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THE X FACTOR

BEHIND THE SCENES
OF ITVX DRAMA, A SPY
AMONG FRIENDS

HOT SHOTS

From *Your Honor* to *The Handmaids Tale*, *House of the Dragon* and *A Very British Scandal*, top DoPs explain the art of cinematography

Building the future

How production design is evolving in a digital era



THE TOP UK POST HOUSES

THE NEXT DIRECTION

Will TV drama's incredible story have a happy ending? Plus: tackling the skills crisis in scripted

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE

Factual TV shapes up for the non linear age

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

LIVE SPORT TURNS TO CINEMATIC CAMERAS TO RAMP UP THE DRAMA

SAY IT LOUD

Roundtable: Cutting through the noise on audio post's future

WHAT A FINISH!
THE BEST RECENT
UK WORK IN VFX,
POST, ANIMATION
AND GRAPHICS

ON THE FRONTLINE
SHAPING THE STORY
OF AN EPIC JOURNEY
INTO THE HEART OF
THE UKRAINE INVASION

THE INSIDE TRACK ON LONDON'S NEWEST FILM AND HETV FINISHING HOUSE



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THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Tristin Norwell has a rich history as a music composer, producer, mixer, arranger, and musician, working with David Holmes on the music score for the *Killing Eve* series and Yann Demange's critically acclaimed '71 and with Adrian Coker for *Tin Star* and many more. Norwell has also scored multiple feature films including John Hardwick's *Svengali*. His music recording and mixing credits include working with Madonna, Tricky, Neneh Cherry, Goldfrapp and Talvin Singh for his Mercury prize-winning album.

Tristin's business partner and wife, **Sarah Withers** began in music management with Sade and then Rough Trade Records. Prior to Bleat, Sarah and Tristin had built the prestigious London Lane Studios, also in East London. Tristin comments, "what London Lane taught us was that our model works as a high-end, boutique experience. We've worked with high calibre creative people and artists all our lives. We understand what lies behind a really good service. The way it looks and feels is imperative – to create a calm space - but also having the very best acoustics and state-of-the-art technology within a flexible and malleable infrastructure."

Matt Edwards (Azimuth, Fifty Fifty) is Head of Technical Operations and **Saxon Greenep** (Splice, Jigsaw) is Head of Audio. **Dan Pagan** looks after sales and **Tatiana Shelbourne** operations and ADR management with **Max Norwell** in management assistance.

Bleat Post Production is not just another London picture and audio post house. What sets Bleat apart is that from a blank canvas and working with the very best in the business, Bleat has been built to the very highest acoustic Dolby Atmos Theatrical and HETV specifications utilising state-of-the-art technology and with an exceptional attention to detail. Audio recording and mixing rarely sounds this good.

OUTSTANDING IN THE FIELDS

Based in Hackney, Bleat Post Production is a boutique post house with owner, Atmos music mixer and composer Tristin Norwell in residence.

Bleat offers theatrical and high-end television Dolby Atmos mixing along with colour grading, and online conform for scripted drama and documentaries. Bleat's six Hackney-based rooms are all Dolby Atmos certified with two luxurious theatrical Dolby Atmos theatrical mix stages and an additional four multi-functional, hybrid suites that can be employed for colour grade, online and conform and/or Dolby Atmos HETV. All the rooms are fully networked for sharing live projects as they develop.

Bleat is the perfect destination for directors, performing talent, and creative operators to come together and master full sound and picture finishing and even take over the whole building for a project, while the multifunction edit rooms could be used in isolation to provide full post for a documentary in a single room.



All photos courtesy of **Mike Banks** at **recordproduction.com** (except where indicated)

FROM THE GROUND UP

Owner, Tristin Norwell outlines the vision behind Bleat, "the Sheep Lane building we occupy had been dormant for some time since being built. With one small front window and discreet entrance, it offered a large, high-ceilinged cavernous space - the size of two basketball courts - with two pillars. When we came to the construction and the design perspective, it was godsent. We could build the perfect sized rooms for the current market.

"Our design, architectural and build partners, Level Acoustic Design and Studio Creations supported our desire to work with sustainable materials wherever possible and AKA Design build the most beautiful solid wood desks. One of my pet hates is Rock Wool, which I have lived with all my life behind a single layer of fabric. It scares me. Just after Covid, sheep's wool had slumped in value and was the same price as Rock Wool, but as a natural fibre it has so many positive qualities; its sustainable, Thermafleece is treated with natural borax (which keep moths at bay), lanolin which keeps the timber supple and is more fire resistant.

