to want more and more feedback, and so I decided to continue the Clinic on Sundays during the Analysis Course while Analysis students were working independently; I even continued to provide mentorship one week after that course had ended. This meant that altogether the Editing Clinic was offered to students for a total of almost five weeks.

3. Participants and Projects

Three students were editing their films at the workshop venue at Ruby Hotel: **Shin Daewe** worked on her own half-hour documentary *The Collector* about Myanmar's general election of 2010; **Hnin Ei Hlaing** had directed and was now editing a half-hour documentary about a series of international puppet workshops and performances entitled *Puppets Beyond Borders*; **Zaw Naing Oo** was working on a film that had been commissioned by the **Better Life Organisation**. In the beginning, other YFS students just came to meet us and tell us what they had been up to in their own edit suites at home. This was useful, but gradually they began to understand that it would be more useful if they actually *showed* us their edits.



The Maw Naing, a painter, video- and performance artist who has been a member of YFS for almost seven years, announced that he would like to screen his finished film *The Clinic* to us. When he joined YFS in 2005, this filmmaker was rather introverted and it was a joy to discover how open he has since become, and to observe how relaxed he now is with the beginner students. The film was very touching and we tutors only mentioned one or two minor details which could have been changed.

The Road

The Maw Naing also screened some rushes for a project entitled *The Road*, a hilarious piece of observation about how the government's SPDP party worked frantically to fix the pot-hole ridden road in front of YFS screenwriter Dr Aung Min's home before the election. The Maw Naing's cameraman and fellow-artist Ko Jau filmed almost every day as the party's workforce slapped large blocks of cement on top of the road and then surfaced it. There was a lot of traffic on the road and many things happened again and again: women came to give alms to a row of monks; children went to school; the government's lorry came to pick up road workers; and an old man went to the tea shop. In the beginning, everything seemed to take place very slowly but, in the end, when the road was finished, the bikes and cars zipped past at a clip. The speedier traffic meant that the road had become much more dangerous for pedestrians. Since the cement blocks used were so high (about 30 cm above the ground!) accidents were now unavoidable. The film crew were thinking about using their material as symbol for Ko Jau's bouncy personality as an artist, but I advised them to try first to edit the film as piece of pure observation. I told them I believed they have the potential to make an uproarious black comedy and promised to send them Victor Kossakovsky's film *Hush! (Tishe)* in which the director films from his window the street where he lives in St. Petersburg.

The Maw Naing, Dr Aung Min and Ko Jau make a good team. They are productive and independent cineastes, but also very open to feedback. Ko Jau is a visual artist, composer and musician. He was cinematographer both on *The Clinic* and *The Road*. He is not a YFS member and has not participated in our beginners' course. His cinematography is therefore not the best and this has had a sadly detrimental effect on the quality of his filming. This is a pity because the team's ideas are very original. Although, at almost 46 years of age, Ko Jau is outside the YFS primary demographic, it would be good if he could at least participate in some of the YFS' cinematography courses to improve his work.

Tyres

Editor **Kyaw Myo Lwin** is the first-time director of the documentary film *Tyres*. This film is a partly philosophical work about how old tyres are re-used and made into buckets, sandals and other household objects. The director made a wise decision not to edit this film, which he has entrusted to a fellow editor at YFS, Myo Min Khin. Director and editor showed us the material which included beautifully poetic, black-and-white images shot by YFS cinematography graduate Aung Ko Ko in which the workers' movements became almost musical. The interviews had been shot in colour. Kyaw Myo Lwin explained his idea for the film and we soon realized that the wealth of characters and stories he touched on could fill a feature-length documentary rather than a half-hour film. The editor Myo Min Khin agreed with us and so, having realized the he had not created sufficient layers for a longer film, Kyaw Myo Lwin began to think about how to refine his subject-matter.

Although they had not yet been able to shoot everything they needed, we suggested that the editor could try experimenting with the material and see how it would respond to different approaches. One idea that was mooted was to begin the film with a little animation sequence showing a tyre morphing into little particles and then into something new. I was convinced that director and editor already had excellent material to work with and suggested that such an addition would probably be extraneous, but I left that decision to them. Another possibility would be to make the film without any interviews because the work itself was so fascinating to watch. Although the material had been shot in three different locations, I thought it would be better to give the impression of one place.

Both Kyaw Myo Lwin and Myo Min Khin are much in demand in the Burmese film industry and filming and editing of this project were therefore sporadic. Although we saw the pair again for the screening of a German film about the composer John Cage, they did not contact us for another feedback session, which was a pity. However, I did not insist on seeing the film again because I believe all YFS students need to learn to develop their own initiative and take responsibility for their own films.

Behind the Screen

Ko Nwai (pictured right) works as an editor for INGO Population Services International and has been with YFS since 2007. Initially, he was reluctant to show me his personal film *Behind the Screen* because he was convinced it was finished. But then he decided to give me a DVD to watch after all.



The film is a charming blend of excerpts from old films, photographs and posters. However, I felt that the story lacked drama and seemed to withhold information that would make the story more powerful. To me, the cut was a perfect example of 'ah-na-de' – the Burmese behavioural code which involves doing everything you can to avoid making anybody feel uncomfortable. Ko Nwai's parents were famous Burmese screen actors in the 1960s who separated when he was six years old. Ko Nwai's mother died in 2007 and his father now lives with him. The film is astonishingly polite to his father and I felt that it would make the film more accessible and interesting (certainly for an international audience) if Ko Nwai revealed why the marriage had broken down in the first place. I wrote an email to him including extensive feedback and he responded, promising to meet me at the weekend with the translator. During our session, he told me the whole story. The translator and I were almost in tears when he had finished. He said he was now ready to create additional voice-over for the film and asked me to formulate questions to which he could respond.

We recorded this interview-cum-voice-over in my hotel room, creating a makeshift sound studio between several mattresses. Beginner students Sai Kong Kham and Thargyi helped us with the recording. Ko Nwai's comments were moving and honest but unfortunately the noise from the construction site next door was so loud that we were obliged to abandon our recording session. We managed to record the interview successfully in an early morning session at 6.30 am the next week (in spite of a couple of Pekingese dogs which began barking towards the end). Although it was painful for Ko Nwai to talk about his childhood experiences a second time, he was responsive to the idea of re-editing the film, this time structuring it around his own interview rather than that of his father.

Although it will be challenging for Ko Nwai to re-shape the film (especially since the current version is well-rounded and quite beautiful in parts) and he will have to take it apart to reorder it, I am nonetheless confident that he will have a much stronger film in the end, and the whole process will have been an invaluable one for his career as a filmmaker.

The Collector

Shin Daewe, who joined YFS in 2006 and is a resourceful director-producer, was in a quandary about the rough cut of her film *The Collector*. Filmed over a period of one-and-a-half years, this documentary looks back on Myanmar's recent history of struggle and examines the



mood of ordinary people before, during and after the 2010 election. Staunchly anti-government since youth, Shin Daewe was finding it very difficult to have faith in the recent political changes. We advised her to try to remain open-minded and explore her own feelings. Inspired, she began to shift the focus of her film from being an objective chronicle to a more personal record. Given the scope of this film, we also thought it could be 50 minutes rather than half an hour.

Shin Daewe with Beginner students
War War Hlaing (left) and Seng Mai (right)

Although Shin Daewe had not wanted to edit her own film, and does not regard herself as an editor, she has risen to the challenge and her editing skills are improving. During our mentoring sessions, she quickly began to think of ways of creating a more symbolic level for the film by introducing new material, such as images of Yangon's crumbling old colonial

buildings, commuters on the Yangon circle train, and the streets the government party had paved in order to secure votes. She also began to work on integrating her own voice-over into the film. During this process I played the part of an average viewer from the West who knows very little about Myanmar's political history and probably nothing about the election. When I asked why there was no material about how the government's party SPDP had done their campaigning, Shin Daewe said that it was simply too dangerous to film them at the time. We discussed the fact that these elements, and also the way the USDA had evolved from being a nationwide association to a political party, needed to be explained. Although Shin Daewe is naturally a big fan of Aung San Suu Kyi, we decided that the opposition leader's house arrest and release were well-known in the West and that she should not base her film around such events, but instead try to tease out other aspects and players. For this reason, she conducted an interview with co-founder of the NLD, U Tin Oo who, dressed in prison-uniform blue, discussed his opinions about the country's current transition to a more open society.

