

DCD CASE STUDY – Independent Dancer

David McCormick



Biography

David McCormick is creative director of SnakeOil Media and a Senior Lecturer in dance for the camera at The University of Winchester .

He danced professionally for 10 years with leading companies and choreographers including DV8 Physical Theatre, Richard Alston Dance Company, Siobhan Davies, Imlata Dance Company, Wayne McGregor, Ted Stoffer and Yorke Dance Project.

Since 2001 he has been working on a wide range of commercial video and multi media arts projects including commissions by MTV and Siemens and collaborations with dance and theatre makers including Yorke Dance Project, Scarabeus, Punchdrunk, Snag Dance Project, Graeae Theatre Company, The Petrovski Ensemble and the Gala re-opening of the South Banks' Royal Festival Hall in 2007. These projects have resulted in performance and film outcomes shown in the UK and abroad. His film Cut Out and Keep was short-listed for The Place Dance on Screen Production Award and screened at Tate Modern, Videodanza Film Festival, Italy and the I.C.A. Recently David was the video director for Boy Blue Entertainment's Olivier Award winning production of Pied Piper at the Barbican Theatre.

Transition Process:

Whilst working as a dancer I began to investigate screen based dance as a way of exploring my choreographic ideas. This led to the realisation that the compositional techniques used in choreography were compatible with and creatively translatable through screen production techniques. The attention that the camera brings to movement also offered a range of alternative approaches to choreographic practice and dance making.



Registered Charity No: 327747

I invested in a reasonably good camera and acquired a non linear editing package for my computer, with these basic tools I began to devise ways of exploring and creating dance films with very limited resources. This often depended on the generous participation of fellow dancers and led me to a network of other film makers who shared an ambition to develop new skills.

I attended a number of commercially run training courses that offered training in camera and editing techniques but found many of these to be too general and overly focused on broadcast standards that were economically incompatible with the opportunities I had at my finger tips. I soon realised that I made my most significant progress when working in collaboration with others who had greater experience than myself; on projects we devised according to our creative focus. The learning curve is steep in terms of the competencies required to produce high quality screen based outcomes and as the technology continually evolves, the learning does not plateau. This in turn has expanded the creative possibilities available to me as an independent film maker.

The transition from dancer to film maker was not a sudden one but rather a gradual shift of energy toward the commercial realisation of film making as a career. Some of the most difficult decisions concerned the financial investment in equipment and the sacrifice of time spent earning in my (then) current job as a dancer. I realised that in order to make the transition I needed to focus all my time and effort on film and video as my creative medium of choice. DCD supported me at this critical time and with their financial support I bought the tools I needed to establish myself as a media production facility and at the same time to buy myself the breathing space to look at and identify my options and to tap into the avenues of opportunity available to me.

Learning from the process:

My career has taken a number of lateral shifts that have benefitted from the skills and contacts acquired in previous jobs. The fundamentally creative nature of all my work has meant that a lot of my skills were transferrable though this was not always something I knew.

I have learned to be far more independent in my work and to be adaptable, something that was less relevant working in the bespoke world of dance. My work in video production has led me to be more collaborative with diverse client groups and to shape projects around the various demands of budgets and resources.

A lot of the work I now do is not directly connected to the arts and it is essential to work towards the focus of the client; I found it difficult at first to let go of my identity as a dancer/film maker and to pitch my skills and services appropriately. In hind sight I would have dealt with the issue of multiple identities earlier and had a better sense of the 'portfolio career' that defines the selling points of SnakeOil Media.

Career Title(s):

Creative director- SnakeOil Media

Senior Lecturer – The University of Winchester



Registered Charity No: 327747

Do you have multiple careers? (Please highlight the correct answer): Yes

If yes, please list and highlight the role you view as your Primary career:

Creative director- SnakeOil Media

This DCD re-trainee agrees to being contacted by dancers wishing to gain advice on retraining.
Please contact DCD if you wish to contact David personally.