

# PACIFIC TIES

asian american & pacific islander newsmagazine at ucla

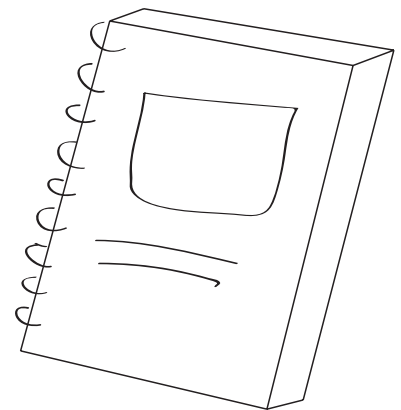
the story issue | spring 2011

volume 33 issue 3

**What's**

**your**

**story?**



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

You have no idea how much I appreciate you! This is my last issue as editor-in-chief of Pacific Ties. It was a wonderful journey for me—a great obstacle too. It's time to pass the torch to Ashley Truong, who will do a greater job with the newsmagazine.

The issue's theme "story" sounds pretty ambiguous. At first, I wanted to end this school year with a feature on how the Asian American and Pacific Islander community use media to tell their problems, their culture, their lives. After all, Pacific Ties is a part of all of it. When stories came in, however, they weren't all media-related. I actually like the way it turned out though. Our writers delved more into their subjects.

This is our mini issue. It has stories of UCLA alumni who have good news! They are creative, successful, and they enjoy what they do. So for those graduating seniors, keep your head up and keep in touch with Pacific Ties. Share us your stories!

Stephanie Aguilar  
*Editor-in-Chief*

*P.S.* So why didn't we print? Money. It costs a lot to print. I do hope you visit our website more often, a fantastic component of the newsmagazine with upcoming video coverages, slideshows, bloggers, more updates, etc.

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“Seven years later, she is the

# SCOOTABAKER



By Deanna Tran

Life wasn't always like this for Heather. At 19 years old, she worked at a small investment firm in New York on Madison Avenue on the 18th floor of a building overlooking Central Park.

Feeling that investment was not her niche and wishing to do art, she left New York to finish her schooling. She attended Santa Monica College and transferred as a third year to UCLA where she graduated with an Anthropology major and Global Studies minor. During her studies, she worked full-time as a project manager in Hollywood, managing 11 different buildings. With her Global Studies minor, she also traveled in Paris for the summer. She graduated as a member of the Class of 2009 when she was 26 years old.

Seven years later, she is the Scootabaker.

Her entry in the baking world was not a love of cooking and baking as a child. During her senior year at UCLA, she quit her job in Property Management and started working at a bakery in Studio City known as the Big Sugar Bakeshop. With the direction and guidance of the bakers at the Big Sugar Bakeshop, she gained her current knowledge of baking without the need for culinary school. She eventually began running the kitchen on weekends and started a baking blog that garnered approximately 200 hits each day.

With encouragement from friends and family, she began the catering and delivery service known as the Scootabaker. Her main challenge was money. Working full time while

trying to build up her brand, much labor was put into the start of her business.

“I knew that it could be something big because of the response I was getting, and I had to put everything I could into the company like getting up early and going to sleep late, and just Promote, Promote, Promote Bake. It's hard labor baking but I don't really want to hand the gauntlet over to anyone else because I am so particular about the way I have my things created,” said Heather.

The success of the business is attributed to a series of factors. Social media and the social network has been her friend as Twitter, Facebook, blogging, and word of mouth have become her main sources of promotion. Without much promotion, the business “grew organically,” said Wong.

Her use of the scooter has garnered a huge amount of attention. The catchy name and the use of an environmentally friendly scooter have resulted in an interesting brand that stays in the minds of people. This name was not the brilliant idea of a publicity firm, but was actually developed by her fiancé. She hopes to “maintain a sustainable lifestyle with scooters – traveling green.” The nature of her business is also something she claims to be resistant to economic downturns. “Everybody needs sweets. It's kind of recession-proof,” said Wong.

She also claims a factor that differentiates her business from other bakeries is the taste. Although her baked goods have an aesthetic appeal, the taste is the first and foremost factor. It demonstrates the quality of her ingredients, and the research and development she has put into improving her baked goods.

