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**Academic-Industry Collaboration for Commercial Film and Television Production:  
an exploration of case studies**

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### Abstract

Over the past decade, new types of academic-industry collaborations for commercial film and television production have emerged that aim to help the university partner enhance vocational relevance of their programmes and the industry partner to both find and nurture new talent as well as enable more cost-effective means of production. Building on previous work, this paper considers two collaborative models: *University as 'Production Partner'* and *University as 'Service Provider'*. It presents an overview of case studies from a range of collaborations worldwide considering how these partnerships were structured, how stakeholder needs were considered, the benefit to students and graduates, and overall project effectiveness. It then looks in detail at the collaboration between the University of York, UK, and Green Screen Productions Ltd. for the creation of the feature film, *The Knife That Killed Me* (2014), backed by Universal Pictures UK. Findings suggest that both models are viable but that partners, particularly academic, must understand the nature of engagement in terms of how it relates to their institutional objectives to maximise benefit. It is suggested that these types of collaborations can be utilised in any industrial media setting globally so long as there is careful consideration of the needs and expectations of all participants.

*Keywords:* academic–industry collaboration, public–private partnerships, feature film production, television production, media business models

### **Academic-Industry Collaboration for Commercial Film and Television Production**

University film and television production courses have long been seen as a primary source of the industry's next generation of creative and technical talent<sup>1</sup>. But with growing numbers of students and greater competition in the sector, institutions have had to find novel ways to make their programmes stand out as well as to ensure their vocational relevance to a changing industry. Many universities have looked to include working practitioners in the support and delivery of courses to address these issues<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, the involvement of industry in informing higher education is increasingly being seen as important, as reflected in government-industry accreditation schemes such as ScreenSkills in the United Kingdom (ScreenSkills, n.d.). The availability of work experience opportunities or industry placements for students is now regarded as a required component of most taught programmes. However, with an increasing number of film and television courses being offered, providing these opportunities has become challenging as more institutions compete for a finite number of places.

Relatedly, the film and television industry is experiencing an arguably unprecedented period of change. Production companies are facing economic pressure from an over-saturated marketplace as well as changes to long established revenue streams as a result of 'digital disruption' – DeFillippi & Wikström (2014) and Holt & Sanson (2013) provide good overviews and analysis. Traditional television commissions and associated budgets have been decreasing at an appreciable rate over the last five years – Williams, C. (2019), Deen (2018) and Glennie (2015) document this clearly for the UK – and feature film budget levels are becoming polarised with the studios increasing reliance on 'tent pole' films and independent film shifting to 'no to low budget' models to be profitable – Fellows (2017)

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<sup>1</sup> Petrie & Stoneman (2014) provide useful overview of the development of film schools.

<sup>2</sup> This has generally been effective although there have been tensions as noted in Mateer (2019).

explores this shift in detail. As a result, many production companies have been forced to find more cost-effective means of developing, creating and distributing their product.

Over the past decade, new types of academic-industry collaborations for commercial film and television production have emerged that aim to help both university and industry partners address these issues and others they face. Building on previous work, this paper considers two models in particular: *University as 'Production Partner'*, where the university and company work together in a 'co-production' capacity; and *University as 'Service Provider'*, where equipment and/or facilities are used in direct support of production or postproduction (Mateer, 2018). It provides an overview of case studies from a range of academic institutions and industry partners worldwide, including major projects in North America, South America and Europe. How these partnerships were structured, the manner in which stakeholder needs were considered, the involvement and benefit to students, and the overall effectiveness of the projects based on stated partner aims are all explored.

This paper then looks in detail at the collaboration between the University of York, UK, and Green Screen Productions Ltd. for the creation of the feature film, *The Knife That Killed Me* (2014), which was backed by Universal Pictures UK and involved the author as an Executive Producer. This particular initiative was designed specifically as a research 'test bed', utilising a series of interviews and surveys, across preproduction, production and postproduction phases, with key participants and stakeholders to systematically assess the efficacy of this type of partnership. The paper concludes with an analysis of findings from this case study, as well as others presented, to provide insight into the advantages and challenges academic-industry collaborations can present in the media sector.

### **Methodology**

This paper draws, in part, on the author's prior work exploring academic-industry collaboration for feature film (Mateer, 2018) and expands on those findings where possible. For both the original and this article, a range of sources of information, compiled from 2008 onward, has been used. Primary

sources include in-person and email-based interviews with academic and industry personnel involved in relevant collaborations. In some cases, contacts were known to the author. In others they were obtained through contact lists from film-focused university organisations including CILECT and NAHEMI; referrals were considered as well. Secondary sources include information obtained through institutional web sites as well as news and trade press. Only projects released on a commercial basis – theatrically, direct to DVD, via a commercial online service such as Netflix, Amazon, etc. – as verified by Internet Movie Database Professional (<https://pro.imdb.com/>) or The Numbers (<http://www.the-numbers.com>) have been included. Financial figures cited are based either on primary source information, data published on institutional sources or from IMDB Pro<sup>3</sup>.

Details concerning the specific methods used for data gathering and evaluation of the academic-industry collaboration that produced *The Knife That Killed Me* are described in the section dedicated to that case study later in the article.

### **Models of Academic-Industry Collaboration in the Media Industries**

#### **Background**

As noted in the author's initial study (Mateer, 2018), formal exploration of academic-industry collaboration in the media industries is predominantly recent. The benefits to students in undertaking production work in a realistic setting have been explored in different contexts including curriculum design (Pfaff and Wilks, 1977; Sabal, 2009), media-specific work placements (Allen et al., 2012; Berger et al., 2013), and integration of the two, cf., Collis (2010). Holt (2013) considers industry engagement in support of 'screen studies' in different contexts although physical production itself is not considered.

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<sup>3</sup> Financial information should be seen as indicative unless otherwise stated. In most instances, it has not been possible to verify whether budgets listed are 'cost' (i.e., actual expenditure only) or 'cash-equivalent' (i.e., actual expenditure plus the value of all in-kind services).

Ashton (2016) describes related research in his examination of the relationship between higher education and the creative industries labour market.

Mateer (2018) outlined the potential benefits of academic-industry collaborations for commercial feature film production and explored a range of case studies. It also proposed that these collaborations could be categorised according to three distinct models: *University as Film Production Company with 'Soft' Investment*; *University as Film Production Company with 'Hard' Investment*; and *University as Film Production 'Service Provider'*. For the purposes of this paper, this has been simplified into two categories – *University as 'Production Partner'* and *University as 'Service Provider'*.

### **University as 'Production Partner'**

This model represents the most common form of academic-industry collaboration for the creation of feature films or television programmes. The term 'Production Partner' is used to suggest that the projects could not have been undertaken in the manner required without the support of the academic institution. Here, the academic institution provides some form of significant resource to enable production. This support can be described as 'hard', where the university is making a direct financial investment, or 'soft', where the investment is in-kind.

