



## Matthew Holland - Senior Compositor

A Compositor's roll is to provide a finished effect shot to a film he or she may be working on. This means taking animation, live action footage, background paintings (matte paintings) and blending them together to create a seamless shot. Having experience in graphics, photography and technical knowledge is essential plus patience and diplomacy in dealing with colleagues and clients is a must. My film credits at Weta started with King Kong, then X-Men 3, Fantastic Four, Bridge Terribethia, The Waterhorse and many others. I also supervise special effects for short films and co-ordinate digital painters, animators, lighters, directors and producers.

My route to this position started when I used to draw at an early age I wasn't particularly great but I found something I enjoyed and was able to concentrate my efforts at school and at home. I practiced drawing and painting most weekends. At 14 I originally wanted to be an architect because I could draw and I heard it was going to get me lots of money. My art teacher told me I wasn't good enough but graphic design would be a better option. Being 14 I didn't really have any idea of direction so I decided to listen to my teacher. This may have been a mistake as I don't believe anyone should tell you can't do something. You can do anything if you really want it.

My teacher persuaded me to take a career in graphic design. There weren't any A-level courses that came close to this subject. So, instead of A-levels I investigated colleges and Universities that taught Graphic Design. I traveled two hours every day to study a National Diploma in Graphic Design at Northampton College. This course opened my eyes to the different kinds of graphic design. I studied a broad range of topics like packaging, website design, exhibition design, photography, illustration, client relations, corporate identity, logo design etc. My parents bought our first satellite dish and I used to come home and watch MTV I was blown away by the creativity of idents and music videos. I successfully passed the two year National Diploma but I didn't feel ready to become a graphic designer. I had a taste for all these different areas but wasn't a specialist in any. MTV was my next focus and decided to do another two year course - a Higher National Diploma in Graphic Design. This course offered more in the way of multimedia and moving imagery. I was rewarded (during this course) with a free scholarship to Philadelphia, Drexel University where I continued my studies for four months.

I realised real industry experience was one of the most important parts of a course. The whole point was to get a job do what you love and get paid at the same time. I paid particular attention to visiting lecturers from the industry and continually spoke with designers who worked in the field. This taught me the importance of being at the mercy of clients and their brief. You can't always do what you want to design and have to honor the paying client. Diplomacy, working well in a team and the art of selling your ideas is just as important as your artistic skill.

When I graduated from my HND I was given the option of a one year top up to gain a degree. I decided against this as I felt I was ready to get a job in graphic design. I wasn't totally satisfied with working as a general Graphic Designer. I had some multimedia and animation experience from my HND but I wasn't going to develop this skill through a normal graphic design job.

I contacted Universities all over the UK and discovered Bournemouth University had a Masters Degree Course in Digital Special Effects. This was perfect exactly what I was looking for and would enable me to make those music videos and MTV adverts. The course cost £4400 and lasted for one year. I had two problems - money and the course would only allow students with degrees. I'm a firm believer there are exceptions to every rule and just because its written down doesn't always mean its set in stone.

So at the end of 1997 I worked for Harlequin Graphic Design studios for six months as a junior graphic designer. I did all the donkey work and learnt from the other designers. I worked long hours to bring myself up to speed with software, clients and deadlines. After those six months I went it alone as a freelance graphic designer. I convinced The Prince's Youth Business Trust to give me a grant of £500 pounds and a loan for £3000. I used this funding to set myself up. I marketed to clients on a daily basis, worked on my design work in the afternoon through to the early hours. Armed with this experience I put together my strongest portfolio of student and industrial work and pitched myself to Bournemouth Universities Master Degree Course. They accepted my application in 1999 I started my Masters Degree Course.

This course taught me moving graphics, title sequences and special effects for television and film. At this course I met visiting lecturers from the BBC, Framestore, ILM and many other companies through out the world. At the end of this course I blitzed London with my showreel. After six months I got my first gig I worked on Photoshop for the Music Video Primal Screams Kill All Hippies. This project lasted for five weeks. My next available job was a unner position where I made coffee and smoothies. I lived in a flat in Soho where I slept on a kitchen floor on an inflatable mattress, that was fun ! Every night after my twelve hour shift I sat in Easy Net emailing company after company. After three weeks the BBC gave me an opportunity and I was employed as a junior compositor.

At the BBC I worked on graphics and special effects for television. After three years at the BBC I felt I was ready to challenge myself further. I updated my showreel, secured a new job then resigned from the BBC. My next job was freelancing in Soho as a compositor on film. I worked at The Moving Picture Company on Jackie Chan's Around the World in 80 Days, Harry Potter Prisoner of Azkahban, Kingdom of Heaven, Wallace and Gromit and Alien V's Predator.

After four years in London I was ready for another change and wanted to catch the end of Lord of the Rings. They turned my application down but said reapply for King Kong (six months later) which I did and they offered me a free lance position for one year. I've continued to reapply for a new contract each year to stay for future films and I've been lucky to be given new contracts.

I have now worked as a sequence lead Senior Compositor on James Cameroons new film called Avatar, a futurist stereoscopic film.

