

# **Ted Goslin**

# **Portfolio of Work**

Email: [tgoslin@pm.me](mailto:tgoslin@pm.me)

# **Table of Contents**

**Gaming in Dolby Atmos: An Interview with Josh Osiris,  
Yamaha Consumer Audio Blog – Page 3**

**The Panorama Experience, Part 1, Pan Magazine – Page  
10**

**March Madness and the Pyramid of Success, Mobile  
Electronics Online Blog – Page 17**

**Letter of Recommendation, STN Media – Page 19**

**Letter of Recommendation, SQA Services – Page 20**

# Gaming in Dolby Atmos®: An Interview with Josh Osiris

By Ted Goslin

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A new era in gaming begins.

Gunshots are ringing out on all sides as enemies surround you, testing every ounce of your skill. Then the final boss emerges, forcing a standoff that will result in victory or defeat.

Every gamer has that transcendental moment that takes things from a form of entertainment to a mind- and time-altering experience. While video obviously plays an important part in this transformation, immersive audio has become an unsung hero, waiting in the wings to take its rightful place in gaming lore.

And TV speakers simply don't do justice to this kind of sound design.

This is especially true for *Gears 5*, a console video game exclusive to Xbox™, and one of the few to utilize Dolby Atmos® — an object-based surround sound format typically only used in cinema.

To better understand the impact that audio and technologies like Dolby Atmos have on video games, we reached out to Josh Osiris, sound designer for *Gears of War 4* and *Gears 5*.

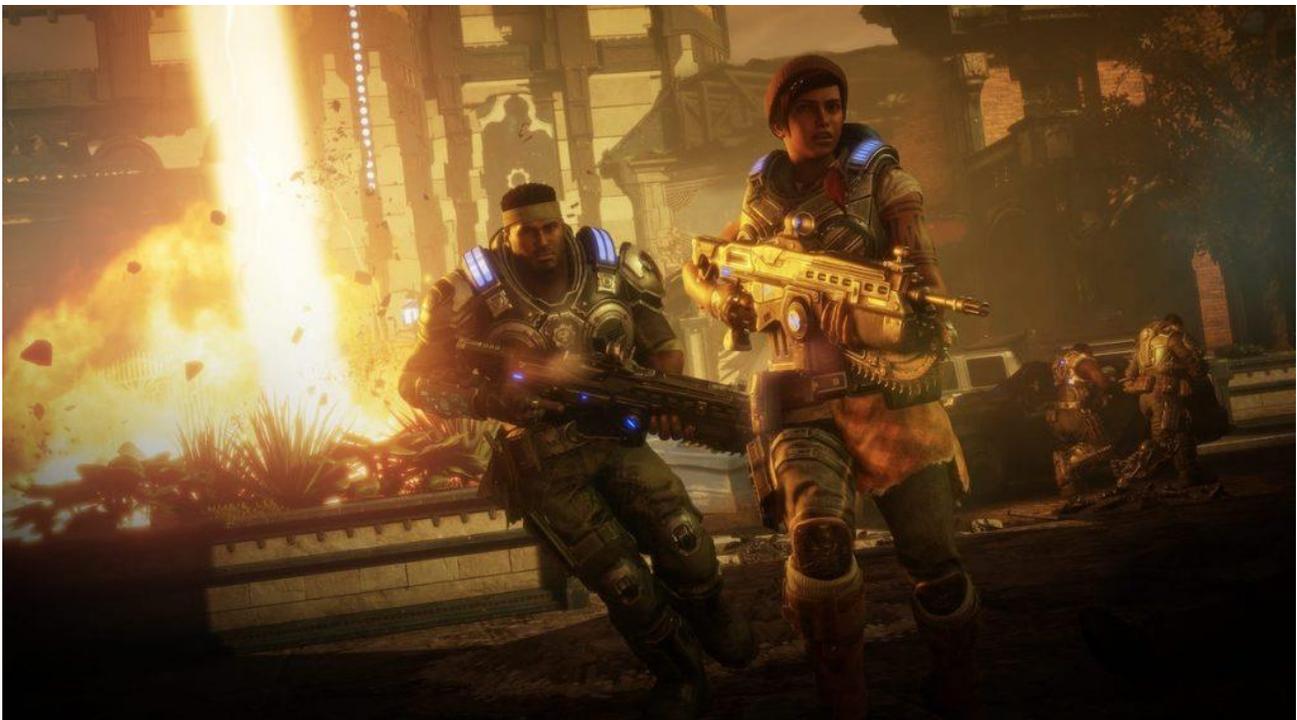
**Bits and Pieces**



*Josh Osiris, sound designer for Gears 5.*

Like film, video game audio is comprised of three core elements: sound effects, dialogue and music. One of the biggest parts of the sound designer's job is to make sense of the audio in a way that brings the right moment into focus at the right time and as seamlessly as possible.

