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Melburnians' deep-sea story wins short film awards, sparking university battle

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A YOUNG Melbourne filmmaker has won two awards at Cannes for a short film made in Russian, shot in a decommissioned submarine near Hastings.

Victorian College of Arts and Music graduate Ariel Kleiman's third-year film *Deeper Than Yesterday*, which blends surrealism with elements of a Steven Seagal action movie, won the Kodak Discovery Award and the Petit Rail d'Or, an award voted on by French cinema-loving railway workers. While celebrating the awards, the film's producer, Anna Kojevnikov, fired off an email from Cannes criticising the University of Melbourne for claiming credit for the film on its website.

"There's this article on the Melbourne uni website which brags about us being Melbourne uni students being successful at Cannes, [but] there was no support from them when we asked them to assist us to travel here," the producer said.

The win, and the success of another VCAM film, Edward Housden's *Muscles*, nominated for Cannes' Palme d'Or du court metrage - the world's most prestigious short film award - comes as the VCA and its film school face budget cuts. A review released last week, commissioned by the university and independently chaired by Ziggy Switkowski, reported the college faced a deficit of \$6 million a year and desperately needed government support.

Former VCA lecturer of producing Ros Walker fears plans are in train to halve the number of films students make each year, effectively halving the cost of training but at the same time halving the education the students get. Some students would miss out or productions would be co-directed.

"Most attempts at co-directing films are a disaster," Walker said yesterday.

"The fact that each student directs a film each year has been critical to the quality of our graduates. The success of this year's students' third-year films at Cannes shows the benefit of our intensive training."

VCA graduates and staff are up in arms about the merger of the historic school with the University of Melbourne's music faculty, and a shift from specialist training to the "Melbourne model" of broad-based courses prior to specialisation.

Kleiman, who was recently awarded an Honourable Mention in Short Filmmaking at the Sundance festival for his second-year film, *Young Love*, was also director of photography on *Muscles*.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2010/05/22/1273948214577.html>

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