There are many examples of projects involving 'soft' support though the form this takes can vary significantly. The simplest involve allowing university staff time to undertake formal production roles. *Denial* (2016), a \$10M US-UK co-production starring Rachel Weisz, is a good example. Deborah Lipstadt, a Professor at Emory University in the United States, is the subject of the film and author of the book on which it is based. Emory agreed to give her time off to participate in the project if the production company would use campus as a shooting location and involve students where possible (Williams, K., 2016). As these requirements added authenticity to the production, the collaboration was straightforward to arrange and, although assistance provided by the university was comparatively

minimal, the project could not have proceeded in the manner it did without its consent, given Lipstadt is central to the story.

Many instances of universities acting as 'Production Partner' with 'soft' support are focused on furthering institutional objectives rather than generating revenue. Academic staff members who have industry experience often seek to undertake 'practice as research', which is seen in several countries, including the UK and Australia, as an accepted way in which to fulfil requirements for research output<sup>4</sup>. Typically, these projects are produced using a mix of in-kind support from their institutions as well as funding from external sources and involve students in production roles working alongside industry professionals from both inside and outside the academic institution. Three examples are *High Tide* (2015), directed by Jimmy Hay at Swansea University, *Laurence* (2016), produced by Sharon Teo-Gooding and co-written and co-directed by Richard Endacott at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and *Wilderness* (2017), written by Senior Lecturer Neil Fox at Falmouth University.

Despite the academic emphasis of projects undertaken as 'practice as research', obtaining commercial release is frequently regarded as key in order to demonstrate 'impact' and audience reach, common measures of the value of research – strategies for this are explored by Mateer & Haillay (2019). Indeed, in some instances, particularly television projects, the collaboration can originate with industry commissioning, with support from the academic institution brought in after that is secured. One example of this is the highly acclaimed 2011 Al Jazeera television series *Slavery: a 21st Century Evil*, which was supported by the University of York, UK. David Hickman, then a Senior Lecturer, produced and directed three episodes with postproduction support provided through his university department. Over 35 million people viewed the series and, as a result of its airing, \$3M was secured for the creation of a shelter for bonded labourers in Lahore and at least four people were known to have been freed

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<sup>4</sup> Although institutional acceptance of film practice as research varies markedly (Mateer, 2019).

from bonded slavery. The impact was viewed as so significant that the project was chosen to be one of the university's case studies for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (ibid).

Over the past decade a number of specialist university programmes have emerged that are specifically designed to involve students in the creation of commercial product. They include the *MA in Feature Filmmaking* at Bath Spa University and Fairleigh Dickinson University's *Summer Feature Film* programme, which has produced several projects – such as *Dark Tarot* (2014), *Stray* (2015) and *Title VII* (2017) – that have had commercial release. The *Masters Digital Feature Film Production*, run by Filmbase in Ireland, was arguably the most prolific of these programmes having supported several films with commercial release including: *Keys to the City* (2012), *How to be Happy* (2013), *Poison Pen* (2014), *Light of Day* (2014), *Fading Away* (2015), *Monged* (2015), *The Randomer* (2016) and *Writing Home* (2017). Filmbase worked closely with local industry in supporting and producing these projects but ultimately the organisation became financially unviable and folded in 2018 (Clarke, 2018)<sup>5</sup>. In all of these programmes, projects involved tutors with industry experience who served as liaisons to facilitate industry access and support. The academic institutions provided infrastructural support in terms of basic equipment, facilities and supervision, with additional production funding coming from external sources, including 'crowdsourced' funding (Mateer, 2018)

Although its degree programmes are not dedicated to feature film production per se, INCINE in Ecuador has supported their students in securing production support after graduation. Camilo Luzuriaga, Producer of OUTCINE, explains:

"Graduates start developing their feature projects during their fourth and last year of studies.

Once they are graduates, a commission of three teachers [...] keep track on the developing of

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<sup>5</sup> Filmbase's final feature film, ironically titled *The Comeback* (2018), had production completed through support from the Dublin Business School (Griffin, 2018).

the projects, through monthly meetings with the writers and producers of the projects, who have to be necessarily INCINE graduates. We help and support them to send the projects for funding. The project that gets the cash funding receives the OUTCINE support with equipment, transportation, wardrobe, props and other production and postproduction facilities.” (Luzuriaga in Mateer, 2018)

*The Law of the Swindler* (aka. *Distante cercanía, la ley del más vivo*, 2013) remains the most high-profile of the INCINE-supported projects as it secured international release through the Australian distributor, Galloping Films. A similar approach for development of feature films has been used by the Milano Scuola di Cinema e Televisione in Italy as well, involving professional production companies working with recent graduates to develop commercially viable projects (Mateer, 2018), although it has not been possible to confirm whether these initiatives are still active.

In a related model, the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) partnered with the commercial production company Two Kids and a Camera through a joint venture known as the Steeltown Film Lab (n.d.). This collaboration was driven by industry veteran Carl Kurlander, who became a Senior Lecturer at Pitt, and professional filmmaker Demetrius Wren. The primary objective of the collaboration was to merge academic film studies with actual film production to enhance both the educational experience and vocational relevance of their courses by having students work with industry professionals on a commercial project (Fike & Dyer, 2017). The initiative’s first feature film, *The Rehabilitation of the Hill* was completed in 2018 and distributed by sister company Steeltown Entertainment. While it has gained exposure in festivals, the project’s commercial success appears to be limited. Steeltown Film Lab remains active although plans for undertaking future feature film projects are unclear

Like Pitt, Point Park University, also located in Pittsburgh, looked to use academic-industry collaborations to “expand its cinema and digital arts offerings to a wider array of students who have the desire to forge a career in the entertainment industry” (Point Park University, 2014, May 21) but looked

at television production as well. In 2014 it developed and produced *The Chair*, a weekly hour-long reality series, working with premium US cable and satellite network STARZ. The project was produced by Hollywood veteran Chris Moore and actor Zachary Quinto (a Pittsburgh native) and also involved Steeltown Entertainment. Over 100 Point Park students and recent graduates worked on the series in a variety of production roles with supervision from industry professionals (Point Park University, 2014, April 10). Despite solid critical reviews (Rotten Tomatoes, *The Chair*, n.d.), viewing figures were weak and the series only lasted on the network one season (10 episodes)<sup>6</sup>.