As a student at Vancouver Film School, Josh Osiris began learning his craft with the intention of working in film or TV. In his first semester, an instructor discussed the creative challenges of working in game audio, using the game *Snake* as an example, which caused Osiris to instead gravitate toward the ever-changing landscape of video game audio. His studies landed him an internship at EA (Electronic Arts) working on the *Need for Speed* series until moving on to Microsoft® and working on the *Gears of War* series.



*A scene from Gears 5.*

Osiris points out that, unlike the linear audio used in film and TV, video game audio needs to be both immersive and constantly adaptive to the movements of the player. This requires the creation of an algorithm that is constantly running over the audio track to ensure that the audio being heard matches what's onscreen at any given moment.

“I think of mixing as being a conductor in an orchestra,” he says. “The performance of sounds for one person's experience will never exist again. You conceptualize what's in the video and find a way to put it into games so it doesn't overload the hardware. It's the jazz of sound design. Game audio is a lively, dynamic thing, especially when it's done really well. That was my goal with *Gears 5*.”

To gauge how it will sound on other systems, Osiris monitors mainly on TV speakers. “If I can make it work on TV speakers, it will sound good on anything,” he explains.

As a method to enhance the biggest audio moments of the game, Osiris and his team chose to work in Dolby Atmos — the first time the team used the technology as part of a game development process. (The previous release, *Gears of War 4*, implemented Dolby Atmos after launch.)

“One of the cool things about *Gears of War 4* was that it used HRTF (Head-Related Transfer Functions),” Osiris says. [*HRTF is an audio response that dictates how an ear receives a sound from a point in space.*] All games on the Xbox can use HRTF for a virtual 7.1 soundscape via the “Windows Sonic™ for Headphones” or “Dolby Atmos for Headphones” setting, even if the game itself does not support vertical positioning of the sounds. “However,” Osiris explains, “when an Xbox game directly supports “Windows Sonic” and the user turns on either of the HRTF systems, they will get full Atmos 7.1.4 virtually, which simulates the appearance of vertical positioning.”

HRTF allowed the team to enhance vertical space elements such as footsteps and gunshots to work in Dolby Atmos, although other elements, like dialogue, were restricted in the mix due to the late addition of the technology. When it came time to work on *Gears 5*, Osiris and the team incorporated Dolby Atmos at the beginning of the process, allowing for fewer limitations and more room for creative solutions.

## **New Gear**

One of the most important elements of any audio design is making sure the dynamic mix — that is, the volume and placement of each audio signal — is done in a way that helps focus the audio for the player.

A significant part of *Gears 5*'s audio was developed under the guidance of Crispin Hands of Lionshead Entertainment, who acted as Music Director, Cinematics Audio Lead, supporting

composer and Music Implementation Designer on the project. (Lionshead Entertainment also provided the majority of the audio staff.)



*Crispin Hands.*

“We worked closely with composer, Ramin Djawadi (*Game of Thrones*, *Westworld*) to establish key themes and explore the history of *Gears* and our characters,” says Hands. “Our main goal was to provide a spectacular and engrossing audio experience while advancing and reinforcing the story — both in the plot and the subtext. We wanted to make sure we delivered a sonically thrilling experience no matter what system you listen on, but really bring the thunder for the people who are passionate enough about sound to invest in great sound systems — with extra goodness for those who invested in Atmos.”

To achieve this, Osiris built a multiband sidechain compressor—a device that’s mostly just used in film and music mixing. [*Standard compression keeps an audio signal within a certain volume range, while sidechain compression works by having the level of one sound controlled by the level of another, thus preventing any one sound from drowning out another at a given moment.*] “The multiband approach carves out space for only the parts of the sound spectrum that the game wants to focus on, rather than the entire sound,” explains Osiris. “This method is more transparent and more natural-sounding than the traditional single-band sidechain compression that is used on most modern games.”