The River

Pe Maung Same joined YFS at its inception in 2005, has worked as a talented cinematographer on a number of films and is a patient camera trainer. He has been editing *The River*, on and off, for almost a year. This film charts a journey made by a group of poets, journalists and environmental activists along the mighty Ayeyarwaddy to the place which, until recently, was to have been the site of the massive Myitsone dam project. During this boat trip, the filmmakers met people who live on or along the river and whose lives would change forever if the dam went ahead, while the passengers reflected on the deeper significance of the river for the Burmese people. Although Pe Maung Same had edited the



film well and the rhythm and pacing were generally good, the cut I saw contained too many elements for a film which was to be about 30 minutes in length; moreover, the black intertitles interrupted the film's flow. We agreed that, although the current version seemed to have worked well for his trusted circle of friends, it would probably not work so well for an international audience.

Pe Maung Same (centre) with Beginner students Seng Mai, War War Hlaing and Sai Kong Kham

We discussed limiting the use of textual information to the beginning and end; concentrating on the photographer-poet as the main protagonist and the boatman as a supporting character; and cutting together a scene in which two journalists talk about the detrimental effects of the dam on the river's socio-eco-system. We also discussed post-positioning scenes of gold extraction and timber transport in order to enable the viewer to get to know and love the river itself first of all. Finally, I suggested that Pe Maung Same should consider using his own voice as a 'poet-narrator' to introduce some of the film's themes. With these clear ideas in mind, I hope that he will be able to reorder the film when he has time to go back to this edit in March 2012.

Puppets without Borders

Another YFS student working full-time at the Ruby Hotel workshop venue was **Hnin Ei Hlaing** who joined YFS in 2006 as an assistant editor, is now working as a sound recordist, director and editor, and has made extraordinary leaps forward in her skills. Her editing displays a good

eye as well as an ability to find humour in material. The documentary *Puppets without Borders* follows a puppet theatre workshop in Chiang Mai in Thailand and subsequent performances in Phnom Penh and Yangon. Although the film was originally conceived as a joint Cambodian-Burmese project, with Hnin Ei Hlaing co-directing, when the Cambodian co-director unexpectedly dropped out, it more or less fell to Hnin Ei Hlaing to direct and edit the project by herself.

Although I helped Hnin Ei Hlaing to put together a preliminary structure on paper, my role was simply to ask questions, and she ordered the scenes herself. This was such a pleasant surprise and marked the first time at YFS where I was able to work as I normally do at film schools in Europe, i.e. Hnin Ei Hlaing was capable of taking on full responsibility for the editing process and there was no need for me to sit with her day after day in the editing room. I felt the material was quite vibrant and the editing process was creative. At over thirty minutes, the cut was rather long but I hope that, with a break, she will be able to return to make a pleasing final version.

Better Life

Zaw Naing Oo is a Burmese editor and talented Beginner at YFS. He was courageous enough to take up the challenge of editing a 15-minute film which YFS filmmaker Sann Maung Aung (from the 2009 cohort) had directed for the NGO Better Life Organisation, which was founded by Lay Thida, herself a member of YFS since 2005.



Hnin Ei Hlaing (in blue) with Beginner students during Basic Training

The film, shot in Rakhine State, contains two different Rakhine dialects. This was a real challenge for the translators who could only provide rough translations of the interviews. Another problem was that the most interesting characters did not always deliver the information needed to describe the NGO's projects. A transgender person – a woman who dresses and behaves as a man and lives in a lesbian relationship – was identified as one of the main characters in the film. A fisherman, whose work was visually interesting but who is not strong enough to carry the film, was dropped from the first assembly in favour of two farmers who were more able to describe how Better Life has been helping to develop the region after the storm, Giri. The challenge now is to strike a balance between the fascinating stories of the transgender person's 'coming out' and the NGO's successful response to Giri.

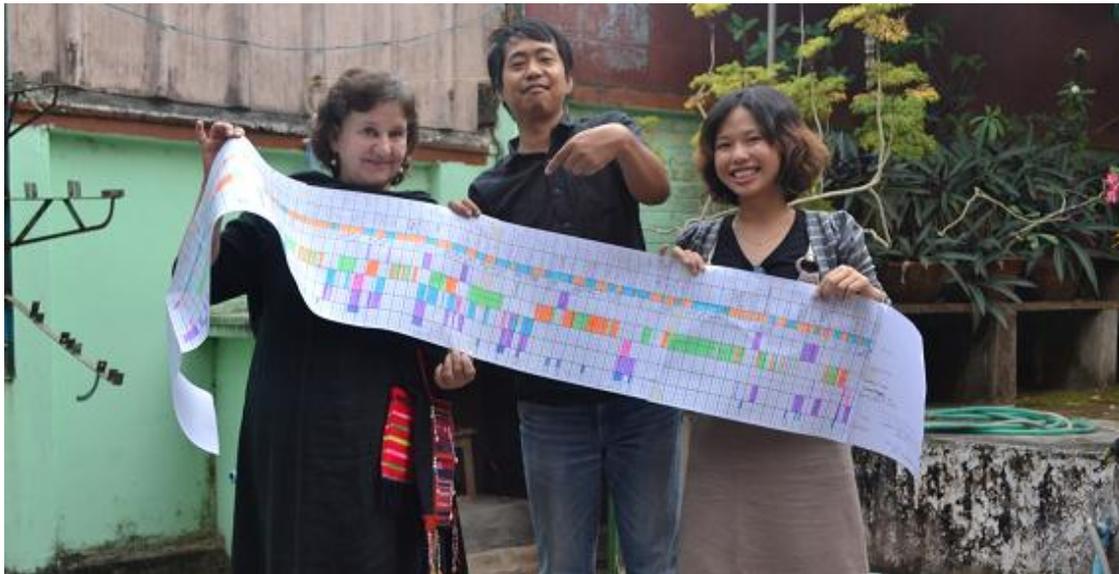
4. Observations and Recommendations

Now that some of the more advanced students are making films of around thirty minutes in length, I feel that some may be able to move towards works of one-hour or more. I am convinced that YFS students are ready for more complex themes and more challenging content. Students are also much more independent now and there is also a larger variety of genres and styles.

One interesting phenomenon this year was the desire voiced by some students to create Burmese and international versions of their films.

In order to change the bad editing habits that have become prevalent in Burmese filmmaking outside of YFS, it is important to train more editors over a longer period of time. If possible, it would be very valuable to create a one or two-year training course just for editors.

Another recommendation is to plan the post-production workflow in advance so a student editor and editing tutor are not booked before the project has been properly prepared, and all transcripts and translations have been completed. Hopefully this situation will be rectified when the planned Management Training commences.



Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen with students The Maw Naing, Seng Mai and an EDL (Editing Decision List)

VIII How Documentary Films Work: An Introduction to Film Analysis

A two-week workshop held by the Yangon Film School in Myanmar
from 12 – 24 December 2011

Report by YFS Editing Tutor Tuula Mehtonen

1. Rationale for the Course

This course was designed to make the students more aware of the viewing experience when watching a film and to help them gain an insight into the basics of classical film dramaturgy, with a particular emphasis on the documentary. The course was also intended to provide a window on different documentary film genres and different kinds of filmic expression.

(i) Participants

There were twelve participants in the **How Documentary Films Work** analysis course: eight beginners and four advanced students. This proved to be a good number of students to facilitate discussion. Four of the participants were women and eight were men. Three of the

participants were more advanced students who had taken part in the How Films Work: Fiction Analysis Course in the previous year. The beginners were from different ethnic and professional backgrounds: one of the female participants was an engineer and a Muslim; another was a film editor and Mon; another a Burmese English graduate; and another a Shan-Kachin photographer and performance artist. The male participants included a Mon videographer; two Burmese cinematographers; a Burmese doctor-writer; a Burmese poet and screenwriter; a Shan sound engineer working for Mandalay FM radio; a member of the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise staff (who had not attended any YFS courses before); and a Shan-Burmese writer, filmmaker and performance artist.



