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— Mike Pella, project manager, Student Production Office

STUDENT PRODUCTION OFFICE GETS A JAZZY PROJECT

Team creates JazzFest spots that hit Northeast Ohio airwaves

Early this year, Terri Pontremoli picked up the phone and called Mike Pella. Pontremoli, director of Tri-C JazzFest and Performing Arts Series, wanted Pella to make a TV commercial for the 2017 jazz festival. Pella, project manager in the student production office, didn’t hesitate.

“We are always looking for interesting projects, so yeah, we jumped on it,” Pella said.

Pella and his team began brainstorming. The idea was to riff on the JazzFest tagline, “Jazz Lives Here.” “We wanted to take the idea and narrow it down to what we could actually pull off,” Pella said.

Working on the project with Pella were students Erahlea Haidet, Chris Leszkowicz, Thomas Matheis and Adam Suntken. They came up with the idea of putting jazz in places where one might not expect to find it. They filmed at Six Shooter Coffee, Great Lakes Brewing Company, Anderson Industries and Zygoté Press. The commercials showed workers at these locations going about their business but

creating JazzFest messaging on the sly. The big reveal at the end of the commercial shot at Anderson, for example, is a fabrication worker holding a metal plate that reads “Jazz Lives Here.”

The four locations each produced a 10-second spot. These spots, primarily used to promote the annual jazz festival on social media, were also combined to make a 30-second commercial that aired on Channel 5 and Fox 8. In addition, videos were used on the ConcertVision screens at House of Blues, Jacobs Pavilion at Nautica and Blossom Music Center. The finished product had a slick, polished and undeniably professional look. Pontremoli and the JazzFest team were impressed.

No surprise. The student production office, now about three years old, can pull off quite a bit.

“We are at the level of an outside production company right now,” Pella said. “These are all students [who worked on the commercials], which speaks to the quality of the program and the real-world experience students get.”

The student production office operates under the Television and Video Production department, itself part of Tri-C’s Media Arts and Filmmaking program. The office has an array of state-of-the-art equipment, and students are paid interns with the option of receiving course credit. Those who complete the program earn a certificate and are ready to go to work. Pella said there is plenty of work to be had, too.

Most students come to the program with dreams of becoming the next great filmmaker. Pella said he encourages those ambitions but understands that there are bills to be paid in the meantime. Many who complete the program find corporate work – filming retreats or editing presentations, for example.

Much of the work the student production office engages in is of this sort, which is why the opportunity to film the JazzFest commercials was special.

“The students were really excited to see their work out in the real world,” Pella said.