Point Park also produced three feature films in conjunction with STARZ, all of which also involved Point Park staff, students and alumni working alongside established professionals. *Not Cool* (2014) and *Hollidaysburg* (2014) both utilised little known but up-and-coming talent and had budgets of approximately \$800K. Neither performed very well financially with revenue reports of \$140K (\$35K theatrical and \$105K from DVD) for *Not Cool* and less than \$4K overall for *Hollidaysburg*. *The Umbrella Man* (2016), Point Park's last feature film project, was directed by veteran Michael Grasso and produced by experienced television producer Philipp Barnett. Financial information about the project is scarce but the film has been reported as 'low budget' so it is reasonable to speculate that it is roughly consistent with Point Park's previous projects. It played several festivals but did not get significant theatrical release, ultimately being placed on video-on-demand services including iTunes and Amazon after airing on STARZ. In 2017, it was picked up by Super Channel in Canada (*The Umbrella Man Movie*, 2017). Given this release pattern it is highly unlikely that the project recouped its costs but it has not been possible to verify this. It is speculated that the poor performance of all four projects ultimately led to the disbanding of the partnership between Point Park and STARZ.

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<sup>6</sup> The series was subsequently picked up by Amazon Prime and is still available.

There are several instances of more complex implementations of the *University as 'Production Partner'* model that often involve the use of an intermediary company to serve as a bridge between the academic and industry partners (Mateer, 2018). Unlike the Steeltown Film Lab collaboration, these usually involve a direct cash – or 'hard' – investment by the academic institution. Given this financial commitment, universities expect the projects to generate significant benefit, either through profit or other tangible forms (e.g., increased institutional awareness, increased recruitment, increased donations, etc.). Likewise, risks to the academic institution are significantly higher in this type of model than those where the contribution is 'soft'. The scale of these risks can be significant, as exemplified by the case of the University of Texas Film Institute (ibid.)

In 2003, the University of Texas at Austin established the University of Texas Film Institute (UTFI), which was overseen by Prof. Tom Schatz, and a for-profit spin-out company, Burnt Orange Productions, run by industry veteran Carolyn Pfeiffer. The goal was to regularly produce commercial feature films that would involve students and recent graduates in production roles working alongside established industry professionals. The project was highly ambitious with the university planning to produce "eight to 10 high-quality, low budget independent feature films during its first three years of operation" (UT News, 2003). \$3M of private equity financing was raised to cover production and other related costs (Schatz, 2008) and a total of five films were produced. The first of these, *The Quiet* (2005), starred Hollywood actors Elisha Cuthbert and Edie Falco, and involved over fifty students and recent graduates in production. The film was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics and screened in over 300 theatres, but only grossed \$380K across all platforms. Given the production budget was \$900K this represented a significant loss.

UTFI's second project, *The Cassidy Kids* (2006), was scaled down as a result. It involved relatively unknown actors but still had over sixty students and graduates involved in the production, this time with many in key roles. Although official budget figures are not available, it is speculated that it

was at least \$300K. The film struggled to find distribution and, although it was picked up for broadcast by Independent Film Channel, it did not generate any significant revenue (Schatz, 2008).

The initiative's third project, *Homo Erectus* (2007) was "more of a project for hire" with much lower student involvement (ibid). Here, the collaboration model was more along the lines of *University as 'Service Provider'* in that name industry personnel – including established director Adam Rifkin – drove production although the university still had a financial stake. Schatz indicated that the project was intended specifically to generate revenue for Burnt Orange Productions (ibid). The film was picked up as a direct-to-DVD project and rebranded as *National Lampoon's Homo Erectus* (to utilise the name recognition of the well-known humour magazine). Although there was a pre-release order of 220,000 copies, and some theatrical revenue (the film generated just under \$100K worldwide), it did not recoup its \$1.1M budget. Schatz expressed disappointment with the project saying that it was not worthwhile pedagogically and poorly placed in terms of budget to be cost-effective (ibid).

UTFI produced two more feature films, both of which were much smaller in scale but, unlike previous projects, Burnt Orange did not provide funding. *Elvis and Annabelle* (2007) had a budget of \$240,000 and featured known actors including Joe Mantegna, Mary Steenburgen, Keith Carradine and Blake Lively. *Dance with the One* (2010) had a comparable budget but no 'name' cast. As with the first two UTFI projects, a significant number of students and recent graduates were involved in production. However, neither film was able to secure industry distribution and thus did not generate any notable revenue. The losses of these and the other UTFI films – it is estimated that Burnt Orange Productions accrued a deficit at one point of over \$760K (Daily Texan, 2013) – combined with the economic downturn of the late 1990s and budget cuts at the University of Texas meant that the UTFI initiative had become unsustainable (Schatz, 2010). Despite the many issues faced, Schatz was still bullish about academic-industry collaborations even after UTFI was suspended saying, "I remain convinced that

[academic-industry production collaborations are] something films schools should be pursuing.

Although original cable programming may make more sense these days than theatrical features” (ibid)<sup>7</sup>.

Chapman University, located in Orange, California, adopted a similar approach to UTFI and established Chapman Filmed Entertainment (CFE) in 2013 as a “launching pad” for students to enter the industry by working alongside professionals on projects with budgets ranging from \$250K to \$1M (Chapman University, n.d.). Although specific details are scarce, projects to date appeared to have been structured in a similar way to UTFI’s with several Chapman students involved in key production roles working alongside industry personnel and overseen by Chapman staff – Hollywood veteran Travis Knox, who has served as Producer on all of CFE’s films, is also an Associate Professor at the university. Principal financing seems to have been secured through private investment though details about how this was structured and the terms of investment are not available. Originally the initiative was similarly ambitious to UTFI’s, aiming to produce four to six films per year (Dodge College, n.d.)<sup>8</sup>, but to date, only one has been completed and released – *The Barber* (2014), starring Scott Glenn and Chris Coy. Revenue figures for the film show income of about \$775K and it is unclear whether the project recouped costs. After a four-year hiatus, CFE’s second project *Static* was shot in 2018 and appears to be close to completion (it is still listed as ‘in postproduction’ as of this writing) and two further projects are listed as ‘in development’ suggesting CFE’s model may be beginning to work. Indeed, the initiative seems to have value to the university as it continues to feature prominently in their advertising.

Of the large-scale *University as ‘Production Partner’* collaborations, those where the academic institution prioritises non-financial benefits, are arguably the most successful. Mateer (2018) described

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<sup>7</sup> The UTFI case is quite complex and included controversy surrounding the University of Texas Communication Foundation, the non-profit bridging entity that enabled the university to have financial dealings with Burnt Orange Productions. This has not been included here as it is not strictly relevant to this article, however, full details can be found in Mateer (2018).

