

GRADUATE showcase

Celebrating MFA alumni who are **shaping** the entertainment landscape.

COURSES THAT UNLEASH YOUR



Spencer Glover, MFA '17

FILMMAKER

Spencer Glover is a Los Angeles-based writer, director, and gamer. A Disney Launchpad fellow, he directed *Black Belts* (Disney+). He participated in the Half Initiative Directing Program, shadowing FOX's *9-1-1*. His film *Message Read* won Best Short Film at Capital City Black Film Festival and aired globally on FOX SOUL.



Katelyn Botsch, MFA '20

EVP, PRODUCTION AT KINGDOM STORY COMPANY

Katelyn Botsch transitioned from an Accounting degree to filmmaking in Lipscomb's MFA program, quickly discovering her passion for Producing. She interned with Kingdom Story Company and secured a job before graduating. She has worked as a Producer or Production Manager on multiple feature films such as *Jesus Revolution* and *Ordinary Angels*.



Sydney Tooley, MFA '20

FILMMAKER

Sydney Tooley is a director making waves in the independent film world. Her directorial debut, *Sun Moon*, earned a distribution deal from Sony Affirm and became a top-streamed movie on Pure Flix. Her films delve into the human condition, exploring themes of identity, coming-of-age, family and the complexities of human relationships.

Imagine learning from top industry professionals, getting real-world insights, and building lifelong connections—all while working on your craft from anywhere in the world. That's what Lipscomb University's **MFA in Entertainment & the Arts** is all about.

Our online courses are designed to be engaging, hands-on, and personal, with experienced mentors guiding you every step of the way. But learning doesn't stop at the screen—our program is built on community, collaboration, and unforgettable experiences that take you straight into the heart of the industry.

As part of the program, you'll have the opportunity to travel with your professors and classmates to some of the most exciting entertainment events in the world:

Lightbox Expo (California) – Walk among world-class artists, animators, and designers, soaking up inspiration and networking with the best in the business.

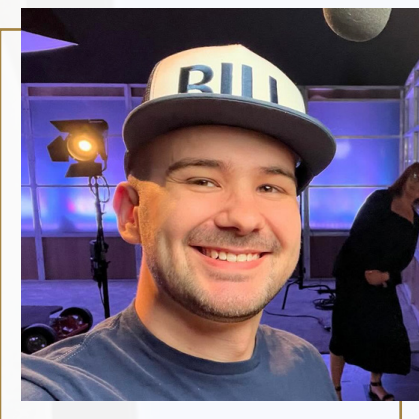
Austin Screenwriting Conference (Austin, TX) – Immerse yourself in the world of storytelling, meeting fellow screenwriters, producers, and industry insiders who share your passion.

Anney Animation Festival (France) – Experience the magic of the world's top animation event, where cutting-edge work premieres, and professionals from across the globe come together.

These aren't just trips; they're once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to connect, learn, and grow—alongside your professors and peers who will be right there with you.

If you're ready to **level up** your career, **expand** your creative network, and gain **real-world experience**, this is the place for you. Join us and make your mark in the entertainment industry.

The LEGEND of BILL



JACOB BIRMINGHAM is a director and animator best known for *The Legend of Bill*, which won Best Sound Design and Best Original Score at Lipscomb University's **5-Minute Film Festival**. Originally from Texas, he moved to Nashville to study animation under former Disney and Big Idea directors. With a background in motion graphics and a BFA in Film & Media Arts from the University of Oklahoma, Jacob blends comedy and drama in his storytelling. He is currently developing *The Legend of Bill* into an animated TV series.

JACOB BIRMINGHAM
WRITER/DIRECTOR, *THE LEGEND OF BILL*



The film's poster created by student Karly Falanga

IN 2023, A DEDICATED TEAM OF OVER 40 LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY animation students crafted *The Legend of Bill*, a five-minute animated short that has since garnered international acclaim. The film narrates the tale of Bill, a duck who defies odds to compete in a Texas desert off-road race. Its unique visual style seamlessly blends 3D animation, ideal for depicting the depth and realism of racing vehicles, with 2D hand-drawn techniques that capture expressive character emotions.

