Student Interview 2

Interview Date: 26/09/2020

Interview Location: Limerick Institute of Technology

(TIMECODE): 00:01:04:00

Interviewer: Okay so we’ll start off, can you tell me about yourself and what you are currently up to?

Participant: Currently so I have just finished my degree in Creative Broadcast and Film. And its kind of a path I have been on I guess for four or five odd years at this stage. And as soon as I did finish I knew I wanted to hit the ground running because I had that momentum from finishing. A lot of knowledge was fresh in my head and I knew that sound was definitely the sector or sub sector I wanted to specialise in. So I have just been doing everything I can to learn about that. And I have been lucky enough to land the trainee role in the last few months since finishing college. And that’s been brilliant because it’s in a mentorship dynamic with a very small sound team. It’s a two member, its boom op and sound mixer. So its has let me get a glimpse into both those roles and sort of just help out anywhere possible. But even more so it’s a kind of experience that you don’t necessarily get in an academic situation because it’s onset hierarchy and just kind of unspoken things that you pick up and sort of an atmosphere that you get used to and working around the different units and that’s something that’s really been good. So, I’m kind of just everyday I turn up to work and kind of trying to learn something and keep my notes and also just make kind of meaningful connections with people because I kind of realise even by virtue getting the job, its as much about how you come across to people and the connections you make as it is your actual technical skills and your degree in whatever. They both work in tandem. You cant really rely on just one and that’s kind of what I have come to learn.

TIMECODE: 00:02:40:15

Interviewer: So that’s great. Form the course point of view, what encouraged you to start that course that Creative Broadcast and Film Production course?

Participant: What encouraged me initially I was very interested in writing sort of career. So I had initially done creative writing and arts. That was my number one choice finishing school and a friend of mine had done a PLC and it was a one year kind of low level kind of film and tv thing. And Actually by helping him out on some of the projects like the end of year short film, I got a sense that it was a really interesting approach to working on stuff because you can work with friends but its an application of creative stuff and kind of logistics and just having your head screwed on. And I decided to forego the writing and actually do that PLC and stall it for a year with the option of going back. By the time I had finished that even though it was with the lowest level gear you can have and no real stakes or expectations, I knew I wanted to continue it somewhere that could facilitate more. And actually possibly break into the wider scene in Ireland and abroad. And that’s,… as soon as I started I kind of got a sense that it was enough technical knowledge to kind of skill me up but also enough creative scope to try out new things and that’s kind of been, that’s kind of the traction that gave me the last four years to keep going with it. I think its kind of important to have that.

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Interviewer: Was there something particular about this course that stood out for you?

Participant: Really I think, it could have been a lot but I think the fact that, it was kind of fortunate because I knew someone who had done it or was doing it and they had a lot to say about it and they kind of gave me an honest rundown of the positives and negatives. And I knew that I was capable of it in terms of like you know skill level and it wasn’t a very steep curve. But also, I was kind of excited to join in a city and move into a city because I never, I lived in the countryside and all my friends had been planning on moving to Limerick, so a lot of things kind of lined up. And it’s one of those things where at the time you just say, look I might as well try it. Like I’ve not got anything else that’s pushing me you know. Big opportunities leaping out. So, I’ll make the best I can of this. And I knew that it was… one thing obviously that did stand out to me was that it was at that time under the umbrella of a kind of engineering Bachelor of Science degree. And the position I was in at the time and I suppose, my family and parents, it seemed like a lot more of a maybe a practical approach. That you would come out of it with some sort of engineering focus as well as the creative element.

TIMECODE: 00:05:23:04

Interviewer: As regards to and again you said sound has been kind of your focus, but with sound and maybe even editing did you have any prior experience about those areas before coming into the course? I know you mentioned the PLC course and stuff but as regards yourself did you do any self directed learning about it. What did you know about maybe the editing side of it before you were exposed to it.

Participant: I knew very little about editing, the way it’s actually done in post-production. I think in terms of sound It would definitely have come from music, because I’ve been playing music even before I started secondary school and it has just developed a lot of things for me like a sense of rhythm and tone and pacing and I think that does go hand in hand with sound design and production sound. And that’s only been kind of confirmed over the years as I meet more people who are very tuned into sound. Even lecturers here or people on the job I’m in now, there is almost always a crossover between interest in music and live music and performance and also production sound. So, I think that’s true for me as well. It definitely was a thing where one led into the other. In terms of editing and the technical side, I think there is very little scope to actually learn about that when you are in school for me in Ireland because there’s very little focus on it. And you would almost know nothing about how these kinds of things are made until you go into college. Which is, I suppose it is a specific skill set on a specific sector. So, you can’t really expect too much but it was very much learning from the ground up and when I started editing and just messing around with software’s like the Adobe suite, it was kind of just every day you would pick away until you, with the clicks until you find something new. And that’s kind of the approach I’ve had with any software or any technical things since.