YFS students in the 'How Documentary Films Work' classroom at the Ruby Hotel

I felt that the films YFS Beginner students had made during the Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop during the summer had given them a good grounding and quickly helped them to acquire a similar grasp of analysis to the others. I noticed a marked difference between YFS-trained students and the one participant who was attending the course without any previous YFS training.

(ii) Teaching and Working Methods

The course was taught in a classroom and contained a mixture of lectures, screenings, shot-by-shot viewings, group work, discussions, preparation of assignments and, finally, independent presentations.

The course was taught in two six-day weeks plus one extra day. During the first three days of the first week the emphasis was on lectures and sample films. The three films to be analysed were screened at the end of the week; each film was screened twice during the course of one day. One half of the second week was devoted to intensive group work and the other half to each group's presentations.



2. Week One

The course began with several lectures on the emotions and how to create opportunities for identification in a film. In order to make the theory more accessible *The Bamboo Grove*, a short 'true fiction' film made by YFS students in 2010, was screened to the students. The students were asked to discuss in groups their own identification process while viewing. Students were also asked to find other story solutions based on this experience. *The Bamboo Grove* is a story of a young doctor who comes from Yangon to work in a remote delta area. The main protagonist is an actor but all the other characters are real people from the grove. It was surprising that almost all the students identified not with the main protagonist, the young doctor, but with the old man whom the doctor tries to persuade to go to Yangon to receive treatment for his cancer. All the students wanted to give more space in the story to the old man. A good discussion about the importance of plausibility and authenticity of a film's characters ensued and participants soon realised how strong the performances of nonprofessionals can be.

Two documentary film milestones, the Maysles Brothers' *Salesmen* (1968 USA) and Erroll Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* (1988 USA) were screened and the cinematic elements of these films were deconstructed on the timeline by the tutor.

Salesman is a wonderful example of pure observational cinema whereas in *The Thin Blue Line* events are staged like a fiction film and make a remarkable contribution to the film's intensity. The structure of the editing of both films is very classical; they provided good examples of structural alternatives and we came back to them many times during the course. It's rather difficult to find versions of these classical documentary films with English subtitles. I had almost given up on *The Thin Blue Line* when I suddenly found a subtitled version in the YFS's own film library. There is a lot of talking in these films and this is always a challenge for Burmese students. I felt that they only really understood them when I went through them a second time. It was also clear both for me and the translator Aung Min Tun that *Salesman* was much easier to understand, although the language is actually much more difficult than in *The Thin Blue Line*. I surmised from this that it is easier for students to understand action rather than on-camera interviews, since, if they didn't understand every word, they were at least able to grasp the gist from what was happening.



Students Lu San and Khin Maung Kyaw get to grips with a film analysis exercise

After the first screening of these two films and a general analysis of the emotional content of both films, we screened and discussed each of the films the students were to analyse during the next week. After this, we came back to analyse *Salesman* and *The Thin Blue Line* in more detail. I found this approach useful for the students and it yielded more examples for the lectures about different levels of meaning.

3. Week Two – Exercises in Film Analysis

During the second week students analysed four different films in groups of two or three. The films analysed were:

- *The Story of the Weeping Camel* by Byambasuren Davaa and Luigi Florni (2003, Germany)
- *Wall*, by Simone Bitton (2004 France, Israel)
- *9 Star Hotel* by Ido Haar (2007 Israel)
- *The Gleaners and I* by Agnès Varda (2002 France)

Because there was one cinematographer on the course (Aung Ko Ko), I included an extra film, *Three Rooms of Melancholia* by Pirjo Honkasalo (2004, Finland) for him and a younger camera student, Khin Maung Kyaw. I asked sound student Sai Kong Kham to join them in order to analyse the use of cinematography and sound in this documentary. They comprised the fifth group. The other four groups were formed freely, but I insisted that the more experienced YFS students should join different groups. This was a good solution because these students, especially Dr Aung Min, were able to help the beginners.

The oral group presentations were held at the end of the course. *The Story of the Weeping Camel* and *9 Star Hotel* are observational films and it was quite easy for the students to analyse and identify meaning, plot points and structure in them. The former was analyzed by Dr Aung Min, War War and Zaw Naing Oo and the latter by Thet Hsu Hlaing and Khin Myanmar.

The Gleaners and I is a personal film essay and students who are also performance artists, The Maw Naing and Seng Mai, selected it for their presentation. They were very astute in identifying the diverse material used by Agnès Varda in this film; however, verbalising the meaning of the various elements proved more challenging.

Wall is a poetic film about building the wall in Israel and it was really difficult for Lu San and Sai Nye Nye to get beyond what was happening in each scene. Although we repeatedly told Lu San, who is a poet himself, that we had seen the film, we know what is happening in it, tell us something else you have discovered about it, he was not able to go beyond recounting

the events. The two cinematographers and sound recordist Sai Kong Kham worked their way meticulously through the *Three Rooms of Melancholia*, which is a very long film, and analysed every single image, all the camera angles and gave a competent description of how sound is used in this film.



Zaw Naing Oo, War War Hlaing, tutor Tuula Mehtonen and Aung Min with their EDL (Edit Decision List)

After these group presentations, I gave several short talks on different documentary genres using Eric Barnouw's and Bill Nichol's approaches. I concluded by discussing Jon Boorstin's approach to defining three different ways to look at a film.

4. Observations and Recommendations

In comparison to my students in Finland, Burmese students seem to have no qualms about taking to the stage. However, speakers need to do a lot more to make their presentations interesting for others! I also feel that it may have been too much to listen to the analyses of five films in such a short space of time.

For the beginners on this course, feature film analysis would perhaps have been easier, but I also think it is a good idea to change the topic every time – perhaps we could look at comedy next time. We could also begin to use older students as co-teachers and they could begin to lead beginners' analysis courses in tandem with international tutors.

IX Post-Production and Sound Pre-Mixing Workshop

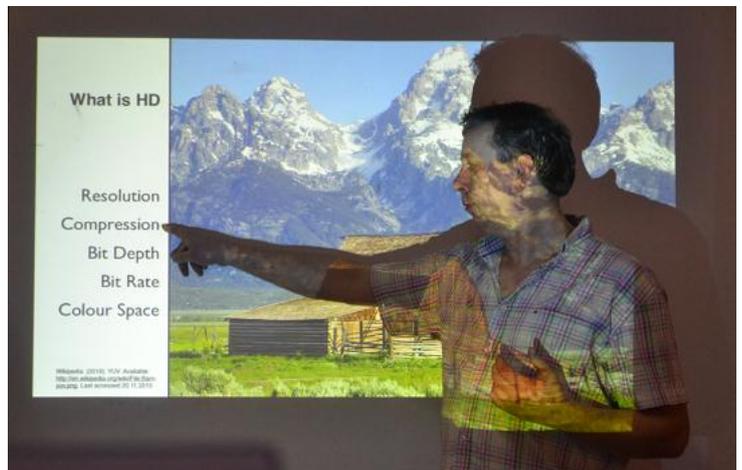
A two-week workshop at the Yangon Film School in Myanmar
from 30 December 2011 to 13 January 2012

Report by YFS Post-Production Tutor David M. Smith

1. Aims and Approach

Building on an introductory module offered to participants of the Beginners Workshop in summer, 2011, the aim of this **Post-Production and Sound Pre-Mix Workshop** was to instill more professionalism at the closing stages of an edit. In particular, participants were encouraged to take charge, become able to deal effectively with directors and international producers, develop more efficient subtitling strategies and work towards getting a cut 'locked'. Technical skills to be taught included online editing, colour grading and sound pre-mixing.

Post-Production tutor David M. Smith



The teaching was classroom based. The room was organized with eight Mac workstations and all teaching materials were made available to each workstation. Initially the teaching was based upon 'show and go' training methods to establish a common level of student experience. Participants were given practical exercises that were completed as I circulated amongst them and offered support.