As a catering and delivery service, the Scootabaker is contacted through e-mail inquiries and a separate phone line. There is usually a 24 hour notice for deliveries. She delivers to restaurants, local markets, cafes, and customers. She has also catered for weddings, which she claims to be a favorite experience. Three to five orders are normally received per day. A single order can be comprised of 200 cupcakes. Mini cupcakes cost \$1.50, and a cupcake can cost \$2.50-\$3.00. She bakes 50 to 400 cupcakes daily, as well as numerous other baked goods. All of the baked goods are all-natural. The menu also includes vegan and organic options, cakes, cookies, mini pies, tarts, whoopee pies, pie pops, and mini meringues.

The baking magic takes place at a certified, insured, and up-to-health-code commercial kitchen in Hollywood. Her employees are essentially her friends: two bakers, a creative director, and an events promoter.

The business has been established for approximately two years. Their delivery service has appealed to many customers, and the necessity of opening a bakery has not been brought up. Business plans for the future do include a storefront that is part bakery, part scooter museum, and a franchise although she enjoys the familial and local aspect of her current business.

“Don't limit yourself to one thing ... Try everything out. Be open to changes in the future because anything could happen,” advises Wong to UCLA students.

“Don’t limit yourself to one thing ... Try everything out. Be open to changes in the future because anything could happen,” advises Wong to UCLA students.



1. Photo courtesy of Heather Wong. Scootabaker team at event Unique LA in December 2010. Heather Wong is second from the left.

2. Photo courtesy of Deanna Tran. Wong on her yellow Vespa.

3. Photo courtesy of Heather Wong.

4. Photo courtesy of Heather Wong. Wong sculpts icing around cake.

Photos courtesy of  
Jason Kirshner

# Father's concerns lead to a profitable venture

By Stephanie Aguilar







**U**CLA alumnus Roger Lin is sitting on something good, and it's good for our posture.

Lin, who also holds an MBA from USC, is the C.E.O. of Posture in Style.

When he noticed his daughter, a 3-year-old at the time, hunched over the table with her legs dangled from her seat, he became concerned about her posture.

"If she's going to do that for the next—I don't know how long—it's not good. There has to be a solution out there."

So he searched through countless stores and websites until he discovered Moll, a German company specializing in ergonomic furniture since the 1920s.

"I fell in love with the table by just looking at the webpages," Lin said, referring to the furniture's features and design.

After 6 months of directly working with the company and finding a way to import the furniture, it finally arrived.

"[That experience] was painful. I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for my daughter," Lin explained.

Lin was satisfied with the workmanship and easy installation. The table can tilt, encouraging a child to sit comfortably in a 60-degree angle while reading, writing, drawing, etc. The table itself can be raised or lowered at any time, "growing" with the child. The chair can be adjusted the same way, including frontwards and backwards. The furniture is also customizable in 6 different colors.

After being acquainted with the furniture, Lin took one step further. He proposed to Moll the prospect of distributing their furniture in the U.S. Having run a company that imported seafood, Lin has expertise in importing goods. From several phone calls and e-mails, a representative met with him and finalized the plan.

Posture in Style opened in March 2010 as the exclusive distributor of Moll furniture in the United States.

Due to its design and longevity, the price of these furniture may be too steep for families on a tight budget. Customers of Posture in Style, however, see Moll furniture as a good investment. However, Diana Lee, a customer of Posture in Style, finds it as a good investment.

"If you're looking for furniture for your kids," said Diana Lee, a mother and happy customer, "the last thing you want to do is buy every other three years. My son grows so fast that if I actually went for a normal typical furniture, I would have had to replace it already."

Despite a weak economy, Posture in Style has been doing well. Lin explained that parents are placing their children's health and well-being miles a head of budget concerns. This is a key concept in Roger Lin's vision, where parents think about ergonomics without hesitation, associating it with Posture in Style and Moll.

# DU O N N A

By Pao Carol Lee

Photos courtesy of Donna Du

Can you remember the last video you saw? Whether it was Alexandra Wallace's viral rant or Rebecca Black's disastrous "Friday," chances are you used YouTube. By providing the canvas for self-expression, YouTube has become the "go-to" website for anyone with Internet access and a video camera to showcase their unique abilities and ideas. Popular videos lead to fame among the online community and even to stardom beyond the Internet world (the most recent example being teenage heartthrob, Justin Bieber). With the range of talent here at UCLA, we, of course, have a few online "celebrities" of our own.

