In many ways, I was a cruel screenwriter. I wrote many aspects of the script without a clue as to how they would be accomplished, but, despite my best efforts to befuddle, Alejandro always managed to get them done. In the script, one line refers to a Valentine’s decoration sending a flicker of red across Mars’ face. Alejandro made it even cooler by having an actual heart-shaped red light drift across Beau’s face. Beau sat calmly [top] while a plank of foam with a heart-shaped hole cut in it was slowly pulled in front of a red light [bottom]. Though working out the method was tricky, the shot ended up looking lovely.
Mars was originally written as an antagonist for Venus, a counter-argument to her argument, as a way to make the story less static. And, at first, he was purely functional. I didn’t like him at all. Mars and I were at odds.

He was supposed to be tall, dashing and anything but Caucasian. Obviously, Beau doesn’t exactly fit that description.

I had seen him in other theatre shows and I was flattered he auditioned, but I was more flattered when he delivered the audition bit perfectly.

I didn’t like Mars at all, but in the guise of Beau, I started to. He brought something to him that made Mars’ pompous posturing and self-righteous ways, if not charming, at least understandable. He made the God of War I had written more human and likable, which was more of a challenge than it might have seemed.

I purposely made Venus not your average Goddess of Love, mainly because, if she were an unbelievably beautiful representation of the ideal female form, I would have no idea how to write her. So, I decided Venus was plain and went from there.

I saw Holly in a play at Muncie Civic Theatre and she was incredible. It was then I realized that she could hold this piece; she could play Venus and play her well. That night, I asked her to audition. She did and wowed us all.

I liked Venus from the moment she was written, but Holly brought to her a vitality and angst that was lacking in my mind’s eye. Venus was dower, unhappy and lifeless, but Holly’s Venus was melancholy, angry and fallible. Holly found preparation for Venus difficult, but the thought she put into it was just what the character required. Holly would jokingly say, “I’m your Venus.” She was right.
This is the professional level to which all the rest of the cast and crew had to rise. [right] The producer goes over the script. [left] The director readies his shot.
When the original *Venus on Valentine's Day* short story was written, Club Olympus didn't exist. It wasn't until it reached short film format that the club opened for business.

Alejandro and I went together to talk to the owner, Jarrod Bean, and to "scout the location," as they say in the business. We walked through the golden doors and were met by Venus de Milo. "It's a sign," I said to Alejandro.

And I think perhaps it was.

The statue of Venus herself became an important symbol in the film, a background or foreground to an important scene. Believably, though disturbingly, her nipples were often the most worn and dirty part of her. Before scenes involving a close-up of the statue, we would have to scrub her nipples. That always proved an interesting task. We had a good time with her whether it was feeling for her the bashfulness of which she was incapable [right] or running away with her [below]. And we were always careful with her as she was Jarrod's prize possession.
Due to the fact that Olympus was an open and functioning dance club, we had to conform our schedule to theirs. They were open most weekend nights, so we worked during the day. The only trouble this presented was daylight. The whole movie is supposed to take place during the night and the sun streaming in through the front door windows would make it difficult to convince audiences of that. Alejandro and I anticipated that and during pre-production we took the initiative, purchasing nine and a half yards of black fleece. Soft and functional.

Each day of filming, we would cover the windows with fleece and the trick was complete. It was dark inside. For a month of weekends, we managed to deprive ourselves of sunlight. Leaving the club involved subjecting oneself to sudden and intense sunlight and returning into the club was even worse. Temporary blindness would occur and one would have to stand, waiting until vision in the darkness was restored. For one scene, Paul and Ali had to enter from the outside. Opening the door would have created a flood of sunlight, so we had to construct a cave - a fleece cave encasing the front door of Olympus.
Natisha and David would huddle in the fleece alcove [above] and listen for Alejandro’s hollered “Action!” and prepare to enter.

The light was blocked out and our night scene was accomplished – in the middle of the day.

Of course, this ended up being our longest day and creating night soon became a non-issue. For later shots involving entrances and exits, the door could open all it wanted. Night had fallen.
Garland. We had around thirty-six feet of red garland, which we strung up almost everywhere to give Olympus that actual Valentine's Day feel. The set up behind Natisha [above and below] was created due to the need to cover the electrical outlet that is directly behind that big doily heart. And it ended up looking pretty, too. [below right] Holly is ready for "Action."
This was our final night in Olympus and we took great care to see we got everything filmed that we needed filmed.

Alejandro is an innovative and perceptive director. While he will on occasion ask for (and listen!) to the advice of others, his ideas and plans are original and impressive. He has no wish to rehash old concepts and has every intention of behaving and running his set as professional as possible.

The work involved in this night took us to midnight and beyond. Many of the cast and crew stayed at Olympus after hours, visiting with the owner Jarrod and saying goodbye to the location where we had spent so much of our time for the last month.

[left] Alejandro corrects the lighting with Beau and Holly.

[below] All check out a shot in the monitor.
30 November 2000 – Out to the cold. Saying good bye to Olympus meant saying good bye to indoors and climate control. The 30th through the 3rd would be an intense four day marathon of filming – our last four days. The biggest challenge was the weather.

Holly, proving once again the she is either a glutton for punishment or the most dutiful actress who does not have a hefty paycheck, willingly braved the cold and “rain” again. The 10th of November, for the sake of health, had to end early with a few crucial shots incomplete. A small crew went out the 30th to finish. But this time we were all ready.

It was, unfortunately, even colder than the 10th, but we took all the precautions we could fathom. Holly wore a trash bag underneath her coat [below] creating what we believe will be the new look for the future, and she wore about four layers under her costume. As Holly noted at the time, “Acting is so glamorous.” The shots were less complex and thankfully, didn’t involve a lift. This time we knew what to expect. Instead of a fire hose, we used a garden hose hooked up to the spickets in the kitchen of Vera Mae’s Bistro. Vera Mae’s took care of us, loaned us buckets when we asked, let us use their bathrooms and their water, let us huddle inside for a time to get warm. They were a completely invaluable asset.

