

**Without the Filmmaking there is no Research:** Establishing the Sound/Image Cinema Lab via a REF2021 Impact Case Study and exploring the impact of its engagement with UK film production.

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## **Abstract**

This article discusses the process of writing an impact case study for REF2021 that revolves around independent film production, film industry and pedagogy. The culture of professional film production at Falmouth University's School of Film & Television resulted in involvement in the BAFTA winning Mark Jenkin film *Bait* (2019) and the widespread impact of that film provided the impetus for an impact case study that saw the consolidation of practice [as] research in the form of the Sound/Image Cinema Lab (The Lab) project. *Bait* is one of several commercial short and feature film productions that have received key research-led interventions from the Lab in terms of financial, technological and/or labour resources. These interventions have resulted in the production and/or completion of work that would not have been possible, or not possible to the same level of quality, without it.

This article tracks how those interventions impacted the discussed beneficiaries and stakeholders culturally, socially and economically and resulted in national and regional economic and production benefits for film production and graduate career development. It discusses how these interventions and productions were configured as research to ensure that the impact of *Bait* and other films were measured and captured. It also discusses how lessons learned from the research and the impact case study will inform practice research in The Lab moving forward. Robin Nelson's *Practice as Research in the Arts* (2013) emerged as a theoretical and methodological starting point as work on writing the impact case study following a consultancy visit by Nelson to Falmouth as part of REF2021 preparations. The article takes his ideas and others in the practice [as] research field as the basis for constructing The Lab's approach and methodologies and extends work delivered by the author in *Media Practice & Education* (2018, Vol 19. Issue 2).

## **Introducing The Lab and some key projects**

The Sound/Image Cinema Lab (hereafter The Lab) is a new name for an old practice, namely the film production and co-production activity undertaken by Falmouth University's School of Film & Television, nominally since 2010 and in earnest, since 2016. The Lab delivers interventions in commercial and professional short and feature film work in Cornwall and

nationally that covers the designations of partnership developed by Mateer (2018) in terms of 'soft, hard and service provider' investments. Mateer's useful definitions look at university engagement with industry productions in a variety of ways including in-kind support, financial support and resource support amongst other things<sup>1</sup>. The Lab has found success by deploying a variety of soft, hard and service provider interventions for short and feature film work based on production need, budget and opportunity. In 2019 and 2020 The Lab was written up as an impact case study for REF2021<sup>2</sup> and this allowed the accrued activity, attached research and pedagogy and future ambitions for the School of Film and Television to be consolidated in an official identity. The majority of projects discussed here are from the REF 2021 census period though this narrative includes mention of earlier works, particularly where context is important. In terms of earnest development and acceleration the intense period reflected in the case study is arguably from 2015 onwards. In 2015 The Lab provided financial and resource support to Cornish filmmaker Mark Jenkin's featurette *Bronco's House*, continuing an association with Mark, a lecturer in the school, that stretched back to his feature *Happy Christmas* in 2011. In 2016, I co-wrote and produced '*Wilderness*', a feature film that formed the basis of a 'filmmaker in residence' pilot where a commercial, professional feature was funded and produced within the school and crewed by students. Shot over 12 days the film had a strong festival run and was picked up for distribution by Sparky Pictures who released it digitally in April 2021 to good reviews from the likes of The Guardian and Mark Kermode<sup>3</sup>. The projects engaged in by The Lab benefitted from strong existing and emerging partnerships that enhanced the 'visibility' (Mateer and Hailay, 2019) of these industry partner projects.

The success of '*Wilderness*' as a festival film and pedagogical project alerted a number of film industry producers and organisations to The Lab at Falmouth and what to it is capable of achieving. In the wake of '*Wilderness*' The Lab ended up partnering with various short and feature productions, most notably filmmaker Claire Oakley's debut feature *Make Up* (2019). This was due to existing relationships with the film's executive producer Mary Burke and previous iFeatures<sup>4</sup> director Hope Dickson Leach. The experience with *Make Up* proved that The Lab could provide vital resource support in Cornwall for commercial feature production through key funding, provision of student and graduate crew and connection to its network in Cornwall, all invaluable to assuring a successful production. In this context, key funding refers to the provision of small amounts of money that can act as completion funding, in some cases ensuring a production can unlock other promised funds, or funding that allows a production to increase or access something hitherto unreachable that adds significant value to their project. In return, Falmouth students and graduates gained access to production experience that would otherwise have been beyond their reach in the form of paid work, set visits with Q&A sessions with heads of department and masterclasses throughout pre and post-production.

