ATEC GRADUATE HIGHLIGHTS

by: Deb Edattel, MA ’23

Kyle Murdock

“Always be learning. Don’t be afraid to try everything once.” That’s the philosophy of Kyle Murdock, ATEC Master’s program graduate, Spring 2021. Currently a sound designer for VICE, one of Murdock’s jobs is to transport listeners around the world: to pull a specific sense of place out of the frequency spectrum and plant it in the listener’s mind as if recalling a memory. One moment he’s sound designing a teenager’s bedroom in Minneapolis (Monaea, a 2020 Diary) and the next a vibrant protest in Hong Kong (I Was Prepared to be Arrested). Today: Seoul, South Korea. Tomorrow: Jamaica.

This is possible, he tells me, using his skill as an audio technician and his artistry as a sound designer and composer. It’s also his keen ear for the sonic textures that put each one of us in a particular headspace at a singular moment in time; an especially useful skill in an era defined not least by restrictions on travel.

Mostly known for its video content, Murdock brings his sound engineering skills to VICE’s podcast offerings, the latest of which is slated for released this Spring. The podcast – the title of which is still under wraps – tells the complex backstory of a legendary Korean hip hop artist and reflects two passions of Murdock’s: hip hop and history. Will it be the next big podcast hit? Perhaps VICE will rise in the cut-throat rankings of podcast power players, in part due to Murdock’s sonic sensibility. That’s not what he’s thinking about though. “Why aren’t more video games scored with hip hop?” Murdock asks. He wants to give that a try. “Hey, never be afraid to try everything once,” he reminds me.

Look out for a trailer for the new podcast from @VICENews in early 2022.

Dani Perez Carasol

New York City’s famed Electric Lady Studios, founded by Jimi Hendrix in 1968 and the recording destination for legendary artists from Led Zeppelin and David Bowie to Kanye West and Lady Gaga, is a place many musicians and recording engineers only dream about setting foot inside. Not recent American University ATEC graduate Daniel (Dani) Perez Carasol.

His advice for AU students eager to follow in his footsteps?

“While you are at American get as much time in the studio as you can. Learn the details and get to know your guest speakers,” recommends Dani. “There’s no easy pass to engineering for big artists and there’s a lot of competition... you have to decide if you want to fight for it. Put yourself in the right place at the right time and put in the hustle to build trust. You can’t be beneath managing lunch orders (and getting them right). You’re expected to know the mics, the outboard gear, the DAWs and
everything else. But the right attitude is just as important. Maybe more important.”

Dani graduated with a Master of Arts in Audio Technology at American University in May 2021 after having earned a Bachelor of Science in Sound and Image Engineering at the Technical University of Madrid as valedictorian. Still, he started at Electric Lady at the bottom: intern. In fact, after moving to New York City in 2021 he interned at both Electric Lady and Premier Recording Studios simultaneously which resulted in 7-day work weeks, sometimes back-to-back shifts adding up to 35 hours straight. His primary job? Cleaning the studios.

“I never touched a mixing board as an intern… other than to clean it. It was different than I thought it would be, but hey, sometimes that’s what it takes.” A month in a spot opened up at Electric Lady and he was offered a full-time position. “I can’t tell you who I pass in the halls every day here (it’s privileged information, he stresses more than once), but you’d recognize the names. It’s a privilege just to get in the door.”

Éowyn Fain

Éowyn Fain (May 2020, BA, Audio Production) didn’t necessarily expect that her dream job would be at a public radio station in Asheville, North Carolina. “Most folks encouraged me to focus my job search around the larger cities with major music studios... Los Angeles and New York,” said Éowyn, who was recently hired as Blue Ridge Public Radio’s operations coordinator and radio announcer.

It was during her year-and-a-half-long job search post-graduation – much of which took place during the uncertain days at the height of the pandemic – Fain found herself reflecting on what she describes as NPR’s empathetic and human approach to storytelling. One story in particular stuck in her mind: its focus was a housing complex damaged by mold – and the Mexican immigrants whose health had been impacted.

“The sound design of the piece really conveyed the feeling of those families. You could hear the effect in their voices. You could hear the coughing in the background.” She felt called to action and drawn to the work.

She also encourages those who are job searching to consider careers outside of the major metropolitan areas. “There are wonderful opportunities out there and many places offer vibrant local culture and music scenes,” said Fain who plays guitar, bass and flute and as a student hosted a weekly music program for American University’s student-run station WVAU.