2. Participants

The ten places on this workshop were open to all YFS students. Participants included four women, one of whom, sound recordist, editor and director, **Hnin Ei Hlaing**, was a graduate of several years of YFS courses and three of whom (**Khin Myanmar**, **War War Hlaing** and **Seng Mai**) had recently completed YFS courses in documentary, editing, film history and analysis.

The five men on the course included YFS graduates cinematographer and editor **Pe Maung Same**, editor-director and NGO worker **Aung Nwai Htway** (aka Ko Nwai) and three students who had recently completed YFS courses in documentary, editing, film history and analysis: **Zaw Naing Oo**, **Khin Maung Kyaw** and **Sai Kon Kham**.



David takes the students through the principles of post-production on the YFS's Apple Macs

3. Course Content and Structure

This two-week course introduced students to the following post-production tasks:

(i) Editing

- o locking the cut
- o working with directors and producers
- o subtitle techniques
- o sound editing mixing in FCP

(ii) On-line and Colour grading

- o the role of the on-line editor
- o media management and exporting for on-line, colour grading and pre-mixing
- o the art and science of colour correction
- o Apple Color in detail

(iii) Sound Design

- o the role of the sound designer
- o importing session data
- o introduction to Protools 101
- o sound editing in Protools
- o organising tracks for the Mix
- o compression, reverb and equalising
- o the mix
- o exporting the mix

(iv) Media Management

- o organising project assets into one location
- o folder organisation
- o archiving a project



Post-Production students War War Hlaing, Khin Myanmar and Hnin Ei Hlaing

4. Week One

(i) Editing

We started off with Final Cut Pro. I took the students through parts of the Apple Certified course to ensure everyone was at the same level. We covered advanced editing techniques including double system, i.e. separately shot picture and sound. This was combined with drama editing techniques such as synching up, take selection, rehearsing takes, pacing, rhythm and performance. We worked using a short dramatic scene from *Kramer vs. Kramer*. After the initial assembly, students were encouraged to consider the finer points of shot selection, analyse performance and learn about revealing emotion and developing rhythm.

The students appeared to really enjoy this, as most had never edited any drama material before. It is a very different discipline to documentary editing, one that offers different challenges based on maintaining continuity and getting the most out of an actor's performance. We returned to this material later in the course when we worked on audio post-production.

(ii) Workflow

We then moved on to advanced HD workflow, looking firstly at the technical background including resolution and bit rates. It is important to be technically correct right from the beginning of this process. After this we began an HD workflow exercise. The aim here was to establish a complete HD workflow – from shooting right up to DVD production. We called this exercise the '**One Minute Feature Film**'. Students developed an initial concept and developed the script. We shot a sequence using both the Canon and Sony HD cameras. We were able to include multi-camera editing into the exercise (live switching between the synched camera clips). The students then ingested the footage using the correct settings and they all edited the sequence. We then used this sequence in later lessons.

(iii) Locking the Cut

We discussed as a group the challenges editors face in maintaining forward momentum in film editing. One of the problems YFS has faced in the past is finishing films. This may be in part due to a general lack of confidence, but it is definitely not helped by an exaggerated deference to international tutors. We discussed notions of taking charge by assuming responsibility for the film, as well as strategies for dealing with directors and the conflicting messages of contributors, colleagues, mentors and tutors. In short, I encouraged students to get to know their material, listen, believe in themselves, be courageous – and trust their instincts.



Students create images of themselves (and have some fun) during the Post-Production workshop

We also discussed the role of the on-line editor, colourist and audio mixer. The purpose of these roles is to take a locked cut forward to a finessed and polished finished film. This includes maintaining colour and sound continuity, technical correctness and graphical sensibility. The on-line editor's role is both creative and technical and depends a great deal on attention to detail.

(iv) Colour Grading

I split this into two areas: colour grading in FCP and using the specialist application 'Apple Color'. Most of the students concentrated on FCP as they found Apple Colour a bit too much of a challenge. We started with a general look at the art and science of this specialisation – why colour grade, what can be achieved, the stages and the workflow. I would consider most of the beginner students to be very comfortable with using FCP for grading and that this way of working is sufficient for most YFS output. All students attended sessions on advanced grading using Apple Color and so are aware of its capabilities and how the workflow is organised.

5. Week Two

(i) Graphics

In week two, we went into the fundamentals of constructing motion graphics in FCP including the principles of fill/key/background in the construction and design of graphics. We also covered key framing, animation and timing, as well as the basics of text design in Photoshop and how to import them into FCP. I took the participants through end roller options such as Apple Motion or FCP.

(ii) Subtitles

One of the major issues affecting all the films that come through the Yangon Film School is translation and subtitling. This forms a huge part of the workflow and has a tendency to slow

down the development of films. One utility that has proved useful in the latter stages of postproduction is Title Exchange Pro. With this application it is possible to export draft subtitles to be edited in a text editor.

One student, Ko Nwai, proved to be proficient at making DVDs with user selectable subtitle tracks using TEP.



(iii) Sound

I had intended to cover Protools for audio post. However, I made the judgment that introducing Protools would simply be too much for the beginner students unless they had a particular interest in sound post-production. This needs to be covered in a dedicated Sound Design course.

Khin Maung Kyaw works on editing sound during the Post-Production workshop

For this reason, this course was only able to provide an introduction to this complex part of the post-production process for which I decided to concentrate on the tools available in FCP. I introduced the participants to the various stages of sound editing including track-laying, sub-frame editing, copying and pasting atmos, replacing takes, cleanup and level adjustments. We also covered processing including equalisation, compression and reverb, and the difference between manual and automated mixing.

(iv) DVD Production

To conclude, we took a look at the making of DVDs and Blu-rays including simple menu-driven designs. The teaching was based on the 'DVD Cookbook' handout.

(v) Course Materials

All course materials, clips, audio, graphics, projects, tutorial videos etc and all presentations, documents and handbooks were left on YFS drive 16.

6. Observations

January 2012 was a very exciting time to be teaching in Myanmar. During the workshop the **Art of Freedom Film Festival** took place – an extraordinary event, which brought part of Yangon to a standstill when Aung San Suu Kyi attended the final awards ceremony. Our students were understandably very excited by this and although they were careful not to express too much optimism, it was clearly inspiring for them to see openly critical and satirical films in a public setting. I was fortunate to be able to attend the awards ceremony even though I did not have a ticket and somehow bundled in with the students. This meant I was able to see the films and experience the event with them. YFS student Zaw Naing Oo was even interviewed by the BBC, as can be seen at the following link:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/THE-ART-of-FREEDOM-FILM-FESTIVAL/233000596764946?sk=wall>

The group dynamics in our workspace were very good. In these teaching situations, students often learn as much from each other as from the tutors. Language difficulties were dealt with on the spot with good humour and not a little amusement as I occasionally slipped into idiom and jargon.

It was interesting to see how different students responded to the different topics we covered: **War War Hlaing** was obviously fascinated by the drama editing exercises especially the 'One Minute Feature Film'. She arrived early and left late and experimented with different versions. **Seng Mai** and **Khin Myanmar** initially found the course very challenging but, through hard work and the help of their colleagues, ended up achieving more than they expected. **Zaw Naing Oo**, **Khin Maung Kyaw** and **Sai Kon Kham** all found the motion graphics and compositing sections very exciting and were soon putting together quite complex title sequences. **Hnin Ei Hlaing** continues to develop apace and shone in the colour grading, completing the first pass colour grade on her own film project *Puppets without Borders*. I think YFS should treat her as the 'go to gal' for this kind of work. She is a talent – very smart and focused with a good eye. When it came to DVD authoring, I was pleased with the work done by Ko Nwai and would recommend him as the 'go to guy' for this part of the filmmaking process. He even managed to find the technique for multiple subtitle tracks on a DVD – so I was able to learn from him too!