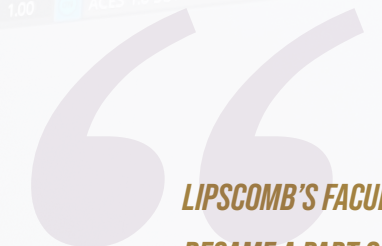
Under the direction of MFA student **Jacob Birmingham**, the project began in an Animation Production course and evolved into an extra-curricular endeavor. The core team of 13 graduate and undergraduate students, supported by faculty with industry experience, collaborated intensively over 15 weeks to bring the story to life. Their efforts were complemented by original music from Kaleb Clarke and a film poster designed by senior Karly Falanga.

Since its completion, "The Legend of Bill" has been selected, nominated, or awarded at more than 15 international film festivals. Notably, it won the Audience Choice Award at the **Nashville Film Festival** and

secured first prize in the Student Mixed Media/Combo category at the **Los Angeles Animated Film Fest**. The film also received Best Student Film at the **Grand Motoring Film Festival** in South Carolina and Best Animation Film at the **French Duck Film Festival** in Paris.

In early 2025, the film screened at the **KidFilm Family Festival** in Dallas and is slated to be showcased at Ireland's **Animation Dingle Festival**, a qualifying event for the **Student Academy Awards®**, in March. Additionally, the film is an official selection at Vanderbilt University's inaugural **Point of VU** student film festival on February 15.

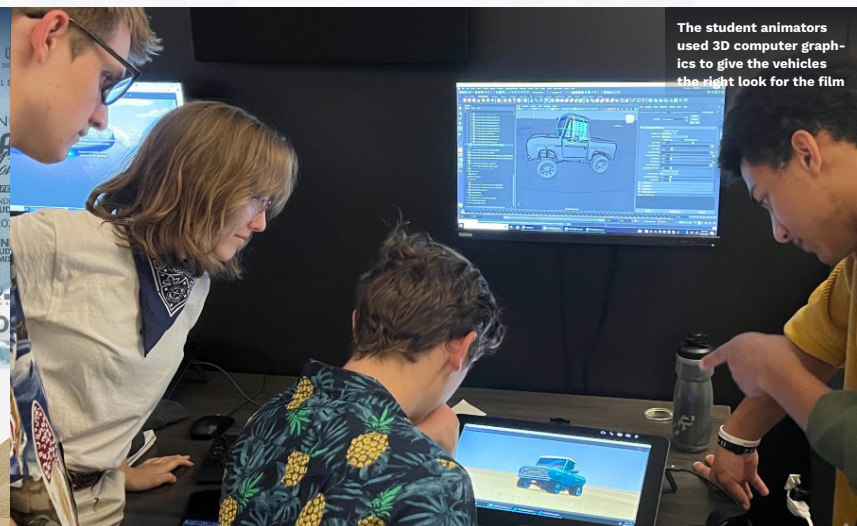
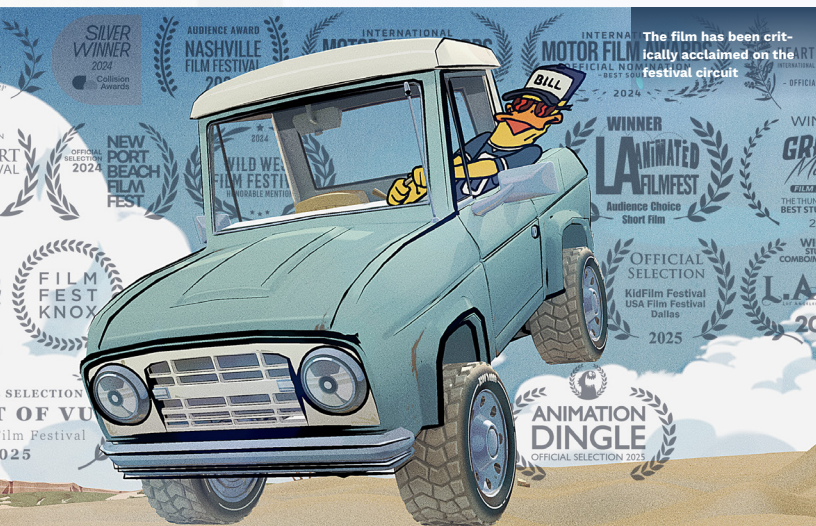
Reflecting on the journey, Birmingham stated, "Animation is a team sport, and it takes a crew to cross the finish line on a project this ambitious." The success of the film stands as a testament to the talent, dedication, and collaborative spirit of Lipscomb's animation students and faculty.