<sup>8</sup> Subsequent press releases indicate the target is now two to three films per year (Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, 2018).

the first production initiatives at the US faith-based institutions Regent University, whose CEO is televangelist Pat Robertson, and Liberty University, whose President is Jerry Falwell, Jr., son of another famous televangelist. This section briefly reviews these and details their most recent activities. Both universities view promotion of their beliefs as a key aspect of their activities and have invested significant amounts in the creation of commercial feature films involving name Hollywood talent working alongside students and staff. Rather than create spin-out entities like UTFI or CFE, these institutions commission and fund projects internally only bringing in industry as needed to ensure production quality and raise public visibility.

Regent's first feature film project was the comedy *In-Lawfully Yours* (2016), featuring US television stars Marilu Henner and Corbin Bernsen, and was budgeted at \$625K. Dean of the School of Communication & The Arts, Mitch Land, served as the film's Executive Producer and more than 80 students worked on the project in a range of production roles (Regent University, 2016). The film was promoted through Robertson's *The 700 Club* – which claims a viewership of over 300M people (CBN, n.d.) – but grossed just \$120K worldwide. Despite failing to recoup costs, the university trumpeted that the project “enjoyed great success on multiple levels” and a second project, *Mary for Mayor* (2020) was commissioned for production in 2018 (Regent University, 2018). It was released in April 2020.

Liberty University states that it has produced five films through an academic-industry collaboration model but it appears only one has had commercial release. *Extraordinary* (2017), a drama starring established actors Karen Abercrombie and Kirk Cameron with a \$2M budget, was touted as the first “feature film created by a university film program [released] in movie theaters nationwide” (Liberty News, 2017) having screened in 400 US cinemas. However, the film grossed only \$55K. Despite this low financial performance, Liberty subsequently produced *The Trump Prophecy* (2018), a drama based on the 2017 book by Mark Taylor. Like *Extraordinary* the film also had a \$2M budget and a wide North American release (in over 550 theaters) but no ‘name’ cast. Financial performance was notably better

with theatrical revenue of over \$670K and DVD income of just over \$60K but this still falls well short of covering costs. In both instances, over 50 students were involved in the project working alongside both university staff and industry professionals (Smith, 2018).

Considering the income generated and the faith-based nature of Liberty and Regent, it would seem quite likely that the return on investment from these projects and value to the institutions is not being considered in terms of revenue but rather for their educational and, principally, evangelical benefits.

Academic institutions can also consider benefits in non-financial terms if all project funding is fully secured and constrained. In some instances, this can mean project support comes from an existing resource within the institution, which can inherently contain its scope. In others, financial support comes in the form of a grant without which the project (and collaboration) could not take place.

The University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) has produced feature film projects involving the Computer Science and Film Studies departments working jointly. This interdisciplinary initiative enabled engineering and film students the opportunity to work together alongside industry professionals on films financed (in part) by MU's Interdisciplinary Innovation Fund and produced through MU's Project IT production company (Wiese-Fales, 2011). These projects included *Mil Mascaras vs. the Aztec Mummy* (2007), *Academy of Doom* (2008) and *Aztec Revenge* (2015) – three 'Lucha Libre' themed films directed by Chip Gubera, Professor of Practice in the Computer Science department, written by Jeff Uhlmann, an Associate Professor of Computer Science, and co-produced with local professional companies including Osmium Entertainment and Boster Castle. Each of the films involved students working in various crew roles. The first two were budgeted at approximately \$800K each and were distributed by Monogram Releasing with limited theatrical and DVD release. *Aztec Revenge* was a much smaller project with a budget of \$20K and only had festival exhibition. Financial performance data for these films is scarce but it appears the initiative has been seen as a success as *Lost Treasure of Jesse James*, a new feature film

collaboration involving Gubera, MU students and Boster Castle, recently completed production (Gubera, 2018) and is in postproduction at the time of writing.

Two feature film projects produced at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, *State of Aloha* (2009) and *Go For Broke* (2018) are good examples of academic-industry collaborations facilitated by external grant funding. Here both projects involved themes of heritage and cultural identity that made them eligible for state and national funding. *State of Aloha* was a documentary commissioned to commemorate Hawaii gaining US statehood. It was funded in 2004 by a \$400K grant from the General Services Administration (GSA), part of the US government. Anne Misawa, an established cinematographer and producer, was hired by the university as an Associate Professor in the Academy for Creative Media (ACM) specifically to oversee the project. Production took place over a four-year period with students playing a significant role, shooting segments and conducting interviews. What is of particular note is that the project was embedded in the curriculum so students obtained credit as well as experience through working with professionals (Misawa, 2019). The film was completed in 2009 and released by the US public broadcaster PBS. The university viewed the project as highly successful, which led to ACM looking for other forms of industry collaboration (ibid)<sup>9</sup>.

ACM's second feature film project, *Go For Broke* (2018), is a dramatized account of the formation of the United States Army's 442nd Infantry Regiment that was comprised almost exclusively of second-generation Americans of Japanese descent. The story is culturally significant in that the 442nd was the most highly decorated combat unit in World War II and changed public perception of Japanese Americans such that statehood for Hawaii became possible. Here, \$200K in state grant aid was secured given the historical significance of the story. Terms of the grant required co-production so the

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<sup>9</sup> Misawa noted challenges in cash-flow management as university systems are not designed for the rapid response required by industry so some logistical aspects were less successful.

project was explicitly set up to involve industry although Misawa again acted as Producer. Over 30 students and alumni worked as crew on the project (comprising more than half overall) with industry professionals acting as department heads. Staff from ACM, led by Misawa, oversaw the creative aspects of the project. Although the project was not intended to make money (ibid) it was successfully received at several film festivals and garnered good press reviews (Rotten Tomatoes, Go For Broke, n.d.). As with *State of Aloha*, the project was seen as a strong success by all stakeholders.

Outside of the United States there are examples of academic institutions engaged in industry collaborations acting as a 'Production Partner' with direct financial investment but these are less common. As with the models above, all involve students working alongside professionals during production. In Israel, the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School collaborated with Channel 2 TV for *Miss Entebbe* (2003), which also had financial support from the Jerusalem Fund and the Israeli Lottery Fund. Despite significant festival recognition, including winning a 'Crystal Bear' award at the Berlin International Film Festival, the film only generated limited revenue and the school did not recoup the \$250K investment (Shahar, 2012). In Singapore, the Puttnam School of Film at the Lasalle College of the Arts produced *Sandcastle* (2010), a feature film with a budget of \$330K that was directed by Junfeng Boo. The film received several significant festival nominations, including the 'Critic's Week Grand Prize' at Cannes, and secured international distribution. Although there is no financial data available, Lasalle College was said to have been very happy with the performance of the project and was looking to expand support through an 'incubation' model (Mateer, 2018). However, it does not appear that the school has been involved with any further feature films.

