



GCRS on Making Sound for VR

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By Samuel Spencer on 25th May 2017 [@s_spencerwrites](#)

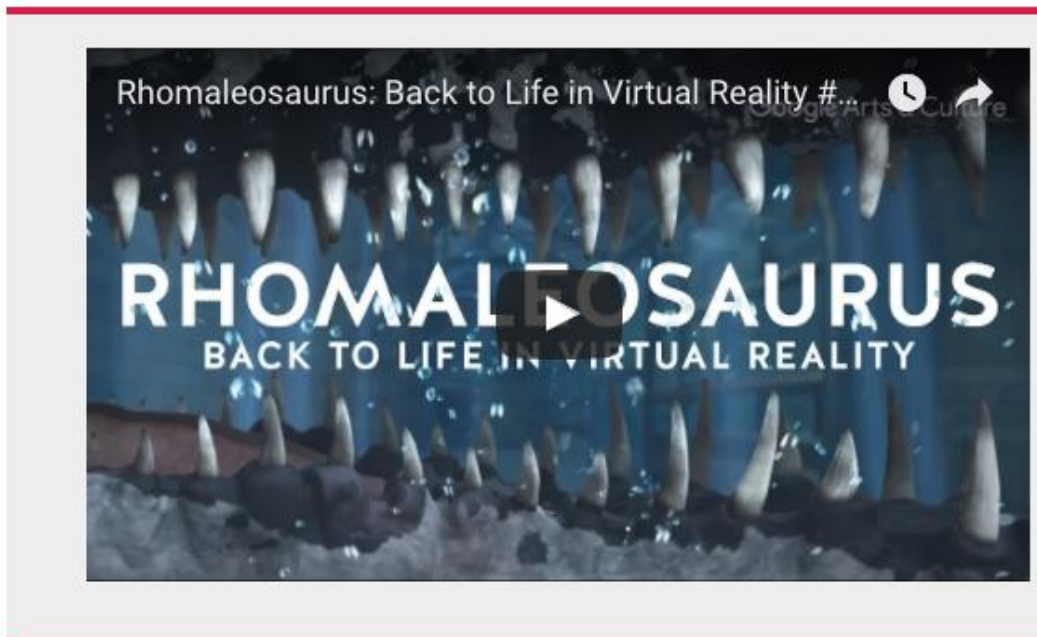
GCRS's Steve Lane and Mike Hill on the studio's new venture providing 3D sound for virtual reality.

Last week, London's [Grand Central Recording Studios](#) (GCRS) announced GCVRS, a new arm for their sound design business that will focus on providing 3D audio for VR.



As **Steve Lane**, the technical lead for the venture, explains, a lot of audio made for virtual reality really detracts from the realism of the project. "It's all about immersion" he said, sitting in his chair in one of GCRS' new studios, full of the latest tech to create sound for the next generation of formats. "With a lot of VR, you can move your head, but the audio won't follow you. If the audio is not matched to the visuals, it takes you right out of the experience."

"At GCRS," he continues, "we're working with spatial audio, where the audio tracks according to what you're looking at." Learning how to do this required a completely new way of thinking about audio.



He gives *Rhomaleosaurus* [above] as an example. In this 360 film, created by Google Arts & Culture and the Natural History Museum, the eponymous marine reptile ("not a dinosaur. Natural History Museum were very clear about that...") comes off the wall of the museum and comes to life, swimming past the viewer. "If we were doing a mix of this for a standard screen project, you'd just create one sound mix, with all the creature sounds, room sounds there with the voiceover on top. But in VR, you never know where someone is looking. Are they following the dinosaur as it swims past them, are they looking in one place and letting it swim past them? Or are they looking the other way, checking out the ceiling tiles? All of these possibilities need different sound mixes."

Roughly speaking, this allows them to map sounds to objects, meaning that as things move the sound they make moves with them.



"This is something we have been working on in the background for some time now," adds **Mike Hill**, (head of VR production) who is overseeing GCVRS. "We've been playing around with spatial sound for over eight years, but until now there hasn't been much chance to implement it in to our everyday audio post work".

Hence the new studios. "VR has flipped everything on its head," Mike Hill noted, "with this stuff, sound designers have to become programmers a little bit. We have seen it moving *this way for a long time, and made the necessary steps at becoming experts in the area.* And with huge amounts of money pumped into VR in the last 18 months from Facebook, Google and Oculus, it's a really exciting time for us to be launching this venture."

Watch this space, or should that be listen to this space, for more from the sound studio in the world of VR audio...

Creative connections

Sound Designer **Steve Lane**

Head of VR Production **Mike Hill**