"Rather than using sound bloc, we used Fermacell, which is high-performance recycled plaster board, which is harder to come by. It's only a third thicker, but double the weight, which makes it harder to work with, but it pays dividends as not only is it more sustainable, but it also gives us better audio performance.

"The carpets are made from recycled fishing nets. The parquet floor is reclaimed 500-year-old Jarrah wood from Australia. The marble bar is reclaimed as are the tables in the break-out space. The banquettes are made from unused leather from a coat factory and the light fixtures are recycled."

Co-Owner, Sarah Withers has a deep family background in design, "if you're working in a building and you use natural fabrics, rather than plastics, you can feel the difference within the working environment. To us it's mission critical. We want to stretch our sustainability into the way we staff and run the business and are already looking towards B Corp status."

The result is a comfortable, creative-friendly environment.





“Avid consoles are the absolute gold standard and familiar across the industry. It’s very difficult to ask someone to come in and work on anything else. The Avid S6 console is so configurable that if someone comes in and says I absolutely have to set up the desk in a certain way, I can change it for them in ten minutes. It’s the beauty of the S6.

“And we have the MTRX system which is a completely configurable I/O. It’s a no-brainer. You can’t have anything else for hardware theatrical rendering. If you need a MADI renderer for a theatrical RMU, you have to have an MTRX. There are other solutions but that’s the 2ru killer.”

Saxon Greenep, Head of Audio, Bleat

avid.com

JIGSAW24 | MEDIA

“Jigsaw24 Media were our first-choice partner for the Avid audio consoles, storage and Pro Tools licenses; they’re competitive on price and their Avid support is exceptional.

“The team understand the needs of post and are always knowledgeable and responsive. Joffrey Ghiringhelli steered the whole project expertly from the first call. We felt very well looked after.

“What also set Jigsaw24 Media apart was their expertise in shared storage, which is second to none. Their support is absolutely fantastic from first order through to product support. I can call them at any point, and they can answer all of my questions.”

Saxon Greenep, Head of Audio, Bleat

media.jigsaw24.com





“Chris Walls and Matt Ward brought an extraordinarily refined set of calculations to the studio build. The way they’ve designed the structure, from the floated concrete bases up, is the key; there is no cross talk between the studios whereas in most facilities you can hear other rooms. They even reoriented the theatres to change the position of the speakers and the projectors in order to optimise isolation between studios.

“Chris and Matt have designed hundreds of studios and there are very few people who have that extraordinary body of work. The crisp, clean audio experience at Bleat is testament to the unique value of that experience and knowledge.”

Tristin Norwell, Owner, Bleat

levelacousticdesign.com



“I knew I wanted to work with Studio Creations from the start. They had just built Platoon7 Recording Studios in Tileyard for Apple with Level Acoustic Design. I’d never seen a build quality like that with such an attention to detail, and I’ve been to quite a few places. This was mind-blowing from their use of new materials through to applied design aesthetic.

“Studio Creations’ Rob King’s genius technical design coupled with his unrivalled scripting and programming skills has been continually mind-blowing. He’s brought bespoke functionality to our rooms that I just hadn’t even heard of let alone seen implemented anywhere. Saving precious energy is important to me and who knew you could power down 48 Sentinel Alcons Audio amps from your iPad? Well, Rob did!

“Studio Creations have been fundamental in orchestrating our build”

Tristin Norwell, Owner, Bleat

studio-creations.co.uk

bleat.tv



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DREAMING OF ELECTRIC SHEEP

At the heart of the Bleat offer are two generously sized theatrical Atmos theatres both with high ceilings. Each comes with an Avid S6 audio console, which can be easily configured based on preference, both with 4K HDR projection and the exceptional Alcons Audio speaker monitoring.

The plush, living-room style theatres are designed for final mix and premium ADR. Tristin observes, “our theatrical ADR is old school, projected ADR where we can have crowds of up to 20 working with the Avid S6 in the main rooms. Any engineer will tell you that you can hear the glass of a VO booth. The best ADR you can do is within a large space that’s properly treated. These theatres are fantastic for that.”

The HETV mix room has an Avid S4 and the three picture/Atmos suites all have the Avid S1 audio console and controls. The difference between most production editorial suites is that these Atmos certified rooms have all been configured for both picture and audio. Tristin explains, “because the edit rooms are multi-purpose, they’re very useful in the picture stages. Audio-wise, they can feed in as editorial to the theatrical rooms, which is great, but they stand on their own two feet for documentary, other factual and online deliverables.

“They are entirely flexible. You can work on Avid Media Composer, Avid Symphony, Pro Tools, Adobe Premiere Pro or Blackmagic Resolve. They’re perfect for VOs and you can do ADR in them. You could work in them for end-to-end non-scripted reality. You could offline, online, colour and mix all in the one space, which can be very appealing as a workflow design.