We all journeyed back downtown to our little alleyway on Walnut Street with the hopes of being done early.
We considered using hot water instead of warm to keep Holly’s body temperature from lowering so quickly, but the water was scalding and hot water freezes faster, so, as unpleasant as it sounded, it would have to be cold water.

The first series of shots included close-ups of the heart falling to the pavement. Holly was not needed for these so she was instructed to remain in Aaron’s heated car and stay warm. (By the end of the night, she had mastered Aaron’s digital stereo readout.) With Alejandro crouching with the camera, Ron would drop the heart [left] while Aaron supplied the rain with the garden hose.

The subsequent scene, of Venus stomping on the heart, allowed Holly to keep her coat on. Alejandro would film as Aaron would “rain” on the heart from his precarious perch atop a ladder and Holly would stomp on the heart [below].
The shots were important ones, basically the meat of the opening. We offered a stunt foot for Holly, someone to stomp on the heart in her stead so she might stay warm and dry just a bit longer, but she wanted to feel that contact, that anger that Venus felt and so she willingly had her pant legs sprayed with water and stepped into the fray.

We were all freezing. Alejandro was nearly as drenched as Holly and to be able to use the camera, he had to have his hands gloveless. We took refuge in Vera Mae’s for a few moments at a time to prepare ourselves for the next bit of shooting.

For one of the more vital clips, Holly had to walk toward the camera, look directly in the lens and walk on. Fortunately, Alejandro and the crew found a way to keep the water off of her. They held a reflector board up in the air, over Holly’s head, and sprayed the water on to the reflector board [right]. From the camera’s perspective, the water was falling all around and it kept Holly just a bit drier.

Despite our best efforts, the cold water managed to drench Holly to the skin anyway.

Just when Holly feared she might not be able to go back out in the cold, Alejandro came to us in Vera Mae’s back room and said we were done for the night. The back room became a dressing room and Holly got out of her wet clothes immediately.

Some of the men in the crew had gone to the Heorot, a nearby bar. We met them there and I decided to speak to the owner. A few days earlier, Alejandro had told me of an ambitious rooftop shot he hoped to get. I spoke to many of the downtown companies in our area. Understandably, most were unwilling to let a bunch of kids on their roofs. Others had no roof to stand on, that area being claimed by windows or climate control machinery. The Heorot, though unwilling to allow us on the roof, would give us supervised access to their third floor. It would have to work.

With much accomplished in a short amount of time, we declared ourselves done and I was back home by 9:30pm.
1 December 2000 — We began in terrible, bitter, freezing cold earnest with a full crew and our two leads. We had a few scenes to do this evening, but Alejandro had decided to string the scenes together into one, moving, unedited shot, then do a few “pick up” shots including close-ups and mid-shots. It seemed relatively easy.

Beau and Holly met at my house to put on their costumes and make-up in more suitable environs before traveling to Walnut Street. I warned Beau of the temperature, but we discovered that it took at least one night out in it, to realize how excessively cold it really was. Beau wore layers, but not enough. We all realized that while gods aren’t supposed to get frostbite, ours could.

While the weather, beyond the temperature, was not a particular concern, Alejandro and I did keep it in mind. Of course, the footage we shot on the 10th of November was without snow and because of that we had bound ourselves to an exterior minus snow—and even worse, an exterior with recent rain.

At these temperatures, if we were to have any precipitation, it was going to be snow. Alejandro and I decided we should have a coverage line, a line that would explain the change in weather without damaging the flow of the film. I came up with a simple one liner for Mars: “Still channeling your emotions into the weather?” Venus would not respond.

Before we began shooting we had flurries and so we told Beau to add that line in. He and Holly rehearsed in the warm, heated van with that line added. Meanwhile, the crew outside tried to scrape and brush away the telltale signs of winter. That involved scraping every car on the street that had snow on it [Anne, above]. We felt like criminal good Samaritans. While scraping the snow and ice from strangers’ cars, we were sure one of them would come out and demand to know what we were doing to their vehicle. We weren’t sure how to explain that we were just cleaning it off for them.

One scene, one scene. It sounded simple. Alejandro and I are both fans of moving, unedited shots and the one he had created for this scene was lovely, but it posed some unusual, but easily solved difficulties. Alejandro would have to walk backward, so I walked behind him to guide him around various obstacles. The rest of the crew, Adam, Ron and Anne, would have to keep pace while doing their jobs and being careful to avoid casting shadows. The first few takes didn’t go so well.
A few times, our audio cord snagged on a fire hydrant, nearly causing us all to topple. We fixed that problem. Then, Adam and the boom mic couldn't squeeze through the narrow space between the hydrant and the trashcan on the corner. So, we moved the trashcan and solved that problem. Issue by issue, we polished our movements until, really, the whole thing was darn near ballet, which proved to be advantageous as we did that one scene over 30 times.

2 December 2000 – Our actors were great throughout the cold and gave great performances despite, or perhaps because of, the constant threat of frostbite.

Moon Girl was played by Anette Schindler, a student from Germany. She found the cold to be almost unbearable, which confused the rest of us as we understood Germany to be an often cold country. But Anette insisted that Germany was “not this cold.”

The actors found their ways to stay warm whether it was huddling in blankets [Beau and Anette, above right] or riding the dolly [Beau, above left]. We were all cold, but at least we were pleasant.
A few weeks after the casting decisions had been completed, I put the script through a rewrite. It lacked...well, it lacked a lot and required a lot of work. The motivations (my apologies to Alejandro who loathes the word) of the characters were not concrete and the dramatic action wasn't really dramatic. So, I put it through rigorous criticisms and revised it. The resulting script is a better and stronger one.

One of the latest revisions was a simple one line bit of dialogue for Mars. All we needed him to say was “Not to interrupt your solitary diatribe, but.....” We had a good time with Beau’s struggle.