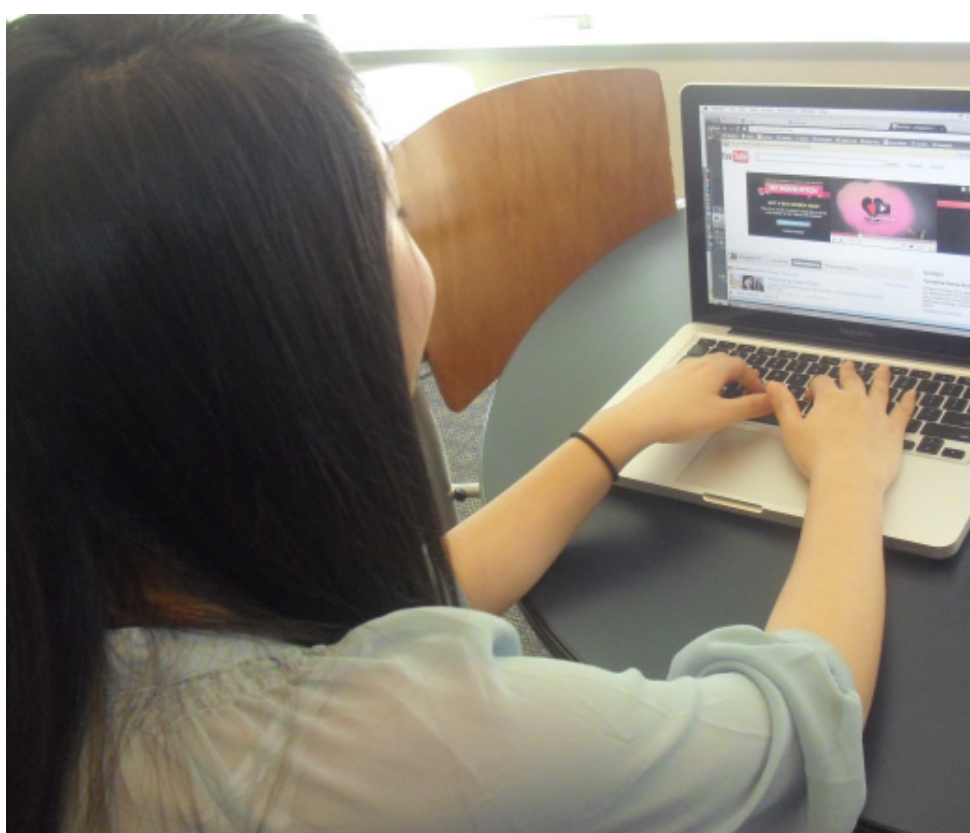
Meet first-year Donna Du, whose major is currently undeclared, but who is developing an interest in business economics and accounting. Aside from the demands of schoolwork, practicing her ukulele, and writing a musical, Du posts new videos to her singing channel on YouTube under the username pinkgreen111. It all started rather unintentionally three years ago when Du posted a video of herself singing a Taylor Swift song, accompanied by her guitar. The video unexpectedly grew in popularity, and Du found herself with an audience and a new fan base. Since then, Du has been regularly posting covers of predominately mainstream music, though she has composed a few original songs. When asked how she composes songs and writes the lyrics, Du responds, "Usually, I have to be inspired to write a song. The chorus comes up in my mind first or I start just messing with the guitar and then I just work my way backwards." Not only does she do all the composing, writing, and singing, Du also edits every video and plays the piano, violin, guitar, and ukulele. She's a one-woman show, and enjoys every aspect of it.

When it comes to achieving instant fame and being "discovered," it seems YouTube is the way to go. However, the reality of it all is much more complicated; it requires intense effort and talent to be discovered and signed by a record label. Most musicians on YouTube constantly hope and dream for a record deal and mainstream fame.

Surprisingly, Du wants neither. Apprehensive about the restrictions and limitations of having a record deal, she wants her YouTube channel to remain a hobby. "I just really want [...] people to like my original songs. Yeah, it'd be cool to get signed but I'm scared it might take away from my wanting to write music for fun," says Du. Ultimately content with producing original songs and singing covers, Du has a strong sense of who she wants to be as a singer/song-writer.

Apart from her YouTube channel, Du also performs in San Diego's Vietnamese Tet Festival and in the state university's cultural night. With such a supportive community, it's no wonder Du has well over a thousand subscribers on Youtube! The range of talent here at UCLA is also a beneficial influence—Du says, "I meet a lot of people here who are real talents... They teach me and I teach them." Du is pushing forward with her hobby at her own pace and says we can expect to see more medleys, more ukulele covers, and perhaps an upcoming collaboration duet on her channel in the near future.

