

Institution: Falmouth University		
Unit of Assessment: 32		
Title of case study: The Sound/Image Cinema Lab: Promoting UK Film Production and Career Development for Filmmakers		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Neil Fox	Senior Lecturer	2013 - present
Dr Kingsley Marshall	Head of Subject	2006 - present
Mark Jenkin	Lecturer	2008 - present
Denzil Monk	Senior Lecturer	2015 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Sound/Image Cinema Lab (SICL) is a multifaceted partner, funder, resource and research centre dedicated to the production and education of independent film at Falmouth University. It produced and co-produced 14 commercial films (2015-20), working in partnership with industry, resulting in professional level learning experiences for 173 undergraduate and postgraduate students, and 41 graduates. These experiences accelerated professional development and increased attainment on film courses at Falmouth University. SICL also benefited cinema audiences and 15 industry companies for whom production would not have been possible without SICL or not possible to the same degree of quality. One project, <i>Bait</i>, took over £500,000 at the UK cinema box office, won a BAFTA in early 2020 and was nominated for the Outstanding British Film of the Year Award.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Sound/Image Cinema Lab (SICL) project responded to a variety of conditions in the contemporary UK film industry including the need for greater opportunities for film producers (individuals and organisations) to access funding and resources, a need for greater diversity of regional voices and places onscreen [Denzil Monk, RO2] and a greater diversity of backgrounds 'behind the camera'. SICL also addressed gaps in learning and professional development inherent due to the limits of classroom teaching that can only be sufficiently addressed in professional contexts on professional projects. [Neil Fox, RO1]</p> <p>SICL is a multifaceted partner, funder, resource and research centre dedicated to the production and education of independent film. Based at Falmouth University, the Lab is convened by senior lecturer Dr Neil Fox [at Falmouth since 2013]. Falmouth University academic staff also active in the Lab as practitioners and researchers are Dr Kingsley Marshall [at Falmouth since 2006], Denzil Monk [at Falmouth since 2015], and Mark Jenkin [at Falmouth since 2008]. The Lab produced and co-produced a series of regional and national, narrative and documentary, short and feature films from 2015 onwards including '<i>Wilderness</i>' [RO3, 2017], <i>Bait</i> [RO4, 2018], <i>Backwoods</i> [2018] and <i>Hard, Cracked the Wind</i> [2018].</p> <p>The structure of the research was to build models of partnership with the aim of increasing the scope for British independent film production that provided career development</p>		

opportunities and enhancement. These partnerships were made up of interventions on the part of SICL that included core funding, completion funding, student, graduate or staff crew sourcing and deployment and technical resource support – for example, camera, lighting, sound, post-production facilities.

Each production project had a different goal and framework all under a practice led research methodology, whereby production practice was undertaken to answer a series of questions. This was achieved by reflecting on productions to uncover knowledge as to the potential impact of interventions on pedagogy and professional practice. For example, lessons learned from ‘*Wilderness*’ [RO3] led to changes in practice and focus on *Bait* [RO4]. By focusing on practice in what might be termed a ‘commercial’ or ‘mainstream’ space, the SICL research activity sought to pose questions of relevance to a broad spectrum of industry beneficiaries.

Questions included ‘how to engage with production companies according to their needs and the means and abilities of SICL?’ [RO3, RO4]. Also, ‘what is a relative pedagogical component for different levels of support that will ensure maximum opportunity for students and graduates?’ [RO3, RO4, RO5, RO6].

The nature of the findings and outcomes demonstrate that university film schools can play a positive, vital role in increasing production scope through the investment of funding and resources. It is also found that a range of opportunities for students and graduates can be developed and the scale of the projects that seek to work with the film school and their production scope can grow. All the films are professional artefacts created with SICL input and some also act as research artefacts [RO3, RO4].

3. References to the research

RO1. Fox, N. (2018). Filmmaking is a hard thing to do: reflections on student and lecturer experience of Falmouth University’s filmmaker in residence initiative. *Media Practice and Education*, 19:2, 205-221. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2018.1469354>.

Listed in REF2 (output identifier: 120) [Journal Article]

This journal article was peer-reviewed and published by Taylor & Francis.

RO2. Monk, D. (2020) *Ragdres Hwithrans Darlesor Gonis Poblek Kernewek /Cornish Public Service Broadcaster Research Project*
<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/40498119/cornish-public-service-broadcaster-research-project-scoping-study-report-july-2019.pdf>.

Listed in REF 2 (output identifier: 333) [Research report for external body]

Created in collaboration with several partners and reviewed as part of the process by stakeholders.