In his defense, it was bitter cold this evening, as it had been the evening before. The night before, he had slurred the word “successful” repeatedly because his lips were frozen. All of us on the crew tried and we slurred the word as well. And, though the cold was little trouble with “solitary diatribe.” Beau was certainly imaginative with his mistakes. We heard “Not to interrupt your soli...sausage,” “Not to interrupt your...thingie,” and “Not to interrupt your soapbox.” Finally, for his close-up we solved the problem by having Holly, who stood off camera, hold a piece of paper that read “Solitary Diatribe” in large, capital letters [above]. He got through the scene without a hitch. And all of us, even Beau, got a good laugh out of it.

It sounds as if I am hounding Beau and, though I am, I should point out that most of the actors had lines that gave them trouble. Holly understandably had difficulty with “Everything doesn’t mean anything. Saying it means everything is saying nothing,” for example, but all of them easily conquered the problems and we got some fun bloopers out of all of it.

And we crewmembers made numerous mistakes ourselves, but none of ours were on camera. Fortunately.

The 2nd was our first night with Anette, our Moon Girl, and it was also the night during which we had to film our extras. We had only two couples: a married couple and a lesbian couple. The lesbians weren’t actually lesbians, but two young women who kindly braved the cold for our film and joked with us saying, “If you ever need lesbians in your next movie, you know who to call.” I would imagine it would depend on just what sort of film we were making.
Our married couple was played by an actual married couple: the Marins, otherwise known as Alejandro’s father and his wife. They consider themselves staunch supporters of Alejandro’s work, having executive produced his directorial debut, Kleptic. And they willingly came downtown and portrayed, well, themselves. Alejandro’s father just happened to wear his beret and we all learned where Alejandro had gotten his keen fashion sense [below].

Our last task of the evening involved an “insert” shot of the pepper spray Moon Girl carries. It was such a small, minor shot, but because of the angle, everyone had to be outside, in the cold, and working [left].

I felt like I was charging through these last days, making sure to get everything done and feeling a little weight lesson each night when Alejandro called, “That’s a wrap!” (We were very Hollywood.) The 3rd was our last day of filming outside, our last day of filming - period.

I was ready.
To stay warm, which was of great concern to us all, we created for our actors — and often our crew — makeshift trailers, just like the one’s in Hollywood. Except we only had one trailer...and it was actually my mom’s minivan, which she had kindly let me borrow every weekend of filming. It served its purpose: it was warm, had a CD player and Holly supplied us with plenty of CDs. During those freezing nights, the van was definitely the place to be.

The actors would camp out in the van and stay warm until they were needed. And the crew would stay outside until Alejandro said we could go in. During those brief “warm-up breaks,” all of us would huddle into the nearest warm vehicle — most into the van [above] and two into another crewmember’s car. Then, Alejandro would climb out of whatever car to which he had retreated and then we all knew we had to go back to work.
[above left] Kathryn chats with Holly and Beau.

[above right] Alejandro directs Chad and Anette.

[left] Chad and Anette – Moon Boy and Moon Girl – do as directed.
3 December 2000 – Our last day! And, to misquote the old proverb, this movie went out like a lion.

Alejandro wanted an “aerial” shot or as close to one as I could legally get. As the producer it was my job to keep him happy and so I did what I could. During my talk with the owner of the Heorot on the 30th of November, we secured supervised access to the third floor and they held to that. You can’t really see him, but those shadows in the highest window on the Heorot are Alejandro and Adam [below]. Adam was there to hold Alejandro’s feet and make sure he didn’t topple. Alejandro’s main concern was the camera.

While Alejandro was having a jolly time hanging out of windows, the rest of us were on solid earth scurrying around like mice.

We had much to do.

The shot demanded a wet street and, worse, puddles. Wet streets in December, perhaps. But it would be more accurately called “ice.”

Once again taking advantage of the good people at Vera Mae’s, we borrowed buckets and filled them with water. We would stand ready and when given our cue, we would rush out and dump the water in various puddles along the street. We would literally run into an alcove [also pictured, just beneath the “Docs” sign] and Alejandro would shout to the actors.

Moon Boy and Moon Girl would cross the street.

Mars would turn a corner.

Venus had to kick a puddle.

And it was that puddle that proved to be so trying later in the evening.
We could fill the buckets with water [Aaron, right], we could dump that water on the street [Kathryn above, left and right], but we couldn't keep it from freezing.

Poor Holly had to walk right up to that puddle and kick it. Often, by the time she arrived, no liquid water remained to be kicked and we were sending her directly into a death trap. She never fell, though she came close several times, and we got the shot we wanted from all the angles we needed.

We were all home by 3 o’clock in the morning, not ready at all for school the next day. But this time, when Alejandro said, “It’s a wrap!” — it was... sort of.
9 December 2000

- Though filming was done, we still had two photo shoots left. Our staff photographer, Debra Branscome, challenged the dedication of our cast and crew by setting the first shoot on a Saturday at 7:00am.

Everyone showed.

We still had equipment checked out from the Media Lab. We thought we should probably use it. Alejandro and I had been toying with the idea of tag scenes, as we called them, for lack of a better term, which would include moments that occur the morning after Valentine’s Day. Some ideas included Ali and Paul getting back together and then, just cause it was funny to think about, Lonely Man hooking up with Lassie, our Blonde Woman. We did film the Paul and Ali scene right in front of Olympus and then, for unknown reasons, Alejandro decided to have the entire cast and crew waddle along past the building and grab Paul and Ali, dragging them along with us. It was silly, but we all had a good time. And extra kudos to Jina who stood out in the cold in her costume: black slacks and a tank top, which fit well into the “Not Winter Clothing” category.

[above] Debra photographs Jina, our bartender.

[left] Debra photos Holly at the bar in Olympus.
The yield from our first photo shoot ranged from the beautiful...
...to the ridiculous.

Our second day had much the same result.