In addition to traditional news and narrative radio programming, Blue Ridge Public Radio also produces Close to Home, a weekly program featuring the classic folk and Americana stylings of renowned dulcimer player Don Pedi. It’s a show Éowyn Fain holds close to her heart. Pedi has been broadcasting in some form or another on Blue Ridge Public Radio since 1985. “It’s pretty amazing, actually,” says Éowyn.

Rebeca Lindenfeld

One of Rebeca Lindenfeld’s (BA, Audio Technology, 2017; MA, Audio Technology, 2018) more memorable professional experiences since graduating in 2018 was working as an assistant sound editor for the Spanish film Madres Paralelas (Parallel Mothers). “The baby must sound natural,” she recalls the director insisting. No other baby
would do and certainly no sound effects. But since babies don’t coo on cue, it was a long process create a library of natural sounds of the infant from the raw audio and place them just so to generate the crucial emotional impact for each scene. The strategy paid off: her meticulous work was part of a sound design effort that was nominated for a prestigious Goya Award (known internationally as a “Spanish Oscar”). It was also one of several professional experiences that inspired Rebeca to narrow in on her specialty: dialogue editing.

Growing up in Venezuela, Rebeca had a passion for music, film and science and knew she wanted to work in sound. Today she credits much of the professional success she’s enjoyed to three things: the fundamentals of sound she learned at AU which she now uses daily; the various internships she completed that allowed her to dial in on a career path; and the advice of AU faculty. “Listen to your professors,” she advises current ATEC students. “If it wasn’t for their guidance I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

ATEC FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

by Deb Edattel, MA ‘23

Professor Braxton Boren: New Volumetric Capture Studio

A $1 million National Science Foundation grant secured by a team of AU faculty members including Assistant Professor of Audio Technology Braxton Boren (co-PI) brings a TetaVi Volumetric Capture system – the first such facility in the DMV region – to American University.

Volumetric capture is a computer vision technology that enables recording the topology of objects, people, textures and light from any angle in full 3D rather than, as in traditional video recording, the projection of three-dimensional objects onto a two-dimensional surface. The topology can then be recreated as holograms in Virtual Reality or Augmented Reality systems. Due to high costs of system acquisition, volumetric capture and its application is currently being researched only at a handful of US research centers.

Assistant Professor Boren is planning a research project to auto-calibrate an acoustic simulation with just a single acoustic room impulse response which characterizes all the reflections, frequency-dependent filtering, and reverberation of the space without all the usual steps required such as making multiple site visits, photographing objects and boundaries, and calibrating the results by hand according to acoustic measurements. “This will have applications in 3D audio and immersive virtual environments, including VR and AR systems, but also for creative audio production techniques in 3D,” says Professor Boren.

Professor William Brent: OUTPUT

Having brought his most recent research project to life over the last two years amid Covid lockdowns, ATEC Professor William Brent calls OUTPUT his ‘pandemic baby.’ While he initially explored the idea several years before with ATEC alum Holly Baynham, all that time working from home spurred him to revisit its development to advance the genre of bytebeat music. Bytebeat composers create algorithms that generate a waveform as a function of time – typically a fixed melodic composition – rather than using a musical score or instruments. Instead of creating a static composition, OUTPUT enables bytebeat musicians to perform, improvise and alter their algorithms in real-time while collaborating with others in remote locations.

To learn more about OUTPUT or try it for yourself, please visit: github.com/wbrent/OUTPUT

by: Prof. Michael Harvey

Professor Paul Oehlers: AUTOMATON

“Any sound is viable for music composition.”

“Automaton” is Professor Paul Oehlers’s Musique Concréte Electroacoustic Music SEAMUS selected piece for Spring ’22. Musique Concrète, developed in the 1940’s incorporates everyday recorded sounds in music compositions. Professor Oehlers’ composition, along with other components, employs the recordings of jack hammers and an ancient hamburger press (no meat involved!) to make the percussive sounds according to Professor Oehlers of a “Rube Goldberg device, a device that uses unnecessary steps to complete a simple task”, which is perhaps “reflective of our society”. His process involved use of Avid ProTools, C-Sound (an older tech line code program), Meta-synth and GRM plug-ins.

Interested in Electroacoustic Music composition? See the Seamus link on the next page for conferences and festivals.
SEAMUS

“Founded in 1984, The Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (SEAMUS) is a non-profit national organization of composers, performers, and teachers of electro-acoustic music representing every part of the country and virtually every musical style. Electro-Acoustic music is a term used to describe those musics which are dependent on electronic technology for their creation and/or performance. SEAMUS is committed to facilitating member interaction and the dissemination of their work through an annual national conference, juried recording projects, and the publication of Journal SEAMUS.”

