



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

College of Letters & Science

UCSB

# Alumni Spotlight

This month's Spotlight features James, a former Global Studies major who's lighting up the soundboards of Hollywood as a music supervisor for popular TV shows and films.



**James Bianco:**  
**Music Supervisor/Music Editor**

## What are you up to now, post-graduation?

I am a music supervisor and music editor. I work with a seasoned music supervisor at his company, Wike Music. As music supervisors, we are in charge of putting together all of the music that you hear in feature films, television shows, commercials, and any other areas of entertainment media. We do all things music from hiring composers and picking songs, to executing license agreements and editing music to picture. Our projects are primarily feature films and television series.

When the workday's done, my band, Dead Things and War, plays shows around the LA area. You can check us out on Spotify!

## How did you get to where you are?

Honestly, I came into this job in a pretty indirect way. I did not even really know what a music supervisor was until a couple years after graduating from UCSB. My Global Studies major, though wonderful in its own right, was very different than what I'm doing now.

Post-graduation, I thought I wanted to get into audio post-production, so I began interning at a huge film scoring company. I worked as a runner for minimum wage for a few months, then worked as a scheduler and project manager at an agency that specialized in

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digital and print entertainment advertising for feature films, television, and video games. Though I was pretty good at it, I did not really enjoy the work or the stress.

Then, the company opened an AV department specializing in movie trailers and hired a music supervisor. Curious, I started talking with her about her job and she was kind enough to take me out to a show one night and explain to me what her job was all about.

I immediately enrolled in a music licensing class and a music supervision class at UCLA Extension, and searched for high-profile music supervisors to intern for. I was fortunate to land an internship with my current employer fairly quickly through networking from my previous job. After being an unpaid, part-time intern for a couple of months, helping with managing synch and master license agreements and filling out cue sheets for TV shows, I graduated to part-time employment, and then full-time shortly after.

It was hard working for little to no money for a few months, but considering that this was basically a career change, it all came together pretty quickly. I wish I had known about this job/career earlier on in my undergraduate days, because I could have definitely prepared for it better and gotten an earlier start. I cannot emphasize enough how helpful those night courses were though, both in getting me hired and enabling me to hit the ground running once I got in the door.

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**What was the best thing you did as an undergrad to help you get to where you are?**

I took a couple music and film courses outside of my major that helped lay a foundation for what I’m doing now. These courses were purely for my own interest at the time and I never thought they would

actually help me with a future job in music.

One course in particular was on ethnomusicology, which involved researching and listening to a wide variety of music. I wrote research papers on classical music and black metal, and found that I genuinely enjoyed listening to music outside of my preferred spectrum (which was

pretty narrow at the time). From chorale hymns, to soul gospel, to noise music, the course motivated me to continue broadening my musical palette, which is a huge part of being a music supervisor. Though you do not have to LOVE every kind of music that is out there, it is important to have a strong familiarity with many different genres of



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music, and to know why certain songs work for certain moments and why others do not.

My Global Studies major might seem completely different from what I’m doing now, but both fields appeal to people who are intellectually curious and hungry to experience new and different things with an open mind. I think such people also possess the willingness and the discipline to do the work and research necessary to learn these things beyond a superficial level, whether it be a new language, culture, or genre of music. Those skills have stayed with me.

Also, playing in bands throughout college and developing basic recording chops helped provide me with a competitive edge in the music supervision/editing world.

### **What do you wish you had known while you were in undergrad?**

I wish I had known how invaluable internships are during the undergraduate years. I would take a step further and say that they are a necessity, especially for entertainment industry jobs, and I highly regret not taking on any while I was in school. Between work-

ing part-time, playing music, and traveling abroad (which was one of the greatest experiences of my life), I did not make the time for an internship. Consequently, I ended up having to do it anyway post-grad, which was kind of unfortunate. Despite being a financial strain, it was well worth it, though.

### **What was the best thing about being a Gaucho?**

I played in a few bands in college, one with a couple of older gents who had a practice space in Isla Vista. We had a blast playing in that rehearsal space 2-3 nights a week and playing shows in the park, IV, and on State Street. With the exception of the band I am in now, it was some of the most fun I have ever had playing music. I think the IV culture really provides for a fun and lively musical environment overall, and I feel lucky to have been able to experience it. Playing music and watching friends’ bands play through IV provided me with a lot of wonderful memories.

Oh, and getting to attend one of the best universities in the country that also happens to have six Nobel Prize Winners was pretty good too.

### **Any final words of wisdom for the current Gaucho generation?**

Intern, Intern, Intern! I know it sounds pretty obvious, but if you



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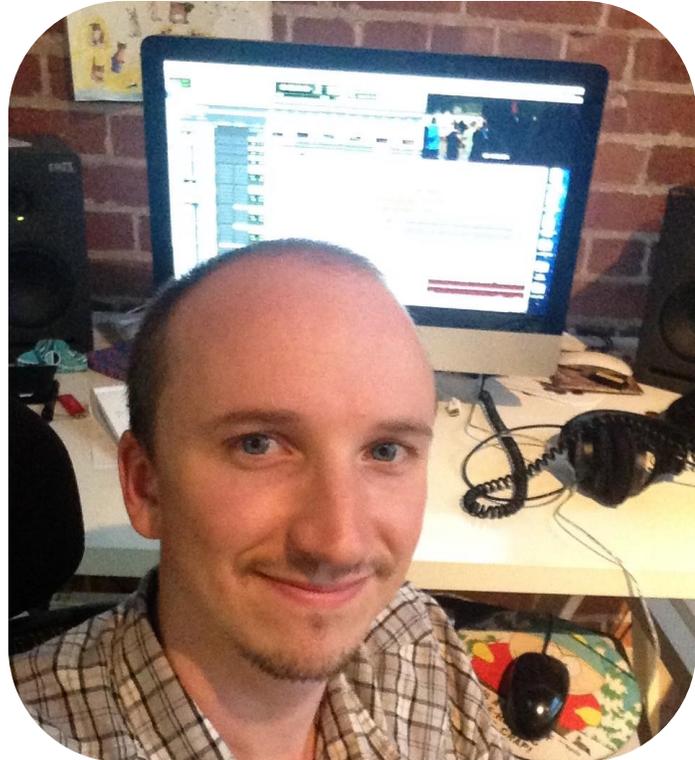
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If an alum's story is meaningful to you, consider reaching out with questions using the contact information provided.

have even the slightest inkling toward a particular industry or career path, seek out an internship position. Whether it is a couple times a week during the school year or over summer, paid or unpaid, just go for it. There is no better way to

get a taste of what a job or industry is about, and you'll have a much better shot at landing a related job soon after graduation.



*James welcomes UCSB students to contact him via LinkedIn with questions about the field and for advice on how to use your time at UCSB to become rock stars in the music industry. Requests to look over student resumes or inquiries about open positions will not be responded to.*

[www.linkedin.com/pub/james-bianco/9/345/a17](http://www.linkedin.com/pub/james-bianco/9/345/a17)



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