It’s also particularly helpful in Dolby Atmos, where different audio needs to be clearly sent to different speakers. “There’s a volume curve going up and down based on how loud the rest of the audio is,” adds Osiris. “The game is measuring the overall loudness of everything except

speech, so that dialogue doesn't get buried in the mix when explosions are happening everywhere, and isn't blowing your head off by being too loud when the ambient audio is quieter."

### **Battle Damage**

Josh Osiris considers *Gears 5* to be the best work he's done to this point in his career, but it was also one of the most demanding projects he's ever tackled. The biggest challenge, he says, was the final boss fight with a character called The Kraken.

"You fight him twice and he's the most gigantic tentacled creature you've ever seen," Osiris says. "So we gave him his own mix, with a separate ducking system [*an audio processing tool that is used to selectively lower the volume of the other sound elements to help the creature stand out*] than we used on the rest of the game. There were days I would just sit there, tweaking it and nothing else. It was tough because you get fatigued over time; you lose the ability to listen critically or hear all the frequency response."



*The end boss battle with The Kraken.*

The process Osiris used to determine which sounds he wanted to enhance with Dolby Atmos involved calling out specific moments. In the game's introduction, for example, players are introduced to the main characters via a scene involving soldiers traveling in a helicopter to start a mission. The soldiers, including the main character (controlled by the player), descend the chopper by rope into a cenotè (cave pool).



*As players descend down a virtual rope, Dolby Atmos sends the audio all around them.*

“Before we saw a single picture, we talked about this idea of descending near a waterfall,” recalls Osiris. “Immediately, that speaks of verticality [height]. We thought, “What can we do to make that moment shine?” We had area designer Brent Silk and Audio Director John Morgan fill that out with waterfalls, birds and other nice panorama sounds. It plays differently on speakers versus headphones.”

Similarly, Crispin Hands saw Dolby Atmos as an opportunity to add more depth to the sound stage and create some carefully chosen “wow” moments. “We knew that we couldn’t rely on more than a small percentage of players having access to it,” he explains, “but we really wanted to make sure those players felt like *Gears 5* was one of the titles that really made it worth having.”

### **The Next Level**

The importance of audio advancements in gaming cannot be overstated, as far as Osiris is concerned. Given the impact that Dolby Atmos has had on the overall gameplay experience for *Gears 5*, he stresses the importance of using it to advance video games in the future.

“For me, it’s all about gameplay feedback, first and foremost. With a dynamic mix, you focus on what’s most important to the player. Atmos lets you provide a level of clarity that was not previously available to the player. Being able to demonstrate how important audio is and how it improves the gaming experience is an important thing in the industry. I’m hoping to increase those expectations and resources to give better experiences for players with mix and gameplay feedback specifically.”

Hands has a similar opinion about the future use of Dolby Atmos in gaming. “As long as enough gamers adopt it, the possibilities are endless. Verticality plays a huge role in many games, so Atmos can and should become an essential part of the information-scape for players in many games. Hearing enemies above you can evoke a primal response similar to hearing them behind you. Even in games that don’t inherently have verticality, there are interesting opportunities to use the height channel for communicating information that would otherwise crowd the rest of the soundscape.”

### **Headphones versus Speakers**

So how best to experience high-quality gaming audio? “Atmos for headphones works with anyone’s headphones,” Osiris says, “and Xbox will let you use Dolby Atmos on your headphones if you get the Dolby license. If you’re going to use speakers, the most cost-effective way to game is with a sound bar. Buy the best one you can afford and it will sound good. But if you can afford it, AV receivers with Dolby Atmos support and high-quality surround sound speakers are the best way to go. There’s no comparison.”

The work Osiris did on *Gears 5* speaks for itself, but not every system is built for you to hear it in Dolby Atmos. Yamaha offers numerous Dolby Atmos-capable AV receivers, as well as many with multiple HDMI® inputs that allow them to serve as your hub for your gaming systems. [Explore and compare their features here.](#)

*Photographs and images courtesy of Microsoft, The Coalition™, Josh Osiris and Crispin Hands.*

The Panorama Experience, Part 1 (<http://www.pan-mag.com/feature-stories/the-panorama-experience-part-1>)

3/13/2016

2 Comments (<http://www.pan-mag.com/feature-stories/the-panorama-experience-part-1>)

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PAN Magazine Editor, Ted Goslin, describes his experience rehearsing and performing with birdsong Steel Orchestra for Panorama 2016.