RO3. Doherty. J.J. (Director). (2017). ‘*Wilderness*’

Listed in REF2 under Neil Fox, writer/producer on this film (output identifier: 509) [Film]

RO4. Jenkin. M. (Director). (2018). *Bait*

Listed in REF2 (output identifier: 501) [Film]

RO5. Fox,N (2020). Developing a Commercial Film Production System in Academia with Pedagogy at its Heart. UIIN: Boundary Spanning Champions Online Forum, Online Conference <http://repository.falmouth.ac.uk/4124/> [Conference contribution]

RO6. Fox,N (2020). *Film production and the intersection of technology, education and culture in a post-COVID-19 climate // A Conversation between Dr Neil Fox (Falmouth University) and Freya Billington (UWE)*. Digital Culture & Education, NA. ISSN 1836-8301
<https://www.digitalcultureandeducation.com/reflections-on-covid19/film-production>
[Digital or Visual Media]

4. Details of the impact

The SICL project has resulted in a variety of impacts for stakeholders and beneficiaries. Stakeholders that benefit from the activities of SICL in the business sector are film production companies and in the private/public sector organisations supporting the Cornish film economy, including the regional film agency Screen Cornwall. Beneficiaries include the general public in the form of regional, national and international audiences and, in the public and private sector, graduates and students developing their professional skills and networks and enhancing and accelerating their industry employment trajectories, as detailed below.

Impact on Film Production in the UK

There were 15 production companies that benefited from support they would not have had access to otherwise. SICL enabled productions (9 feature, 5 short) and increased the scope of those productions, achieving a level of quality hitherto beyond reach.

Martha Tilston [T1] who directed the SICL supported feature film, *The Tap* (2020), said “*working with recent MA graduate editor Marcus Cook and using SICL facilities meant that we were able to push the film both creatively and technically.*” In the case of the short film *Mr Whippy* (2019), completion funding from SICL ensured that the film could go into production. Emerging producer and Falmouth Film graduate Kamilla Kristiane Hodøl [T2] said of the BFI backed short, that SICL “*made an invaluable contribution to a short film [...] to help launch the career of Rachna Suri, an exciting up-and-coming director from an under-represented background, and [...] contribute to the diversity and excellence of the British film industry.*” BAFTA-winning producers Early Day Films [T3] said of SICL’s involvement in *Bait* “*without [SICL support] we would have had to leave Cornwall to complete the film.*” *Bait* took £532,000 at the UK box office (73,800 admissions) pre-lockdown (March 2020). BAFTA-winning producer Emily Morgan [T4] said that working with SICL on *Make Up* “*greatly enhanced the scope of our production process in Cornwall.*” Filmmaker Steve Sullivan, who directed the SICL supported feature documentary *Being Frank: The Chris Sievey Story* (2018) claimed “*Working with [The Lab] significantly benefited my approach to narrative and post-production [...] and I have no doubt that without this collaboration I would not have made a feature film with the narrative rigour or finished technical quality to have had a World Premiere at SXSW in Austin, Texas or for it to have been released as a theatrical cinema film across the U.K.*” [T11]

Impact on the Development of Cornwall’s Creative Economy

The Cornish Public Service Broadcaster’s report [RO2] highlights that Cornwall’s representation on screen has been limited to being seen as England’s exotic ‘other’ and in predominant usage of coastal scenes, in ways which have contributed to its longstanding reliance on a tourism economy. As stated in the report; “*To challenge the persisting, colonial ‘outsider’ view of Cornwall, a rebalancing is required, in terms of indigenous production. Access to meaningful, self-produced representation[.....] which proceeds from setting editorial policy, through commissioning, to supply chain, creative talent and production entities, requires investment on an appropriate scale...*”

The interventions made by SICL have ensured that a robust and diverse slate of Cornish film production has been made possible in the past decade. The success of *Bait* highlights the quality of film work being produced in Cornwall and SICL sits at the heart of Cornish film culture through (co) production of a number of short and feature films. As Director of Screen Cornwall, Laura Giles says “*the Sound / Image Cinema Lab is an important bridge between the excellent academic set-up at Falmouth University’s School of Film & Television and the realities of industry financing and production. For Screen Cornwall, being able to work with the impressive students & graduates across all roles through the productions the lab is involved with is vital to developing the talent pipeline for the Cornish screen sector.*” When discussing the release of the SICL supported *Brown Willy*, producer Simon Harvey says “*Brown Willy had an unprecedented (at the time, pre Bait) Southwest Cinema release*

playing for six weeks at the local cinema chain, WTW (Truro, Newquay, Wadebridge and St Austell). Truro and Wadebridge were our most successful venues - with the film playing solidly in Truro and repeatedly in Wadebridge for approximately 84 screenings. The film also had 4 sell out screenings at the Newlyn Picture house and 3 sell out screenings at The Poly in Falmouth and runs in both Redruth and Penzance cinemas. Approximately 21 screenings. The film screened outside of Cornwall in Exeter, Warwick, Leeds, Bristol (The Watershed), Torrington and the Clapham Picture House, London [6 screenings] and in the summer of 2016 - the film (which was marketed entirely by ourselves with zero budget) broke into the UK's Box Office Top Fifty Box Office.” [T5]

Impact on Cinema Audiences

Bait played to over 10,000 audiences at 30+ international festivals, winning 8 awards. It won the 2020 BAFTA for outstanding debut film and was also nominated in the Best British Film category. Mark Kermode declared in *The Guardian* that *Bait* is “a genuine modern masterpiece, one of the defining British films of the decade.” ‘*Wilderness*’ played to over 2,000 people at 17 festivals and events, winning 12 awards along the way and receiving excellent critical reviews including “Life as jazz. Cinema as bebop” (*The Sunday Times*). In addition, *Backwoods* and *Hard, Cracked the Wind* played to over 1,500 audiences at 15+ festivals internationally, winning 2 awards. As one audience member said following the *Backwoods* 2020 UK Premiere “This was my favourite film at LSFF this year” [London Short Film Festival].

