

Students 'Chip' in to create sci-fi film with small budget

James Hickson
FOR THE GAMECOCK

How would you like to have a computer chip implanted in your brain that allowed you to memorize everything you see, like the pages of a textbook? A quick scan through its pages, and you would be set. Cramping would be a thing of the past. With final exams just around the corner, most students would kill for such a device.

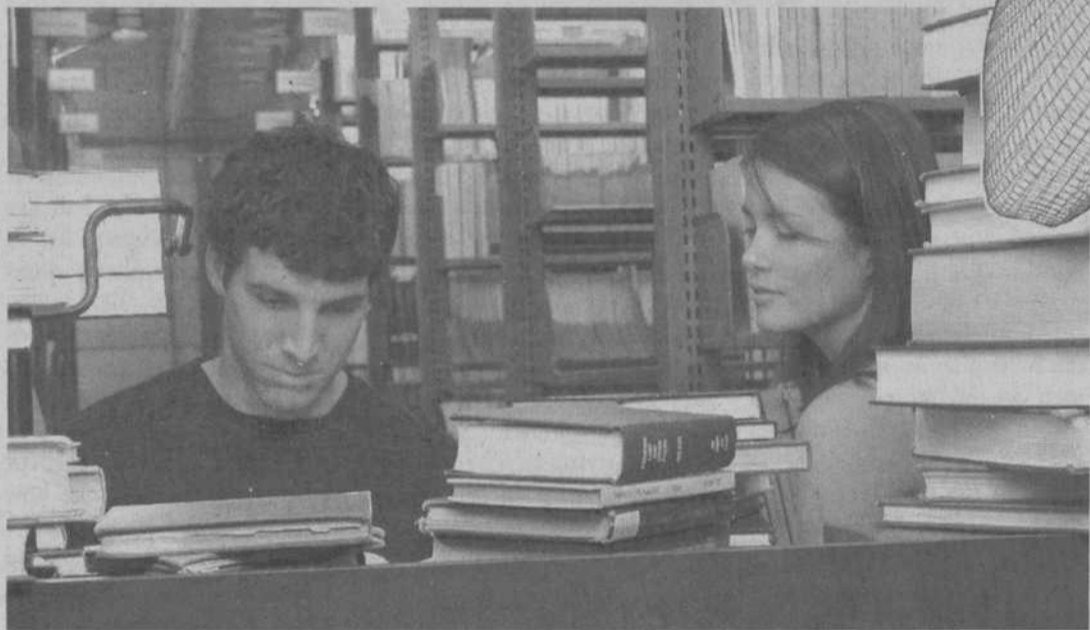
"Harper's Chip," a student film by fourth-year media arts students Jason Steelman and David Vassalotti, touches on this very question in the story of Scott Harper, a young man who implants a chip inside his brain designed to allow him to memorize everything from textbooks to TV shows. Eventually though, things start

to work too well, and his friends Audrey and Cindy must help him to figure out what is real and what is only a memory stored inside the chip. The official designation is a sort of science-fiction grounded in real science, but it's more about the dramatic relationship between the characters.

Steelman and Vassalotti undertook the film as an independent study course for the College of Media Arts and as a project for the student film organization Refried Films. Weighing in at almost an hour, "Harper's Chip" is Refried Film's first feature.

"It's not unusual for someone to take an independent study course to develop their skills," said Laura Kissell, associate professor for the media arts department and faculty advisor

HARPER'S CHIP



Kyle McAndrews and Ali Williams star in "Harper's Chip," a film created by media arts students.

for Refried Films. "But it takes a very organized and structured plan and person to do it."

The idea first took shape during the summer when Steelman (writer and director), Vassalotti (producer) and Donna Clark, fourth-year media arts student and one of the film's associate producers, met to discuss the possibility of a feature. The team met weekly to discuss ideas for the feature before going with what would

become "Harper's Chip," then only a half-finished script. After two months of heavy editing and recruitment for the film, shooting was ready to begin. The film's crew consisted entirely of undergraduates — 25 members plus eight cast (in all, a number much larger than most student productions).

"Harper's Chip" used a studio setting where they created the final product from scratch. Sets employed background pieces on

loan from the theatre

department later painted to match the built sets. Furniture and other fixtures such as couches, televisions and windows were provided by the crew or had to be brought in. "We had no budget, so everything pretty much came from my house," said Nichola Lafferty, the film's art director and a 30-year-old media arts student.

"Harper's Chip" premieres Saturday in McMaster 214 at 6 p.m. It stars graduate students Kyle McAndrew, Marybeth Gorman and Jason Craig, and first-year media arts student Ali Williams. For more information, visit www.refriedfilms.com.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockfeatures@gwm.sc.edu

Make 'em, break 'em, stick to 'em

As New Year's nears, keeping resolutions can be difficult

Devon Vlcek
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Each year, students make New Year's resolutions that can be difficult to maintain with the endless distractions of college life. Campus is abuzz with resolution hopefuls, confident in their ability to carry out a variety of goals.