Live Lab initially appeared to be one of the largest academic-industry collaboration initiatives outside of North America but its scope has changed. It was established in 2010 by the Griffith Film School in Australia as an "in-house production studio [...] offering students a unique opportunity to work in industry whilst studying" (Live Lab, n.d.). Originally, feature film production was seen as a priority:

“We are now Australia’s largest film school and [...] we want to give our students the opportunity to work on long-form films and open up opportunities for industry collaboration” (Herman van Eyken, Head of Griffith Film School, in Crossen, 2016).

In 2015 they produced an adventure comedy entitled *Bullets for the Dead* (2015) collaborating with VisionQuest, veteran producer Norm Wilkinson’s production company. The project had a budget of \$2M and secured distribution through GSP Studios International, who had previous involvement in feature film collaborations with universities (detailed below). Although financial data is not readily available, it appears that this project did not generate enough revenue to break even and the film was Visionquest’s last. As of this writing, Live Lab is still active but the emphasis has changed such that the projects supported are now smaller in scale. The ability to partner in broadcast co-productions is still mentioned on the Live Lab web site but the majority of projects listed are short form (Live Lab, n.d.).

In the United Kingdom, both the Met Film School (MFS) and National Film and Television School (NFTS) collaborate heavily with industry. MFS launched Met Film Production (MFP), an independent production company, in 2007 two years after it relocated to Ealing Studios, the oldest commercial film studio in the world (Ealing Studios, n.d.). Jonny Persey, MFS’s Chief Executive noted that this move was by design, “We pride ourselves on blurring the boundaries between education and industry” (in Mateer, 2018). The goal was to provide production opportunities for students to “cut their teeth on real industry projects” (ibid) working on films developed and overseen by MFS staff – many of whom come from industry – and working with other professionals. Although not all of the projects MFP is involved in are academic-industry collaborations, many are. *Town of Runners* (2012), *How to Change the World* (2015) and *Sour Grapes* (2016) were all produced through MFP and overseen by Head of Documentary for MFS, Al Morrow. While the financial performance of these projects has not been strong – with reported gross revenue of \$35K, \$179K and \$25K respectively – MFP has nonetheless been actively producing projects using this model. Most recently, they produced *Swimming with Men* (2018), which

grossed over \$1.4M and involved 12 recent graduates in production. Their most recent release was *Last Breath* (2019), a Netflix documentary project involving Morrow that grossed just under \$30K.

Although they are not involved in feature film production, the National Film and Television School's academic-industry collaboration model is worthy of discussion as it features strong industry backing. *The Bridges to Industry* programme is specifically designed to enable short film projects pitched by recent NFTS graduates to obtain direct financial support from industry that would otherwise be exceedingly difficult to secure – both BBC Films and Channel 4 Films are involved. They provide a cash contribution to each production with all equipment and facilities being provided by NFTS. Production crew are comprised of other recent graduates and some professionals on a paid basis but at low rates to maximise budget (Wardle, 2019). The benefit to the industry partners is that they can find new talent – not only 'high-flyers' but also those who can work effectively in support roles. For NFTS, it is a means to "jump-start" the careers of their graduates, effectively serving as a "mid-point between the school and (paid industry work)" (ibid). The model has been in use since 2016 and supports approximately six projects annually.

The examples above demonstrate that the implementations of the *University as 'Production Partner'* model have varied from institution to institution with the level of success and risk seemingly linked. Initiatives that have not relied on revenue generation or wide-scale distribution have been the most successful for the universities. Conversely, those with more ambitious 'studio-like' models have struggled in large part due to difficulties in establishing a sufficient and consistent revenue stream. The risks associated with direct financial involvement are arguably disproportionately high if return on investment is considered to be a priority.

### **University as 'Service Provider'**

The proliferation of film and television courses world-wide has arguably been driven by both an increased demand for media product (and thus industry personnel) and a lower cost of entry for

academic institutions with the advent of more cost-effective technologies. This has resulted in several universities and other academic organisations investing in facilities that are effectively on par with commercial studios<sup>10</sup>. Apart from many CILECT member organisations<sup>11</sup>, which often are well-equipped given the nature of their focus, other institutions such as Birmingham City University (n.d.), The University of Salford (n.d.) and the University of York (discussed below) in the UK have recently made significant investments in facilities to support their media production-related programmes. Some of these institutions are now looking to both maximise their return on investment and enhance the student experience by making their resources available to industry. This has given rise to the *University as 'Service Provider'* model for academic-industry collaboration. Here, the academic institution only provides logistical or infrastructural support to the projects with the industry partner, engaging with them in essentially the same manner it would engage a commercial service provider such as an equipment hire company, a film or television studio complex or a postproduction house. All creative control, funding and overall logistical responsibility therefore rests with the industry partner. This model represents the lowest risk to academic organisations as access can be controlled so that commercial activities only take place in quiet periods. That said, limitations on access can make this form of collaboration difficult. Likewise, culture clashes and differing expectations between partners can mean that supporting projects effectively is not always straightforward. Because of the sporadic nature of service provision – it occurs on a per-project basis – and commercial sensitivities surrounding many film and television projects, it is difficult to provide an accurate account of how many academic institutions are currently involved in this type of collaboration due to confidentiality concerns. However, three UK institutions actively acting *University as 'Service Provider'* are described below.

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<sup>10</sup> The ambitiousness of some universities is exemplified by Leeds Beckett University's £80M Creative Arts building project (Leeds Beckett University, n.d.).

<sup>11</sup> CILECT is the International Association of Film and Television schools whose members are often regarded as offering the top programmes in their respective countries.

Birmingham City University opened Curzon Street Studios in 2013, which is presently comprised of five television studios, six radio studios, three Avid editing suites, two dedicated Pro Tools-based audio postproduction suites and a range of HD production equipment (Curzon Street Studios, n.d.). These are available for 'wet' or 'dry' hire<sup>12</sup> although it is not apparent what background operators have (i.e., whether they are BCU staff, students or bought-in industry experts). These are shared teaching spaces and how commercial activity is accommodated around this is unclear.

The University of Salford is situated within MediaCity UK, a media production complex located at the Salford Quays near Manchester, that includes a range of professional media organisations including ITV and serves as the regional headquarters for the BBC. The university features its own commercial grade facilities, including two HD television studios, three professional radio studios and a large format dubbing theatre for audio postproduction, all of which are available for commercial hire. As is the case with BCU, these are shared teaching spaces but the way in which industry projects are accommodated and the level of student involvement is unclear.