When on set, for short or feature film production visits to Lab supported projects, students are accompanied by staff to ensure that pedagogic commentary can be provided throughout the experience, not just in the presence of heads of department. It is vital that there is no cost to the students to attend set and work on projects so The Lab ensures that all travel and food is covered, plus accommodation if shooting falls outside their accommodation contract times, in the summer for example, or just following graduation.

Since *'Wilderness'* these kinds of opportunities have formed the core of the Lab's pedagogical ethos and any offer of support includes them as standard. This has meant that throughout the life cycle of recent undergraduate study students have had the opportunity to experience several of these opportunities across their time at Falmouth. Another significant project in the aftermath of *'Wilderness'* is the short film *Backwoods* (2019). Based on a HP Lovecraft short story, the project was created to support Falmouth graduates in a meaningful way. The director, Ryan Mackfall, is a graduate of film at Falmouth, who had been working successfully as a director in music video and music documentary for ten years. He was looking to move into narrative work and was happy to work within The Lab's production and education process, where inexperienced student crew are the bulk of the labour and teaching happens alongside production. He was also happy for The Lab to provide a large amount of the crew through its alumni networks. An additional graduate support ambition of this project, that differed from previous productions, was to bring back graduates working in industry but not necessarily at their chosen head of department role yet and give them a paid contract as a head of department, with current students working for them in department. This ensured that graduates received support and our current students received training on the job from working professionals. *Backwoods* played international festivals including the London Short Film Festival and received the HP Lovecraft award at the Rhode Island International Film Festival. It is featured in Kier La-Janisse's folk horror documentary *Woodlands Dark and Days Bewitched* (2021) alongside films such as Robert Eggers' *The VVitch* (2015) and Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973). *Woodlands Dark* won the audience award at the 2021 SXSW Film Festival and *Backwoods* is included as a special feature on the Blu-ray release.

In between The Lab's involvement with *'Wilderness'* and *Make Up*, Mark Jenkin was embarking on a project that represented a culmination and consolidation of his work to date, most significantly since returning to shoot on celluloid, establishing his practice of post-synching all sound and music. The production of *Bait* was not very different to *Bronco's House* in terms of The Lab's involvement and support. The Lab provided a small amount of funding, provided graduates to work on the production and brought students to set to act as extras in return for access to the production for teaching. Upon seeing an early cut of the film, the

conviction was that Mark had made something remarkable, that extended his work in celluloid beyond the short and medium form and could prove to be the start of something that might one day lead him to being seen as an interesting and important British filmmaker. What happened went way beyond what anyone expected. It was thrilling to be in Berlin for the film's world premiere - each year the school runs a trip to the Berlinale with students - where students who worked on and were in the film could attend its world premiere at one of the world's elite film festivals.

The year that followed, with Mark travelling the world talking about the film and mentioning the School of Film & Television, then the huge British Box Office return for the film, nearing £500,000 before the pandemic struck - it was still playing in cinemas at that time - culminated in Mark winning a BAFTA in early 2021 and mentioning the school in his acceptance speech. The success of *Bait* threw a spotlight on The Lab, both in the university and in the UK film industry. Mark's effusive showcasing of the work of the School of Film & Television when discussing the film ensured a change in perception of the relationship between the 'dual identities of both industry persona and researching practitioner' (Webb, 2019). The change in perception was how Mark was perceived as a filmmaker with dual identities but also how the Lab itself operated in a similar 'dual' way. Word spread and The Lab became very popular with low budget independent producers and productions. The Lab is currently involved in projects at varying stages of development and production and has been heavily involved with Mark's follow up to *Bait*, the Bosena and Film4 production *Enys Men* (2022). In addition to consolidation, *Bait* ensured The Lab could make a really strong case for impact as part of the REF2021 preparations. An impact case study was authored, with *Bait* at the centre and with the film acting as one of the case study's research outputs. The next section of this article looks at the research context for authoring the case study and establishing *Bait* and other mentioned works as research before discussing the process and findings.