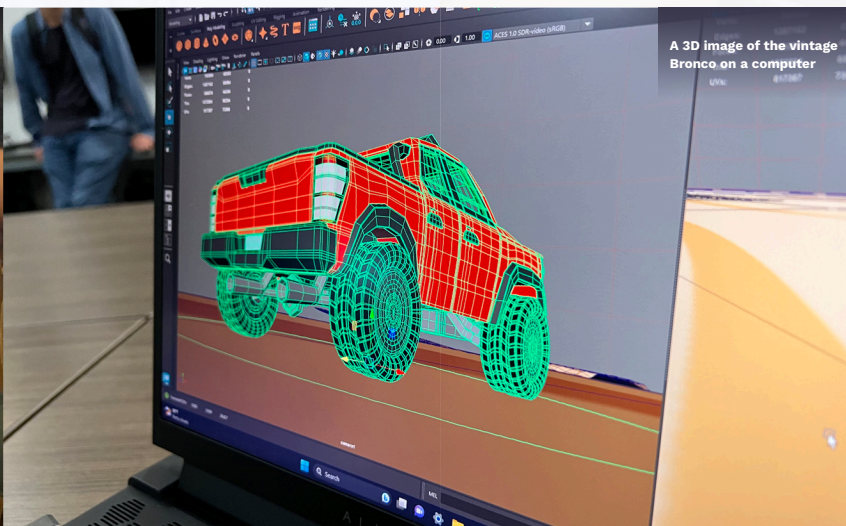
LIPSCOMB'S FACULTY DIDN'T JUST TEACH US; THEY BECAME A PART OF OUR TEAM. THEIR FEEDBACK AND HANDS-ON GUIDANCE HELPED US NAVIGATE CHALLENGES THAT WOULD'VE BEEN NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THEM," SAYS BIRMINGHAM. "THEY CREATED A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ALLOWED US TO NOT ONLY SUCCEED BUT TO EXCEED OUR OWN EXPECTATIONS."



LEARN MORE AT
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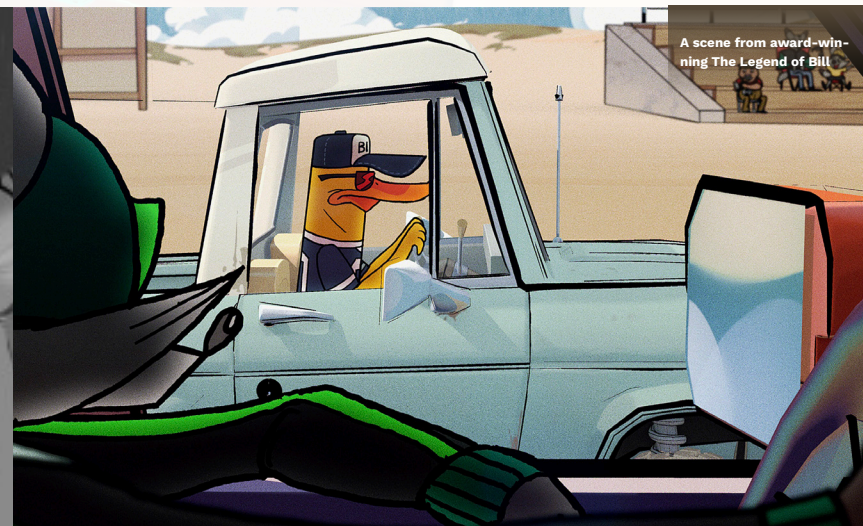
The student animators used 3D computer graphics to give the vehicles the right look for the film