**Written by Ted Goslin**

When I was 13 years old, a steel band came and performed at my school. I didn't know it then, but that one moment would change my life forever. The band's leaders would eventually be my mentors and our fates would be inexorably intertwined. It's hard to describe when you see something or someone that you know will matter more than anything in the world to you. For me, the steelpan just clicked.

As I entered high school, the first thing I did was join the steel band in the summer prior to freshman year. All new

players were asked to walk around during sectionals and see what instrument they wanted to play. After seeing tenors, double seconds, quads and bass, I found what would be my first primary instrument: triple guitars. After that, I was hooked.

Throughout the rest of high school I played in the marching and concert bands, but never took my sights *off* of pan despite those other endeavors, playing around three gigs a week with the high school group, playing with the local university steel band and joining an all-star group in which I got to tour Finland and various states in the U.S. over the next few years. I also co-founded a band of my own with some musician friends that continues to this day.

Instead of listening to pop music on the radio, I spent time listening to the latest Panorama music coming out of Trinidad & Tobago. I also played it with most of the groups I played with, giving me as close of an experience to the real thing as I could get where I lived. But no matter how many crowds I helped make dance, how many backyard parties I played or people whose lives I helped with the power of music, none of it made me whole. None of it was Panorama.

Despite my love of the music and culture, for some reason, I let life sidetrack me. In fact, I thought, unless I won the lotto, I might never go to Trinidad given my low-paying jobs and habit of spending all my money instead of saving it. I'd learn later that I wasn't the only person with that concern. It would take me just over 20 years to finally make the trip.

### **Early Planning**

During my daily checks of various social media groups, I came across an offer from birdsong Steel Orchestra to come to Trinidad for Panorama in January 2016. The trip was said to include housing, a guaranteed spot on an instrument of my choice, several excursions and various workshops throughout the course of 11 days. Being a master procrastinator, I realized that this trip wouldn't be possible if I stuck to my old ways. So I jumped all over the opportunity immediately, researching flights and asking questions of the trip coordinator as soon as I thought of them.

The organizer was Dr. Jason Koontz, director of percussion studies at Eastern Kentucky University, who has been working with birdsong Steel Orchestra since 2013, coordinating the travel and accommodations of foreign players, which have helped round out the band where local resources may have lacked. During my initial contact I was given an information packet to fill out that included my name, address, contact info, top three choices for instrument to play (since it was provided for me there) and the name of another attendee who I'd want to bunk with. The trip would include four masterclasses with Andy Narell, including one where he is joined by legendary Calypsonian, Relater, nightly rehearsals leading up to preliminaries and semi-finals, and several excursions to local sights like Maracas Bay Beach, Las Cuevas Beach and Port of Spain for shopping.

Packing so much into such a short time seemed like a lot, and looking back,

it was, but somehow it all managed to fit nicely into itself, with all moments captured in segments in my mind. Soon enough, I'd be on my way. After months of practicing Narell's original composition on a set of low E double seconds I borrowed from a friend, I would finally embark on the biggest goal on my bucket list: Panorama competitor.

### **A New World**

Before one travels, it's customary to do research. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, I felt it was important to research some of the local customs, cultural history and sayings that I might encounter on the trip. I learned about words like bacchanal (a wild party), jouvert morning (the morning after Panorama finals that commemorates the start of Carnival), and prepared myself for how daily life might differ by reading various travel blogs on sites like Trip Advisor and The Lonely Planet. None of it mattered once I got *off* the plane.

I've been to other countries, but nothing prepared me for what I would experience. And I'm so happy that was the case. The first shock after the 12 hour travel day (which was light compared to some trips I've taken), was the way food is sold: fast and random. There are restaurants and even chains like Subway and Kentucky Fried Chicken (which was surprisingly good) but the best places to eat were independent restaurants and street vendors. Luckily, I wasn't alone on my plane ride, having been booked on the same flight as the ECU group, which included Dr. Koontz and five of his students.

The first thing we, as a group did when we arrived, was hop into a Maxi Taxi, which is the local cab service. Due to the exchange rate, this ended up being rather inexpensive for the duration of the trip, only .50 cents U.S. from every couple of miles or so. After we piled in, luggage and all, I chatted to the driver about local culture, government and business infrastructure. He seemed well-educated and was very open to sharing info.

