

Behind the Scenes of Unusual Films



History

For 60 years Unusual Films, BJU's on-campus production company, has fulfilled BJU's vision of producing quality Christian movies. The studio has released 10 feature-length films, as well as several shorter animated films. The studio's moniker comes from a reference to Bob Jones Sr. referring to BJU as "the world's most unusual university."

The Studio

Attached to Rodeheaver Auditorium, the studio holds a myriad of different departments: an animation studio, a makeup department, cinema classrooms, movie sets, a sound recording booth and a library of archival footage.

Steve Ross, the manager at Unusual Films, said technology has changed the way the studio operates: what used to take hours to do with several different machines can now all be done on computers. For instance, Ross points out a hulking metal contraption that used to be responsible for melding together the audio and video from a shot—a job which is now done instantly in sophisticated editing software.

Down the stairs in the studio is the sound stage. The space is a hodgepodge of students' projects, props, lighting equipment and the remnants of an old-fashioned general store set from *Milltown Pride*. "It's a mess right now, but that's not unusual," Ross said.



The Films

"Film is really interesting because it combines so many different types of art," Ross said. "It takes makeup, photography, construction, design and combines them into something that lasts longer than any of those one elements would have lasted on its own."

The studio seeks to make movies that will stand the test of time. In order to achieve that type of longevity, Ross said the studio usually chooses to make period films. Films like *Sheffey* are able to last longer because they're not tied to the fads of the present day, Ross said. But he also said doing these period pieces requires great attention to detail because one out-of-place element can completely distract the viewer.

In the meantime, when the studio isn't working on full-length films, they often make shorter projects. For example, the multimedia video shown to visitors in Levinson Hall as they tour the University was created by Unusual Films. With its last big project, *Milltown Pride*, finishing production in 2011, Ross said the studio is now beginning to work on a new project, which he hopes will go into production in the next several years.

