2008/2009 CAH Interdisciplinary Award
FINAL PROGRAM REPORT

- Recipient name/Principal Investigator: Lisa Mills, Asst. Professor, Film
- Co-Principal Investigator(s): Stephanie Rice, Instructor, Radio-Television
- Departments involved in project: Film and Radio-Television
- Project number: 2301-0007
- Project Title: Sam Rivers: Jazz Master of the Moment
- Award dates (including no cost-extension(s):
  Start date: May 2007
  End date: November 2008
  Was a no-cost extension requested for this project:
  Yes ( If Yes, please provide reason for need of a no-cost extension)
  X No
- Amount awarded: $6,159.00
- Departments involved: Film and Radio-Television (NSOC)

Brief description of project objectives:

We originally set out to create a CD/DVD set featuring a live recording session at WUCF-FM by the Sam Rivers Trio and an accompanying documentary film about his life. The idea was that this would be the initial deposit into the “Sam Rivers Archive at UCF.”

Were these objectives accomplished as scheduled?

In November 2008 we completed a 15-minute high-definition documentary film about the Sam Rivers revival concert at Columbia University in New York City.

If objectives were not accomplished, please provide reason(s):

There are two main reasons why all objectives were not accomplished, but these reasons are related. First, we were unable to gain any funding beyond the initial CAH Multidisciplinary Seed Grant. This made our initial objectives too ambitious. Upon meeting with Monique Rivers to plan our project, she informed us that she needed $40,000 to participate. Although Stephanie Rice had a verbal agreement with Ms. Rivers prior to applying for the CAH grant, it seemed that once Ms. Rivers heard our grant was only for $6,000 she was no longer interested in cooperating. We were able to gain her permission to film only two concerts with Mr. Rivers. She told us he was too busy to travel to WUCF-FM for a recording session. Although NSOC and CAH each provided an intern to help Ms. Rivers organize archive materials for our use in the documentary, Ms. Rivers informed us that she would not allow us access to the materials. She also informed us that Mr. Rivers was too busy to be interviewed for the project. She did not express any interest in the archive part of the project but we hope that she may change her mind in the future.
• **Detail the most relevant activities of the project?**

• Despite some difficulties with access to Mr. Rivers and his music we were nevertheless able to create a short documentary film that shines a spotlight on a jazz master and his pupils who attended a revival concert in Harlem. Although Mr. Rivers has appeared in other jazz documentaries we believe this is the only documentary to focus entirely on him. Mr. Rivers is now 85 years old and we believe the film is an important work because it may represent one of the last opportunities to document his art. This is also one of the first documentaries produced at UCF in high definition video. Working in this new format required us to gain new expertise in camera work, media storage, editing and DVD authoring. We will be able to share this expertise with students in our classes.

• **Describe project findings? Explain future funding possibilities?**

• Our research for the film found many of the young jazz musicians who flocked to Rivers for tutelage in 1970s New York are still very devoted to the free jazz pioneer. They are anxious to talk about him. If our film gains exposure through film festivals there is the possibility of funding to expand or distribute the work.

• **Detail any publication(s) resulting from this project?**

• The film screened in the Brouhaha Film Festival at the Enzian Theatre in December. The judges of the festival voted it into “the best of Brouhaha,” so it will screen again at the Florida Film Festival on Saturday, April 4 at 1:30pm at the Regal Winter Park Village. We have submitted the film to several other music and film festivals and are awaiting word on its acceptance.

• **Describe any other specific products and contributions of the project.**

     NA

• **List general conclusions.**

• We have learned a valuable lesson with this project. No matter how well-intentioned a project may be or how many verbal agreements you have with film subjects it is absolutely necessary to have signed consent releases and agreements in hand before moving forward with a project. We believe this case was a catch-22 because the subjects involved would not have agreed to cooperate in the first place without a grant, yet when we received the grant it was not enough to satisfy them. It is regrettable that Ms. Rivers does not see the value in providing us with access to Mr. Rivers for an interview or to any of his boxes and file cabinets of archive material. We understand that Ms. Rivers and her husband have been ill, so perhaps the timing of our project just was not right. Still, we are proud of our work and it is receiving some recognition after peer review at two film festivals. We are pleased with high definition technology. We find the finished film very aesthetically pleasing.

• **CAH Interdisciplinary Awards are considered “seed” monies to provide for the basis of future research endeavors. How has funding provided for this project impacted your plans for future research activities?**

• This was our very first grant award and a great learning experience. For future projects we intend to line up several grants at the same time so that we have enough money to more successfully achieve our objectives. We also intend to line up in advance a “grant mentor” who can better guide us through this process. Documentary grants are few and far-between, which makes them extremely competitive. Very few grants are awarded to film makers who have not already won festival awards. In the future we may seek a single “donor” who has an interest in our topic and can fully fund the work.

• **Additional Comments:**

• While we were unable to achieve our three goals of a CD, DVD and Archive we did complete a documentary film of which we believe the College of Arts and Humanities can be proud. As the Florida
Film Festival nears there may be some media attention to our film. Perhaps that will inspire Ms. Rivers to work with us again. However before doing any more work on this project we will get her intentions in writing. To date we have left telephone messages and emails about the film. We sent Mr. Rivers a copy on DVD but have not received any response from him or Ms. Rivers. We do not know if they will attend the screening April 4th.

This report was prepared by Lisa Mills on February 19, 2009