



Lol Crawley at the Bafta Awards - (c) Getty Images

Feb 27, 2025 10:43 GMT

## From Tyneside to Hollywood – the Northumbria alumni making their mark in the film industry

On Sunday 2 March the biggest names in the world of film will gather in Hollywood for the 97th Academy Awards – with 23 Oscars awarded to the brightest talent in the industry.

Among the nominees is Lol Crawley – director of photography for 2024 film *The Brutalist*, who has been nominated in the Cinematography category.

And while he currently lives and works in Hollywood, his career journey began more than 5,000 miles away on the shores of Tyneside, when Lol arrived at Northumbria University to study Film in the 1990s.

It was a decision which has shaped his professional journey, with the connections he made and style he developed during that time still influencing his work today.

It was during his time at Northumbria that Lol met film director Duane Hopkins and producer Samm Haillay, who went on to form independent production company 'Third' in 2001. Lol collaborated with the pair after graduating, giving him his first professional experience and international exposure.

It was while studying that Lol developed his distinct style, teaming naturalistic lighting and exposure with a documentary feel, as well as an ethos of meaningful storytelling.

As he explains: “I always wanted my work to reflect my personal values. To create something meaningful you need to have something to say, and some life experience. It was while studying at Northumbria that I found my personal film-making style and I’ve stuck to it, creating a body of work with a continuity of aesthetic that makes sense when people look back at it.”

When it comes to aspiring film makers hoping to work within the industry, Lol advises them to immerse themselves in all things film, both past and present, adding: “You have to want to be at the top of your craft. It’s not just about the practical skills but the intellectual understanding, taking the time to really examine film theory. Success doesn’t happen overnight, it takes time, but the experience and confidence I gained during my time at Northumbria, as well as the connections within the industry, really helped me when I graduated and began carving out a career for myself.”

Robert Jefferson is the programme leader for Northumbria’s BA (Hons) Film and TV Production programme, which from September will be known as BA (Hons) Film to reflect both demand from students and the skills required within the industry.

Robert is a Northumbria graduate himself, having studied in the same cohort

as Lol. Speaking about Lol's success he said: "He was always the stand out cinematographer whose work, in his own words, was about the 'philosophy of looking'. His own grad film was dream-like, open and painterly and his work for fellow students Duane Hopkins and Samm Hailly was sharp and muscular. This romantic drive combined with crystalline clarity has defined his amazing body of work. It's no surprise his grad film shot on the North East coast began a journey to the Oscars and there were several works along the way that were equally deserving."

Neil Percival, co-director of Cultural Partnerships at Northumbria, added: "We are all very proud of Lol – he has always had the most incredibly positive, creative attitude and in his earlier career supported the course whenever he was able to, from taking part in curriculum development discussions, to awarding prizes at our student gala. He's a terrific example of what can be achieved with great talent and creativity, a commitment to his craft, and a fantastic positive attitude."

Ahead of the Academy Awards this weekend (Sunday 2 March) there has already been cause for celebration for Lol after he won the Best Cinematography award at the British Academy Film Awards, known as the BAFTAs, also for his work on *The Brutalist*.

And he wasn't the only Northumbria graduate recognised, with *Kneecap*, a film produced by Jack Tarling, winning the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer. *Kneecap* is the third feature film Jack has produced, following *God's Own Country*, which was nominated for Outstanding British Film at the 2018 BAFTAs, and *Await Further Instructions*, which was sold to Netflix.

Last year fellow Northumbria graduate, cinematographer Si Bell was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on the short film *The After*, having also found success shooting *Peaky Blinders*, and *A Very British Scandal*.

And Sunderland-born Chris Foggin, who graduated from Northumbria in 2008, has also achieved success as director of films such as British comedy-drama *Fisherman's Friends* (2019), *This is Christmas* (2022), and *Bank of Dave* (2023).

"Professional practice, creativity and theory have always underpinned our programme, which has evolved continuously alongside the industry since its

inception in the 1980s”, added Neil Percival. “Our updated BA Film programme embodies the same principles that have launched many film and TV careers over the decades, and our partnerships with organisations such as the British Film Institute make sure that students are getting real world experience, whatever their background. The big awards are exciting recognition of how far they can go, but of course we are proud of every single one who goes forward to carve out a niche in the sector.”

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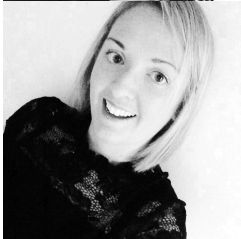


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