X Flying Mentorships & Post-Production Workshop II

A Yangon Film School Mentorship & Workshop held in Yangon, Myanmar in February and March 2012

1. Flying Mentorships

Once again, the YFS Flying Mentorship programme proved an invaluable asset as students struggled to meet deadlines and respond to the sometimes challenging briefs of NGO clients. Having travelled to Yangon in May/June 2011 to round off her mentorship of the edit of two 'true fictions' films *Bungkus* and *The Bamboo Grove*, YFS Editing tutor **Regina Bärtschi** returned to Yangon in February/March 2012 to mentor the edits of four film commissions. Here are her comments:



A still from *A Step Forward* filmed in Rakhine State for local NGO Better Life Organization

A Step Forward (for Better Life) aims to show the impact that Better Life Organisation's programmes are having on people in Rakhine State. Beginner-editor Zaw Naing Oo's rough cut did not clarify the changes for each of the film's protagonists, nor why Better Life had chosen to work in this region. Hence, the film was re-structured and an introductory text and archive photographs were added describing the effects of the storm Giri which prompted the NGO to intervene.

In *Puppets without Borders*, which the editor Hnin Ei Hlaing also co-directed, the challenge was to create an atmospheric film which also does justice to the diversity of approaches to puppetry and performance as well as to the individual protagonists.

The project for Malteser International, *More than a Tree*, required editor Myo Min Khin to distil – in just three weeks from around five hours of material – a ten-minute film about how mangroves can help combat the adverse effects of climate change.

2. Post-Production Workshop II

During her mentorship of these commissioned films, **Regina Bärtschi** conducted a one-week workshop in post-production with seven students working on commissions: **Aung Ko Ko**, **Hnin Ei Hlaing**, **Khin Myanmar**, **Zaw Naing Oo**, **Myo Min Khin**, **War War Hlaing** and **Lay Thida**.

The focus of this workshop was to concentrate on two main areas of post-production: a) colour correction and b) subtitling.



'Flying Mentor' Regina Bärtschi with Post-Production Workshop II students in February 2012

(i) Colour Correction

Regina supervised as editor **Hnin Ei Hlaing** and the project's cinematographer **Aung Ko Ko** worked their way meticulously shot-by-shot through the colour correction of the Save the Children project in order to give it a homogenous 'look' that reflected conditions during the shoot. This was to mark Hnin Ei Hlaing's first autonomous grade following David Smith's post-production workshop in January and represented a useful opportunity for her to practice her new-found skills.

(ii) Subtitle Programme Title Exchange Pro

Regina also introduced students working on projects for Better Life, Save the Children and Malteser to the subtitle software 'Title Exchange Pro'. This programme makes it possible to import and export lists of time-coded subtitles into Final Cut editing software and reduces the time involved in laboriously typing up lists of subtitles into another format such as Excel; it also narrows the margin of error when correcting subtitles. In addition, the programme allows subtitles to be exported to the DVD in such a way that it allows the viewer to select a language, or watch the film without subtitles. This will allow YFS to produce multi-language versions of films.

XI Screenwriting Mentorship in 2011

Report by YFS Screenwriting and Directing Tutor Rachel Mathews

During 2011, Rachel Mathews mentored various YFS screenwriters and directors via email from Europe. These included:

Aung Min – *A Monk* (co-written with the project's director, The Maw Naing)

A Monk is a feature length screenplay based on *Zawana The Novice*, a short script developed and written by Aung Min during the first YFS Screenwriting Workshop in November/December 2007. Aung Min and YFS filmmaking student The Maw Naing began to develop the feature length version of this story whilst studying at the FAMU Film School in Prague in 2010. However, they requested and have been granted continued mentorship from YFS throughout 2011. Tutor Rachel Mathews has given these students detailed online feedback on the treatment and two drafts of the screenplay which Aung Min and The Maw Naing are currently finalising in Yangon. Location scouting and casting has already begun and the film is set to be shot in the Delta region of Myanmar in June 2012.



Anna Biak Tha Mawi – *Bungkus*

Anna always intended to write *Bungkus* – made into a short film during the True Fictions II workshop in winter 2010 – as a feature length screenplay set in her home village in Chin State. The political situation meant it would have been impossible for YFS to shoot a film of this story there. However, recent developments in Myanmar mean it might be possible to film in the region soon. Rachel Mathews has mentored via email Anna's preparations for the longer version of this story which is currently at treatment stage. Anna is also planning to write a second screenplay based on the life of her Uncle, a famous Chin general who fought against the Burmese government. Rachel will mentor both these project online throughout 2012.



Traditional Chin weaving which will feature in the full-length screenplay of *Bungkus*

As well as the sustained support of Aung Min and Anna – two writers who have been identified as the strongest screenwriters in the YFS cohort – Rachel Mathews has undertaken the following script mentoring work:

Linn Ti Oo – *Untitled Project*

Linn Ti Oo is an accomplished writer who wrote the short screenplay, *Like A Bubble In Water*, during the 2007 YFS Screenwriting Workshop. Two versions of this script were filmed and four versions edited during the first True Fictions Workshop in 2008. Caring for his ill father has

since led to a hiatus in Linn Ti Oo's writing career. However, tutor Rachel Mathews remade contact him in November 2011. He is currently working on an outline for a new short screenplay, set in the Delta where he is now living. Rachel will deliver feedback via email once the first draft has been delivered, hopefully in Spring 2012.

Thi Ha Thwe – *A Twist of Fate*

Thi Ha was one of the three winners of the YFS Pitching Competition in November 2009 with an outline for a short fiction screenplay, 'A Twist of Fate'. Rachel Mathews has mentored the development and writing of this script throughout 2010-11 via a mix of face-to-face tutorials (in Winter, 2010) and email contact. Unfortunately, Thi Ha's full-time job as a journalist has delayed the filming of this project. It is hoped he will find the time to finalise the script and shoot the film in Summer 2012.

Lay Thida – *The Lost Girl*

At the 2009 Pitching Competition, Lay Thida pitched a poignant true story about a teenage girl in Yangon who developed kidney disease and, realising she was going to die, pretended to her family she was getting better. Lay Thida intended to make a documentary of this story. However, following feedback and further research, she has decided it will work best as a 'True Fictions' type film. Rachel Mathews is currently mentoring Lay Thida to turn this real-life material into a fictional story.

Lay Thida leading a seminar during the Beginners' Workshop



1. Comments

Although good progress has been made with Aung Min and his director, The Maw Naing, and with Anna Biak Tha Mawi via online mentoring, other YFS screenwriters and directors have not responded so well to this form of tutoring. This may be chiefly because Aung Min and Anna (alongside Lin Ti Oo, whose family problems have interrupted his writing career) would appear to be the only true writers YFS has so far found to work with. Some other screenwriting students have written promising drafts of short scripts but have failed to demonstrate the long-term commitment demanded by this discipline. Students such as Thi Ha, Okkar and Lay Thida would appear to be more suited to directing and production than to writing. They are working on scripts chiefly because YFS is lacking a pool of writers they can draw upon at this stage in the school's development. For this reason, we have decided to run the following Workshops in Summer 2012:

(i) Beginners' Screenwriting Workshop

This workshop will be designed specifically to create a number of 'True Fictions' type scripts i.e. fictional scripts based on true stories which can be shot on location in or near Yangon with non-actors. Following this workshop, the most promising scripts will be developed via online mentoring with the aim of 2-4 of these projects being ready for production during the True Fictions III workshop proposed for 2013. This Workshop will be for writers new to YFS and will be tutored by Rachel Mathews. The writers will be mentored by Aung Min and – if he is able to leave his family for the duration of the workshop – Lin Ti Oo.

(ii) One-to-One Screenwriting Mentoring

Whilst she is in Yangon in 2012, Rachel will organise a series of face-to-face meetings with writers and directors already working on projects e.g. Aung Min and The Maw Naing, Anna Biak Tha Mawi, Thi Ha, Lu San, Lin Ti Oo, Okkar, Lay Thida. The aim of this mentoring is to push forward the projects currently being developed, and get some of the scripts ready for production in late 2012/2013.