TIMECODE: 00:07:19:00

Interviewer: What was your experience now that you have moved onto the equipment and software? What would you say your experience has been with the equipment in college here?

Participant: The college I think its, there’s a lot of positives because you get a chance to try out a few things in terms of softwares and workflows that you will see again and again in the real world once you leave. I think that the thing with software is a lot of it, and I have talked to a lot of people since, is based on personal preference in terms of the interface and workflow and even just the visual representation. I think you can get bias towards or against softwares and equipment as well quite early. If something works for you once and you get a good result and you start to trust it, you almost get a sort of a maybe a fear of branching out or an unwillingness to learn something else because it’s harder or its you know, it’s more… its less instantly gratifying. You don’t get quick results right away. And that’s something that I definitely experienced in college. But as I went through college and as I started meeting professionals it dawned on me that you can’t really have that, if you're trying to break in at a young age, you have to just say okay, I’m gonna embrace this technology, no matter how hard it seems or how unintuitive it is. I’m just going to grind at it until it works. Because you could be in a situation where someone above you says, ‘okay we are doing this, and if you say I would rather do it this way, they’ll say well I don’t care this is how it is.’ And I definitely had that and like gear and software can be from its just it’s an infinite thing. It’s always going to keep progressing and get more complicated and you have to be adaptable in some ways and that’s… I think realising that during college was very helpful because if I just stuck to my own one or two trusted things like the ones I did during my PLC maybe Garageband and Premiere, I’d be a lot more limited than say I am now. And I’ve experienced things like Pro-tools and Avid or even slightly emerging softwares like DaVinci, it’s good to have those kind of feathers in your bow. Even if you're not an expert, to be able to pull up and say ‘I’ve used this before and I’m not an expert but I’m willing to learn’ as opposed to shutting yourself off and saying ‘no no its too hard for me’.

TIMECODE: 00:09:38:19

Interviewer: Well speaking of those pieces of software so and the wider equipment in the edit suites and stuff, do you feel that the lecturers across the course did well in informing you or giving you that knowledge, do you think that worked?

Participant: I think it does, and it did work for me because the position I was in in this college, I knew a lot of the lecturers that I kind of got the most from either had a lot of experience in the real world or were still currently working in the industry. And it’s a different thing than if they said, ‘well when I learned it, it was this that or the other’, but when they’re working day-to-day and they can show you evidence that this is the standard in the industry, and you need to learn it. Then you kind of perk up and go well If I’m going to make a proper attempt at working, I’ve gotta make an effort with this. So, that’s especially true of Pro-Tools and things like the Adobe Suite and also Media Composer. Particularly Pro-Tools because I am so interested in sound and I’ve kind of been learning on Premiere and maybe Logic and Garageband, I kind of baulked initially at Pro-Tools because it’s not welcoming whatsoever. And it feels like it was designed to match a system that I was born long after it was gone into fashion in that kind of way. But having been told by lecturers and then professionals since that, no this is what is still used so you have to suck it up and welcome it and get a good as you can. I think it was good in that sense. And I think its hard for lecturers to probably be an expert in everything because everything has its quirks and they have different applications and they’re kind of for different small tasks but in fairness for the time that’s in it for four years, I think the taste you got of everything was very sufficient for moving forward. And you can, if one particular strikes your fancy, you can definitely hone in on that and say, ‘ this is relevant to my industry, I’m going to go outside of college and learn as much as they can about it.’

TIMECODE: 00:11:43:14

Interviewer: I’m going to move onto another area now, can you describe to me your interpretation of craft and craftsmanship?

Participant: Craft and Craftsmanship…

Interviewer: for example, would you consider editing to be a craft?