Soon enough, we arrived at our first stop: a street vendor selling a popular Caribbean dish, Doubles. The dish consists of two main elements, bara, a type of fry bread that acts as a kind of soft taco shell, and channa, the filling, made of chick peas (garbanzo beans) and various sauces and spices, including cumin, curry and saffron. Check out that recipe and many others [HERE](http://www.simplytrinicooking.com/recipe-index1) (<http://www.simplytrinicooking.com/recipe-index1>). Our birdsong representative told us this was THE spot in the area.

There were a lot of people gathered around the cart ordering out of turn, despite the line that formed in front of it. Luckily, the two people running the cart churned out the Doubles quickly enough that it didn't matter. Once I arrived at front, having gotten a sense of how to order from those in front of me, I asked for two, and was given them quickly, after someone from the side barged in to order his first. At first I wasn't sure of the price since many Trinis speak quite fast and in a local version of English which requires some getting used to for a foreigner. Once I took my first bite, being hungry as hell and fairly exhausted from traveling, I knew I was home. I wish I could say the same for some of our group, however.

One person, who I won't name, felt the culture shock pretty quickly as the fast-paced, loud and seemingly chaotic environment was a bit much for her. "Can we go anywhere else to eat? I'm not sure I like this," she said, slightly

exasperated from her travels. The question seemed to come mostly from not knowing what the dish was made of. After a good night's rest, however, she and the rest of the college-aged group settled in for the trip of a lifetime.

Once we ate, we were taken to our apartments, which, thanks to the relationship between the University of West Indies and birdsong (which has existed symbiotically since its inception), were extremely nice and large enough for up to 9 people (more if they slept on the couch). Unfortunately for me, the clicker for our electronic gate (most compounds had these) didn't work and I was left stranded from my assigned dormitory. After some phone calls and apologies from Dr. Koontz, we arranged for myself, and my late-arriving roommate, Dr. Brandon Haskett, to stay at another apartment for the night.

### **Safety In Numbers**

Over the next couple of days, more players would arrive from all over the U.S. and other countries like Sweden and France. I would also be introduced to my roommates, all professional musicians and educators, all American, and half of which, were first-timers to Trinidad, along with myself. One person, in particular, drum corps guru and Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Southern Mississippi, Dr. John Wooton, had been once before, having played with the Solo Pan Knights under the direction of steelpan legend, Robert Greenidge, known for his complex arrangements and his long-time status as the official pannist of Jimmy Buffett's Coral Reefers band.

"Playing with that band was a much different experience than this since there was no sheet music, which meant we had to learn the piece by rote. I also had to find my own housing," Wooton said. "What I enjoy about this experience is that the music is provided before hand and we have housing provided with roommates, which makes it much safer when walking around at night."

During his previous visit, Wooton suffered an attempted mugging in the middle of Queen's Park Savannah, the location of Panorama. The assailant tried to take his fanny pack, and when he resisted, the would-be-thief pulled out a knife. Luckily for Wooton, his driver, a large Trinidadian man, saw the incident and intervened, cursing out the younger, smaller man and lecturing him on how poorly this action represents the country. Needless to say, after Wooton told me this story, I was on my guard whenever I was walking alone, which wasn't very often.

It turns out that Tunapuna wasn't a dangerous area at all, given the fact that we walked around through the streets and a park close to the panyard on a nightly basis, either to go to the local bar for a beer during break, or to check out another band nearby, which happened to be a personal favorite of mine, Exodus. That yard, designed as an ampitheater with stone steps and a grass area, was particularly cool thanks to the lack of carts and the dual drumsets, adding to the powerhouse sound of the group. Not to mention, the corn soup was one of the best things I ate. The real dangers, we were told, were in the Savannah and Port of Spain, particularly at night.

### **Prelim Surprise**

During the days leading up to prelims, most of the foreign players had to adapt to more than just culture. Once we entered the panyard for our first

day to practice, we were told someone would assign us drums. That someone never came. Instead, it was a free-for-all, with players going into the instrument room where all of the tenors, double tenors, double seconds and quads were stored. Once I found a set that looked good (large, visible notes), I realized not all the notes were labeled with a Sharpie, which wouldn't have mattered had the layout been turned one note to the left in my right-hand drum. For those unfamiliar with the challenges of playing a memorized piece for Panorama, muscle memory has a lot to do with it. Effectively, it meant I had to relearn the tune from scratch in terms of getting it up to tempo. I had the tune down cold at home, but I figured this might happen, so I dove in hard, as did many other players. Thankfully, my planning paid off and I was able to adapt within a few days. Some of the other players struggled as well, but moreso due to their pans being low F and F#s, which makes it even harder to adapt.