XII YFS Annual Screening

On Sunday, 4 December 2011, the Yangon Film School held its outdoor **Annual Screening** at a new venue, the House of Memories, on U Wisara Road in Kamaryut Township. The event, which was opened this year by **Mme Veronique Lorenzo**, Head of Operations at the EU Delegation in Bangkok, attracted a diverse audience of diplomats and members of the international development community, but also local capacity building and civil society organisations and NGOs, journalists, media workers, filmmakers, artists and writers, as well as some of the films' protagonists.

The protagonist of *Koran and Karate*



The screening kicked off with two of the four final film assignments made by novice directors during the 2011 Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop: Zaw Naing Oo's *Empty Nest*, about a Chin woman living in Yangon who sorely misses her children (all but one of whom now live abroad) and War War Hlaing's *Koran and Karate* which portrays the life of a young Myanmar-Muslim woman in Yangon. The first part of the programme was rounded off by Wathann award-winner *Sweetie Pie*, which was Shan director Sai Kong Kham's first film exercise. The filmmakers of all the beginners' films were introduced on stage before the break, during which they mingled with guests and discussed their work.



Student-trainer Aung Ko Ko (left) with Beginner Students during the Basic Training Workshop

The screenings after the interval were reserved for three works by more experienced YFS students: *On Holiday*, Shin Daewe's deeply felt observation of visitors to the Ananda pagoda festival in Bagan; and *Unreported Story*, a hard-hitting tale of domestic abuse in Shan State by Lay Thida and editor Eh Mwee,

who came on stage after the film to discuss some of the issues raised by this short

documentary and talk about how they thought the film might be used to raise awareness and encourage women's groups to lobby for women's rights. The last film of the evening was ***The Bamboo Grove***, a 'true fictions' film produced by YFS in 2010, which tells the story of a young doctor from Yangon who finds himself caught between deep-seated local traditions in the Kayin village where he has been assigned and his commitment to providing treatment for his patients, come what may. Afterwards the film crew came on stage and talked about the challenges of filming on location in a Kayin village with little or no electricity and the rewards of working with a non-professional but enthusiastic cast of locals.

Although Q & A sessions were only introduced at YFS two years ago, students are becoming increasingly confident and more articulate about their work. Like all filmmakers, they relish the opportunity to hear what audiences think about their films. The Burmese traditionally come to public events early and leave punctually, many members of the audience chose to stay on after the screening to mix with filmmakers and other guests and continue discussing the films.

XIII Direct Results of YFS Workshops and Activities in 2011

1. Visible outcomes

In 2011, YFS participants took part in, produced or are developing:

- a) Two residential workshops
- b) Five non-residential workshops
- c) One 'Clinic'-style workshop
- d) Two 'Flying Mentorship'
- e) Two ongoing distance learning modules (screenwriting and production)
- f) **Nine short documentaries and exercises**, five of which focus on topics inspired by Myanmar's diverse ethnicities
- g) **Four commissioned films in 2011/12**, three made for the NGOs Save the Children, Better Life Organisation and Malteser International and one, **Puppets Without Borders**, made for the **Goethe Institute Jakarta** about a cross-border workshop Thailand which gathered creators of puppet theatre from Asia and Europe

The films marked in bold, as well as two short films about the 2011 YFS workshops – which include comments from both participants and tutors – will be available on two Yangon Film School DVD collections: **Different Voices: Yangon Film School Workshops in 2011**, and **Stories from Myanmar 2011: Films made for Development Organisations by students of the Yangon Film School**. Both DVDs will be released in May 2011.

2. Benefits for Target Group

- Students work with different ethnic groups in Myanmar and learn to overcome prejudice
- Members of marginalised ethnic and religious groups are involved in a creative activity that delivers solid skills and helps them gain confidence
- Students are exposed to a variety of cinematic styles and are able to develop their own individual identities as filmmakers



Beginner students Seng Mai & Khin Maung Kyaw share a joke at the Ruby Hotel

- Unique opportunity to live and work alongside industry professionals from all over the world in a relaxed but structured atmosphere in which cultural barriers melt
- Participants acquire media skills that are becoming increasingly desirable in a growing marketplace – at home and abroad
- Positive psychological effects as participants take pride in their abilities, assume responsibility and acquire a deeper understanding of themselves, their immediate environment and the world at large.

3. Dissemination of YFS Films

(i) Commissioned Projects for the Development Sector

In 2011, several NGOs approached the school's production arm Yangon Film Services to produce films about their activities: YFS Committee member and NGO worker **Lay Thida** asked YFS to create a short film about her NGO **Better Life's** response to cyclone Giri in Kyauk Phyu in Rakhine State; **Save the Children** asked YFS to make a documentary about



behavioural change in a village tract in Deedu Gone in the delta; and, at the beginning of 2012, **Malteser International** commissioned YFS to produce a documentary *More than a Tree* about their disaster prevention activities in Kyae Taw village tract in Rakhine State.

A young protagonist from *Let's Get on the Bus* filmed for Save the Children in Deedugone Township in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta

As with other Yangon Film Services productions, the YFS Committee and Director were careful to consider as many YFS members – old and new – as possible when crewing. They continued their policy, begun in 2010, of involving beginners from the latest intake as trainees and/or

junior directors. In this way, **Khin Myanmar** was assigned as Junior Director on *More than a Tree* and conducted interviews with protagonists on behalf of Malteser representative Philipp Danao. The film was edited by **Myo Min Khin** of the 2005 cohort. The Better Life project was directed by a crew from the 2009 intake with **Sann Maw Aung** directing, **Kyaw Ko Ko** on camera and **Mya Darli Aung** on sound, and edited by **Zaw Naing Oo** from the 2011 intake. The Save the Children project was directed by **Maung Okkar** from the 2009 intake, filmed by **Aung Ko Ko** from 2005 cohort and edited by **Hnin Ei Hlaing** who joined YFS in 2006.

In September, Bram Steenhuizen of **MTV Exit** approached YFS for a crew for an MTV website project about human trafficking entitled 'Enslaved'. YFS crew Aung Ko Ko, Lay Thida and Hnin Ei Hlaing accompanied Bram to a location in the delta and also conducted interviews on his behalf.

(ii) New Commissions

Among commissions currently under discussion are:

- A documentary for **Pyoe Pin** about thirty colonial era buildings that have been recommended for preservation by the Myanmar Architects' Association.
- A **docusoap** idea in collaboration with **Population Services International** about best vs. worst practice at a rural clinic.
- A documentary for INGO **Geneva Call** about land mines in Kachin State
- A project for local NGO **Tampadipa Institute** aimed at reducing stereotypes and discrimination against ethnic groups in Myanmar

(iii) Other Projects and Partnerships

Thanks to continued sponsorship from **The British Council**, in 2011 three YFS students were awarded scholarships to take part in six months of British Council English-language classes in Yangon.

YFS Director Lindsey Merrison is now on the Advisory Board of the **Wathann Film Festival** which was founded in Yangon by YFS filmmakers in September 2011.

YFS has been approached by the international organisation **The Search for Common Ground** to provide a) ten one-day workshops aimed at developing media skills among young people of different ethnic origins and b) a 'video dialogue' between members of remote communities

(iv) Independent Projects by YFS filmmakers, the YFS Production Fund

YFS filmmakers continue to develop their own projects, with and without YFS input. In 2011 **Wai Mar Nyunt**, who returned to Myanmar in June 2010 having completed a nine-month course in Multimedia at FAMU, continued filming her project (with the working title *7/11*) about the Election and its aftermath. She is collaborating on the project with fellow YFS-student **Pe Maung Same**. In June 2011, **The Maw Naing** and YFS screenwriter **Dr Aung Min** travelled to FAMU to develop their screenplay *A Monk* for which they also received mentorship from YFS Screenwriting Tutor **Rachel Mathews** (see above). This feature length drama will go into production in June 2012.

Shin Daewe continued work on her own election film *The Collector*, she is also producer of YFS Production Fund project *Tyres*, directed by **Kyaw Myo Lwin**. Another Production Fund project is **Aung Nwai Htway's** personal film, *Behind the Screen* which is in its final stages of completion at the time of writing.

Inaugurated in 2009, the **YFS Production Fund** aims to support the production of independent projects and at the same time familiarise YFS students with international pitching and acquisition processes, encourage them to create budgets and contracts and handle film productions according to industry norms and best practice.

