



# Creative industries



South West England

## Introduction

With decades of achievement in the creative industries, the South West of England is now internationally recognised as one of the most important hubs for digital and media companies in the UK.

The region's position as the world's foremost location for natural history programming is unchallenged and its depth of expertise in animation, production, animation, image manipulation, new media technology and content development sets it apart as a "hot spring" of Media Innovation.

The South West was recently identified by the UK government as an exemplar region for creative industries. The report "Creative Britain – New Talents for the New Economy" designated the South West as a Beacon Region of creative excellence. Almost 90,000 people work directly in the creative industries sector in the South West, with a further 55,000 people in related occupations, so the health of the creative industries is crucial to the regional economy. The South West RDA and local authorities place a strong emphasis on supporting its ongoing growth through the development of Creative Business Networks and workspace.

Companies such as HP, Two Four Media and Endemol have invested heavily in the region, thanks to its concentration of academic research, public support for the creative industries and wealth of creative talent. Nokia has recently established its Digital Music R&D activities here, demonstrating the outstanding qualities that the region has to offer.

Creative and digital businesses in the South West are always keen to find new solutions to problems, whether in entertainment, virtual worlds, communication or artistic performance. This spirit is embodied in the ground-breaking Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol, which supports collaborative projects bringing together academics, creatives and technologists by providing the space to explore the application and business opportunities within new media formats.

A series of highly-regarded arts festivals take place in the region, including the Cheltenham Literary Festival, Wildscreen – the world's leading wildlife film festival – and the largest music and performing arts festival in the world at Glastonbury.

Please take a look through the following sections to see the range of creative work that takes place in the region and get in touch with individual companies or organisations to find out more.

For more information visit [www.southwestengland.com](http://www.southwestengland.com)

### Our sectors

Aerospace • Biotechnology & Bio-medical technologies • Composite technologies • **Creative industries**  
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Manufacturing & advanced engineering • Marine industries • Renewable energy

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## Multimedia Production

In total, productions shooting in the South West region add many tens of millions of pounds to the local economy and help to make it a destination of choice for creative companies from around the world.

South West Screen, the agency responsible for media development in the South West can assist producers and filmmakers through its directory of local talent, its access to training, locations and facilities and many other resources. "In the past year alone we have

helped more than 4,600 companies and played a part in attracting £66 million to the region in inward investment," says Caroline Norbury. "We have created or safeguarded hundreds of jobs and promoted the region as a filmmaking location to many thousands of people."

## TV Specialisms

700 hours of daytime TV is produced in the South West annually, and there are particular strengths around factual broadcasting. Bristol, the largest city in the region has a critical mass of production companies including: Oscar and Bafta winning Aardman; Endemol West (makers of Deal or No Deal); Icon Films; Tigress; Quickfire Media; Testimony Films and RDF Television West.

The BBC's Natural History Unit, based in Bristol, has produced many of the most outstanding and world-renowned television programmes of the past 50 years. Series such as Life on Earth and The Blue Planet have won countless awards and made the South West a centre of extraordinarily fertile programme-making. The BBC's centre of excellence has attracted a number of other Natural History specialist companies and post production houses to the South West and together they account for 25% of the global production output for this genre.

Locations in the region are familiar to TV audiences worldwide. Recent drama shot in the region includes Larkrise to Candleford, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Being Human and the Rosamund Pilcher adaptations.

## A movie base

The South West is fast becoming a serious alternative to London as a centre of excellence in filmmaking, with a host of companies located in the region and a growing track record of production expertise. Recent movies shot in the South West include The Boat that Rocked, The Duchess (featuring Kiera Knightly) and Tamara Drewe, directed by Stephen Frears and starring Gemma Arterton. Gloucester cathedral was used as a setting for Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the Harry Potter film series.

In addition, Bristol hosts the international short film festival – Encounters – each year, attracting hundreds of entries from dozens of countries. An annual Scriptwriters Festival takes place in Cheltenham and Wildscreen – the world's largest wildlife film festival – welcomes thousands of visitors to its Bristol every other year.

## Artistic excellence

The South West is also home to a wealth of creative excellence, from the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to the "trip hop" music scene in Bristol, from Tate St Ives, to the mysterious graffito, Banksy.



## Animation action

The only full-time animation studio in Europe, Aardman Animations, was founded in Bristol in 1976 and remains firmly located in the city. It's much loved claymation movies starring Wallace and his dog Gromit have won four Oscars and entertained audiences around the world, with multi-million dollar grossing productions including A Close Shave, The Wrong Trousers and The Curse of the Were-Rabbit. Aardman has also produced CGI animation, including the full length movie Flushed Away. The company currently employs 110 people and has a turnover of around £17 million per year.

Four further animation companies have their headquarters in Bristol, including 422 Productions and Cod Steaks, together employing several dozen creative staff and contributing to the concentration of animation talent in the region.

## Bristol-BBC Anchor

In 2009, the BBC and the city of Bristol formed a pioneering partnership to create a multi-media test bed for innovative production. Together, Bristol and the BBC aim to attract creative companies and activities to the city, encourage collaboration through high speed digital networks, support education and skills programmes and develop infrastructure in Bristol. "Digital technologies and the convergence of media platforms are revolutionising creative industries, changing audience behaviour and creating challenges which require new thinking, new business models and new alliances," according to the new organisation.

