

NEW ROUTES FOR MUSIC

Richard Llewellyn interviews Guy Michelmore, CEO of ThinkSpace Education

Founded in 1996, **ThinkSpace Education** is the world's first online postgraduate degree provider in music and sound-design, for film, games and television. They also provide a complete range of quick short courses on subjects such as Video Game Music, Orchestral Mixing, Sound Design, Film Scoring, Trailer Music and Music Theory.

Guy is a multi-award-winning film, games and television composer, whose clients include Marvel, Disney, Dreamworks, Lionsgate and many major TV networks around the world. His YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@ThinkSpaceEducation) has well over **350k** subscribers and is an incredible resource for school Music Departments.



Why did you start ThinkSpace Education?

As a working film composer in the 1990s, aspiring film composers would phone me up at regular intervals and I would find myself on the phone for an hour at a time explaining how the business worked. It dawned on me at the time that it might be a good idea to set up a distance learning course, which helps support musicians as they entered the profession. Many years later and thousands of students have passed through our courses. We are pleased to be able to support our three hundred postgraduate students from fifty two countries around the world into new careers in film games and television.

What makes ThinkSpace Education different to other Colleges and Universities?

Mainly that every single one of our teaching staff is a working creative professional person. In other words, you're being taught by people who do what you want to do for a living. Many of our teaching staff work at the very highest level of the industry. This means that you are getting mentored by people who really know what it takes to succeed in a very competitive business. Secondly, we are entirely online and have students all over the

world. We are also brutally honest. We do not pretend that the industry is easy to get into or that it's easy to earn a living from writing film, television, and games music. But starting from that perspective gives us a major advantage because there are many opportunities out there, and we are pleased to help direct our students towards them without pretending that this is an easy ride, and anybody can just walk through the door.

How do you help music students working towards their GCSE and A Level music exams?

Both GCSE and A-level students are required to write music, but this is something that many music teachers are not adequately prepared to teach. Our short course 'How to Write Music' and its sister course, 'Learn Music Theory' both address the practical and theoretical aspects of writing music from the perspective of somebody who has done this for a living all their working life. If I was doing my GCSEs all over again, these are the courses I wish I had!

Do you support music teachers or have any useful resources they could use?

Many music teachers around the world use the videos I produce for our

YouTube channel in their classes. We also have several short courses which are available to anyone (and resources like time coded movies for students to try scoring) all of which are completely free and available to use by any music teacher as part of the curriculum.

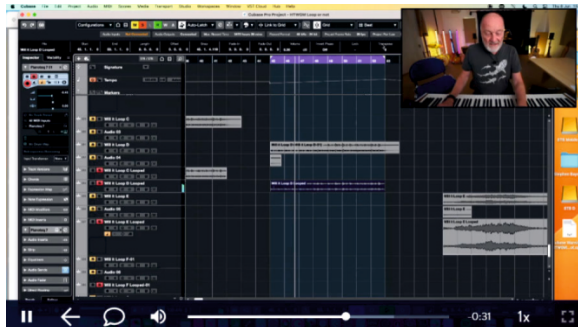
What jobs have your students been able to get following a ThinkSpace Education course?

In the last couple of years, we have had graduates nominated for a Grammy award and another who won an Emmy. Students have provided music for major feature film films including Disney's live action spectacular 'Peter Pan and Wendy'. Other students have worked on computer games, including the 'Battlefield' and 'Spiderman' franchises. Hardly a week goes by without another success story. But that's not to say it's easy. It's not! 80% of our graduates get paid work and over 60% earn most of their income from music and sound design.

Are you noticing any new trends in where job opportunities might exist?

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Are you noticing any new trends in where job opportunities might exist?

Yes. Many students come to us wanting to write feature films, but the feature film industry is shrinking, and fewer and fewer independent feature films are able to make a profit. It's a very challenging place in which to work as a composer. Fortunately, we don't just teach film composition, we teach composers how to enter the media in all its many and various forms. The growth in TV music and games music has been dramatic over the last few years. TV music is growing driven by the streaming platforms, and although a lot of the work is going to establish composers, they need more and more help, and so assistant composer jobs are becoming more common. The games industry is growing at 10% a year, and that means that there is 10% more work for everyone including composers.

What's the best way of trying to get a job in Music Technology?

Look for the opportunities other people don't know exist. Don't join the long queue when there's a short queue round the corner that nobody knows about. Don't always follow the obvious route when a less obvious route may bring you the same satisfaction. For example, a lot of musicians who start out wanting to be film composers end up, enrolling on our sound design for video games course, because they find themselves working with music technology telling stories with sound and working in a very creative environment. We are just rolling out an employment support program which is a boot camp that graduates can enrol in after they leave the masters program, and it supports them in learning to find opportunities for work by networking and pitching.

Why do you think Music Technology is important in schools?

Because it combines creativity and technology, and those two things are what drives the contemporary economy more than anything else. There is almost no limit to the opportunities if you have a creative mind and a good handle on how technology works.

Music technology produces a disproportionately high number of entrepreneurs and other successful business people. Despite the fact that the government seems to have decided that creative education is often of 'low quality' or 'low value', the statistics always speak for themselves.

What words of wisdom could you offer?

Be flexible. Don't be too dogmatic in what you're trying to achieve but look at a variety of options that might present themselves. Look at the career paths that are developing and will develop further in the future. Don't be too wedded to career models that existed in the past. Good training and good education can unlock your potential often in ways which you did not anticipate when you enrolled in a particular course. All knowledge is good, and education is a major springboard to career success.

What does the future hold for students thinking about becoming Film/Game/TV composers?

Changing technology, changing business models, changing market structures all present both challenges and opportunities for composers and music producers. There has never been more television and games production than there is today, and the world is filled with tons of opportunities. Yes, the music industry is extremely competitive, and if you look at exactly what the market is buying and the qualities, you'll see what it is looking for in a professional composer. The real competition is much less than it might appear at first, so follow your dream, but do it with your eyes open in a pragmatic way.

ThinkSpace Education