(v) Yangon Film School Films at International Film Festivals

In January 2011, The Maw Naing's *Again and Again* was screened in Norway at the Sorlandet Art Museum during the Roving Eye Exhibition 'Landscapes of Concern'.



In February, **Lindsey Merrison** and **Eh Mwee** travelled to Toronto in Canada to take part in the *New Voices, New Visions: Buddhism, Development and Documentary Filmmaking in Burma* symposium at the University of Toronto where they screened six YFS films, met filmmakers from Canada and Tibet and compared various models of participatory video.

Eh Mwee (second right) with other filmmakers at the Toronto symposium

Maung Okkar's *Charcoal Boy* continued to prove something of a 'festival darling', doing the rounds of festivals in Regensburg (Germany), Los Angeles (together with **Nyi Lynn Seck's** *Killing Time*), Sehsüchte Student Film Festival in Potsdam-Babelsberg (see pic), the Mo&Friese Children's Short Film Festival in Hamburg, Palm Springs, USA, the Traumzeit Festival in Duisburg, the Up-and-Coming Film Festival in Hanover, Lago Film Festival in Italy, Signe de Nuit in Paris (with *Burmese Butterfly, A Million Threads, An Untitled Life, Life Father, Like Son, A Bright Future*), Asian Connection in Lyon (with *Hey, Girl!* and *An Untitled Life*) and Vivé Rencontre Cinema in Grisny, France.



In addition, YFS films *My Positive Life, A Bright Future, Our Forests, Our Future and Stigmatize This!* screened at the Lifescapes Festival in Chiangmai in Thailand; *Like Father, Like Son* and *A Million Threads* screened at the second Vientianale in Laos in the presence of Pe Maung Same; *Beyond the Light* and *Happy Days* went to a festival in Brazil; *A Million Threads* went to London's Open City Festival and screened again (along with *Peace of Mind, An Untitled Life, Life Father, Like Son,* and *Killing Time*) at French student film festival FIDE; *An Untitled Life*

went to Bulgarian festival In the Palace; in Berlin *Stepping Up, Rice – Towards a Better Future*, *A Piece of Eden* and *Beyond the Light* were presented at the Mekong Country Day and, finally, in November Interfilm International Film Festival screened Lay Thida's *Just a Boy* and hosted the premiere of YFS 'true fiction' film *The Bamboo Grove* directed by Khin Khin Hsu.

Alongside the above YFS titles, YFS has been helping to disseminate independent Burmese filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi's film about environmental change in Inle Lake in northern Myanmar, *Floating Tomatoes*. Thanks to support from YFS, he was able to present his film in person at festivals in Seoul, Korea and Vientiane, Laos. This title also screened at festivals in Berlin, Lyon and Lago in Italy.



Khin Khin Hsu und Lay Thida at the Interfilm Festival, Berlin

(vi) YFS at Festivals in Myanmar

The Yangon Film School is delighted at the inauguration of the first two independent Burmese-run film festivals in Myanmar. Founded by YFS students **Thu Thu Shein** and **Thaidhdi** among others, the **Wathann Film Festival** took place at Mahar Sanni Thukha Monastery in Tarmwe Township in Yangon from 15-17 September, 2011. The event, which showed uncensored versions of both local and international works and marked a watershed in Myanmar's media history, showcased two YFS titles: *Sweetie Pie* (Dir. Sai Kong Kham) and *Burmese Butterfly*, a film by Hnin Ei Hlaing about Myanmar's emergent gay community. YFS beginner-student and first-time director Sai Kong Kham received Best Documentary Award for *Sweetie Pie* from an international jury that included Myanmar Motion Picture Association President U Myint Thein Pe and the Institut Française's Fabrice Etienne. This charming short began life as a filming exercise and was only completed two weeks before the festival began. YFS also screened Maung Okkar's kick-boxing film *The Game* and 'true fictions' film *The Bamboo Grove* at the inaugural **Art of Freedom Film Festival** in January; this festival was organised by celebrated Burmese comedian Zarganar and filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, with whom YFS also met in order to discuss possible ways of cooperating.

(vii) Myanmar Television, Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise

In a further bid to make inroads with MRTV as an outlet and also co-producer of YFS content, YFS Director Lindsey Merrison, Workshop Supervisor Helke Madry, Management Coach Rusta Mizani and Permit Manager Pe Maung Same paid a visit to the country's only quasi-private broadcaster **MRTV4** to discuss possible ways of cooperating. In particular, YFS mooted the idea of a regular 15-minute television slot devoted to documentary films made by Myanmar filmmakers. Still unsure of censorship developments and how the new media law would affect his programming policy, the broadcaster's **CEO, Khin Maung Htay** was however reluctant to take up the idea, citing the need to 'play safe' by broadcasting innocuous in-house productions and outsourced entertainment programmes. He did however cite the need to train a new generation of broadcasters, and explained his plans for a Media Development

Centre on the current MRTV4 site, with support from Deutsche Welle Academy and Korea's Educational Broadcasting Services. Cooperation with YFS tutors and possibly local YFS trainers at this level would be welcomed. Although MRTV4 could not immediately commit to YFS programme content, YFS would be able to submit films to MRTV's new Channel 7 programme due to be launched in 2012. Another suggestion was for YFS to approach another quasi-private venture, Myanmar International Channel. Although the meeting did not bring much in the way of concrete results, CEO Khin Maung Htay did spend almost two hours with us, which gives some indication of YFS' reputation within Myanmar's media landscape.

Filming *Koran and Karate*

MRTV may have been tentative, but the government's film department, **Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise**, seemed only too willing to cooperate with YFS. Bestowing his first site visit on YFS, the department's Technical Director **U Win Htu** and five colleagues toured the workshop venue. After briefly observing the HD camera workshop and editing process (shaking hands with all the male students and ignoring all the female participants), U Win Htu asked about the school's history and training programme. Explaining that Information Minister Kyaw Hsan had urged the department to improve the quality of Myanmar filmmaking, he asked if YFS would train 5-6 MMPE employees. Reminding him that YFS had included MMPE employees on its courses on at least four occasions, YFS Director Lindsey Merrison confirmed that the school would always be willing to interview any prospective candidates. She emphasised that recruitment, though inclusive in terms of ethnicity and economic means, would remain selective and aptitude-based.



(viii) Cooperation with International Media

Myanmar's thaw in the wake of the 2010 elections has led to a steady stream of visitations from members of the international media. As a result, YFS is being approached by an increasing number of visiting journalists, filmmakers and/or production companies. Among the projects for which YFS has been asked to provide researchers, fixers and crew members are:

- A **BBC** television series on the world's great railways is developing a 2-3 part documentary series on Myanmar's railways in which YFS will be involved during the research, filming and editing.
- An Asian 'road movie' for Franco-German channels **rbb/arte**. YFS will be involved in the filming of the Myanmar leg of this pan-Asian trip.



Camera Tutor Lars Barthel and students watch playback during the Beginners' Workshop

- A three-part documentary for Franco-German broadcasters **SWR/arte** about the people who live on and around the Ayeyarwaddy river.
- A television drama entitled 'Dream Hotel' for the German channel ARD. YFS will assist in casting protagonists.
- The YFS Committee is also currently considering an offer from the exiled broadcaster Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) to broadcast YFS films.

XIV Conclusions and the Next Step

YFS trainings continue to deliver solid media skills to a young generation of independent filmmakers and screenwriters in Myanmar. The gender parity and diversity of the new intake in 2011 reflects the school's commitment to training people of different ethnic backgrounds and underrepresented groups as well as to empowering women in the media.

The YFS teach-to-train programme serves to create capacity for filmmakers as both proponents and multipliers of filmmaking skills. In terms of content, the 2011 courses met the ongoing demand to learn more about storytelling (editing, film history and analysis). Courses also gave more experienced students the opportunity to work independently, working towards established goals (paper cut, assembly, rough cut) and receive feedback during periodical mentorship sessions.

The upgrade to HD (cameras, editing laptops) and the ability to use and integrate this equipment into new workflows will ensure the school keeps abreast of international norms and remains competitive as a producer of films both at home and abroad.

