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Professional Perspective: Tristan Oliver BSC

Tristan Oliver BSC is a British cinematographer best known for his work with Wes Anderson and Nick Park in the field of stop frame animated feature films.



What a Performance!

Ivan Chandler is a professional music supervisor, music copyright consultant, music licensing executive, musical director, composer, musician, music publisher, author, trainer in music copyright and a forensic musicologist. He has a tale to tell.



How Did We Get Here? by JAMES Co-Director, Dennis Weinreich.

"One advantage of being old is that I have seen the development of recording from what many people call the golden era of analogue, through to today's many and varied digital formats."

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Use Your Ears by Wendy Laybourn

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My Experience at LIPA by Mac Lee

I'm studying the JAMES Accredited Sound Technology course at LIPA - which teaches the in-depth technical understanding and physics behind Sound that makes the technology and systems possible whilst also teaching the creative artistic side.



Life After Course

Emily Key has recently completed a JAMES-Accredited course in Creative film, television and digital media production at the University of Northampton. She tells us how her career has progressed since graduating.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

By JAMES Co-Director
Dennis Weinreich

One advantage of being old is that I have seen the development of recording from what many people call the golden era through to today.

I came into the recording business in the late 1960's right after graduating high school in 1969. I was lucky because it was a moment when things were expanding rapidly, a young guy from the suburbs of Los Angeles who had spent his school years recording bands in the family garage was a good fit for many LA studios. I had so many options and along the way I got to work with some great engineers and producers in some amazing studios.

Most of the recording back then was on 4-track tape machines with everything on the record played live in the studio. Then it was a case of using the two remaining tracks for vocals and maybe something for colour. (The Doors first album was recorded on a 3-track with the whole band live and a track for Jim on vocals - and that album stands up well almost 60 years later). Most masters were edited between various performances, purely because getting a three minute song with lots of musicians in the studio without mistakes is much harder than it seems! This gave rise to the then common practice of using studio musicians, much to the annoyance of the bands who were credited but who rarely played on their own records. Session musicians would usually get it right first time - it wasn't just a creative issue, studios were expensive.

8-track came along soon after I started in studios, which changed the workflow dramatically - now there were options. You could record the backing track to a stereo pair like you did on 4-track and then have six tracks for overdubs. Sometimes recording the band



across six tracks which allowed you to correct a mistake for one performer without the need to record the whole take again. Some band musicians were able to play on their own records because, if someone from the band messed up, you could fix it without paying for a studio full of session musicians. Once the backing was all correct, you'd mix it down to a stereo pair and overdub on what seemed like an incredible six tracks. There was room to experiment, be creative and inspired by the music you created.

Something that you could never do on the smaller formats which 8-track made possible was to record the band in one session then bring in strings, brass, vocals and other instruments and record them separately. The need for huge rooms where you could record 40 or 50 musicians comprising a full band and orchestra was no longer necessary, so 8-track allowed you to work for the first time in layers in smaller rooms. The soundscape changed - the taste for close dry sounds became the norm and drums ▶

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▶ particularly came to the fore. A guitar player could record their solos over and over until they got what they were looking for. Did 8-track usher in a period of indulgence? Oh Yes. Many of the huge studios were rebuilt into smaller rooms, which was a commercial bonus for many studio owners.

By the time I relocated to the UK, 16-track was the predominate format. Now you could start with a basic backing track and not need to mix it down to make tracks available. You could build up the song in layers, much as we do today, and at the end do a final mix that allowed each instrument to be processed to fit correctly with all the instruments around it. It was 8-track on steroids, and 24-track was still to come!

"A guitar player could record their solos over and over... Did 8-track usher in a period of indulgence? Oh yes!"

Soon we had the chance to use multiple multitrack tape machines because of timecode and synchronisers. Two 24-track was common, but I preferred a 16-track and a 24-track: record the basic track on 16, sub mix the elements onto a 24-track tape, overdub to your hearts content on the 24-track, then in the mix go back to your still pristine sounding 16-track for the final. It sounds like a great work flow but frankly the technology was never really up to it and you spent far too much time waiting for machines to sync up than was good for the mix.