The interventions of SICL have also included exhibition support, ensuring that the short and feature films produced in Cornwall can be submitted to international film festivals and that those involved - staff, students, graduates can travel to the events to deliver the work and support the independent film culture that SICL represents. SICL has enabled supported films to be enjoyed by audiences at international festivals around the world including the Berlinale (Germany), Cinequest (San Jose, USA), London Short Film Festival, Encounters (Bristol), Aesthetica (York), New Directors New Films (New York, USA), SXSW (Austin, USA), Oberhausen (Germany), Cambridge (UK) and many other prestigious global events.

Impact on Graduate Career Development

There were 41 graduates (including *Backwoods* – 5, *Hard, Cracked the Wind* – 7) that benefited from opportunities to evolve skills learned on their undergraduate degree, get screen credits and paid work in their chosen specialism, as well as accelerated professional opportunities. *Bait*, *Backwoods* and *Make Up* employed early career graduates that were recruited through SICL in a variety of key roles. For Faith Glenister [T6] the experience “accelerated my career in the film industry”. Similarly, for Natalys Wilcox [T7] who used the experience to help “get a job in film exhibition” and also successfully applied for funding “from Screen Cornwall, Falmouth University and the BFI to direct my own short film.”

Impact on Student Development

There were 173 students (including ‘*Wilderness*’ – 30, *Bait* – 20) that benefited from learning opportunities that provided invaluable experience leading to accelerated professional opportunities, career development and greater attainment. Stine Tøndelstrand [T8] said of working with professional editor Steven Worsley on ‘*Wilderness*’, “it is great to be able to work with someone who is professional and get the chance to ask questions that pop up during the project.” Professional editor Steven Worsley [T9] [‘*Wilderness*’] said in response “the students assigned to the editorial department really engaged with the process, gaining experience that doesn’t usually occur within the confines of an educational establishment.”

SICL projects increased Falmouth University film students’ awareness of film production cultures and practices that directly impacted their studies. Josh Bransgrove [T10] said “working side by side with industry professionals and having the opportunity to observe how a professional set is run [...] early in my university career boosted my confidence and allowed me to run my own sets to a similar standard, which in turn allowed me to pass the knowledge I had learnt onto my peers”. Each film discussed here also held at least one on

campus masterclass for film students and staff, with audiences totalling approximately 1,000 participants.

Awards

Bait won 9 awards including a prestigious BAFTA Film Awards 2020 for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director, or Producer, and was also nominated for the Outstanding British Film of the Year award. '*Wilderness*' has won 12 awards including Best Actress at Oaxaca (Mexico) and Southampton (UK) Film Festivals, Best Screenwriter at Chain NYC (US) and Västerås (Sweden) Film Festivals, Best International Feature Film at Chain NYC and Västerås Film Festivals, and Best Production at Goddess on the Throne Film Festival (Kosovo). Also, productions *Backwoods* and *Hard Cracked the Wind* supported by SICL, won 2 awards including the HP Lovecraft Award for *Backwoods* at the Flickers Rhode Island Film Festival in 2019.

In addition to the film awards mentioned above SICL itself won the Innovative Education Award at the University Industry Innovation Network (2020). The award recognises the innovative approach to filmmaking and film teaching that makes SICL unique. Additionally, Dr Neil Fox was individually recognised as a '*boundary-spanning champion*' at the awards ceremony for his innovative approach to the relationship between industry and academia.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[T1] M. Tilston. Director., L. Giles. Producer. & J. Fewings. Executive Producer. *Screen Cornwall* (email, 21 May, 2020).

[T2] K.K. Hodol. Producer. *Elation Pictures* (email, 1 Sept, 2020).

[T3] L. Waite., K. Byers. Producers. *Early Day Films* (letter, 9 July, 2020).

[T4] E. Morgan. Producer. *Quiddity Films* (letter, 10 Oct, 2020).

[T5] S. Harvey. Producer. *O-region* (letter, 18 June, 2020).

[T6] F. Glenister. Graduate. *Falmouth University* (email, 21 April, 2020).

[T7] N. Wilcox. Graduate. *Falmouth University* (email, 27 Aug, 2020).

[T8] S. Tøndelstrand. Graduate. *Falmouth University* (video interview <https://vimeo.com/497649935>, 2018).

[T9] S. Worsley. Freelance Professional Film Editor (email, 5 May, 2020).

[T10] J. Bransgrove. Graduate. *Falmouth University* (letter, 29 July, 2020).

[T11] S. Sullivan. Independent Filmmaker. (email, 21 April 2020).