

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL

'Keep making movies,' Wisconsin student filmmakers Matt Sloan on jurying the film fest, cinema in Madison, and Plo Koon

David Medaris on Friday 04/06/2007 05:04:05.

Madison filmmaker Matt Sloan is perhaps best known as a partner in the viral Chad Vader series, a principal in [Blame Society Productions](#) and one of the co-founders of [Wis-Kino](#), but the Milwaukee native has a background encompassing improv and live sketch comedy, theater and Cherry Pop Burlesque.

As a juror for the 2007 [Wisconsin Film Festival](#), he helped select the Wisconsin student shorts that will be seen at the festival. In a Q&A conducted via email, Sloan shares his perspectives on the jurying process, his advice for other filmmakers, and what he might do if he had to give up filmmaking.

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The Daily Page: How did your experience as a filmmaker whose work has been shown at previous Wisconsin Film Festivals affect your perspective as a juror sitting in judgement of this year's Student Shorts films?

Sloan: Not much. I didn't really look at anything in a "Wisconsin" context. If something is well-done and interesting then I think it will play well at almost any festival.

What qualities were you looking for in the films you juried? And to what degree did you find what you sought? Interesting subject matter. Good pacing. Technical competence, not necessarily technical perfection. There were plenty of good films to choose from.

How much did the jury have to negotiate to reach consensus?

Not much. There were a few differences of opinion, but not many. We were pretty in tune with each other.

As someone with a background in comedy and improv, how difficult did you find it to suspend those preferences or biases while judging a variety of candidate films?

Well, I don't really see them as "biases." I look at it as a unique perspective that allows me to be more objective when it comes to dealing with films that are not necessarily in my personal style.

What collective advice might you share with filmmakers whose work you judged for this year's festival?

Keep making movies. Keep showing them to live audiences. Keep learning and improving. The best way to learn and improve is to make more movies.

What advice would you impart to filmmakers who, at some point the future, reach the viral level of celebrity or buzz you and Aaron Yonda have found?

Don't stop listening to what your gut tells you to do, and don't stop making material that excites you.

What accounts for the strength of the local and statewide filmmaking communities?

I think Madison in particular is a unique breeding ground for creative people and closely-knit communities of creatives working together. Both of these are essential to having a vibrant film community.

Your work has screened at more festivals than Roger Ebert could count -- even if he had 10 thumbs. Which was your favorite, and how does the Wisconsin Film Festival compare?

I've been to very few of the festivals where our work has screened. There don't seem to be many that are as big or well-organized as the Wisconsin festival.

Which movies will you be seeing at this year's Wisconsin Film Festival?

I tend to gravitate towards music documentaries and shorts. I'm going to see the punk rock doc and a few shorts programs. Plenty of other stuff too.

What was the last mass-market movie you watched in a commercial theater that you would recommend to your friends, and why would you recommend it?

I rarely go out to see movies, actually. I think the last one was *Children of Men*, which was quite good.

If the survival of the universe required you to give up either screenwriting, acting, directing or editing, which would you sacrifice -- and why would you choose to forego that discipline?

At this point in my life they are all one in the same, so I guess I would have to go ahead and give up all four. Take up tap dancing or something.

Have you ever met the other Matt Sloan, the special effects and animatronics technician for *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*?

No. Was it the same Matt Sloan that was in the movie? He plays one of the members of the Jedi council. Haven't met either of them, but I have met the Matt Sloan that used to be an alderman in Madison. Nice guy.