Sony and others were shortly able to offer 32 and 48-track digital tape recorders which went some way to eliminate many of the shortcomings of analogue tape. No more synchronisers, no more tape deterioration as you dragged the tape over the heads

for months doing overdubs - and with the age of digital in the studio came the delivery format of the CD. It's hard to realise just how enthusiastically digital recording was embraced. The workflow was clunky. Converters were poor compared to today and all, if not most, of the mixing desks were analogue. Those converters got a lot of work.

The early digital audio workstations did not have enough 'voices' to replace 24 or 48-track. They were basically 8 or 16-track devices at best, but the future was there to see.

The shortcomings of analogue tape was replaced with digital tape, and the shortcomings of tape were all but eliminated with a move to digital work-stations. Soon tracks were unlimited, playback instant, the ability not only edit in musical sections vertically but linearly completely changed the role of the engineer. The primary basic skill of being able to balance has never gone away but the environment bears little resemblance to the studios I worked in 50 years ago.

Many people look back at the days of analogue with rose coloured glasses. We worked differently back then. Much of what comprised a record was performed live in the studio with many musicians dynamically leaning against each other's performance. People talk about dynamics and in most cases this was not created by the recording, it was inherent in the performances. Analogue tape was full of compromises. We were called engineers because we had to engineer around the shortcomings.

In many ways today is the golden age of recording. Unlike back then, access to top grade technology is not cost-prohibitive, the tech does not fight you and the ability to experiment is limitless - but the disciplines we needed back in the day are still relevant. I think too

few music makers start a recording with the same degree of vision for the final outcome that the producers and engineers had back when I started. This is why I support music education. I think that knowing the history of music recording gives today's music makers a chance to make better records.

Image left, courtesy of Wikipedia and RCA Studio, Nashville.

RCA's Studio B with Ampex AG-440 1/4" 2 track and 4 track recorders plus Ampex MM1000 16 track machine.



My Experience at LIPA

By Mac Lee

I'm Mac Lee, a student currently studying the JAMES Accredited Sound Technology course at LIPA. What I enjoy most about the course is that LIPA teaches the in-depth technical understanding and physics behind Sound that makes the technology and systems possible whilst also teaching the creative artistic side.

In the first year of the course, you study all disciplines of sound (studio, live sound, sound for picture) which allows you to explore and experiment. I really enjoyed my first year at LIPA as it allowed me to try out lots of things that I hadn't done before which helped me decide my option choices for the 2nd year. Alongside the core modules in first year, you also study a collaborative technical project, which assigns you to one work the LIPA shows/performances. For mine last year, I was put in a team tasked with creating a 5.1 surround system to make an immersive sound design to show off some set design/codes that some theatre production design students had made. I really enjoyed this as one of LIPA's strengths is being around so many studying creatives, this allows lots of collaborations of projects.

In the second year, I decided to study Audio Post-Production, Music Recording and Broadcast Audio, enjoying audio post where we are currently replacing



all the audio for the first eight minutes of *Back to the Future!* As of writing this I am currently mid-way through the broadcast module which is a two-week intensive module where your assessment is putting on a TV show and putting together all of the audio for it. We design everything from the system to the mics being used. In the 3rd year, you pick a core module to specialise in and pick a mini module, creating a final portfolio and dissertation.

Next Steps: After LIPA, I'm hoping to pursue a career in game audio and or audio post-production, I really enjoy working with sound to enhance stories. Last year I bought a Tascam DR-40 Location Recorder and since, have had lots of fun recording sources at home to use in my audio re-design projects. Via Audio Kinetics online courses, I have recently learnt the Wwise design and development tools - and from this, have worked with other developers in a couple game jams, I have gained a lot from these and hope to do a lot more soon!

Overall, most interesting about game audio is that any asset can be triggered at the same time, therefore when mixing games, you must anticipate that anything can happen at any moment!

Use Your Ears!

By Wendy Laybourn

Can you imagine watching a film without hearing the actors' voices, or be caught up in stunning and atmospheric music, or be terrified by the roar of a pre-historic monster? Ever since 1927 when the audience first heard people speak in *The Jazz Singer*, the Film Sound Department has been enhancing the images on screen with dialogue, music score and background sound.

Before an audience can explain why a scene engages them, the music score has usually done its work because it shapes and reinforces the story. This is the job of the Sound Supervisor, Music Composer, Sound Recordist and the Post Production Sound team - but why am I talking about this you ask? Well, if

you've completed a JAMES Sound or Music course then these jobs may also be available to you, which gives you more scope when you are looking at your career. It's a highly specialised business and it takes time for any new crew member no matter what level of expertise, to assimilate the full atmosphere, intensity and work ethic involved on a film set. It can be stressful at times but the camaraderie amongst the crew and the satisfaction of hearing your work in the completed film makes it all worthwhile!