Despite her own hesitant attitude toward fame, Du still wishes for other members of the API community to edge their way into mainstream music media. "Honestly, it's like Asians dominate on YouTube. I mean, we have great videos, but for some reason... I feel like it's so hard for Asians to be famous in America." Fortunately, events like Kollaboration work toward "empowerment through entertainment," an idea that Du whole-heartedly supports. "Yes, I would participate in Kollaboration if asked," says Du. The scene of media (music, film, comedy, etc.) looks promising, with a few of our alumni already in the spotlight. Just to name a few, comedy group Just Kidding Films is approaching a quarter of a million subscribers, while YouTube musicians and UCLA graduates Jason Chen and Chester See are now selling their hit singles on iTunes. Perhaps Donna Du will join the ranks of her fellow celebrity Bruins, but for now she is simply enjoying her first year of college life, content with making music as a hobby. Only time will tell.





## FUN FACTS about Donna Du

Favorite genre: alternative rock

Her genre: slight pop, acoustic folk

Favorite original song: "Stumbled"

Favorite personal cover: Bruno Mars' "Marry You"

Hometown: San Diego

Cultural background: Vietnamese (born in Vietnam)

Influences: Maroon 5, OneRepublic, Marie Digby (YouTuber)

Her original song "Stumbled" is available for download!





# Documenting our community

By Ashley Truong



Photos courtesy of Christopher Woon



What do Hmong b-boys and first-generation Japanese immigrants have in common? Not much, unless they're both subjects of documentaries.

UCLA alumnus Christopher Woon's feature documentary *Among B-Boys* is a look at the world of break dancing through the eyes of Hmong youth from California's Central Valley. The documentary is an expansion of Woon's 2004 short film, which he produced with the Armed with a Camera Fellowship. The Fellowship is part of Visual Communications, the longest running community-based arts organization for Asian American and Pacific Island media.

Visual Communications, located in Los Angeles, was founded in 1970 by UCLA professor Robert A. Nakamura. Nakamura, who began his career as a photojournalist, turned to documentary-making during the 1960s civil rights movement as a form of social change. Nakamura says, "Part of the movement [was

the idea of] creating community. Another idea was serving community... We kind of adapted that to say, 'Let's use media to serve the community.'" Noticing the dearth of archived information about the Asian American community's history, Nakamura began to gather his own information, in order to create and preserve that history.

According to Nakamura, there are three principle things documentarians need to do in order to serve the community: document, preserve, and present. Many stereotypes about Asian Americans are based on what they look like, so profiling the community visually is necessary to refute those stereotypes. Unfortunately, the Asian American community--and most communities of color--are not documented, and the information disappears. That's why Nakamura turned to making documentaries, and why he founded Visual Communications. "If no one else is [documenting the Asian American community] we need

to do it ourselves."

Nakamura founded the EthnoCommunications the history of various et EthnoCommunications year, and students watch techniques to produce t a third-year political sci class, sees documentar the stories of communit remained forgotten. "[I make films that are both he said. Documentaries which followed the strug community in New Orle helped Huynh and his c for community organiza

For Christopher Woon,





UCLA Center for  
 as a way to document  
 ethnic communities. The  
 class spans the entire school  
 with documentaries and learn the  
 their own films. Dieu Huyhn,  
 a former major and student in the  
 program, sees it as an opportunity to tell  
 stories that would have otherwise  
 been unheard. [He learned that] it was possible to  
 make an entertaining and educational,  
 film such as A Village in Versailles,  
 which struggles of the Vietnamese  
 soldiers after Hurricane Katrina,  
 and his classmates recognize the need  
 for this kind of education.

an alumnus of the

EthnoCommunications class, producing and directing  
 Among B-Boys was a way to document the story  
 of Hmong b-boys. But it was also an attempt to  
 understand and justify his own involvement in hip  
 hop, a movement seen as primarily African American  
 to mainstream America. Woon heard about crews  
 of Hmong b-boys in the Central Valley area from his  
 roommates, and became interested in why they were  
 involved with the hip hop movement.

“Maybe that could answer for me ‘Why do I like it?’” he  
 said.