The University of York's involvement as a 'Service Provider' for commercial feature film and broadcast television projects dates back to 2006<sup>13</sup>. This started with *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* (2007), a feature film produced by Bauer-Martinez for MGM Studios that stars Joely Richardson and Tom Berenger. The author, then part of the Department of Electronics, was approached by the film's Visual Effects Supervisor, Kit Monkman, whose team was responsible for creating composites for a handful of 'blue screen' shots for the film. Given the scope of work was small, Monkman thought he could train students to complete the sequences using the compositing software Shake. The department was receptive to this, five students were selected to participate and an office space was secured for the

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<sup>12</sup> 'Wet' hire refers to rental of facilities with operators included; 'Dry' hire is rental of facilities only.

<sup>13</sup> The author was directly involved in several of the projects at the University of York. The majority of information provided in this section is first-hand although additional sources have been included where possible.

team on the University's Science Park (University of York, 2006). As the work progressed, the producers became increasingly impressed with the quality of the students' work and allocated more shots to the team for compositing – this grew substantially to nearly 30 finished minutes of the 91 minute film. The project was seen as a great success with students gaining paid work experience, the University obtaining positive press and Bauer-Martinez receiving solid visual effects work at a reduced cost.

Around the same time, the University decided to establish a new Department of Theatre, Film and Television (TFTV)<sup>14</sup> as part of the first phase of its £750M Heslington East campus expansion. Part of the funding for the department was provided by a grant from the European Regional Development Fund. Conditions of the grant required that the department facilitate a number a business 'assists', supporting local companies to add value to the regional economy (Mateer, 2018). The University took the view that these requirements could be met by providing professional production and postproduction facilities to support film and television projects. Although this required a higher level of investment than was originally envisioned, it was felt that students would benefit from learning using industry-standard equipment and through the ability to work with professionals on commercial projects (ibid). TFTV's bespoke £25M building opened in September 2010.

To manage commercial use of the facilities, the University set up Heslington Studios eighteen months later (University of York, 2012, n.d.). Through this business vehicle a range of broadcast television programmes were supported including sound mixing for the BBC 1 series *In the Club* and *The Syndicate* as well as postproduction support for Channel 4's popular *Location, Location, Location* and BBC 1's *Emergency Rescue Down Under* (produced by AirTV, which had offices in the University's Ron

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<sup>14</sup> TFTV changed its name to the Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media (TFTI) in 2019.

Cooke Hub). In addition, numerous feature films were supported including *First Night* (2010)<sup>15</sup> starring Richard E. Grant and Sarah Brightman, *Mad to Be Normal* (2017) starring David Tennant, and John Hurt's final film, *That Good Night* (2017). Since 2010, over 20 commercial feature films and 10 commissioned broadcast television programmes, as well as a range of interactive media projects and industry-related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, have been supported by TFTV. This has yielded dozens of paid placement for students and jobs for several graduates as well as generated income to the university approaching £500K (Mateer, 2018). However, despite these benefits, the use of Heslington Studios to enable this work began to be seen as disproportionately expensive to run due to staff overheads. In 2016, the decision was taken to dissolve it, with TFTV management itself taking over commercial engagement activities (ibid).

Several of the film projects supported by TFTV were in collaboration with Green Screen Productions (GSP), an independent feature film production company established by veteran Producer Alan Latham, with Oscar-winning Producer Stephan Evans serving as its Chairman. These films were part of an 'umbrella agreement' between GSP and Heslington Studios (brokered by the author in 2011) that gave GSP priority access to TFTV facilities out-of-hours. GSP guaranteed a minimum of five commercial feature films per year brought to the department that would be funded externally but produced with TFTV resources in large part. A fee would be paid to the university for each project and it was to receive a small profit-share as well (University of York, 2012, March 8). Despite multiple projects having been brought in, the volume was not as high as promised. GSP was late with payments on various occasions and tension arose between the uncertain culture of independent filmmaking and the regularity required by academia. Despite this friction, TFTV's management decided to expand the umbrella agreement in

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<sup>15</sup> The film's UK release was in 2010 but the Producers wanted to recut it to better target the US market. It was this work that was supported by Heslington Studios, enabling US release in 2013.

2016 in order to simplify its commercial dealings in light of the dissolution of Heslington Studios. However, unbeknownst to the university, GSP got into tax trouble with the UK government and was forced to cease trading at the end of that year. This effectively killed the collaboration as it created significant distrust (Mateer, 2018). Although the partnership with Green Screen Productions ended on a sour note, some of the projects undertaken are still seen as highly innovative and successful examples of academic-industry collaboration, in particular *The Knife That Killed Me* (2014).

### ***The Knife That Killed Me – A Case Study***

*The Knife That Killed Me* is a highly stylised dramatic feature film backed by major film studio Universal Pictures UK that was seen as a ‘flagship’ project for the umbrella agreement between Heslington Studios and Green Screen Productions. Unlike the majority of projects supported under the agreement, this was an instance where the University of York acted as a ‘Production Partner’ rather than ‘Service Provider’. The film is based on the best-selling teen book of the same name by Anthony McGowan and featured a unique sketch-like look that blended abstract and photo-realistic computer graphics with live-action that was shot on green screen – see Figure 1 for examples of the visual style. The team behind it included Kit Monkman, here in a Directing capacity, working alongside theatre veteran Marcus Romer as Co-director; Alan Latham and Tom Mattinson, the producing team behind *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey*, were the film’s Producers. The author had a dual role as an Executive Producer as well as the film’s Visual Effects Producer. What was unique was that the entire visual effects team consisted of recent TFTV graduates – without any prior professional experience – who were hired as staff by GSP with full industry salaries. The seven-member team, overseen by the author and Visual Effects Supervisor Tom Wexler, was located in a dedicated room within the TFTV building and the facilities used were a mix of GSP equipment and department resources. Initially, having such an inexperienced team with the responsibility of delivering an entire visual effects-heavy film was problematic as several completion bond companies felt the project was too risky thus funding could not

be secured easily. However, after various test sequences were created to prove that the team could deliver, bonding was obtained and financing was completed. In total, the production took two years to finish, which is remarkable given the very small size of the VFX team and complexity of the work<sup>16</sup>.

The film itself was generally well received and garnered some strong reviews, including being named the “10th Best Film of 2014” by the Huffington Post (Crow, 2014), earning a four-star rating in The Times (Ide, 2014) and being an official selection of Alice nella Città, a side bar competition of the Rome Film Festival. However, the film, which has an extreme look, also polarised reaction. It was given some less favourable reviews from The Guardian (Felperin, 2014) and Empire Magazine (Parkinson, 2014). As a result of this mixed response, Universal did not see value in marketing it heavily and the film obtained only limited theatrical release generating a disappointing level of revenue. However, the visual effects were universally lauded as ‘innovative’ and ‘high quality’. The response was such that Green Screen Productions spun-out the visual effects team to form a new company called Viridian FX. As a result, both GSP and TFTV viewed the collaboration as a success, entering into a second production partnership in 2015 to produce a green screen version of *Macbeth* (2018)<sup>17</sup>.