Although film is a visual medium much of the storytelling and emotional involvement is through the soundtrack - I bet you can all remember the theme from a favourite Bond film - think how it enhanced the action, kept you focused on the story and became part of the whole experience - so keep your options open when you are looking for your dream job!

WHAT A PERFORMANCE!

By Ivan Chandler



Ivan Chandler is a professional music supervisor, music copyright consultant, music licensing executive, musical director, composer, musician, music publisher, author, trainer in music copyright and a forensic musicologist. Phew! The tale he tells goes like this...

Jude and Judy are mates who are both into audio recording, like it's what they love – try and tell them they are wasting their time and you'll get a mouthful

Jude is the audio and recording techie and Judy is into sound and music mixing (she's also an EDM DJ at weekends). Jude helps Judy by introducing her to the latest gizmos for her mixing and mash-ups and Judy plays Jude's favourite tracks when he comes along to one of her stonking Friday nights at Bunk Off, a 'pop up' night club in the Mendips – there's hours of re-mixes of their favourite dance/hip hop/rap and US chart hits.

Barney is a hip film maker with plenty of dosh from his mother's fashion design business in Bath. One night he takes a drive from Bath to Frome and, after a couple of beers in a noisy pub, hears about Bunk Off a cool but secret venue; he finds out where it is.

He parks way down the road and walks up the hill to where there appears to be nothing going on. He sees some lights, makes his way down a footpath using his phone for a torch and nearly falls over what looks like a trap door. He lifts it up and is pinned back by the noise. A girl dressed up like Pippi Longstocking with hair as outrageous asks, what he wants. He tells her he's looking for DJs for some new happening film projects. She mumbled something like "alright" sniggered and told him to be careful down the steps. A

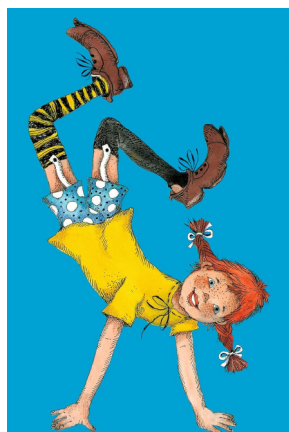
guy stamped his wrist with a weird logo and he reached the sawdust ridden floor.

Barney thought that the whole thing was a bit weird with people chatting, laughing, dancing, leaning against the wall, looking at Judy and being mesmerised by the whole event. Barney didn't stay long but handed his card to Judy, saying loudly "Call me!".

Judy told Jude about the guy and they called and arranged a meeting at Barney's place in Bath. Barney told them about the project and they said they were up for it and when do they start. Barney offered a daily rate of £500 between them and gave them a two page contract which they signed without looking at it. Not cool - but off they went to create sound and music for the film tentatively entitled "What A Performance". It was a fast moving short film with flash ups of actors, singers, guitarists, drummers, DJs, contortionists, street acrobats and sports men & women.

Using their combined skills Jude and Judy put together a massive sound track that, in the playback studio, blew Barney away. Barney immediately told his Production Manager to arrange for the film to have a final mix and have it ready for delivery. A week later, Barney submitted the film for the Smash It Film Festival taking place in Outer Mongolia March 2019. Reading the terms and conditions, he decided to pass the details to his lawyer, in particular the wording:

"Entrants represent and warrant to the Festival that the Film and all parts thereof are original; that the Film does not contravene the rights of any person or entity and that entrants own or control the Film and all parts thereof and have the sole authority to submit the Film to the Festival."



'Judy' - Pippa Longstocking. Copyright Astrid Lindgren.

Barney's lawyer asked him if he had got consents from the performers in his film. Barney said they were only quick flash ups, often for only a second and that the clips were taken from YouTube where anyone can download music and video!

The lawyer looked doubtful then asked ►

► about the sound and music score and Barney said that Jude and Judy had signed a consent form granting all necessary rights. The lawyer then asked if Jude and Judy had composed the music themselves. Barney said, no, it was a mash-up of samples taken from various dance tracks by people such as David Guetta, Skrillex, Zedd and Afrojack.