Visibility for Asian American b-boys has been  
 increasing, Woon said, and this visibility has helped  
 challenge stereotypes about the Asian American  
 community. For many of the Hmong b-boys in Woon’s  
 documentary, however, it is still difficult justifying their  
 involvement in hip hop to their family. Many of their  
 parents push education as a means of success, and

associate breakdancing with gang culture. But Woon  
 thinks that making and presenting Among B-Boys is a  
 way for these parents to see break dancing differently,  
 and for Hmong youth to validate their involvement in it.  
 Ultimately, for Woon, as for Nakamura, making  
 documentaries is about the community and social  
 change. Although the seven years it took to make  
 Among B-Boys were often challenging, Woon was  
 encouraged by the b-boys in his documentary to  
 continue because they felt that it was important for  
 themselves and their families. “It’s sharing stories,”  
 Woon said. “There’s something about sharing stories...  
 that connects people. It builds a sense of community.  
 It doesn’t necessarily have to have a political drive to  
 it.” For Woon and for Nakamura, building community is  
 important because it allows people to feel a resonance  
 with strangers’ stories, and to create a sense of  
 solidarity.





Photo courtesy of Adam Rose

# The past and future of the classic film

By: Ray Luo

**T**urner Classic Movies' second annual Classic Film Festival is a movie-lover's dream come true, and Asian American viewers and talent are taking notice.

Classic Film Festival is a celebration of newly restored Hollywood and foreign classics, complete with discussions with filmmakers and performers who can illuminate the times and situations surrounding the creation of various featured films. On Friday, April 29, Kirk Douglas was in person to talk with host Robert Osborne about the production of "Spartacus."

Clips from Douglas's One-Man Show were shown on the big screen. In that clip, the older Kirk Douglas tells the younger Kirk Douglas to go away when it is revealed that he is just too haughty. Douglas and Osborne were a delight for all, including a sizeable crowd of Asian and Asian American viewers.

"The presence of movie directors and moviemakers gave us a great insight into the [the ways movies are made], from the original idea to the final product," said Ting Liu, an exchange student from Hong Kong at UCLA who attended the film fest for the first time. "It was a delight to see some of the great works in the movie [genre] for the first time."

Liu and the audience were sent into riotous laughter following a description of a the scene in "Goldfinger." In particular, Meskin's retelling of the moment where, feeling the need for "man talk" with Felix Leiter, his British colleague, Sean Connery slaps the buttock of a lady with whom he was intimate.

Liu referred to one of the moviemakers Warren Beatty, whose conversation with Alec Baldwin was one of the highlights of the festival. During that discussion following a showing of the very long film, "Reds," Beatty joked that he only

agreed to participate because Baldwin had agreed to star in Beatty's next film; a four hour and twenty-five minute vehicle with two characters, both played by Baldwin, who was to work without pay.

One of the most insightful topics to come up during the conversation is the nature of directing oneself when one is also the lead performer in a film.

"It can't be done," said Beatty, the 1981 Academy Award-winning director of Reds; a film about Communist activist and journalist John Silas "Jack" Reed. "Because the job is to be out of control, as an actor, but the job of the director is to be in control. A little bit out of control of [being] in control because you want to go with the actor, and the actor has to be a little bit in control of being out of control."

Aspiring filmmakers beware next time a small budget calls for putting oneself in film.

“Character is plot,” said Beatty, who applauded Diane Keaton’s performance as the personality who formed the plot. “I would not have made the movie without her, or would have made an entirely different film.”

Baldwin, the host, was impeccable. One of his most provocative questions was how Beatty’s relationship with the woman in the film affects the filming process.

“It’s very hard to meet someone [for the first time on film] you already know [personally],” said Beatty, who elicited a gasp of profundity from the crowd.

For Asian filmmakers and audiences, the festival was a gem of insight into the workings of the Hollywood industry, as well as into some of the most influential filmmakers and performers who ever graced Hollywood.

“As Asian Americans, we will be able to make use of the media to voice out our stories and thoughts,” said Ting. “It is an introduction to the classics of the past adapted to [our digital age].”

Even in showing his most acclaimed work, Beatty forecasts the future of movie-making and movie-watching. What do Beatty and Baldwin think are on the horizon? Variable ticket pricing and watching “Lawrence of Arabia” on one’s iPod.

“The car chases used to require a buildup,” said Beatty, who describes a different way of filmmaking for our more demanding current times. “Now if there’s a buildup to a car chase, you go to the refrigerator—there is no captive audience.”

For Asian Americans at the forefront of the digital revolution, the classics cannot be ignored. They teach us what we need to know about filmmaking and reveal how the ways of the past will be applied to the films of the future.