• seamusonline.org/about

AES

The Audio Engineering Society is the only professional society devoted exclusively to audio technology. Founded in the USA in 1948, the AES is now an international organization that unites audio engineers, creative artists, scientists and students worldwide by promoting advances in audio and disseminating new knowledge and research.

• aes2.org

Women’s Audio Mission Conference

WAMCon is an interactive recording conference series for women and gender-diverse individuals presented by Women’s Audio Mission with support from groups like Dolby, Disney, Spotify, Universal Music Group, Capitol Studios, YouTube, The Recording Academy, iZotope, Shure, sE Electronics, Universal Audio, Sweetwater, and more. WAMCon was offered in Nashville, Los Angeles, and New York in 2019. After 2020, in response to the global pandemic, WAMCon went completely virtual, reaching 700+ attendees in over 15 countries.

• womensaudiomission.org/training/wamconrecordingconference

NYCEMF (New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival)

Monday, June 20 through Sunday, June 26, 2022. The New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival is accepting submissions for its festival in June 2022. Now in its twelfth year, NYCEMF is the largest annual showcase of electroacoustic music in New York City, and one of the largest festivals of its kind in the world.

• nycemf.org

International Computer Music Conference (online 2022)

The theme for the conference is the virtuoso computer: redefining limits. The main idea of the theme is to reflect about what does it mean to be a virtuoso in the context of computer music. Is the computer a virtuoso? Are performers who performs laptops on stage virtuosos as well? How can we compare digital virtuosity with the general notion used for acoustic performers? Are we talking about the same concept?

• icmc2021.org

Ismir 2022

The ISMIR conference is the world’s leading research forum on processing, searching, organizing and accessing music-related data. The 23rd International Society for Music Information Retrieval Conference will take place in a hybrid format, hosted in Bengaluru, India.

• ismir2022.ismir.net

SXSW

Join us for the 2022 SXSW Music Festival from March 14-20 in Austin, Texas. New, developing, and established Showcasing Artists enhance their careers by reaching new audiences and attendees. Showcases are curated by South By Southwest® in collaboration with record labels, booking agencies, management and PR firms, export offices, publishers, media outlets, lifestyle brands, festivals, and more.

• www.sxsw.com/festivals/music
**Brookings Institution: Podcasting**

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC. Our mission is to conduct in-depth research that leads to new ideas for solving problems facing society at the local, national and global level.

- [www.brookings.edu/about-us](http://www.brookings.edu/about-us)
- Contact the Program Director for information

**Educational Development Center: Post-production editing and music creation**

“Achieves sustainable impact. Promotes research-based interventions. Designs effective digital technology. Builds scalable solutions.” EDC’s work around the world does all this and more to open doors to education, employment, and healthier lives for millions of individuals. Visit each of our areas of expertise for more information and to view a selection of our related projects, resources, and staff with skills and knowledge in that area.

- [www.edc.org](http://www.edc.org)
- Contact the Program Director for information

**Bias Studios: Music Engineering**

“Bias Studios is one of the premier recording facilities in the Washington D.C. area. Serving the music community for over 40 years.”

- [www.biasstudios.com](http://www.biasstudios.com)
- Contact the Program Director for information

**Green Connections Media/ Electric Ladies: Podcast editing and sound design**

“Hosted and produced by Joan Michelson, acclaimed journalist, business leader, coach and speaker, based in Washington, DC. This is your destination for inspiration, trends and insights in clean energy, climate and sustainability from business, policy and technology, to money, the arts and careers – by and for women.”

- [electricladiespodcast.com](http://electricladiespodcast.com)
- Contact the Program Director for your application

**The BBC (WDC): Engineering for Television**

“The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom. Headquartered at Broadcasting House in London, it is the world’s oldest national broadcaster, and the largest broadcaster in the world by number of employees, employing over 22,000 staff in total, of whom approximately 19,000 are in public-sector broadcasting.”

- [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)
- Contact the Program Director for information

**The Library of Congress: Audio Collections, Preservation, Music archives**

“The Library of Congress offers exceptional opportunities to perform meaningful and unique work in a collaborative environment, one that values personal growth and achievement. The Library’s reach is wide: preserving and disseminating materials that are the essence of American culture and knowledge; supporting and informing lawmakers; and protecting intellectual property domestically and internationally.”

- [www.loc.gov/internships-and-fellowships](http://www.loc.gov/internships-and-fellowships)
- Apply directly

**National Public Radio**

NPR is an independent, nonprofit media organization that was founded on a mission to create a more informed public. Every day, NPR connects with millions of Americans on the air, online, and in person to explore the news, ideas, and what it means to be human. Through its network of member stations, NPR makes local stories national, national stories local, and global stories personal.

- Apply directly