Worrying, as the composers had signed an agreement probably indemnifying Barney against any claims, they probably wouldn't have any money to compensate him if he was sued. Barney took up the issue with Jude and Judy who said they don't have a problem with their 'live gigs'. Barney reminded them that live gigs are covered by the venue's PRS and PPL licences – even he knew that!

Even if they had them, those licences do not cover the 'copying' or synchronising the music with visual images, particularly in this case, his film! He knew as well that even if the record companies grant the featured artists' rights, they would also need clearance and approval from any non-contracted musicians or session players in respect of their re-used performances.

Jude and Judy asked Barney how he got permission for all the clips in his film and looking a little awkward, he said that they were only short extracts and were fine because they were from YouTube. Even Jude and

Judy knew that clips from YouTube need permission for re-use in other audio-visual productions.

None of them had budgeted extra money for all these rights so they were scuppered. No film, no music, no dosh. Fortunately, they called Musicalities who advised them that, as long as they used music that was specially recorded and produced for use in audio-visual media, there is lots of so called Production (Library) Music that is pre-cleared covering the composers, the recordings and all the performers including some who are actually DJs themselves – and at only a few hundred pounds.

The key here is that use of commercial material for private use and bona fide courses of study is covered as an exemption under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act; however, commercial use and public performance of copyright material requires consent from all those involved. Could they afford it? Probably not! But, using commissioned original scored music or library music - or even no music! - are all good options.

In the meantime, Jude and Judy took up learning to compose and make their own music. They are being quite successful – in fact pretty hot (in more ways than one) having moved from Frome – to Florida!

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Life After Course

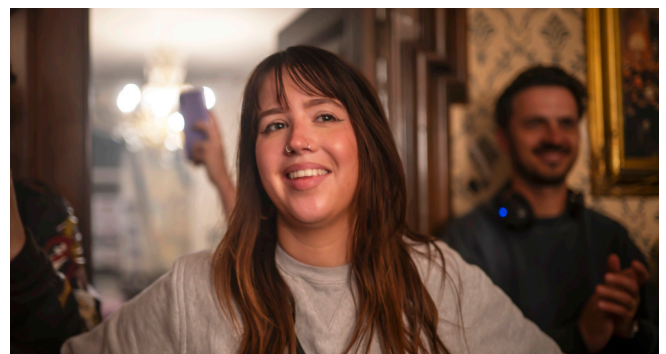
By Emily Key

Through my completion of a JAMES-Accredited course in Creative film, television and digital media production; I have been able to strengthen my skillset within Art Direction and begin to build a freelance career. The University of Northampton has worked as a catalyst in the progression of my professional and personal development, paving the way for opportunities outside of an educational setting. Expanding my creative network has been beneficial in gaining access to experienced professionals, both within and external to my field. The course at Northampton University has facilitated this through hosting talks/discussions with established media businesses and individuals working in Film/TV and Advertising.

Due to working with a local Northampton media company 'Renegade', I have had the opportunity to provide my services on a variety of commercials and music videos. These projects have enabled the growth of my vocational progress; allowing me to gain access to professional film shoots straight from obtaining my degree. Receiving high levels of responsibility early in my career has enabled the rapid growth of my role relevant experience as well as my understanding of the creative collaboration process on set.

Through networking and developing professional relationships, I have been provided with an assortment of opportunities to both progress and refine my practical capabilities. This highlights where the resources at JAMES can lead to significant progression for students, providing them with the confidence and the technical skillset needed to develop in their chosen area.

Overall the JAMES accredited course has dramatically shaped the job I do today, the network of support and knowledge from tutors/technical demonstrators has inspired creativity, out of the box thinking and experimental practices. Using this knowledge, I am consistently propelling forward to better my experience and abilities in order to get to the next level. Through being constantly challenged to progress and improve, I have been able to establish the drive needed to be successful in this profession.



PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE: Tristan Oliver BSC, Cinematographer



Tristan Oliver BSC is a British cinematographer best known for his work with Wes Anderson and Nick Park in the field of stop frame animated feature films.

His work has also covered live action and mixed media commercials, shorts and feature films. His early collaborations with fellow cinematographer and long term friend and mentor Dave Alex Riddett resulted in Academy Awards for the Nick Park/Aardman shorts, *The Wrong Trousers* and *A Close Shave* and the feature film, *Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. Tristan's credits also include: *Isle of Dogs*; *Loving Vincent*; *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; *ParaNorman*; *Fantastic Mr Fox*; *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*; *Chicken Run*; *Stage Fright*; *A Close Shave*; *The Wrong Trousers*; *War Story*.