Uniquely, *The Knife That Killed Me* also served as a formal means to assess the viability and efficacy of academic-industry collaborations for feature film production. Given the author’s dual role as academic and practitioner, he was able to get consent from a wide range of stakeholders including University of York and GSP staff, students and recent graduates, and others involved in the project such as hired crew (who were not GSP staff) and investors. Three surveys were conducted using Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/>) to gauge expectations and perceptions of the project – one prior to the start of production; one after the completion of principal photography; and one when

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<sup>16</sup> To put this in perspective, *Sin City* (2005) had over 80 visual effects artists working on just one of its three segments and the overall scope of its postproduction work was roughly comparable (DiLullo, 2005)

<sup>17</sup> The project was started in 2015 and completed before GSP ceased trading although the film was not released until 2018. Further details can be found in Mateer (2018).

the film was completed before release. For each survey, participants were asked basic questions to understand their specific relationship to the project and then presented with a series of statements with which they had to indicate their level of agreement: *Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or Don't Know*. The discussion below identifies key reactions and sentiments of the participants but a more in-depth analysis is needed to break this down by stakeholder group – this is an area for future work.

The first survey was designed to assess expectations of the project. In total 19 participants completed the survey: 8 from GSP, 3 from the University, 5 hired crew and 3 others – see Table 1 for a breakdown of responses. It is interesting to note that the respondents were generally quite optimistic about the prospects of this type of collaboration (particularly that it might work on a range of productions) but thought that industry would be sceptical of this model. The respondents also seemed to feel that there are potentially significant benefits to the University and students.

The second survey was intended to gauge perceptions of the project directly after principal photography was completed but prior to postproduction. Overall 17 people responded: 7 from GSP, 1 from the University, 7 from hired crew and 2 others – see Table 2 for a breakdown of responses. Here views are somewhat more varied although there is general agreement that the use of recent graduates was received favourably and did not detract from the overall production process despite the majority feeling that they clearly were not professionals. Likewise, less than 20% felt that the efficiency of production was adversely affected by having a comparatively inexperienced crew<sup>18</sup> and all felt that the experience would enhance the students' and graduates' employability. It is also interesting to note that

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that the visual effects team was heavily involved in production given the unique way in which shooting had to be conducted given there were up to 20 camera passes required for each shot.

after production had finished, all of the respondents felt that this type of collaboration would be beneficial to industry.

The final survey was intended to gauge stakeholder reaction to the finished film so the participant base had a slightly different profile with 19 respondents in total: 9 from GSP, 6 from the University, 3 from hired crew and 1 other – see Table 3 for a breakdown of responses. This survey focused in large part on the perceived quality of the finished film. It is interesting that over 80% of respondents felt that the film was of a comparable standard to other commercial feature films yet only about half felt that it would be apparent that it was a studio-backed project. All respondents felt that there were benefits to the University in terms of enhancing teaching and generating publicity. It is notable too that all respondents felt that this specific implementation of the academic-industry model enabled the film to be made in a way that would not be otherwise possible. This feeling is likely related to the unique production methods used given the experimental nature of the computer graphics and would suggest that the use of a similar collaborative model could fill a niche in the support of projects that are more creatively ‘risky’. That said, nearly all respondents indicated that industry would likely be sceptical of these collaborations, which suggests adoption of the approach could be difficult.

As noted above, a deeper level of analysis is required to identify particular views of the individual stakeholder groups. However, the data does suggest that the project was seen positively overall with the potential for significant benefit to all involved.

### **Conclusions**

The case studies above show a wide range of experiences for those organisations undertaking academic-industry collaborations for commercial feature film or television production. While there is clear evidence that both models – *University as ‘Production Partner’* and *University as ‘Service Provider’* – can be effective and seen as worthwhile, stakeholder definition of what constitutes ‘success’ is critical.

Collaborations where the objectives are closely aligned with traditional goals of the academic partner are most likely to succeed. However, this is dependent on the level of ‘hard’ investment and thus overall risk. Projects where the academic resource commitment is limited to staff time (e.g., *Denial* produced at Emory University) or existing facilities that have available capacity (e.g., Birmingham City University, University of Salford and University of York) have been shown to be highly effective. Likewise, even where there is a financial commitment by the academic institution, these collaborations can be worthwhile if the intended outcomes support traditional activities, such as research or teaching, but full return-on-investment or profit is not seen as a main requirement – as exemplified by the projects at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the various examples of practice-as-research at Falmouth University and elsewhere. Indeed, the clearest evidence of this is from the films produced by Regent University and Liberty University where there was significant financial investment which was not recovered yet the projects have been seen as highly successful as generating income was not a priority.

Partnerships that rely more on commercial success (and subsequent income) are potentially problematic even if core project objectives are traditional. Some collaborations, such as those at Point Park University and Filmbase, had some success but were ultimately unsustainable financially. Others where the academic institution investment was higher, such as the initiatives at Griffith University and the University of Texas’ UTFI, demonstrate that relying on income generated by the product developed through collaborations can be risky and financially dangerous. Volatility and over-saturation in the marketplace mean that securing distribution alone – even from ‘name’ distributors – is often insufficient to ensure adequate financial return. The monetisation of film and television content is proving to be

increasingly challenging due to 'digital disruption'<sup>19</sup> so focusing on income generation is arguably ill-advised.

Finally, it is apparent from the review of these case studies that for either the 'Production Partner' or 'Service Provider' model to be effective, the academic institution needs to recognise (if not embrace) the cultural and operational differences between academia and industry. Projects where there was understanding by the academic partner of the need for timely decision making, rapid reaction and response to changing circumstances, and the unpredictability of cash-flow and revenue that is common in the film and television industry, were the ones with the highest level of benefit (even if long-term success was not sustained). Although academic-industry collaborations for commercial film or television production can involve significant risk, they have the potential to be successful if they are carefully designed with clear objectives and an understanding of the business environment in order to minimise that risk.

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<sup>19</sup> Tryon (2013) provides a detailed account of this including emerging changes to delivery mechanisms and subsequent impact on consumption patterns and revenue streams.