## **Research Context**

The underlying principle for the case study was derived from Robin Nelson's work on practice as research (2013). Following a visit by Professor Nelson to Falmouth as part of the university's REF planning period it became clear that aligning the work of The Lab with Nelson's work in the field would ensure a robust defence of the work submitted and allow the research questions and impacts to emerge from a strong critical context. Nelson defines practice as research as a research project 'in which practice is a key method of inquiry' resulting in a practice, in this case film, 'submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry' (2013: 8-9). As will be mentioned later in this article, the research questions The Lab

is seeking to answer are contained in the production process of the films, therefore the films themselves, even if they don't contain research questions in the text, are vital to The Lab's research. Without the filmmaking, there is no research. The practice of making the film, rather than the film itself, contains the research. During the period of developing the case study a number of other principles from the field of practice [as] research were used as a way to understand The Lab as a research project and centre. These included the work of Petrie and Stoneman (2014) in *Educating Film-makers: Past, Present and Future*, *Critical Cinema: Beyond the Theory of Practice* (ed. Myer, 2011) and *Screen Production Research: Creative Practice as a Mode of Enquiry* (ed. Batty and Kerrigan, 2018). A significant text was Kerrigan and Callaghan's 'The impact of filmmaking research from 2018 and in particular its analysis of filmmaking research submissions in the prior REF.

Nelson says practitioners moving to being practitioner-researchers need to adjust and that 'perhaps the biggest adjustment practitioners need to make in the process of becoming practitioner-researchers is overtly to engage in conceptual debate' (2013: 31). This is both the process that has been undertaken by those who work on projects within The Lab over the past few years and the process contained in the labour of the impact case study, for the author, me, and the wider team. The team involved with projects and outputs for The Lab are a combination of practitioners and researchers and increasingly a combination, the practitioner-researcher. Discussing the tension between the 'academic' and the 'creative' as concepts and personnel, Rod Stoneman writes 'the categories of academic and creative, as they move together and apart, linking and extricating, are the polarities which function to shape time, courses and resources and embed them institutionally' (2014: 223). The Lab is engaged in a possibly utopian aim of creating a research space driven by practice that includes useful tensions, and the space for a variety of research and practice approaches without seeking to define via a restrictive term, such as the emerging use of the "pracademic". Alongside the conceptualisation of the role of academic staff in The Lab there is also the question of how students engage with the process. The ambition for The Lab is to ensure a greater opportunity, in addition to taught lessons, for students to achieve what Bill Nichols describes as an 'awareness' (even if their practice at the time can't fully articulate it) 'informed by a conscious critical, familiarity with their chosen medium' (2011: xiv).

This critical context is vital to The Lab's work. The work of The Lab is in part, to add to a student or graduate's understanding of film practice and culture, in ways that the limitations of the classroom preclude. Interesting work on those limitations can be found in Murray et al (2020). There is also a desire to ensure that students and graduates have access to productions that address the toxic misconceptions of how filmmaking on an industrial scale is

undertaken. This desire addresses a key question for Aparna Sharma regarding the interface of theory-practice in film education, one of 'how students critically engage with their creative impulses, the histories, and philosophies linked to the media they work with and the wider exhibition and distribution networks they explore' (2011: 143). The Lab seeks to work on projects where the professional practitioners are themselves engaged with critical questions about their practice, including the running of sets and locations that eschew bullying, overworking and discriminatory practices. The flow of critical knowledge from established professionals to students and graduates should run in both directions. As a result of a critical approach to practice [as] research, The Lab has been formed on the principle outlined by Craig Batty and Susan Kerrigan of 'systematic reflection upon a production to gain rigorous insights into how a work was made' (2018: 1). The reflections undertaken by The Lab are rooted in the professional support and pedagogic success of the partnerships undertaken. As mentioned elsewhere in the article, the process of production is where much of the research and insight is found for Lab projects. Stoneman argues that 'practice-based research leads to new forms of enquiry that make their own processes manifest' (2014: 235) and arguably the impact case study is a process of articulating those processes. Similarly Erik Knudsen writes that 'one could argue that the documentation of the creative journey itself provides the most valuable evidence of new insights' (2018: 127) as opposed to the artefact itself. This extends to student insights also, and this is tracked in Lab projects and participants via on-set blogs, post-shoot interviews and legacy interviews where the impact on attainment is critiqued. The next section looks at how the concepts discussed in this section were formalised in the writing of the impact case study.