A 3D image of the vintage Bronco on a computer



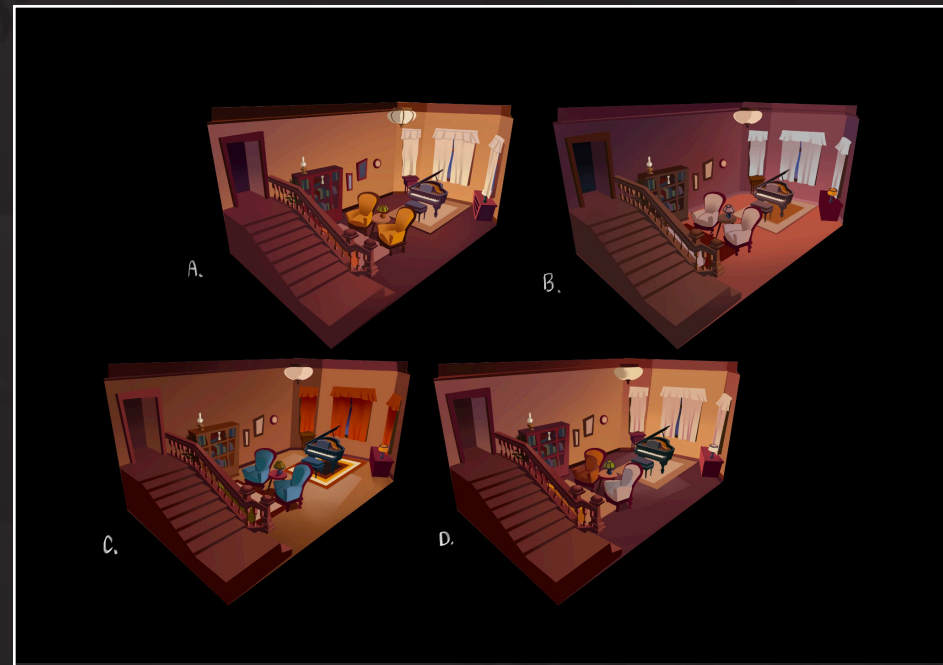
A 2D storyboard image from the film



A scene from award-winning *The Legend of Bill*



The Piano



ABOUT THE PROJECT
Written and Directed by: Avery Kroll
Executive Producer: Tony Bancroft (*The Lion King, Mulan, The Hunchback of Notre Dame*)
Associate Producer: Pietro Schito
Art Director: Kristen Bearshears
Editor: Hunter Dixon



Writer, director, and storyboard artist **Avery Kroll** presents *The Piano*, a beautifully crafted tale of a sleepless girl who sneaks out of bed late one night to see her dad, only to discover him bent over the piano, pouring his soul into the keys. Focused on storyboarding and writing for animation, this project exemplifies the high level of talent and execution in the MFA program.



“Amazing how you were able to tell such a beautiful story without dialogue and with this form of animation. Such complex emotions are paced extremely well.”

“LIPSCOMB HAS BEEN AMAZING. THE SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY, LIFE-CHANGING CONNECTIONS, AND CHALLENGING PROJECTS PUSH US TO BE BETTER ARTISTS. THE FACULTY HELP US HONE OUR CRAFT AND ALSO BOLDLY REPRESENT OUR FAITH IN OUR WORK.”

Learn more about Avery Kroll and *The Piano*



LEMON-AID

A FILM BY SUMNER MCMURTRY



A SHORT FILM BY SUMNER MCMURTRY

When a seemingly innocent lemonade stand materializes in a suburban front yard, the once tranquil neighborhood descends into chaos as mysterious and unsettling events unfold.



Lipscomb University alumnus **Sumner McMurtry's** short film LEMON-AID has made a bold impact on the festival circuit with its unique, absurdist storytelling. Premiering at RiverRun International Film Festival, the 16-minute film has earned numerous accolades, including Best Short at France's RED Movie Awards, Best Direction at Italy's Absurd Film Festival, and honors at Nashville, Headline Horizons, and more. Official selections at top festivals like Nashville Film Festival, Sidewalk Film Fest, and Hollywood Shorts Fest further highlight its success.