Photographing model sets and miniatures for movies should first and foremost be about making them look right and making them look beautiful. There should be no concessions made to the medium. The size, apart from a few practical issues, is irrelevant.

The process falls broadly into two forms: stand-alone models which create a complete environment in themselves such as are used in stop frame animation films or into which some other animated or live action elements may be placed and models which extend and enhance existing full scale environments where to build the entire set in full size is prohibitive or where the extended view is somehow fantastic and very different from what is really there.

Let's look at an example from the stop frame animated feature film, *Isle of Dogs*. All the sets were constructed by hand. There is very little digital enhancement in this movie and so it is quite old school in its process. The film centres around Trash Island, a barren and abandoned archipelago which

once housed an animal testing facility and is now the municipal tip and home to thousands of feral dogs.

The whole idea with the testing facility was to create an air of despair and decay (Fig. 1) and also of scale within what was actually a very small space.

It is important to consider how what you are shooting fits within the structure and style of the film as a whole. One off beauty shots are one thing but the movie needs to feel like a coherent whole, as if one hand crafted it and so considerations must always be paid to lighting direction, colour temperature, time of day, shooting style and mood etc.

Fig. 2 shows the exterior of the set. Note the extraordinary detail in the construction of the windows with the shattered and dirtied panes of glass all contributing to the feel of the model. Also you can see the basic lighting set up using a row of upward facing cyc lights bouncing into two large sheets of polystyrene to create a very even flat light. I used a very light blue gel (1/4 CTB) on the lights in order to create a colder look and I created a faint sense of sun direction by using 1250W bulbs on the right hand side and 750W bulbs on the left. The gels are suspended away from the lights to prevent them burning through. ►

Fig. 1



Fig. 2





Fig. 3

► Fig 3. is the finished set, lit and ready to shoot. There are a number of small reflectors around the camera which are catching the main light and bouncing it back in in order to accentuate foreground details but in an entirely natural way. There is no end wall so we have to create what it would be doing in terms of bouncing the ambient light around.

The area below the platform at the end did read as very gloomy and it was hard to register detail in that part of the set so this was enhanced using short strips of LED lights which were concealed behind the roof beams. The effect is entirely believable as the light is coming down and is motivated by the high long window in the rear wall.

In addition you can see a small powerful spot light, heavily diffused which created an arena like centre space for the main action. Again this reads as motivated light from the glass ceiling panels.

To further add a sense of naturalism to the set, we shot a number of plates with atmospheric mist. This greatly enhances the sense of scale and depth and you get a lovely modelling effect where set components occlude the light and create shadow volumes in the space.

In terms of the actual shooting process, it makes sense to establish the space as a wide shot, so just as in any movie, you give the audience a sense of geography. I used a high camera position, equating to about 30' (10m) from the floor and a 20mm prime lens set at T16. (The camera here has a full frame (8 perf) sensor and the aspect ratio is 2.39:1 spherical)

This combination of lens and aperture brings a wide view with considerable depth of field. There is nothing more betraying of scale than having too shallow a focus. You immediately get a very 'modelly' feel and the sense that the camera is struggling to make the space look real. Tight apertures and wider lenses are definitely the way to go in these kinds of scenarios.

In cases where you are photographing elements to extend existing footage, it is of course essential that the components match exactly. Although this requires a deal of trial and error, you should always be looking to match focal length, aperture, camera angle, sensor size and aspect ratio or there is a risk that elements will 'float' relative to one another instead of reading as a cohesive whole or that you have to do a load of correction and fiddling. The more you can keep the same, the easier the composition.

"To further add a sense of naturalism to the set, we shot a number of plates with atmospheric mist..."

Additionally lighting direction, angle, type and colour temperature should be duplicated. Basically, measure and record **everything**.

I am often asked if I use a lot of very small lights in my work and actually I do but I also use a lot of very large lights.

Nothing gives away the scale of an exterior sunlit set more than using too small a key light. The way shadows fall away to mush and diverge is greatly exacerbated by this. Remember the sun is vast compared to Earth and although shadows do diverge and decay, they do so only relatively little because light coming from the sun is virtually parallel. (See below).