Participant: to me just intuitively when I hear craft or craftsmanship, it makes me think of a certain kind of internal dedication to quality if you know what I mean. It’s sort of, its when people talk about woodworking or metal or say like engineering or electrics, it kind of like something that you dedicate yourself to and you have a high standard that you say I’m not going to let myself down by being shoddy or being like, pardon the language, but by being half assed in something kind of a way. And I think that’s kind of what craft feels like to me. And its something, it’s in the name I think. Its something that you hone over years but you never stop learning. I think that’s something that I try and carry forward. You can never be an expert completely in anything and anyone who says they are I think slightly deluded because there’s always going to be something that you can learn. And even if you think you have interpreted something fully, there’s always going to be a new update or something that throws you for a loop. And you should be kind of open to that. But to bring it back to craftsmanship I think It is that sense of continuously doing the best you can and kind of engaging with it on a personal level. Not just, this is a job I’m doing and its by the numbers and it’s a template. It’s kind of a slightly more intimate thing that you engage with it and you think about it outside of work or college. And that’s something that during college I realised pretty early on, you have to do in this line of work, I think you have to go home and not just say that’s finished now I can do whatever. I think if you're really going to be in the craft of it, it’s always somewhere in your head ticking over, you're saying ‘how did you do this’ or ‘how can I get better’ or this will you know could light a fire under you. And be it just watching things or watching YouTube videos about how things are done or just constantly keeping your mind ticking over. That to me and to other friends I have who want to do this kind of work that’s kind of what craft represents I think.

TIMECODE: 00:14:13:01

Interviewer: So, do you think that some of the lecturers use craft and craftsmanship in their teaching?

Participant: Definitely yeah, I think so, I think because lecturers are just people as well and they have, you know people have their different quirks and approaches. I think it’s not always consistent. I think and its definitely something that was talked about with peers and such going forward that you start to get a sense that some lecturers are very invested in the work on a personal level and some see it more as a job and they might have other pursuits so you know that sort of way and it’s not that’s not to criticise either approach because everyone’s situation is different. But I think there is a lot of craftsmanship in this course because there’s a lot of dedication to getting things right. You know it could just be a thing where students come in and they learn and then they try something, and they fail. And a lecturer could just say that’s fine you’ll get by and you’ll scrape by. But I think where the craftsmanship comes in is when you push someone to be better to be to get to the top of their potential because that’s very gratifying for someone whose also trying to be at the top of their game. Always I think that is kind of a key thing is just to recognise peoples strengths and encourage them to be the best they can because every day is an opportunity to get slightly better and I think if you're not doing that and not encouraging and be it by positive feedback or if someone needs a bit of a knock back to reality to say like this is not going to work and you ned to work harder, I think as long as it’s coming from a place of wanting the absolute best for them and for them to feel fulfilled then I think you're kind of on the right path. And that’s definitely something that I felt here in college particularly towards the end of it when the whole thing becomes a bit more real and you realise that in a year’s time I am going to be just relying on my own. You know, my own attitude and my own ethic going forward. No one’s going to hold my hand and say go here and go there and if you have been supported throughout your four years or whatever it might be I think it equips you with a lot of, it gives you a good attitude going forward because if you can do that going forward for other people the same way you’ve been encouraged I think you could do a lot worse.

TIMECODE: 00:16:37:09

Interviewer: So with that in mind, do you think the lecturer, say for example in editing or sound, do you think that they need to be a craftsperson to do, in order to teach that or to word it in another way does the lecturer need to come from industry in order to teach something like that?

Participant: I think for me its hard to imagine it another way. Yeah I think it’s hard to imagine someone coming in having a purely an academic understanding of something and they do it by the book. And you could get amazing grades that way and you could feel like you are getting by well but once you enter… if you plan to pursue this as a real job, once you enter the real world as such, you're not going to be relying on grades or how quickly you can remember figures and facts. You're going to be relying on that bit of passion and that fire in your belly that you have put in you by someone and I suppose it’s kind of easy to get bogged down in like in definitions but someone who’s worked in the industry and has had to be their best and push and do things that are kind of slightly out of the way or kind of go the extra mile, that’s kind of the only way that you’ll get by in this kind of industry I think. You don’t just coast. It’s not a place that you can sit by and do whatever. You need to make an impression on people and if someone has been in the industry for a long time they’ve obviously done that and so they obviously have things that they can pass on to the next generation that speak to that as opposed to just say, well this is how it literally is on paper. You know, do what you will with that and figure it out yourself.

TIMECODE: 00:18:20:23

Interviewer: Nearly there now, At home do you have your own workstation for editing or anything like that setup at home like you know is there a mini edit suite?