## **The Process of Writing the Impact Case Study**

### **1. Selecting Outputs**

The first task when writing up the impact case study was to configure the work The Lab had undertaken continuously, instinctively, with a desire to be engaged with and support UK film production and film pedagogies, as research. This had been done to some degree in the case of '*Wilderness*' as that project formed part of my research trajectory and continued work begun in my doctorate. As a result, assigning research questions, themes and methodologies to the body of work that would become known through this process as the Sound/Image Cinema Lab was relatively straightforward. More difficult was selecting the films that evidenced the research and research questions that could become research outputs within the case study and the REF submission. '*Wilderness*' was an obvious one as it had the aforementioned Media Practice and Education output tied directly to it, as was *Bait*, with Mark directing the film and

being a member of the teaching staff. Two other films were included, the aforementioned *Backwoods* and another short by Mark Jenkin, *Hard, Cracked The Wind* (2019), shot following *Bait*. Mateer and Hailay (2019) raise the issue that films have not historically be seen as valid outputs in a REF context but, due to changes in the criteria this time around, Lab films were presented as portfolio submissions, allowing greater scope for the research to be contextualised via a statement and for additional information and evidence to be provided to support claims or reach, rigour and significance.

## **2. Context and Supporting Evidence**

Following this process of working out the shape of the case study through outputs the task was to place the work of the Lab in context. For this, the Lab was discussed in terms of its place and function in a UK film production ecosystem, drawing out where it filled gaps in terms of funding and resource provision that would have remained unfilled without it. From there, the impact case study was built using testimonials from industry partners to that end. The testimonials - which also included graduates discussing how the Lab had accelerated their career progression, and students discussing how the Lab had increased their attainment potential, industry readiness and practical and cultural understanding - provided vital industry narrative regards impact that backed up the Lab's claims as a key intervention provider for UK film industry, particularly in the micro and low budget space.

## **3. Research Questions & Structuring the Research**

The process of establishing research questions resulted in an understanding that the film work of The Lab was practice as research that could be considered Production Culture (Caldwell, 2008) or Screen Production (Batty and Kerrigan, 2018) research. As a result, questions such as 'how to engage with production companies according to their needs and the means and abilities of The Lab?' [for *Wilderness* and *Bait*] and 'what is a relative pedagogical component for different levels of support that will ensure maximum opportunity for students and graduates?' [All the films] emerged. The belief, as the case study received feedback from colleagues internally in the research and REF2021 offices and steering groups, and externally from the company Falmouth employed to support the writing of the case studies, was that the productions rather than the films contained the research and that research questions should be articulated accordingly. This led to a consideration of process rather than product as the means of establishing the Lab's work as research and both crystallised and set a precedent for ongoing conversations about how the filmmaking is the locus of the research. Though, as

with the case of *Bait* and its relationship to Cornwall as a subject, one of the Lab's strengths is that further research is often located within the films themselves.

#### **4. Meeting the REF Criteria and deciding on a title**

The REF defines impact as 'as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia' (REF2021; 68). For the first time, the REF also included impact on students and teaching within the institution as submissible. In looking at the work undertaken by The Lab, it was clear that the interventions it had made had changed or benefitted society, culture, quality of life and the economy, especially with the testimonials that were garnered in support of The Lab. Many of the industry testimonials attested to changes in behaviour and perception from industry towards The Lab and as a result, academia. The graduate testimonials similarly spoke of impact of The Lab on quality of life via career progression and the data on audiences and the region spoke to benefits for society, culture and the economy. Advice received from the external consultants was that the title of the case study should reference the impact claims directly and succinctly and following a lengthy process the title 'The Sound/Image Cinema Lab: Promoting UK Film Production and Career Development for Filmmakers' was agreed upon. The process of ensuring impact could be claimed accurately and tied to 'excellent' research as per the REF's definition was arduous at times, with even finding a title a course of anxiety and stress. The next section looks at lessons learned from the process of writing the case study and what can be taken forward in the future.