Photo courtesy of Mathieu Young



Photo courtesy of Adam Rose





# Red carpet experience as a photographer

Written and photographed by Stephanie Aguilar

I have lived in Los Angeles for three years, and I had never seen a red carpet premiere (how shameful because Westwood hosts many premieres) until a few weeks ago. I didn't think I'd go to my first one as a photographer.

Suzanne Kai, board member of Asian American Journalist Association's Los Angeles chapter, offered students and other young journalists a chance to cover the red carpet premiere of Kung Fu Panda 2 for AsianConnections.com. She sent an e-mail through the chapter's listserv, and I

immediately replied. I became her still photographer for the event.

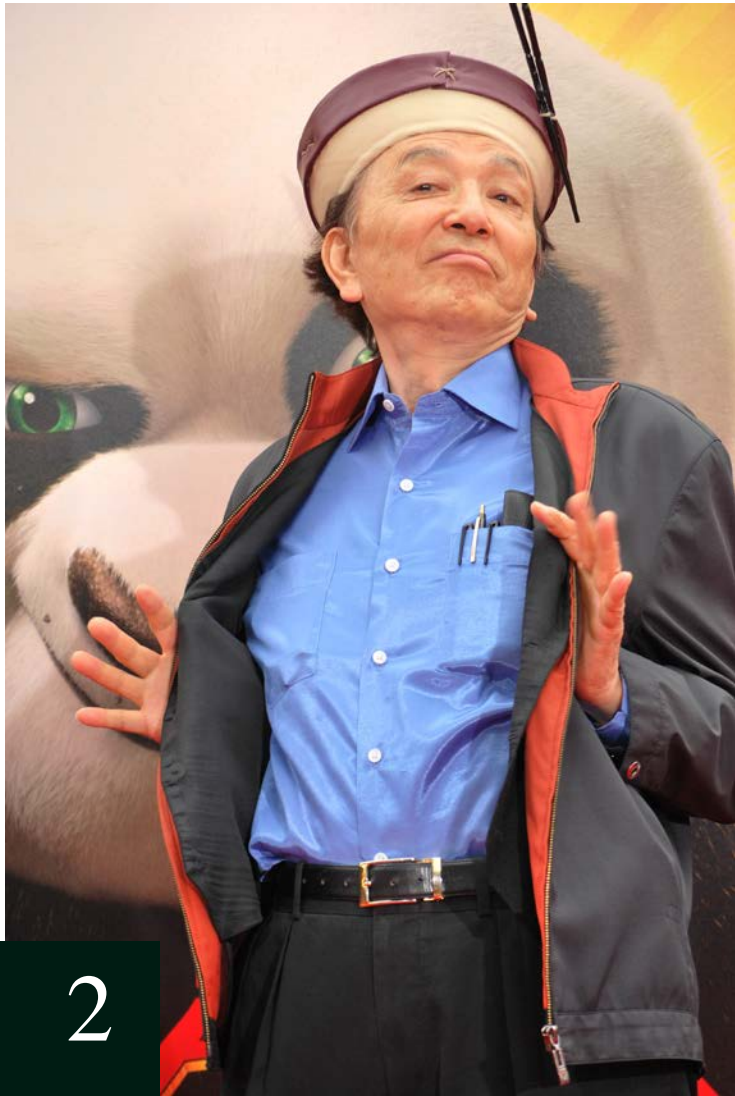
I arrived at the Kodak Theater at 8:00 a.m., waiting for Suzanne and the others John Sakata and Evonne Liew—all of us as a crew. I didn't meet the other one, Liberty Zabala, who viewed the actual screening.

I was positioned with other professional photographers, who had reserved spots right in front of the red carpet.

I captured shots of every actor and actress, including the director Jennifer Yuh Nelson. It was tougher taking photos of more popular celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt since they rushed down the carpet. Luckily, I did get Lucy Liu to look at my camera. She was definitely best-dressed.

This whole experience was a thrill and the coverage's post-production was probably almost as exhausting as studying for final exams.





1 2  
3 4

1. Actress Lucy Liu 2. Actor James Hong 3. Director Jennifer Yuh Nelson 4. Po the Panda, main character

Congratulations to the  
following staff members!

**MOST DEDICATED WRITER: Pao Carol Lee**

**MOST VALUABLE STAFFER: Deanna Tran**

**OVERALL BEST STAFFER: Ashley Truong**

These ladies are too awesome.

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