The most frequently asked question at the photo shoots was “Do you want me as me or in character?” If the answer was as themselves everyone grinned widely. If in character, they all glared angrily. It was a surprising, though amusing, sight.
10 December 2000 – Debra secured for us the little photo studio in the West Quad building [left]. However, due to what I only understand as a technical difficulty (photography is not my strong suit), only one role of film was salvageable.

But we didn’t know that at the time and so, for all intents and purposes, this was our last day as a band of jolly filmmakers. Anette brought us chocolate and we enjoyed Christmas cookies, while taking numerous silly pictures [below].

Within days we were already scheduling a replacement photo shoot to make up for those photos we lost.

I have been upset by many of the obstacles this movie has face, but surprisingly, this was not one of them. I figured it had happened for a reason and that reason emerged that very evening.

Alejandro was puzzling over an avant-garde idea, as he called it, which involved using the pictures within the film as a signifier of a change of mood or introduction of a new character.

It was best we started over with that in mind.
We had our third and, as it turns out, final photo shoot at the beginning of the year. We got exactly what we needed.

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I attempted to approach this production in two completely separate ways: as writer and as producer. I had heard the talk from Hollywood about how having the writer on the set could quickly become the bane of the whole picture. Though, as producer, I was putting myself in a position of enough power to have an opinion, I didn’t want to be a cliché. I wanted to be flexible.

I was easily concerned when a line wasn’t said exactly as I had heard it in my head, but I tried not to mention it every time and just listen to what the actors were bringing to the characters. And I discovered that if I just calmed down, I would realize that the actors were bringing my characters alive.

I will never be a good enough writer that the input of others won’t make my work better. Writers often say that no matter what happens, they are always disappointed in the finished product of their writing, but I don’t think I will be, because I have been involved.

Had I written the script, handed it over to someone and then shown up at the premiere to see it, I would be disappointed, but by having been on the set, I know why certain characters changed, certain lines altered and certain actions were added or dropped. I was there to help decide what was best. And I was there to realize that everyone, not just I, wanted this movie to be good.

I am proud of this movie and of everyone who put their time, experience and intelligence in bringing it to fruition. I would like to flatter myself that everyone who worked on this film had a good time with it. I certainly hope they did as it is the only form of payment I can offer, though they easily deserve much, much more.

A long time ago, this ceased to be my movie and became a product of a company. A company of amateurs, granted, but a company nonetheless. And if, in my professional life, I get the opportunity to participate, let alone head, another production, I would consider myself fortunate if my cast and crew were as dedicated and skilled as those of Venus on Valentine’s Day.
As this photo album is to be on display at the premiere on Valentine’s Day 2001, I cannot, with any certainty, declare proudly that this film is a success or say confidently that it is a flop. I simply do not know what the outcome will be or how this film will be received. But Alejandro and I were talking recently and though, of course, we want it to be nothing short of a campus-wide phenomenon that launches the careers of not only ourselves but of everyone involved, we realize that that is not likely or even what really matters. We have had a great time with the making of this film and, despite all the pressure we were all under, it was a good experience. Every week, I looked forward to the weekend, anxious and excited about that week’s scenes. I looked forward to seeing the people, hanging out and gathering great and hysterical quotes for my Quote Book. I learned a lot, sure, but that’s secondary. I had a good time.
It is possible that this movie will be finished, premiere and then fade into oblivion. But, then again, it is just as possible that in ten years a chain of Venus on Valentine’s Day theme restaurants could pop up all over the world, with “Birth of Venus” tablecloths, life-size Venus de Milo statues and, of course, on the dessert menu, Mars bars.

And then there are the sequels. Venus on President’s Day, Venus on Ramadan, Venus on Kwanzaa, Venus on New Year, Venus on Christmas, Venus on Saint Patrick’s Day, or the Science Fiction cultural drama, Valentine’s Day on Venus.

The possibilities have no end...

This last paragraph or so I must dedicate to the cast and crew of Venus on Valentine’s Day. All of us were, for the most part, amateurs when beginning this production and though it would be nice to think otherwise, we are amateurs still. I am indebted to each of you for your hard work, consideration and determination, as I have hopefully said too many times before in this narrative.

I firmly believe that this film will be good, regardless of how it is received by our audiences. With the resources available from all those pictured above, it can’t help but be quality work – work worth seeing. Now, of course, I am in danger here of quoting this very film, but it stands true.

Regardless of the outcome, this film has been worthwhile.
Now, just so I don’t end this photo album on that completely cheesy and melodramatic note, here is the *Venus on Valentine’s Day* edition of my Quote Book. Where necessary I have explained the story behind the quote.

“How would you dance with someone normally for god’s sake?! You’re mauling her on the dance floor.”

-Alejandro Marin 11/1/00, re: rehearsing the dreaded dancing scene

“You know, it’s so easy to dance salsa, you guys don’t even know what you’re missing.”

-Alejandro 11/1/00

“The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said you were *fine.*”

-Anne Taylor 11/12/00, re: voices in the mind and God fixing people up.

“Any words of advice?”

“When she says her name you do this snarl thing like ‘ehhh...’ – Don’t do that.”

-Natisha Anderson and Alejandro 11/12/00

“I’ve never seen a secretary who looked like that.”

“But I live in Movie Land.”

-Adam Purcell and Cassie Lambert 11/18/00, re: Cassie’s blond wig and the secretary-looking woman on the package.

“Let’s blow this haven of immortals.”

-Kathryn Gardiner 11/18/00, alternatives for the line “Let’s leave Olympus.”

“He said sexual tension – not fear and intimidation.”

-Holly Carr 11/18/00

“You can touch my tilt handle any day.”

-Alejandro 11/18/00, a terrible techie joke.
"What's the smartest thing to ever come out of a woman’s mouth?"

"...Nothing. Ha-ha-ha."

-Alejandro and Ron Rinker 11/18/00, a dirty joke altered by Ron, who was intimidated by the 3:5 man/woman ratio.

“I wonder if Einstein ever really got freaky.”

-Cassie 11/18/00

“Great minds think alike…but I bet really ignorant minds think alike, too.”