The Q-SYS control platform was introduced to Bleat by Studio Creations who commissioned and designed the system that enables full data and hardware control from an elegant and intuitive iPad interface. Q-SYS is the beating electronic heart of Bleat.

Head of Technical Operations, Matt Edwards, was instantly impressed, “with Q-SYS, we can make sure that everything is available in the suites whenever it’s wanted. We can share pictures or audio from one room to another immediately after the sequence has been saved. This way, you can synchronise a project across the whole studio.”

“It’s like having a massive remote control, from turning the lights up and down and your monitors and amps on and off. You can control all of the hardware across the facility from just an iPad.”



bleat.tv



Mill Road Technology supplied the Alcons Audio two reference-quality Alcons Audio CRMS-based systems that meet and exceed all criteria required by Dolby Laboratories. Alcons Pro Ribbon technology provides an extreme level of transparency that allows every single mix decision to be clearly heard, combined with VHIR linear phase response for pin-sharp object panning and SIS prewiring for the tightest low frequency reproduction.

“When you are in the final stages of a mix – of someone’s dream – you have to know that what you’re creating is the very, very absolute best that it could possibly be. And if you can’t hear it then you’re limited in that expression; in achieving that zenith. You have to have the best speakers you can to get there and the Alcons are the best we could find.”

Tristin Norwell, Owner, Bleat

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AKA supplied the S6 desks in the theatres along with three matching editing and grading desks and one S4 desk, all with integrated client power and USB ports and monitors on sliders to seamlessly adapt their usage.

“Guy Wilson’s enthusiasm for our project was immediate. The place was a shell and he tuned in very quickly to Sarah and my ideas about the tone of the place and that his designs had to marry with our sensitivities.

“Guy and the AKA Design team have designed and built the perfect, ergonomic desks for our rooms, always mindful of our aesthetic and the needs of the creative operator. The solid, veneered walnut topped desks are all beautifully finished and a joy to work at and we have four further edit assist desks coming from AKA over the coming months.”

Tristin Norwell, Owner, Bleat

akadesign.com

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THE FINISHING TOUCHES: THE SKY’S THE LIMIT

Head of Audio, Saxon Greenep expands on how Bleat is fully networked for an integrated workflow, “we’ve put a full Dante infrastructure within this building that allows us to throw audio anywhere we want. If we wanted to record a VO in one of the small edit rooms, that would be easy to move audio backwards and forwards over Dante. At the same time, if we wanted to set up a video satellite system using Avid Media Composer in one of the edit rooms, we could play back UHD picture in the theatres, playing theatrical Atmos through Pro Tools at the same time.

“Bleat is both an environment for stand-alone picture and audio work and we’re project based. Bleat is set-up to take on full end-to-end sound and picture for features and high-end television; as a hub for the full movie. We can have music mixers mixing the music in one of the edit rooms, while the final mix is being mastered in the theatrical suite; everything in fact, apart from Foley.

From a performance aspect, the acoustic and technical integration was led by Chris Walls and Matt Ward from Level Acoustic Design, both of whom have worked on so many high-end audio post projects with architectural interior design from Eleni Papadopoulou & Joao Espinha. Chris Walls comments, “we loved that Tristin & Sarah wanted to create something different to a typical post facility. It meant we had free rein on the interior design which led us to devise a new approach to the acoustic design of the studio spaces. The mix theatres sound incredible.”

Saxon comments, “Tristin didn’t spare expense in all the right places. The Alcons Audio speakers, for example, are integral to making Bleat a premium aural experience. Everything we said we needed, he said, ‘let’s get it’. It functions seamlessly.”

Tristin picks up the Alcons Audio speakers theme, as recommended by Level Acoustic Design, “the knowledge that we didn’t have a roster of inhouse talent meant that we wanted to ensure that work translated from other sources. Talking to other re-recording mixers, they shared my belief that getting the very best speakers would do that. When I took advice on what those were, Matt Ward [at Level Acoustic Design] demonstrated the values of low harmonic distortion and the Alcons speakers gave us almost zero latency between the tweeter and the driver. They are incredibly impressive. You can work on them comfortably all day.

“There are 37 speakers in the main theatrical rooms. All of the surrounds and sides and tops are the same. The LCR is slightly larger but built to the same spec. And they’re all driven by the same amp, so they are all Sentinels. I’ve found that if you stick to the same speakers all the way around, you get a much stronger phase coherency than you would otherwise if you were mixing and matching speakers.”

And the final result of bringing all of these elements together? Tristin, Sarah and the team invite you to come over to Sheep Lane to see and hear the difference for yourselves.

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