

Care Leaver James Holbrook's Adventures in Film Making

James is a BA (hons) film student currently in his final year of study at the University of South Wales. As part of the course he has to work within small groups to create short films, over his time at the university James has produced many films with his colleagues, some of which have gone on to win awards. Outside of university James has worked on television shows such as BBC's Doctor Who and BBC's Keeping Faith, and is hoping to re-join the Keeping Faith crew for further paid work at some point in the new year.

What are your experiences with the Care Leavers Team and the service you've been given since leaving care?

Due to my unique situation where my foster parents Kath and Martin have literally taken me in and treated me as one of their own, the foster care team have always felt like a hindrance that acted as a reminder to me being different from the rest. However having said that in later years and especially since moving away to university these feelings towards the care system have grown to be positive. The care leaver's team now seems to be less invasive on my life, only needing to visit me a few times a year to catch up with my progress. This is my ideal situation as I can feel normal, but at the same time I know there is support for me in the background ready to help with any problems I may come across, which is a comforting feeling. Since moving to university, whenever I have raised a problem with one of my many care workers over the few years they have all gone above and beyond to fix my issues in a non-invasive way. I thank them all for their hard work.

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I'm aware that you have been trying to raise money from Worcester County Council towards your most recent project – how did this work out? Did you get the money you requested?

So I am currently creating a short film based on the Irish rebellion of 1798 called 'The Midnight Court and Other Aislings'. We have now shot the film and are currently in post-production, however this is still a hugely ambitious project for a group of students to achieve and therefore we need as much help as possible which includes raising money for all our expenditures paid out. I asked Monica (my current care worker) whether this is something Worcestershire county council would be interested in helping with and she looked into it on my behalf. At this point any money raised will be still extremely helpful in post-production and in the distribution of the film to festivals.

James' most recent project is 'The Midnight Court and other Aislings', a short film set in the years leading up to the outbreak of the 1798 Irish rebellion.



Your most recent project is 'The Midnight Court and Other Aislings' – where can people see this?

At the moment 'The midnight Court...' is still in post-production meaning there is a few months left until it is complete. Once complete we do intend to put on a premiere in Cardiff and then tour it around the filmmakers home towns including somewhere in Worcestershire. Unfortunately this tour will be the only available place to view the film due to us wanting to submit it to film festivals which have strict entry rules on films accessibility to the public.

You used crowdfunding website Indiegogo to help fund this project – how was that experience and is this something you'll be utilising again in the future?

Crowdfunding is a great concept, and obviously many projects and products are funded this way, however you rely on the backing of others and therefore their trust in you to make a good quality product. With very little weight behind our names as filmmakers the only people who believed in us and entrusted us with their money were our family and friends, of who we were very grateful of, but were not enough to raise the full sum we required. The other point to make is people now expect a good quality product from us, which adds another level of stress to the project as it cannot fail without disappointing people who have donated their hard earned cash. This can be a good thing however as it pushes us as team to make the film the very best it can be.

You chose to go to university to pursue your film-making ambitions – do you think you could have achieved those same ambitions going a different route?

As a budding filmmaker you are constantly reminded that film school is not a necessity in order to make it in the industry. Some of the top filmmakers of today including Steven Spielberg, Christopher Nolan and Quentin Tarnation didn't go to film school. I do sometimes wonder if I could make it without the need of plunging myself into debt but having said that my university experience is one of the defining factors that has made me who I am today. University has gained me independence and has forced me to become more sociable while doing something that I love, surrounded by other like-minded people. It is also with the universities help that I have been able to work on the Latest series of BBC's Doctor Who and Keeping Faith. With the Film and Television industry being very close knitted, I think I would have struggled a lot more to get my foot in the door without the universities recommendation of me and for that reason I think I made the right decision going the University route.

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Tell me a little bit about your other completed projects and where people can access them.

I am currently building a website with a portfolio of all my favourite work that should be online soon. At the moment My work is scattered across the web which to be honest is probably a good thing because not all of it is brilliant. I have a YouTube channel called (simply) 'James Holbrook' which now I have almost finished my time at university I am going to begin uploading videos there.

What's your next project?

To be honest I feel like a lot of the films I have made since being at university are not mine. University rightfully puts us into groups to create films and therefore since I decided to concentrate my studies on camera work I had little to no input on the concept, narrative or style of the films made. Having said that I have learnt a lot about filmmaking throughout university which I now finally look forward to using in my own personal projects in which I hope to develop my own style of filmmaking.

I have a few ideas in my head, one of which is a short comedy web series called 'The Thinning Blue Line' which explores how a small police station attempts to fight growing crime on an ever shrinking budget. We shot a pilot episode of this last year which resulted in a very funny sitcom similar to 'the office' in style. What I love about this idea so much is how relevant it is today with police cuts happening continuously. I hope if I am able to create this, it will open up more discussions about the problem while also entertaining people.

Other than that, I am restarting my YouTube channel which I will be posting videos of my life and filmmaking. I hope they will have an inspirational identity to them which will inspire others whilst also teaching and inspiring myself to be a more creative and original filmmaker.

Which is your preferred role when making a film – do you prefer writing, producing or directing?

Currently I am camera driven, I enjoy crafting shots that not only look pretty but have a deeper meaning. I would perhaps one day like to be a Cinematographer, however at this moment in time I just want to perfect my filmmaking craft as a whole.

What are your longer term aims – what do you think the future holds for you?

To be absolutely honest I'm still trying to figure it all out. I'd be quite happy working within the camera department of something like Doctor who, but at the same time I'd like to have my own self-made company. At the moment I'm doing a little bit of both, whenever I get an opportunity at a production house I grab it with both hands and I'm also beginning to build a name for myself as a filmmaker through my YouTube videos and other independent film projects. Whatever I end up doing as long as it's in the creative scene I believe I will be happy.



*James and the crew. To find out more about the film visit the crowd funding campaign of which goes into a lot more detail regarding what they are filming, and how they plan to achieve it. [https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-midnight-court-and-other-aislings-short-film#/
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