-Ron Rinker 11/19/00

“Okay. I’ll shut up.”

“Exactly.”

-Kathryn and Alejandro 11/19/00, re: intrusive producing

“Quiet on the set. Even though we aren’t using sound, we need not people to interrupt my concentration.”

-Alejandro 11/19/00

“...is the time code, Babe...Babe that I want to kill.”

-Alejandro 11/19/00, to Cassie who had arrived late that day

“Actors, you can release yourselves from the set.”

-Alejandro 11/19/00, poetic dismissal

“It was great. It reminded me of that scene in Kleptic when I sat down...”

-Alfredo Marin 11/19/00, re: Beau’s big scene of sitting down and Alfredo’s similar scene in Alejandro’s Kleptic
“How ya doin’, Alejandro?”
“Okay. I’m okay.”
-Enter Adam Purcell—
“Somebody f**king shoot me.”
- Kathryn, Alejandro and Adam 11/19/00

“Actors, do your best to…”
“Act?”
- Alejandro and Beau Danner 11/19/00

“Does the camera love him?”
“The camera hates his mother-f**king ass!”
- Kathryn and Alejandro 11/25/00, re: Aaron DeLong

“Okay, Aaron. Nothing but net.”
- Alejandro 11/25/00, re: Aaron’s repeatedly missing the tip jar with the ring

“We need to keep Beau busy.”
“Beau, suck on that cord.”
- Kathryn and Alejandro 11/25/00

“We need to figure out where Alejandro’s going to do his cameo.”
“I could be one of the lesbians.”
- Kathryn and Alejandro 11/25/00

“I want to shoot a gun.”
“…Beau, leave.”
- Beau and Alejandro 11/25/00

“Hey, how ‘bout you doing?”
- Kathryn 11/25/00 to Jina, meaning to ask “How are you doing?”
"No it took one day."

-Beau 11/25/00, if said quickly it sounds like a foreign language

"I couldn’t get these pants off if I tried...they’re my chastity pants."

-Beau 11/25/00, re: his many-buttoned Mars pants

"’Cause you’re there...it’s a little bit like Mt. Everest."

-Kathryn 11/25/00, to Alejandro when asked why she bumped into him

"Only when I talk about your venereal deeses, baby."

"You make it sound sexy."

-Beau and Cassie 11/25/00, playing with Beau’s oft-flubbed line

"Do it for Jesus – and Adam."

-Adam 11/26/00 11/26/00, re: the one last take before Adam had to leave

"Get the f**k out of frame."

-Ron 11/26/00, re: Mars’ inner thoughts as he shoves Venus out of frame

"All right, ready – React!"

-Alejandro 11/26/00, directing

"Is there carbon dioxide in here or something?"

-Beau 11/26/00, re: Natisha and David “passed out” on the floor

"I can’t go any slower – I’ll be on pause."

-Beau 11/26/00, said in a British accent

"Ambience."

"Nooooo!!"

-Cassie and Alejandro 11/26/00, after a 15-take complex dolly shot, an unwanted reminder to record ambient sound.
“My blonde bitch role.”
- Cassie 11/26/00, re: playing the “Blonde Woman.”

“Did you call me Chooch?”
- Alejandro “Cheech” 11/19/00, to Alfredo

“This is an A cup trash bag.”
- Holly 11/30/00, re: wearing a trash bag

“Adam, point that toward me. I want to hear myself think.”
- Alejandro 12/1/00, re: the boom mic he was monitoring through head phones

“I’m going to put my hand in this elephant over here.”
- Alejandro 12/1/00, in the cold, misheard?

“Waiting for horrendous truck noise.”
- Alejandro 12/1/00, re: the constant sound troubles downtown

“Hey, this is fun and functional.”
- Kathryn 12/1/00, speaking for Beau who kept his hands warm by putting them in his pants

“Oh, my god! These aren’t black at all!”
- Beau 12/10/00, re: his navy blue socks

“So, I can make turkey pot pie appear out of nowhere, but I can’t [open a door without touching it]?”
- Beau 12/10/00, re: the uselessness and oft-debated limitations of Mars’ powers
Our wrap party was plagued by one of the first real snows of the season, but, though a quiet affair, we had a good time saying good bye to Olympus officially. At this party, Alejandro gave our Christmas gifts to the cast and to Jarrod Bean. The gifts were inexpensive, but came with a personal story, as follows.

To Aaron DeLong, our Lonely Man, we gave a package of bubble bath that came with a sponge basketball and a plastic hoop. This was, we said, for the man who couldn’t seem to get that ring into the tip jar. Now, he could relax and practice his hook shot.

To Jina Koffi, our Bartender, we gave the Bartender’s tool, which included a corkscrew, a bottle opener and, for good measure, a knife. We figured a bartender should always be prepared to open a drink or defend herself, or both.

To Anette Schindler, our Moon Girl, we gave a pair of thick, warm socks with little United States flags on them. Anette commented that Germany was not as cold as the temperatures to which we subjected her, so, with her socks, she can keep her feet warm and remember the intense cold of downtown Muncie.

To Chad Muller, our Moon Boy, we gave the Klutz book of Juggling. We had a good laugh over Moon Boy’s actions. He walks along, runs into Venus and then, not twenty feet away, he bumps into Moon Girl. The boy is a klutz. Also, Chad doubled as our editor and composer, hence the need to learn how to juggle.

To Natisha Anderson, our Ali, we gave a pretty lighter and a set of fake tattoos. Natisha, a non-smoker, always had to borrow a lighter from someone on the set. More often than not, the lighter would not work, so we got her one that would.

To Beau Christian Danner, our Mars, we got the book Why Do Clocks Run Clockwise and other Imponderables. Always on the set Beau was “fascinated” by something and he was always asking question. We hoped this book would answer some of those questions before they were asked.