"I have two resolutions this year," said Lydia Greene, a first-year business student. "I plan to spend less money over the next semester. Whenever I shop at Food Lion, I always end up with a bunch of stuff in my cart that I don't need. I'm going to start questioning everything I buy. I also want to go to the Strom everyday."

"I want to do better in my classes next semester," said Trevor Hartley, a third-year accounting and finance student. "I'll try to study more, but I just turned 21 so we'll see how that

goes." Three of the most common resolutions in America are to lose weight, quit smoking and stick to a budget. Other common resolutions across the country are to find a better job, become more organized and eat better.

It is easy to feel optimistic when making New Year's resolutions, but the most difficult part is following through with them for a whole year. Most people end up ignoring the resolutions made or forgetting about them.

Maryl Razalan, a first-year English student, has embraced the fact that she cannot keep a resolution.

"My New Year's resolution is to not make a New Year's resolution because I always break them. I'm trying not to let myself down," Razalan said.

Fortunately, resources are available to help achieve these goals.

According to the Web site "How to Keep New Year's Resolutions: 5 goal setting

RESOLUTIONS • 9



"Pride and Prejudice" stars British actress Keira Knightley.

Knightley concocts proud performance

Newly remade romantic Jane Austen classic 'Pride and Prejudice' stays true to original plot

Marjorie Riddle
FOR THE GAMECOCK

The new release of "Pride and Prejudice" is a fresh and delightful adaptation of the beloved Jane Austen classic.

Set in late 18th-century Great Britain, the film tells the tale of the Bennet family of Longbourn, focusing on the second-eldest daughter Elizabeth Bennet. Elizabeth has an annoying mother, a doting father and four sisters. Unfortunately for Mr. Bennet, all five of his daughters are ready for marriage. When Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy, new and exciting prospects, arrive in Longbourn, the girls become aflutter over the warm and courteous Mr. Bingley and the proud and

pretentious Mr. Darcy.

Through dancing at exquisite balls and other interactions, Elizabeth's older sister Jane and Mr. Bingley become smitten with one another. Mr. Darcy interferes, thinking Jane is less enthusiastic about Mr. Bingley than he is about her, and the two men hastily leave Longbourn.

While the sisters are disappointed, especially Jane, life goes on, and another suitor calls upon the girls. Elizabeth ultimately rejects Mr. Collins, her cousin, and he marries her friend Charlotte. When visiting the newly married couple, Elizabeth encounters Mr. Darcy again. Over several discourses, Elizabeth determines Mr. Darcy

'PRIDE' • 10

Rock around tree with holiday albums

Adam Carter
FOR THE GAMECOCK

What are the three best Christmas albums of all time? That really depends on your age, but what follows are three of the most interesting Christmas albums of all time — or at least from 1996 to 2002.

The first on the list must inevitably be "Wir Warten Auf's Christkind" (1996) by legendary punk rockers Die Roten Rosen — formerly and still known as Die Toten Hosen. So how did "the dead pants" become "the red roses"? They dressed up in Christmas garb, got some corporate sponsorship from Pfizer and sang as terrible as they could. Their version of "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" ("Silent Night") is sure to wake up the Child in the manger. Well, on average, the album is not all that bad, except for the fact that they changed the lyrics a little bit. Anyone who understands German and isn't

offended by a little sacrilege would really enjoy this CD. Take these lyrics: "Hark the herald angels sing / glory to all newborn kings / thanks to science he can smile / wife and husband reconciled / joyful all ye nations rise / all because the pill of life / hail Vee-agra she will cry" But along with their usual rotten mischief, they made a little improvisation also. Get the translations online. It is simply hilarious — either that or twisted, but hilarious nonetheless. This album is meant to be enjoyed and then burned in your fireplace.

Next is one sure to warm anyone's heart. It's made by none other than the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Sorry to all those who missed their performance in Columbia on Nov. 22. The album is called "Christmas Eve And Other Stories" (1996). What's different about the Trans-

Siberian Orchestra from other acts? Their albums tell a story. It's a rock-opera with a lot of classical music influences about an angel's attempt to reconcile a child lost in New York City with her father. The album says much about the season of Christmas. Like how on Christmas day, German and French soldiers on opposite sides stopped shooting at each other and sang "Silent Night" together (true story); how people built churches for the Christ who was, is and is to come; and how all manner of songs, novels and stories extolling the virtues of giving to others and unconditional love had been written about this day. Anyone who enjoys sentimental Christmas music should get this album.

Third and final is the "WOW!" Christmas CD (2002). This is a compilation of 31 songs by popular

Christian music artists, and it's great for family, friends and mixed company. Put it in the CD changer for that big Christmas party, and guests are sure to enjoy it. "Contemporary Christian" might be a blight on the music industry but for Christmas music, it does wonders. There are hymns from the past-great hymns we all know and love, songs such as "Winter Wonderland," "Let It Snow," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" and as well as new songs that aren't just about snow, Santa, opening presents and the "magic" of the season. Christmas is truly one of the most celebrated times of the year and also one of the most commercialized. If anyone wants to escape the trend for a little insight, spirituality or sacrilege, these are the best picks for the season. Enjoy the winter holidays and Merry Christmas, everyone!