The year 2011 brought four new commissions (now in post-production) to YFS from sources inside and outside the country. Such projects serve to encourage participation and exchange and implement change in Myanmar.

The re-election of a five-person YFS Committee in mid-2011 encourages the target group to take ownership. The call for recruits (in December) for a media management training programme in 2012 paves the way for handover of the project to locals in 2015, as does YFS's newly acquired legal status as a registered company in Myanmar.

As the country opens up and untold opportunities begin to manifest themselves, it is clear that YFS has a role to play in this transition. However, only by finding and funding a permanent site for both school and production outfit will it be possible for YFS to meet these challenging new demands, and maintain its credentials as a robust capacity building project and producer of quality audio-visual output.

1. Assessments and Suggestions

- The focus on ethnic minorities helped to make courses and content more inclusive but more needs to be achieved to reach a greater diversity of applicants and sustain their involvement.

- A Burmese-language version of the YFS website will hopefully attract a wider range of applicants including returnees from Burma's exiled communities.
- YFS students have created an online Media Network of filmmakers via which YFS courses will be advertised and information will be exchanged.
- The Goethe Institute's EU-funded AsiaDocNet, of which YFS is a partner, will also provide more opportunities for exchange between Myanmar filmmakers and their colleagues in the region.
- Annual intake of beginners commences in 2012; this will ensure greater inclusivity and help to create new capacity as older students concentrate on other projects.
- Since classroom teaching of **Creative Production** lacks a practical dimension, production will in future be taught on-site and via mentorship on a case by case basis. This will help filmmakers establish parameters for best practice as the country begins to open up.
- Two planned modules of Screenwriting and Pitching were postponed to 2012 to enable students to develop ideas. Screenwriting mentorship of projects being developed by experienced writer-directors was nonetheless conducted via email during 2011, and a Screenwriting course is planned for 2012.
- In 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding will be drafted to clarify the role and function of the five-member **YFS Committee** and its relationship to **YFS Management**.
- In 2012 the **Management Recruitment and Training programme** will begin the process of transition to a local-run entity.



HD Camera shoot at the Shwedagon Pagoda

2. Workshops in 2012

An Art of Documentary Filmmaking Workshop for six women and six men is scheduled for the first half of 2012. The topic will be **'Women in Myanmar'**. Recruitment will take place in Yangon in May/June 2012 with YFS Committee members and the YFS Director conducting joint interviews. The second half of 2012 will be devoted once again to Editing with courses

for beginners and more advanced editors as well as a module devoted to post-production. Courses analysing documentary editing and the history of film form are also scheduled. Workshops will be rounded off at the end of the year by further tuition in Sound Design.

Film Production will be taught in modules by the YFS Director and Workshop Supervisor based on students' ongoing individual projects; the YFS Director will continue to advise the YFS Committee on all management and other issues with a view to handing over as much of the decision-making as possible to the Committee.

Funds permitting, in 2012 YFS workshops will focus on the following:

- Beginners Workshop: the Art of Documentary Filmmaking taught by student trainers working under tutors' supervision
- Beginners' Screenwriting Workshop
- Film Analysis – the Documentary Edit
- Editing and Post-Production
- Sound design and mixing
- History of Film Form
- Film Production Mentorships: Creativity and Commerce
- Flying Mentorships of NGO commissions and students' individual projects

Lindsey Merrison, YFS Director, Berlin, April 2012

XV TABLE 1 - Breakdown of YFS Participants in 2011 by Gender, Ethnicity & Religion

Workshop	Dates	Participants	Participant Breakdown			
			Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	Joined YFS
1. Beginners' Documentary	26 July to 17 Aug 2011 (20 days)	12	6 F	3 Myanmar	5 Buddhist	12 2011
			6 M	2 Myanmar-Muslim 2 Mon 1 Lahu 1 Shan 1 Chin 1 Kayin-Malay-Myanmar 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese	5 Christian 2 Islam	
2. Beginners' Editing	17 Aug to 11 Sept 2011 (22 days)	7	4 F	4 Myanmar	5 Buddhist	4 2011
			3 M	1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Mon 1 Rakhine	1 Christian 1 Islam	2 2007 1 2009
3. Advanced HD Camera	17 Aug to 20 Aug 2011 (4 days)	10	6 M	4 Myanmar	8 Buddhist	5 2011
			4 F	1 Mon 1 Lahu 1 Shan 1 Rakhine 1 Sino-Burmese 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese	2 Christian	2 2009 1 2007 1 2006 1 2005
4. Film History	17 Oct to 22 Oct 2011 (6 days)	11	6 M	5 Myanmar	8 Buddhist	7 2011
			5 F	1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Mon 1 Shan 1 Chin 1 Sino-Burmese 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese	2 Christian 1 Islam	2 2007 1 2009 1 2006
5. Introduction to Editing	31 Oct to 25 Nov 2011 (20 days)	9	5 M	4 Myanmar	7 Buddhist	9 2011
			4 F	2 Mon 1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Shan 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese	1 Christian 1 Islam	
6. Advanced Editing	5 Nov to 9 Dec + 28 to 30 Dec 2011 (33 days)	10	5 F	4 Myanmar	9 Buddhist	3 2007
			5 M	2 Rakhine 2 Shan 1 Mon 1 Sino-Burmese	1 Christian	3 2005 2 2011 1 2009 1 2006
7. Film Analysis	12 Dec to 24 Dec 2011 (12 days)	13	8 M	6 Myanmar	11 Buddhist	8 2011
			5 F	2 Mon 2 Shan 1 Kachin 1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Sino-Burmese	1 Christian 1 Islam	2 2007 2 2005 1 2006
8. Post-Production	30 Dec 2011 to 13 Jan 2012 (13 days)	9	5 M	5 Myanmar	7 Buddhist	6 2011
			4 F	1 Myanmar-Muslim 1 Shan 1 Rakhine 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese	1 Christian 1 Islam	2 2005 1 2007

XVI TABLE 2 - Summary of Figures for 2011

Total Training Days	Total People Trained	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	Joined YFS
130	30	18 Male 12 Female	10 ethnicities, comprising: 15 Myanmar 3 Shan 2 Chin 2 Mon 2 Myanmar-Muslim 2 Rakhine 1 Kayin-Malay-Myanmar 1 Lahu 1 Shan-Kachin-Chinese 1 Sino-Burmese	3 religions, comprising: 22 Buddhist 6 Christian 2 Islam	13 2011 7 2007 5 2005 4 2009 1 2006

XVII Yangon Film School Management Needs Assessment

In a first needs assessment, the following focus areas were identified as requiring attention in the transition process:

Transparency

- Making the transition process transparent to all stakeholders and inclusive of the current student body, Steering Committee and administrative staff
- Development of guidelines for the interaction between Steering Committee, student body, new local management and current Berlin-based management (during and after the transition)
- Development of common goals/a 'vision' for the transition and milestones for the process
- Making the transition programme financially viable and sustainable even with unforeseen needs for adaptation: what are the main costs drivers, sources of finance and the most cost-effective structure for the process?

Human resources

- Description of job profiles
- Development of the future organizational chart
- Capacity building: Assessment of existing skill levels and individual needs
- Structuring the recruitment process to ensure the attraction of suited management staff
- Ensuring that the new management steps into positions of responsibility and accountability right from the start in order to strengthen engagement with YFS and enriching individual jobs.
- Establishment of a reliable and tailored coaching framework.

Current administrative processes and division of labour

- Understanding the current processes, their aims, operational structure and potential shortcomings
- Development of a target process structure to fit future needs
- Identification of the current local dependencies on overseas management structures
- Identification of extrinsic (e.g. legal, financial) and intrinsic (e.g. adversity to change) barriers to the transition process

YFS Strategy

- Understanding the YFS 'Business Case': sources of finance now and in future
- SWOT analysis: identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in the context of a rapidly changing socio-political and media-landscape in Myanmar
- How can YFS maintain its vanguard position in the local media industry?

Potential target structure for YFS

■ New positions