To David Thrasher, our Paul, we gave a small bottle of Jack Daniels. For one day of filming, David came to the set, got into costume and make-up, and then his scene was postponed to a later date. He got ready for nothing. I felt so bad that I promised him whatever he wanted for his next weekend. He requested either Jack Daniels or Double Stuffed Oreos. He got Oreos. But we eventually came through with the Jack Daniels.

To Holly Carr, our Venus, we gave an umbrella bearing the image of Botticelli’s “Birth of Venus.” As I said when giving it to her, “To our Venus who braved the rain, a Venus who will do the same.”

And to Jarrod Bean, the owner of Olympus, we gave a small 4 inch version of the Venus de Milo statue, a travel size version of the statue he and we like so much.
Diary of a Novice Producer

An Honors Thesis

by

Kathryn S. Gardiner

Nancy Carlson
Advisor

Advisor’s signature

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

15 April 2001

Graduation
5 May 2001
Abstract

This diary chronicles the production of a locally produced short film, *Venus on Valentine's Day*, which was developed from beginning to end by Ball State University students. While the video copy of the film itself stands as the product, the main focus is the work that created it. Included as bonus information are copies of standard film set paper work, as well as newspaper clippings about the film and pages and revisions torn from the original script. The whole thesis piece shows the hard work, dedication, professionalism, talent and time that a group of college students put into a field they love and a project they admired.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are necessary, more than I have room to write. I would like to express my appreciation to David Letterman, whose scholarship through the Telecommunications Department made the funding of *Venus on Valentine's Day* possible. I would also like to thank Nancy Carlson, my advisor, for being my professor, mentor, and friend. The cast and crew of *Venus* have my hearty appreciation and admiration for all of their time and talent, most notably the director, Alejandro Marin, who I hope felt the movie was just as much his as mine. Most of all, I would like to acknowledge my parents, without whom I never could have attempted any of this. When I was young, I was a loud, outspoken little girl. They never attempted to unduly quiet me or temper my opinions, but instead taught me how to express them properly. It is because of that detail that I have chosen this profession and have found such passion and happiness in expressing my opinions through screenwriting.
VENUS
I do solemnly swear to love you
until I don't.

They kiss. Venus pulls back, meeting Mars' eyes. Moon Girl and Moon Boy near them. Venus turns, smiling at them.

VENUS
Happy Valentine's Day.

MOON GIRL
Thank you.

A contented smile on her lips and Mars by her side, Venus walks down the street. As she moves, she kicks a puddle, sending the water arcing into the air, glittering like airborne jewels.

FADE TO BLACK

THE SHORT-LIVED ALTERNATE ENDING.
VENUS
I do solemnly swear to love you until I don’t.

MARS
See you in another twenty-six years, Venus.

He shrugs his coat tighter around his shoulders and turns down an ALLEYWAY. Venus watches him, then kicks a PUDDLE, sending the water arching into the air, glimmering like airborne jewels. The young couple passes her. Venus smiles at them.

VENUS
Happy Valentine’s Day.

MOON GIRL
Thank you.

A contented smile on her lips, Venus walks down the street.

FADE TO BLACK

REWRITE ENDING TO HAVE WALK FROM V. PASSING MOON GIRL & BOY. AFTER PASSING THEM, HE TURNS WATCHING V. V SMILES AT THE COUPLE AS THEY WALK BY.

V

HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY.

MOON GIRL

THANK YOU.

CONTENTED, V WATCHES THE COUPLE WALK AWAY. THINKING A MOMENT, SHE TURNS, HER EYES MEETING MARS’. HE SMILES AND CONTINUES ON HIS WAY, SHRUGGIMG HIS COAT TIGHTER AROUND HIS SHOULDERS, AN UNCONTAINABLE SMILE ON HER LIPS, VENUS LOOKS DOWN, NOTICING A POOL OF WATER AT HER FEET. SHE KICKS THE PUDDLE, SENDING THE WATER ARCHING INTO THE AIR, GLIMMERING LIKE AIRBORNE JEWELS.
### Breakdown Sheet

**VENUS ON VALENTINE'S DAY**

**I/E:** INT  
**Set:** Olympus - Lower Level  
**D/N:** Night

---

**Scenes:** 7  
**Pages:** 6/8

---

**Synopsis:** Mars and Venus dance

**Location:** Club Olympus

---

**Sequence:**  
**Script Day:**  
**Script Page:** 4

---

**Cast Members**

1. Venus  
2. Mars  
5. Bartender  
8. Lonely Man

**Extras**

- five people in alcove
- two women dancing

**Props**

- beer for Lonely Man  
- glass of water

**Set Dressing**

- sparsely decorated for Valentine's Day

**Special Equipment**

- dolly track

---

**SAMPLE BREAKDOWN SHEET**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY/DATE</th>
<th>SET/SCENES</th>
<th>CAST/ATMOS</th>
<th>STAGE/LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>INT. OLYMPUS (N)</strong></td>
<td><strong>#1 - VENUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLUB OLYMPUS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>cont’d</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCENE 2</td>
<td>EXTRAS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>5 PEOPLE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ SCENE 2 - Venus enters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**END OF DAY THREE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY/DATE</th>
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<th>CAST/ATMOS</th>
<th>STAGE/LOCATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ <strong>DAY 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>INT. OLYMPUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>#1 - VENUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLUB OLYMPUS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SATURDAY</strong></td>
<td><strong>UPPER LEVEL (D)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11/00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6/8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ SCENE 2A - Venus enters club.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCENE 12A - Mars' POV of Bartender downstairs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INT. OLYMPUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>#1 - VENUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>#5 - BARTENDER</strong></td>
<td><strong>PROPS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOWER LEVEL (D)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>STOOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCENE 4A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4/8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Venus philosophizes with Bartender - no Mars.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**END OF FOURTH DAY**
**SHOOT DAY** 8