"The **Lipscomb Film Program** taught me how to be a master storyteller. I owe all that I've learned about filmmaking to the rigorous in class projects and loving instruction from my professors."



BLACK BUTTON PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "LEMON-AID" COMPOSERS BRETT BOYD AND KALEB CLARKE
SOUND DESIGNER ALONSO CACHO PRODUCTION DESIGNER SHEL MCMURTRY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JODY BOGLE AND PAUL ENGLERT
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ATHENA KULB PRODUCED BY SARAH BARNES AND ROCKIE BRITZMANN
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SUMNER MCMURTRY

LEARN MORE AT
LEMONAIDFILM.COM



LOST POTENTIAL

Interview



UNMASKING THE AUTISM EMPLOYMENT CRISIS



LEARN MORE AT
LOSTPOTENTIALDOC.COM

MAKE MOVIES THAT MATTER.

The Story

Of all disabilities, autism ranks the lowest for employment. Nearly eighty percent of people with autism, worldwide, are unemployed or underemployed. Lost Potential will explore societal attitudes and misconceptions that hinder the inclusion of people with autism in the workforce.

As a person with autism, I know the struggle with finding proper employment. Autism affects nearly eighty million people across the globe and companies should embrace the value, strength, and talent of people on the spectrum.

This feature-length documentary will take the viewer through my personal story of struggle and discovery with autism, and its hindrances on employment. I will dive into the hard truth of what someone with autism faces living in a world designed for a different mind. But this is not just my story, I will talk with other people with autism as well as experts to show the harsh reality that so many face while encouraging those with autism to leverage their "superpowers".

This film presents key statistics, highlighting the significant success stories of individuals with autism who have overcome barriers and excelled in their chosen careers. It showcases organizations that have implemented inclusive hiring practices, emphasizing the positive impact on both employees and the workplace.

I chose Lipscomb for the faculty's strong industry experience. I found a supportive community of peers and invaluable networking opportunities that propelled my career forward."



BARRY WORTZ
DIRECTOR, *LOST POTENTIAL*

Barry Wortz has been a videographer for over 20 years, honing his craft in many areas of the country. He finds joy in continuing to capture stories through the art of film. His award-winning work has led him into the lives of so many couples and families. He was late-diagnosed autistic with co-occurring ADHD. His hope for this film is to raise awareness about the assets adults on the spectrum add to the workplace.



DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN
AUTHOR/PROFESSOR



DR. CHARLES GALYON
LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST

Andrea Ballard (MFA '25) chose the Lipscomb MFA program to help her navigate the journey of bringing a true story—one that captured the imagination of her children—to life on the big screen. Her film, *Cubs In The Tub*, is set in a 1930s New York City apartment and follows a determined housewife, Helen Martini, who secretly raises lion cubs in her bathtub after her zookeeper husband brings them home. When officials arrive to take the cubs back to the Bronx Zoo, Helen must fight to keep her unconventional family together.

The story, both heartwarming and historically significant, is inspired by real events and explores themes of motherhood, resilience, and breaking barriers. The film was a team effort, involving a number of MFA and BFA students in key roles. Andrea brings a rich background in performance, with a BFA in Performing Arts from Brigham Young University, and draws on her experience both in front of and behind the camera to shape emotionally resonant, character-driven stories. She is currently developing *Cubs In The Tub* into a feature-length film.



View the proof of concept short



*The collaboration and connection found at Lipscomb has **educated and inspired** me to create art that can **edify and entertain**. The industry experience and knowledge of the faculty coupled with an expectation of personal excellence has allowed me to strive to create my best work in a setting carefully curated for creativity to thrive.”*



Andrea Ballard, MFA '25
WRITER, PRODUCER, FILMMAKER

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Written and Produced by: Andrea Ballard (MFA '25)

Director: Sydney Tooley (MFA '20)

Director of Photography: Corbin Schmidt (MFA '20)

Composer: Tyler Skrove (BFA '24)

Editor: Naia Baca (BFA '25)

CUBS in the TUB