Thankfully, the challenge of playing an epic 8-minute arrangement also comes with an ever-present perk: the people. Aside from the many players from various backgrounds to talk to and learn from, there were also those who visited the panyard. There were vendors like the woman and her children who sold doubles on the corner table (which was also a solar panel cell phone charging station), the peanut guy who sold bags of hot, roasted nuts at the yard for players to grab as snacks during breaks, and the birdsong employees themselves, like Kento (Kent Le Platte), the facilities manager since 1998, with long, white dreadlocks, often seen dancing around during rehearsals. There was also the dynamic double tenor duo of Koonta and Rama, who took charge of the pan room when pans would be placed out of order. I was even commanded by them to fix the mess, despite not having anything to do with the disorder. But I didn't mind. I was more than happy to help given I was just a visitor. They've been here for years and **will** continue for years more, ushering birdsong into the next era of panorama as more foreigners like me pass through year after year.

As the rehearsals moved forward, it became clear to all involved what the endeavor would entail: lots of grueling work. The rehearsals consisted mostly of running sections over and over to ensure players captured not just the notes, but feel of the piece, that Narell intended. Unlike traditional Panorama pieces, Narell purposely breaks tradition with complex chord work and the infusion of world music styles, such as a Cuban groove he likes to use, the name of which no one but him can pronounce. There was also a 6/8 groove that was scrapped because it was too far outside the mold.

The piece itself was written by Narell over the course of several months. He would explain that parts would come to him over time and he would develop them, saving each for a rainy day, not knowing what the result would be. As he crafted the piece, first with a jam section, followed by the main melody and bridge, the piece formed, but lacked a title. Even as it was distributed to played in October of 2015, we only knew it as the 2016 birdsong Panorama piece. It even lacked an ending until about two weeks before my flight. Then in December, the unthinkable happened: Raf Robertson, co-founder of birdsong, passed away. Not only was he a past arranger for the group and current teacher at the school. but he was also a noted jazz pianist in T&T, as well as Narell's best friend. Soon enough, the piece had an ending, and a

name: "Dis.1.4.Raf."

When the night of prelims came, which was about four full days after my arrival, energy and excitement were high. My nerves were kicking in a bit, forcing me to check and re-check my hair just before performance time. As it turns out, it was all for nothing as I was told by a returning band member that prelims "don't really matter; they are just used to make sure there is a band with a complete song to play at semi-finals."

Here's how the competition works: there are 20 spots for each class of band in semi-finals. There are four divisions: single pan, small band, medium band, large band. The other categories had more bands than 20 competing to make semi-finals, so they had to worry about their performance on prelim night. Since only 17 bands were competing in the large category, we were in automatically .

The judges visit panyards in stages, beginning in a particular region of the island. There are South, North, East and West, effectively. While the judges visit each band, the other bands rehearse their pieces, not knowing exactly when the judges will arrive , while getting regular updates on their location through word-of-mouth. Shirts were given out to band members, bearing the birdsong logo, while visitors gathered around the band and on the grand stand to watch the performance . During this time, Narell made his final moves to arrange the band to, as he put it, "create a stereo sound" for the judges. Each section needed to be accurately placed to create the most balanced sound possible, despite us being outside where sound travels everywhere.

Once the judges arrived, they were set up at a table in front of the band where a nice table cloth, flowers and glasses of water were awaiting them. Due to the number of bands the judges hear, prior to the performance, each band is required to play an audio recording over a sound system of that band's original piece. Since the arrangement comes from a song, that song must be played prior to the performance to familiarize the judges with it. Then came time for the performance. The band was on point, finally sounding cohesive, executing the feel of the piece at its highest level up to that point.

Once it was over, the judges left and crowd dispersed, the band was left to celebrate the performance with a discussion of what went down and what would come in the following days. As the group waiting for its Maxi Taxi bus to take each group of roommates back to their assigned dorms, Andy, as he prefers to be called, stood alone by the grand stand, relaxing after an exhausting day. I approached him to find out how he felt it went. "It went well," he said. He didn't elaborate. I made small talk until the band captain, Marvin Walker, also a local police detective, approached with the judges sheet.