**CALL SHEET**

**SHOOTING CALL**

**UNIT**

**PICTURE**

**VENUS ON VALENTINE'S DAY**

**W CALL** 7:30 am

**SHOOT CALL** 9:00 am

**DATE** Sat, Nov 25, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGES SET DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>SC. NO.</th>
<th>D/M</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INT Club Olympus - Lower Level</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Club Olympus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT Olympus - Lower Level</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Club Olympus</td>
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<tr>
<td>INT Olympus - Lower Level</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Club Olympus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT Olympus - Upper Level</td>
<td>10a</td>
<td>Night</td>
<td>Club Olympus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONDITIONS:**

**CAST CHARACTER**

1. Holly Carr - Venus
2. Beau Danner - Mars
   - Jorjina Koffi - Bartender
   - Aaron DeLong - Lonely Man

**HAIRDRESSING**

8:00 am

**MAKEUP**

8:00 am

**ON SET**

8:30 am

**COVER SET:**

**ATMOSPHERE AND STAND-INS**

**THRU GATE**

**REPORT TO**

**READY ON SET**

**Blonde Woman**

**Drunken Men**

five people at tables

five people in alcove

two women dancing

**TOTAL EXTRAS:** 5

**SOUND**

- DOOR OPENING U.PSTAIRS
- CHAIRS AGAINST FLOOR
- OPTICAL FX
- FLICKER OF RED ON MARS

**PROPS**

- BEER FOR LONELY MAN
- GLASS OF WATER
- GOLD RING

**HAIR + COSTUME**

- Sc. 9 - VENUS' HAIR + JEANS DAMP
- Sc. 5 - " " " WET
- Sc. 4 - " " " WET
BSU senior's adaptation of short story to have public premiere tonight in the Student Center

Student to showcase her 'Valentine'

BY ROBERT LOPEZ

Senior telecommunications major Kathryn Gardiner has nothing to say that cannot be said in a romantic film.

In the adaptation of her short story "Venus on Valentine's Day," which makes its public premiere tonight in the Student Center, she tells a fable about the fleeting nature of human relationships.

Gardiner describes herself as a lifelong movie buff who has always had an interest in writing. She has a creative writing and humanities minor but dropped those and took a variety of other classes to create an unofficial minor that she dubbs screenwriting.

"I've always loved movies, and I've always been a writer," she said. "I wanted to be in the movies and I wanted to write in relation to movies, and I guess that screenwriting kind of combined the two."

She began, as a sophomore, by adapting Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" in a draft she said was terrible, then re-wrote it, setting it in modern-day Los Angeles. The final draft earned her the David Letterman Telecommunications scholarship.

Gardiner originally wrote "Venus on Valentine's Day" as a short story last year for a creative writing class. When she got her assignment back, the professor had read her script and had some good comments on it," Marin said. "She had seen some of my previous work, and she took a liking to what I had to say, so she approached me in one of my classes and asked if I wanted to do it."

As explained by Gardiner, "Venus on Valentine's Day," centers on Venus (played by senior elementary education major Holly Carr), the Greek goddess of love, alone in a bar on Valentine's Day, where she runs into the Greek god of war Mars (played by junior theater major Beau Christian Danner).

Venus has been on Earth too long and has become disillusioned about her profession and the state of modern-day relationships as a whole. Mars tries to bring things into focus in his own way. He's cavalier and aggressive but not callous. He sees things the way they are but doesn't necessarily let them get to him.

"The way Venus sees it is you read all these cards and signs on Valentine's Day that say things like 'Yours Truly' and 'I'll Love You Forever,' and you think that is such a ridiculous premise because they're such cliches," Gardiner said. "You say these things to people and then break up with them two weeks later."

"She (Venus) used to be the final word in everybody's relationships," Carr said. "But now she feels a little out of control, because of the terrible things that are happening in relationships."

Pre-production took place throughout the summer of 2000, with auditions for cast and crew being held in August. Rehearsal was in October and principal photography lasted through November and December.

Roughly 16 cast and crew were involved working primarily on weekends to work around the school week. Gardiner stayed on the project as producer, to take care of managerial duties and to retain a degree of control of the material.

Most of the film was shot at nightclub Olympos in the mornings and afternoons when the place was closed. Crews sometimes worked up to 16 hours a day and on average worked roughly 25 hours a week on the film.

The production was able to keep costs low by borrowing equipment from the WIP studios and using high-quality digital video, as opposed to high-priced film reels. Gardiner's parents covered much of the $2,000 expense it took to make the movie.

"Since the (Letterman) scholarship was paying for my tuition, my parents were paying for the film," she said. "They were considering it an investment in my future and at under $2,000, it was a bargain compared to what tuition usually is."

Gardiner plans on submitting the film to Ball State's Frog Baby Film Festival in the screen and distributing to other film festivals as well as on the Internet later in the year. Even though it wasn't originally intended as coursework, Gardiner and Marin also plan to submit the film for school credit as a senior thesis project and a practicum, respectively.

"Venus on Valentine's Day" will begin at 8 p.m. in the Student Center Ballroom and will run roughly 25 minutes. Admission is free and all are welcome to attend.
Monday, February 19th, 2001
8:00 PM
Student Center Ballroom
FREE ADMISSION
'Venus' provides treat for lonely hearts

BY ROBERT LOPEZ
CHIEF REPORTER

Venus and Mars walk into a bar on Valentine's Day, and engage in a philosophical discussion of love and war. That is the interesting premise behind the student film "Venus on Valentine's Day," which premiered Monday night in the Student Center Ballroom.

Written and produced by senior telecommunications major Kathryn Gardiner and directed by senior telecommunications major Alejandro Marin, "Venus on Valentine's Day" is a fable exploring what Venus, the Greek goddess of love, would feel toward Valentine's Day and today's cynical perception of love and jaded soul searching.

Due to a technical error in the sound dubbing, the film was roughly 20 minutes later in arriving, but Gardiner held the audience in a question and answer session until Marin arrived with the final product.

The film opens with paper hearts raining slowly and turning into a heavy downpour. The hearts soak a shadowy figure walking through the dark city streets.