Participant: Yeah, I do I’ve kind of built it up over the last few years when I realised that it’s always good to have that at home so, I don’t know if it’s probably not relevant to the specifics of it but definitely like just enough to be able to process footage and sound. Be able to edit it together and also to compose a lot of the stuff I want to do is linked very closely to music and sound design. So, I’ve always got my keyboard in front of me plugged in and I’ve always got my headphones and a little notepad. And that’s kind of the basics of you know, when I said because when you’ve got those three things, you can sit down on any given day and try and generate something and then it’s often happened to me before where, I won’t necessarily have something to work on at the moment but I’ll be in the mood to maybe generate some sound or some texture, some music and I’ll do that. And I’ll save it and that’s fine and I have it in my workflow and then a few weeks later, and this happened a lot in college, something will come up and it’ll need that element of sound to tie it together like a shorter documentary and so they’ll go like well I got that already and I can put it up. And because I approach it that way as kind of a workstation and a dedicated space, it’s very easy to marry the two and edit the music together to whatever it is and then have a finished product and I’m very grateful. I’m very lucky to be in a position where I have access to those tools because it’s very tough sometimes to have that and especially in the circumstances over the last few months. The way I finished college we were given access to a lot of tools and software that would have been otherwise paid services and that you would have to be working to sustain but that was a great opportunity t just take advantage of that and pull everything together and work from home and I could definitely see the appeal of working from home during that time. Because I had access to what I needed like Adobe or Avid or ProTools or anything or Logic which is definitely my main go-to for music and sound. I could just kind of intermingle them and have a product that I sat down and worked on and finished all in one space. So, I think it’s probably essential really for students to try and get that as soon as possible even if its on a small scale like a laptop or even a small corner desk that they have a dedicated space to. Because I think it’s hard to work and engage with something if you're just on the go or you're doing it on your phone, or you have to use the services in the college. I think it’s very helpful to me to have your own space where you feel completely removed from time constraints or interference and sound or people coming in and you can really get stuck into something because that’s when a lot of the best work I’ve done. Or the work I’m happiest with has happened when I can sit down and just be on my own for a while and generate ideas and then leave it behind and go and make a cup of tea or whatever it is. And continue then and you feel there’s a nice compartmentalisation of it you know.

TIMECODE: 00:21:29:02

Interviewer: So, does that space that you’ve created for yourself does that make you feel more of a craftsperson or part of the craft?

Participant: Definitely yeah, I think so. I think having a space to sit down and engage and just completely… it could be a completely independent project. Like you just start, and you start making sounds or you download samples and you start playing with them and fill it around. To be able to do that on your own, on your own steam and not have someone tell you to, it generates a feeling that’s not like anything else really. It’s a certain kind of, it’s like a feedback of positivity when you do something, and you really like how it sounds or looks and it really pushes you to do more and see it through. Especially if you’ve got friends or peers of whatever that are, that will see something and really engage with it. you need that kind of personal drive that even if no one has given you assignments or jobs you’ll keep trying to make something interesting just to pass the time at the and the worst of times it’s just something to do and at the best it’s something that could lead to a big opportunity or a project you're really happy with.

TIMECODE: 00:22:38:07

Interviewer: Jus the last question now, where do you see yourself in the future?

Participant: I think what I’d like to see myself is in a position where I’m able to turn up for work and its something that as soon as I hit the ground, I’m prepared enough to know okay this is what needs to be done, and this is how this works. It’s something in the sound industry and I’ve had enough experience and kind of on-set experience and also a kind of theoretical knowledge the bigger picture because it’s something that I’m finding now that I’m working on my first big gig, it’s incredibly reassuring to turn up and as soon as you're given a job like it could be something like changing batteries and mics or bring out the gear and having it in such a way, you have a sense of the bigger picture and why this is that way and how this will make everything sound better and in turn how sound will increase the production as a whole. So, I think in the future I want to be in a position where I’m given a lot of responsibility over that and I can sort of work with others to make the whole thing come together. Because I think film and TV as a whole it’s a huge wheel with loads of tiny cogs that work together. And they somehow miraculously create something at the end because it’s quite a mess at the best of times but when it gets done its like it obviously works. It’s a system that works and I would like to be a very integral part of that in the sound department, and also be able to work with friends and collaborate and just try something new. So I think even in personal life I’d like to be able to finish work and then continue engaging with it but on a more independent level where there is no expectations or limitations and no kind of budget behind it or no one else worrying about it until the time where it actually becomes something good and then I can share it and share it with like-minded people and try and make something of it. I think that’s kind of the approach I’d like to follow.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Participant: You're very welcome, my pleasure.

INTERVIEW ENDED.