#### **Lessons Learned from the process**

##### **The Work**

The opportunity afforded by the impact case study, aligned with the concurrent success of *Bait*, was invaluable in providing the focus and intellectual space to crystallise and contextualise a body of work that had emerged instinctively and reactively. The opportunity allowed the team at the School of Film & Television engaged in filmmaking activity and pedagogy to establish a narrative and create an ethos, a set of working practices and an archive that would establish The Lab going forward, beyond REF2021 and whatever outcome the case study receives. The critical reflection afforded by the process allowed a set of principles to emerge that allows The Lab to articulate its offer in a succinct and clear way, with impact, pedagogy and research built in from the moment of first interaction with a potential partner. The process has ensured that what was individual projects and participants has been

unified, which has strengthened The Lab in terms of future project support both internally in the university and externally in terms of research and industry funding and partnership.

## **The Case Study**

Because the REF's definition of excellence is not fully defined and ultimately decided by panels, albeit staffed by experts in good faith, the building of a submission and an impact case study is rife with tension and uncertainty. This is in some way part of a wider increasing academic culture of uncertainty and pressure, much of which is felt by academics, where academics can feel reduced to 'dispersed, atomized, precarious, freelance microentrepreneur[s]' (Hall, 2016: 15). The impact case study process is no different. As a sole author receiving competing, contradictory, vague and sometimes unsupportive responses, such as the need to change the work without guidance on why or how to do so, the process was at times demoralising and dehumanising. The nature of the submission, one which seeks to convince without knowing who is being convinced and what they seek to be convinced of given the broad parameters of the definition, means that there is an over-reliance on metrics, ruminations over language, and an unwillingness to make clear statements for fear of repercussion that forgets the human labour and endeavour at the centre of authoring the study (though this may be just my experience and not applicable to others). The process of writing the case study had positives, in terms of how to take disparate and multi-dimensional projects and create a coherent narrative, and the hope is that over time these positives will supplant the negatives.

In retrospect, while being left alone to write, argue and communicate the case study was often lonely and draining, it was an opportunity to craft the narrative of The Lab, define what and where the research could be found and what its research process is. The challenges of defining and honing were undertaken through constructive reflection and conversation with those involved at the sharp end, the academics making the film and the industry partners The Lab makes films with. Being left to argue the case allowed a case to be built that reflected the realities of the practice and research and captured the ethos, culture and ambition of the work. By returning to the community who had made the films possible both internally and externally, the original, instinctive desire, to be a film school that made films and introduced students to continued professional experiences, was given time and space to become a research narrative, explicitly. A critical approach to what the reviews during the process meant and how they could be responded to positively, rather than capitulated to, drove the work of writing the study, as did the knowledge that it provided an opportunity to cement the work of The Lab in the university's consciousness and the sector more broadly.

## **Lessons for the future**

### **The Work**

While much of the internal and external focus of the case study and The Lab is, rightly, on *Bait*, the process of writing up the case study and establishing The Lab as a formal entity created a strong awareness of the research strengths and possibilities of The Lab. The fact that the films made by The Lab constituted research was something felt, and communicated in despatches, rather than articulated firmly and consistently. That has changed since the writing of the case study. What is also clearer now is what is needed in terms of data, narrative, research outputs and testimonial from every production The Lab is engaged with. The wealth of potential for research, pedagogy and return of investment unearthed by the process has seen a desire to become involved earlier with productions and projects to ensure maximum impact. Meaning, alongside supporting production of films, The Lab will be involved in the development of films, particularly feature narrative and documentary. In Kerrigan and Callaghan's (2018) study of filmmaking research in the 2014 REF they highlight the case studies of individual films submitted as research, citing *The Act of Killing* (Oppenheimer, 2012) and *The Arbor* (Barnard, 2010). With more time for impact, it is possible that *Bait* could have been submitted as a case study on its own and, given the way the film has been aligned with tourism and housing crises in Cornwall in 2021, there is scope for it to return in the next REF cycle in just such a way. Additionally, as the work of the Lab is so process driven and is reliant on collaboration between professionals and students in real time, the work is valid to both REF and KEF narratives.