A montage of Renaissance-style nudes, drifting to the sound of Frankie Avalon's "Venus" follows. A forlorn face comes into view, and it is Venus. She seeks shelter inside a nightclub vibrant with color, booming music, drunken dancers and her divine acquaintance, the Greek god of war, Mars, played smugly by junior Beau Christian Danner.

Gardiner's script balances a delicate light-hearted tone, like that in a romantic film, with world-weary characters and philosophy, like that in an Ang Lee film.

Senior Holly Carr portrays Venus as a cynical figure, disillusioned with the state of modern-day relationships and the concept of love. She remembers the time when she could wave her hand and create love between two people in an arranged marriage.

She laments that her job has gotten difficult in an age when romantics are obsessed with finding the right person, but often obtain only an idealization of their desires.

"Some people who deserve love don't have it," she says at one point. "Some people who have it are undeserving of it."

In the nightclub, her clairvoyance is suggested in a series of quick cuts, as she looks over to lovers and senses their troubles and their needs. Secondary characters walk in and out of her sphere of influence and in a split-second the gravity of their relationships flash by.

The production values on the film are high. Gardiner remarked in an earlier interview that director Marin was a perfectionist and it shows — especially in the visual style.

The scenes in the club are similar in execution to some of the wilder moments in the film "Go."

The scenes are rapidly edited, colorful and the characters speak in quick, but meaningful, bursts of dialogue. The street scenes are damp and chilly, but create a friendly, almost affectionate ambience, and the city lights shine down like garish apparitions.

An intimate relationship is suggested between Mars and Venus. Like the opposites that they are, they attract. Danner plays Mars as a smug, self-assured, but alluring being. His job involves finding two entities, whether they be individuals or nations, and sending them into conflict. He remains assured in a world where there is a constant battle to be fought.

Carr and Danner put up no fronts and hit it off with the confidence of two people who have had a love/hate relationship. Carr is subdued as the melancholy Venus. Her appearance in the film is plain, but when she speaks an ageless philosophy about love comes through.

Danner is the finest performer in the film, dripping with chauvinism as Mars, but never cruel. He's like the miscreant, whose very appearance begs for the audience's affection, simply because he is so suave. Venus is intelligent enough to rebuff his advances, but falls for his charm, even if only through the statement of "I do solemnly swear to love you until I don't."

"Venus on Valentine's Day" is a film for the lonely hearts on Valentine's Day. It is cynical but not angry. Ultimately the overwhelming emotion is that of sympathy in the hope that those lonely hearts will one day find their soul mates. It's rare, but it does occasionally happen.
FIFTH ANNUAL FROG BABY FILM FESTIVAL

FSU presence felt at Frog Baby

BY ROBERT LOPEZ
CHIEF REPORTER

Florida State upstaged Ball State this weekend.

Fifteen films were screened at the Frog Baby Film Festival on Saturday: 10 from Ball State, four from Florida State University and one from Notre Dame. Even though Ball State had more films in competition, they were exceeded in quality by the Floridians, but both programs had some gems to offer.

The festival opened with the philosophical fable "Venus on Valentine's Day" by Ball State seniors Kathryn Gardiner and Alejandro Marin, and it culminated three hours later with an awards presentation.

Films were judged on cinematography, editing, lighting, originality, sound and story. Plaques were handed out for Best Documentary, Best Experimental/Animation, Best Narrative and Best of Ball State.

The Best Documentary award went to "disABLEd" from Florida State. A slice of life piece, the film provides a fascinating examination into the day-to-day operations of a biker who lost both of her arms in a motorcycle accident.

She uses her feet for everything from washing dishes to driving a car and even painting. The film is a feel good piece, because the woman and the people around her feel good about who she is. There are a few moments of bitterness, but she's not afraid to have a laugh, and she insists on tailoring her abilities for the world.

The Best Narrative winner, "Lector," from Florida State's Greg Marcks depicts the old giving way to new. Filmed appropriately through a sepia-toned tobacco haze, the film takes place in Ybor City, Fla., in 1924 where, every day, a lector sits at the head of a cigar factory, reading news, sports and the great works of literature to workers rolling tobacco leaves.

When the workers obtain a radio for the factory, it doesn't take long for his skills to become obsolete. The tragedy is that it's not his fault and it's not necessarily the workers' fault, but rather the blame can be leveled on the grinding forces of progress.

Ball State came through in the Experimental/Animation category, taking the award with junior Noah Zondor's "Irrelevance," a small dosage of chaos theory. The film is made up of several different scenarios each involving the same characters: a mysterious man sitting on the side of the road and a scared woman who walked by.

Each time he flips a quarter, which is a catalyst for the life's game of chance, it sparks a slight difference in the way things turn out. The film also won the award for Best of Ball State.

Many of the films from Ball State were experiments in video art or computer animation, and though they were interesting, many had little to say.

The films from Florida were all like professionally made movies, whose plots had a coherent beginning, middle and end and made a statement, whether it was about war or asthma. Of course they also benefited from the gloss of filming on actual celluloid, but that's an advantage having to do more with resources than talent.

Top-notch materials aren't needed to make an enjoyable meaningful vignette. An example would be "Venus on Valentine's Day," a very well-made movie, filmed on digital video, that benefits from a strong script, an interesting premise (the gods of love and war meet in a bar on Valentine's Day) and sharp dialogue that ponders the gravity of modern day relationships and force the viewer to do so as well.

Ball State filmmakers do have the potential to make professional caliber films, and they have done so in the past. They just need to make more and create a tradition.

Awards

- BEST DOCUMENTARY
  - "disABLEd"
  - Florida State
- BEST NARRATIVE
  - "Lector"
  - By: Greg Marcks
  - Florida State
- BEST EXPERIMENTAL
  - "Irrelevance"
  - By: Noah Zondor
  - Ball State
- BEST OF BALL STATE
  - "Irrelevance"
  - By: Noah Zondor
  - Ball State

All of the festival's films will be aired on WCRH-TV Channel 57 tonight at 8:30 p.m., Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. and Thursday at 10:30 p.m.