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**Table 1***First survey, to assess stakeholder expectations of the project prior to production commencing*

<b><i>The Knife That Killed Me – Expectations</i></b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The quality of the finished film can be as good as standard commercial projects	31.58% 6	42.11% 8	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	15.79% 3
Industry is sceptical of this type of production model	11.11% 2	44.44% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	44.44% 8
Using students and recent graduates for crew takes jobs away from freelancers	0.00% 0	33.33% 6	27.78% 5	22.22% 4	16.67% 3
This type of production model is riskier than that for traditional commercial film projects	5.26% 1	47.37% 9	31.58% 6	10.53% 2	5.26% 1
This type of production model is potentially more profitable than that for traditional commercial film projects	5.26% 1	52.63% 10	31.58% 6	0.00% 0	10.53% 2
Using students and recent graduates will mean that production schedules are longer than for traditional commercial film projects	10.53% 2	47.37% 9	21.05% 4	0.00% 0	21.05% 4
This type of production model can work for all types of feature film productions (e.g., live action, animated, mixed, etc.)	10.53% 2	63.16% 12	10.53% 2	5.26% 1	10.53% 2
Academic-commercial partnerships allow more creative freedom than traditional commercial film projects	21.05% 4	47.37% 9	21.05% 4	0.00% 0	10.53% 2
Using students and recent graduates will mean that production budgets can be lower than those for traditional commercial film projects	42.11% 8	47.37% 9	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	5.26% 1
This type of production model enables certain types of films to be made that would not be made otherwise	31.58% 6	42.11% 8	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	15.79% 3
Academic-commercial partnerships are a sustainable business model	26.32% 5	42.11% 8	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	26.32% 5
Academic-commercial partnerships are simply a way to exploit public resources for commercial gain	0.00% 0	10.53% 2	36.84% 7	42.11% 8	10.53% 2
This type of production model can enable the University to gain publicity that it could not otherwise	42.11% 8	57.89% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
This type of production model can enable the University to generate significant revenue that it could not otherwise	36.84% 7	47.37% 9	0.00% 0	5.26% 1	10.53% 2
This type of production model can enhance the University's teaching	78.95% 15	15.79% 3	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Studios will embrace this type of production model	15.79% 3	26.32% 5	31.58% 6	0.00% 0	26.32% 5
Academic-commercial collaboration is beneficial to the industry	36.84% 7	52.63% 10	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	5.26% 1

**Table 2**

*Second survey, to gauge perceptions of the project directly after completion of principal photography*

<b><i>The Knife That Killed Me – After Production</i></b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The professionalism of recent graduates during production was high	52.38% 11	38.10% 8	4.76% 1	0.00% 0	4.76% 1
It was easy to tell recent graduates from established professionals during production in the way they work	4.55% 1	36.36% 8	40.91% 9	18.18% 4	0.00% 0
The production value (i.e., quality) of this film has likely suffered due to the involvement of recent graduates	0.00% 0	27.27% 6	18.18% 4	50.00% 11	4.55% 1
Inexperience of recent graduates slowed production down	9.09% 2	13.64% 3	22.73% 5	40.91% 9	13.64% 3
Roles filled by recent graduates would have been better filled by established freelancers	4.55% 1	27.27% 6	22.73% 5	45.45% 10	0.00% 0
Only specialist films like this (i.e., green screen projects) can accommodate this number of recent graduates as crew	0.00% 0	36.36% 8	31.82% 7	18.18% 4	13.64% 3
This type of production model enables certain types of films to be made that would not be made otherwise	40.91% 9	40.91% 9	4.55% 1	4.55% 1	9.09% 2
Academic-commercial partnerships are a sustainable business model	36.36% 8	40.91% 9	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22.73% 5
Academic-commercial partnerships are simply a way to exploit public resources for commercial gain	4.55% 1	9.09% 2	22.73% 5	36.36% 8	27.27% 6
The equipment acquired from the University was of a professional industry standard	54.55% 12	22.73% 5	4.55% 1	0.00% 0	18.18% 4
The equipment acquired from the University required more set-up and maintenance than that from a professional hire company (e.g., Provision)	13.64% 3	9.09% 2	13.64% 3	36.36% 8	27.27% 6
Involving recent graduates in this project has enhanced their ability to gain further employment in the industry	86.36% 19	13.64% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Studios will embrace this type of production model	22.73% 5	45.45% 10	9.09% 2	0.00% 0	22.73% 5
Academic-commercial collaboration is beneficial to the industry	59.09% 13	31.82% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	9.09% 2
The use of recent graduates is purely a cost-saving measure	13.64% 3	22.73% 5	18.18% 4	45.45% 10	0.00% 0

**Table 3***Final survey, to gauge stakeholder reaction to the finished film after completion of postproduction*

<b><i>The Knife That Killed Me – Finished Film Perception</i></b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The quality of the finished film is as good as standard commercial projects	31.58% 6	52.63% 10	15.79% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Industry is sceptical of this type of production model	26.32% 5	36.84% 7	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	26.32% 5
Using students and recent graduates for crew took jobs away from freelancers	0.00% 0	42.11% 8	10.53% 2	31.58% 6	15.79% 3
This type of production model was riskier than that for traditional commercial film projects	15.79% 3	36.84% 7	21.05% 4	10.53% 2	15.79% 3
This type of production model is potentially more profitable than that for traditional commercial film projects	11.11% 2	38.89% 7	11.11% 2	5.56% 1	33.33% 6
Using students and recent graduates means that the film took longer to complete than for traditional commercial film projects	21.05% 4	31.58% 6	15.79% 3	10.53% 2	21.05% 4
This type of production model can work for all types of feature film productions (e.g., live action, animated, mixed, etc.)	21.05% 4	31.58% 6	31.58% 6	5.26% 1	10.53% 2
Academic-commercial partnerships allow more creative freedom than traditional commercial film projects	36.84% 7	31.58% 6	21.05% 4	0.00% 0	10.53% 2
Using students and recent graduates meant the production budget was lower for this film than it would have been if a traditional production model had been used	57.89% 11	36.84% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.26% 1
This type of production model enabled this film to be made in a way that would not be possible otherwise	68.42% 13	31.58% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Academic-commercial partnerships are a sustainable business model	26.32% 5	42.11% 8	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	26.32% 5
Academic-commercial partnerships are simply a way to exploit public resources for commercial gain	5.26% 1	5.26% 1	47.37% 9	31.58% 6	10.53% 2
This type of production model can enable the University to gain publicity that it could not otherwise	63.16% 12	31.58% 6	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
This type of production model can enable the University to generate significant revenue that it could not otherwise	21.05% 4	47.37% 9	10.53% 2	0.00% 0	21.05% 4
This type of production model can enhance the University's teaching	73.68% 14	26.32% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Based on this project, studios will be more likely to embrace this type of production model	15.79% 3	57.89% 11	5.26% 1	0.00% 0	21.05% 4
Academic-commercial collaboration is beneficial to the industry	63.16% 12	26.32% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	10.53% 2
It is apparent this film was backed by a studio	5.26% 1	47.37% 9	21.05% 4	5.26% 1	21.05% 4

**Figure 1**

*Four sample frames from the completed version of The Knife That Killed Me (Viridian FX, n.d.)*