### **The Case Study**

One of the most meaningful changes to emerge from the REF2021 process internally at Falmouth University is the introduction of the word *compassionate* to articulations of the review process moving forward. In communications about how Falmouth will prepare for the next REF submission the phrase a 'critical and compassionate review process' has emerged to replace the former 'critical review process'. What may seem like a small gesture is meaningful to someone who at times felt isolated and alone in the corralling of vast amounts of data, testimonial and narrative into a relatively small word count and relatively large conceptual field. As each draft was submitted the feedback got longer, harsher, more fraught and yet the practical guidance diminished to statements such as 'write less here' or 'write more about impact here'. The reminder that a long and relatively undefined process is undertaken by

human beings under pressure resulting from and separate from this task and that those human beings deserve respect and compassion in the process feels like the most valuable lesson to be learned from the enterprise, even if it is sad that it is a lesson that needed to be (re) learned and the reality is that this promise will not bear out.

The introduction of compassion to the process arguably enhances its critical potential. Filmmaking is often a personal practice, a collection of dedicated individuals working collectively to share their passions, abilities and ideas for the judgement of audiences and critics. At the independent end of the industrial spectrum this can be felt more acutely due to lower budgets, less time and smaller crews. Independent filmmaking is not alone in being a creative practice where vulnerability is common and independent filmmaking by academics can be doubly demanding in terms of commercial, value for money and output-led expectations. The expansion of impact analysis to consider the human processes that create outputs is a vital rejoinder to increasingly data-driven research analysis processes, even if it's a difficult conversation to have.

While the difficulties of the process were often alienating there were tangible benefits. The case study process allowed for a vital period of reflection in terms navigating academia as a practitioner [and] scholar. Webb (2019) writes that 'it is for contemporary film educators to forge our own interpretations of how industry and academia should connect and/or separate, especially as we navigate our own professional identities as film-makers working in academia'. The intellectual opportunity afforded by the impact case study process, regardless of outcome, afforded a chance to shape and name activity undertaken across a number of years into a statement of intent for the future, one with the potential at least, to actualise critical philosophies of how film education can be undertaken and how film production and film education can be in dialogue. The next section looks at the how impact was conceptualised and then articulated in the case study.

### **Beneficiaries, Stakeholders and Benefits (610)**

The structure of the research was to build models of partnership with the aim of increasing production scope for British independent film production that provided career development opportunities and enhancement for students and graduates. Partnerships with industry were made up of interventions on the part of The Lab that included core funding, completion funding, student, graduate or staff crew sourcing and deployment and technical resource support – camera, lighting, sound, post-production facilities for example. Throughout the five years of the impact case study period The Lab worked in significant ways with several production

companies, producers, directors and agencies and when the research context was presented to them, they all agreed that is what they had sought and received from the Lab either financially, logistically or in terms of an equipment, labour or facility resource. The testimonial responses, supporting the research claims, were effusive and the impact claims were broken down as follows:

- Impact on Film Production in the UK
- Impact on Cinema Audiences
- Impact on Graduate Career Development
- Impact on Student Development

For the first claim, the case study reported that The Lab benefitted 15 Production companies through support they would not have had access to otherwise that enabled productions (9 feature, 5 short) to exist or increased the scope of those productions, achieving a level of quality hitherto beyond reach. Director Steve Sullivan said that without the Lab providing a technician and a space to do a free professional grade for his film, he did not feel he would have secured such a lucrative premiere as SXSW, which in turned helped secure a UK theatrical distributor for his film, *Being Frank: The Chris Sievey Story* (2018). BAFTA-winning producer Emily Morgan said that working with The Lab on *Make Up* “greatly enhanced the scope of our production process in Cornwall”<sup>5</sup>.