Bristol-BBC Anchor has the explicit aim of bringing further investment into the region, as it showcases the existing wealth of skilled creative people and the many resources that have been built up around broadcast television, multimedia and digital technologies. According to Anne Scorer at the partnership, several other UK cities are now exploring similar initiatives.

## Pervasive Media

Opened in February 2008, the Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol brings together the IT, communications and creative industries to pioneer new forms of digital media, looking at the future of mobile and wireless technology for example. 'Pervasive media' as a concept involves using small wireless computers linked to the internet to deliver improved services and experiences, whether through GPS technology, to tell someone where they are, or through links to internet alerts to remind them of an event.

"We wanted to get inter-disciplinary tools into the hands of artists," explains Clare Reddington at Pervasive Media.

"The project recognises the unique emerging market of skills and research in the region – the Studio was set up to ensure that this concentration of talent could be put to best use. The South West has one of the largest clusters of companies conducting new technology research outside Silicon Valley in California, with Nokia, Toshiba, ST Microelectronics and many more.

The Pervasive Media Studio is run by Bristol's Watershed Arts Trust, with partners including HP Labs, the BBC and regional universities, and with support from the South West Regional Development Agency.



## Creative networks

Across the South West there are a number of creative business networks, focused on creative hubs, such as Bristol, Plymouth and Cornwall, or particular creative disciplines. They include:

- [Bristol Media](#)
- [Bristol Music Foundation](#)
- [Gloucestershire Media Group](#)
- [Plymouth Media Partnership](#)
- [South West Design Forum](#)
- [South West Music Forum](#)
- [Swindon Media Group](#)
- [Wessex Media Group](#)
- [Creative Bath](#)
- [Cornwall Media Focus](#)

At the South West Design Forum, Karen Stockdale explains that the group helps companies that would like to relocate into the region, putting them in touch with potential staff and suppliers and inviting them to events and meetings. There are more than 1,500 individuals and companies on the Forum's mailing list and groups meet in at least six distinct locations around the South West.

There is a strongly commercial focus to the group's work. "We have created a tool kit for designers so that they can demonstrate return on investment, which helps designers to talk the language of businesses," says Stockdale. The Forum also offers master classes in entrepreneurship and provides details of tendering opportunities across Europe. A Media Innovation Award event takes place every year to celebrate the best and most innovative media music and design in the region.

At Bristol Media, Mike Bennett applauds the collaborative nature of many working in the creative industries in the South West. "There is a lot of help available to meet other people in the industry, to exchange work and get support. It is a very flourishing sector," he says. Bennett believes that there are more than 2,500 companies in the region, comprising more than 4,000 individuals. "There's a 'can-do' attitude, with large companies willing to help and support the next generation. It's incredibly appealing for companies wanting to relocate to the region."

The South West of England has long been at the forefront of the UK's creative industries: Watershed in Bristol was the first UK media centre, opened in 1982 and now home to a great array of design, new media, digital, film, television and art-based companies. The Centre has played a vital role in the development of the regional creative economy and has helped to establish the South West as a home for creative pioneers.

Visit [www.swscreen.co.uk/local-networks](http://www.swscreen.co.uk/local-networks) for more information.



## Academic strength

With more than 7,500 students enrolled in creative subject courses at 13 leading universities and colleges in the South West, the region is well placed to provide the staff and entrepreneurs for the creative industries of the future.

Among the most important locations are:

**The Arts University College, Bournemouth**  
[www.aucb.ac.uk](http://www.aucb.ac.uk)

The Arts University College focuses on the disciplines of art, design, media and performance, and is a source of technical and creative talent as well as providing creative business with knowledge transfer and incubation support through its Enterprise Pavilion.

**University of Bath**  
[www.bath.ac.uk](http://www.bath.ac.uk)

The University of Bath's Department of Computer Science teaches courses on human interaction with computers, while its Media Research Technology Centre looks at computer applications in animation, graphics, image processing, music and virtual reality. The university also offers an MPhil in digital architectonics, teaching students how to use digital tools in architectural design.

**Bournemouth University**  
[www.bournemouth.ac.uk](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk)

The UK's leading animation school – The National Centre for Computer Animation – is based at Bournemouth, conducting internationally recognised research and pioneering computer-animated simulation programmes. The university has a Centre for Excellence in Media Practice and offers courses in broadcast media, interactive media, marketing, public relations and journalism.

**University of Bristol**  
[www.bristol.ac.uk](http://www.bristol.ac.uk)

The university's department for Computer Science is a world-class centre of research and training, with its Digital Media Group leading the development of research into image processing, graphics, animation and virtual reality. Bristol also runs post graduate courses in film, television and music and has highly-regarded courses in drama, dance and the performing arts, English language and literature and music.

**University College Falmouth**  
[www.falmouth.ac.uk](http://www.falmouth.ac.uk)

This is a specialist art, design and media college, recently combined with Dartington College of Arts to offer under graduate and post graduate courses in multimedia, creative advertising and professional writing, alongside design courses in everything from gardens to 3D images.

**University of Plymouth**  
[www.plymouth.ac.uk](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk)

Plymouth University's Centre for Computer Sciences and Informatics has an international profile and has helped to develop understanding of interactive intelligence systems, besides teaching courses in digital, 3D and multimedia design.

**University of the West of England**  
[www.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.uwe.ac.uk)

UWE's School of Creative Arts offers high level courses in graphic design and media, with state-of-the-art laboratories and technical equipment to provide training in subjects such as computer generated animation. The college also has a Centre for Fine Print Research.





## Getting in touch

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