CCS in HOLLYWOOD

The distance between the Motor City and Tinseltown is 2,287 miles, but for students looking to make an impact on the film or video game industries it's just a short hop to a successful career.

Speed Bike Rider, concept art by Imran Sheik

"We're far from home," said John Vassallo, a 2003 graduate of the animation and digital media program, "but there's actually a small, growing community of us out here."

Vassallo got his start in the entertainment industry right out of college with his work on the film *Underworld*. From there he worked on a variety of television projects, including developing visual effects for *CSI*, *Threat Matrix*, *Clubhouse*, *Las Vegas*, and *ER*, before returning to the film industry as a freelance character animator.

It's hard to determine which CCS grad made the trip first, but in recent years Detroit has become a popular stop for those on their way to Hollywood. Whether graduating from the animation, illustration, or industrial design programs graduates have played major roles in several successful video game, film and television projects.

"Hollywood is the hot spot right now," said David Chow, adjunct faculty in the Illustration Department. "I send a lot of students out there every year. Besides being where the work is, it's also a place where there is a strong CCS network."

That network includes Vassallo; Jay Shuster, character animator at Pixar; David Hardin, character animator at Sony Pictures; Doug Chiang, owner of Ice Blink Studios; Marc Gabbana, concept artist for Ice Blink Studios; Angie Lai, video game designer for High Moon Studios; Dorian Compo, creative producer at Firstborn Multimedia; Imran Sheikh, character designer/concept artist at Pandemic Studios and Bill Morrison, creative director at Bongo Comics, the company best known for producing the Simpsons and Futurama comic books.

This is just a small percentage of the CCS graduates transitioning to life on the West Coast. **It is estimated that more than 100 graduates work in Hollywood's entertainment industry.**

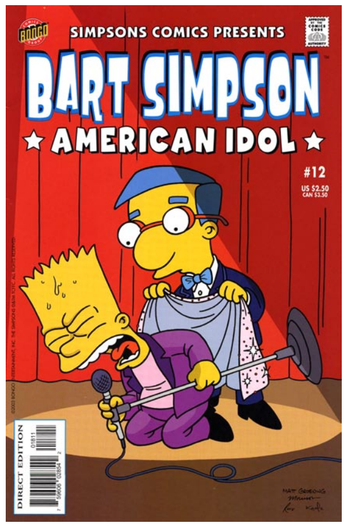
"One of the main reasons I moved to Los Angeles was to be closer to the film industry – to be one of the fish in the amazing pool of artists in this community," said Compo, a 2003 graduate from Animation and Digital Media whose resume includes Cinemax's fall launch campaign, the interactive marketing campaigns for Malibu Rum, and the launch of the Toyota FJ and the Toyota Prius advertising campaigns.

TOP: Character by concept artist Angie Lai.

MIDDLE: A scene from Open Season. Animation by David Hardin.

BOTTOM: Emimem's "Lose Yourself Video" storyboards by Dave Chow.

"Ramone" character from Cars movie. Jay Shuster, Sketch Artist.



The Simpson Comic Book. Creative Director Bill Simpson.

CCS alumni have truly impacted the industry with Vassallo, creating the special effects for Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto*, the action adventure thriller *Primeval* and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Deadman's Chest*. Characters featured in Oscar nominated animated films *Cars* were conceived, developed, and animated by Shuster with Chiang, Gabbana doing the same for the hit film *Monster House*. And, Sheikh and Lai work in the fastest growing segment of the entertainment industry – video games.

Sheikh is the concept artist on the widely popular online game *Gorgonbox* and has worked on *Star Wars Battlefront* and *Full Spectrum Warrior* games. Prior to working for High Moon Studios, Lai spent time with Midway Games where she contributed to John Woo's *Stranglehold*, *NBA Ballers: Phenom*, *NFL Blitz* and *Mortal Kombat Shaolin Monks*.

"There are twice as many video games developed each year out of Hollywood than films, said Chow. "It's by far the fastest growing industry in Southern California.

Due to the rise in popularity of video games and the continued need of animators and illustrators who can develop special effects for film and television, Chow expects the CCS pipeline to continue for several years.

"I always tell students who go out there that they can't get studio apartments, that they have to get at least two bedrooms because the next wave of graduates will be calling on them for support," he said.

Most of the time the support comes before graduates show up on doorsteps. Nearly all of the graduates come back to the Detroit area to visit family and friends and when doing so make it a point to share their experiences and knowledge with students still in the classroom.

"As a student, I learned much of what the concept art field entailed by seeking out and speaking with accomplished alumni Marc Gabbana and Jay Shuster," said Lai. "Taking their advice to heart and witnessing their work ethic and drive helped me gain an insight into the professional world. They helped lay down a very different foundation for me that would have been very hard to learn within the walls of any classroom."

Alumni may provide insight into the "real world," but support for considering a career in the entertainment industry begins in the classroom. Faculty such as Chow, Scott Bogoniewski, Lora Parlove, Adeboye Adegbenro, Gary Schwartz, Ben Ridgeway, and Brooke Keesling have worked in Los Angeles' entertainment industry and pass along the support students need to realize their career goals.

Diversity in the classroom many times leads to diversity in the workplace. Whether it's Vassallo's trek through the film and television industry or Compo's film and fashion work (Compo creates t-shirt designs for Detroit Shirt Company), CCS prepares graduates for a variety of career options.

For more information on alumni events please contact Terese Nehra at tnehra@collegeforcreativestudies.edu or 313.664.7462.

Sci Fi Channel Promotion by John Vassallo, Character Animator.

Driving Force: Tim Flattery.
The designer behind Hollywood's hottest rides

To have a role in one Hollywood blockbuster is a rare accomplishment, so to have a hand in three summer hits means your ingenuity and reputation have established you as one of Hollywood's most creative forces.

Tim Flattery ('87) began the summer unveiling the ride of the Fantastic Four as they battled the Silver Surfer. He then helped Johnny Depp recapture his soul in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End,* and ended the eventful season by transforming a Chevy Camaro into a robot sent to defend earth in the movie *Transformers*. With all this success, these films are nothing compared to the vehicle that is an icon to every comic book fan in the world – the Batmobile.

"I'm really proud of the work I did on the Batman movies," said Flattery, who majored in industrial design. "It's every kid's dream to design the Batmobile. Not only did I get the opportunity to create its look, I supervised construction of the full-scale model used in the movie."

Flattery has recently appeared in dozens of televised interviews and industry publications to talk about the work he did on the Fantasticar featured in *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*. Powered by a proton accelerator, the flying car splits into three separate units and, in theory, travels at 550 mph with a maximum altitude of 30,000 ft. It took Flattery, who has more than 20 years experience as a pilot, approximately ten months to conceptualize and oversee development of the model.

Flattery has worked on more than 30 films including *Transformers, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, Mission Impossible III, Men in Black, Total Recall* and *Back to the Future II* since he broke into the highly competitive entertainment industry during the late 1980s. While his creativity and reputation as a designer continue to land him assignments with leading motion picture studios, his representation as a CCS graduate has opened doors for those aspiring to follow down the path he has blazed.

Tim Flattery with Fantasticar.

RIGHT: A scene from Transformers. Concept art/illustration by Tim Flattery.

"I was one of the first students at the College who planned to go into this line of work. Today, there's a bunch of CCS alumni out here in California doing really well," he said.