For the second claim, the case study reported on the festival successes of films such as *Wilderness*, *Backwoods* and *Hard, Cracked The Wind*, as well as the cinema releases of *Bait* and *Make Up*, providing details of audience data and awards as well as critical responses including Mark Kermode’s assertion in *The Guardian* (2019) that *Bait* “is a genuine modern masterpiece, one of the defining British films of the decade”. For the third claim, the case study reported that 41 graduates had benefited from career development and acceleration across the productions listed and included graduate testimonials that made claims such as the experience “accelerated my career in the film industry” or the experience helped “get a job in film exhibition” and also successfully apply for funding “from Screen Cornwall, Falmouth University and the BFI to direct my own short film”<sup>6</sup>.

For the final claim, included due to changes in REF criteria that allow for pedagogical impact, the case study reported that 173 students benefitted across the film productions listed. This section featured both student testimonial including the statement:

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

And testimonial from industry partners regarding the student input, illustrating knowledge exchange and pedagogical innovation such as “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”, from professional editor Steven Worsley, the editor of *‘Wilderness’*<sup>7</sup>. Due to word count, the impact on staff in terms of their teaching and continued professional practice identity and portfolio was excised.

## **Conclusion (500)**

Stoneman writes that if ‘arguments for film-making beyond careerism and commercial aims cannot be made in film schools they will never be encountered in the extreme and pressurized marketplace’ (2014: 260). The Sound/Image Cinema Lab is a project that seeks to make significant interventions into independent film production that benefit film industry, culture and students. The aim is, by virtue of being rooted in a university department, to introduce students and industry to new concepts of production and filmmaking that are mutually beneficial and educational and reframe ideas of how industrial film production occurs. For Stoneman, there are ‘innovative possibilities for institutions to explore new ways in which theory can return interact with practice in new hybrid forms of research in film’ (2014: 289). Working at the intersection of practice, pedagogy and research, The Lab hopes, following its consolidation, to deliver and showcase such innovation and collect and share new knowledge. The Lab is founded on the belief espoused by Ross Gibson that knowledge from film practice [as] research emerges ‘when the filmmaker-researcher experiences the immersed, messy routines of creativity oscillating with the distanced analytics of reflective critique and theorisation’ (2018: vi).

Beyond the impact case study, which collected often disparate productions and processes into a unified narrative, the founding of The Lab has given an identity to the work being done at Falmouth in film production, both internally in terms of pedagogy and research but also externally in terms of the HE sector and the UK Film industry. Lessons learned from the process of assessing impact includes considering the ways that data is captured. Some of the data in terms of the success of the Lab in the ways that the case study presented - student and graduate involvement, the numbers around *Bait* and *‘Wilderness’* - were readily available due to personnel involved needing the data for research and in the case of *Bait*, future funding and projects being reliant upon it. However, in terms of audience and box office data for

projects such as *Make Up*, *Being Frank* and the copious short films, there was a lack here, one that is being addressed in future co-productions and in-house projects, to ensure that deeper impact can be measured in future. This work is being undertaken in collaboration with the research school and the knowledge exchange leads in the university. In order to fully maximise the Lab's work as research this data capture needs to be better baked in, the work needs to be shared and workshopped at more conferences, more articles need to be written and it would of course be nice to have more moments like a mention in a BAFTA acceptance speech. Next stop the Oscars.

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<sup>1</sup> Mateer's definition are excellent but he misidentifies a Lab project, 'Wilderness' as being a 'soft' investment by Falmouth University when it more aptly sits in Mateer's 'hard' category as it was funded almost entirely by the School of Film & Television who share IP rights with the external production company Baracoa Pictures.

<sup>2</sup> The REF is 'the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions'.

<https://www.ref.ac.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> I wrote about this production and some of its consequences for *Media Practice and Education*, Vol. 19 (2), in 2018.

<sup>4</sup> *Make Up* (2019) was part of the BFI/Creative England/BBC Films funding scheme iFeatures, as was Hope Dickson Leach's *The Levelling* (2016)

<sup>5</sup> Quotes from the REF2021 Sound/Image Cinema Lab Impact Case Study

<sup>6</sup> Quotes from the REF2021 Sound/Image Cinema Lab Impact Case Study

<sup>7</sup> Quotes from the REF2021 Sound/Image Cinema Lab Impact Case Study