"How'd we do?" Andy asked. Marvin smiled and nodded excitedly. "Just read it," he said . The judges loved us. Not only was it a shock to Andy to receive such positive comments , considering how in the past one of the judges gave a note saying that the arranger needed to "develop his themes better," but the types of comments that were said.

"An excellent arrangement indeed. The introduction beautifully foreshadows the memorial theme of the song," one adjudicator wrote. "There is an irony, however, as the arrangement accommodates the spirit of carnival with the [memory] of sadness which is evident in the players as they move to capture the spirit of carnival. Great music with a jazz emphasis," they added.

As Andy read the comments out loud, both Marvin and I looked at each, then again at Andy, catching a glimmer of a tear in his eye, along with a grin, filled with both relief and joy. Regardless of whether we would make finals, being present in this moment for each of us already felt like victory.

*Stay tuned for Part 2 of "The Panorama Experience" next month.*

## MARCH MADNESS AND THE PYRAMID OF SUCCESS

Written by Ted Goslin



Given the popularity of college basketball and its annual tournament known as “March Madness,” I thought it appropriate to discuss the concept of a tournament and its affect on the human psyche. But first, here’s a seemingly unrelated book reference:

I recently finished reading the second book in a series called [“The Reckoners”](#). The first book in the series, “Steelheart,” follows a group of freedom fighters attempting to rid the world of super-powered overlords and the book’s namesake antagonist, a Superman-esque villain that is impervious to all weapons. These powerful beings, called Epics, once mere ordinary people, were corrupted when a powerful atmospheric event turned them into Epics. But due to their powers, every one of them was corrupted. As they say, absolute power corrupts absolutely.

I know what you’re thinking. What the hell does any of this have to do with “March Madness?” Good question.

Legendary UCLA basketball coach, [John Wooden](#), was known for many things. He was the first person in history to be named to the Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player and coach. He was given the

nickname, “Wizard of Westwood,” an appropriate title given his record of winning 10 NCAA titles during his last 12 seasons, with seven of the 10 coming in consecutive years. He was also incredibly humble, making no more than \$35,000 a year—\$151,918 in today’s dollars—and never asking for a raise.

Despite all of those accolades, Wooden is perhaps best known for his inspirational wisdom, stemming from his “[Pyramid of Success](#)” model. The model was aimed at giving players the tools to be successful in both basketball and life, inspiring players like Bill Walton and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar—both former UCLA players—to become future NBA greats.

There’s a point to all of this, I promise.

As you can see in the attached image, the pyramid is built with a list of carefully selected elements, consisting of virtues like loyalty, cooperation, initiative, self-control and team spirit, among others. These virtues all add up to the top section of the pyramid: competitive greatness.

For the 12-volt entrepreneur, this concept should be familiar considering that to be successful in any endeavor, one must be well-prepared to best the competition, or at least put up a good fight. Perhaps the biggest part of being accomplished is how to deal with success without it going to your head. In his book, “Wooden on Leadership,” Wooden said, “You must monitor confidence because it can easily turn into arrogance which then can lead to the mistaken and destructive belief that previous achievement will be repeated without the same hard effort that brought it about in the first place.”

This leads me to “The Reckoners” book reference from earlier. It’s easy to let success go to your head. You can have the appearance of success by gaining fame, professional respect and money, but that doesn’t mean you are achieving it in the best way possible to gain inner peace and self-respect. If you sacrifice any of the elements that make up the pyramid in exchange for the easy way, you will lose sight of yourself as a person and become a self-absorbed, arrogant bore on his way to “the bench.”

Much like the playoff brackets in the NCAA “March Madness” tournament, the pyramid requires patience and determination so that all steps are executed properly. It’s like building a sound system in an RV; it’s a large endeavor that requires planning, long hours and lots of equipment placed carefully in the vehicle. If any step is skipped, the whole thing could be a colossal waste of time and require even more hours to fix all of the errors.

More often than not the teams that win the championships in basketball are those that follow the pyramid, or any other healthy leadership paradigm from their coach. Those that fail are like “Steelheart”; they take their natural, genetic talent and squander it without tapping into their true potential. If you don’t believe me, just read the words of the man himself:

“Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful.”



RE: Ted Goslin

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Ryan Gray and I am the Chief Content Officer of STN Media Group. I am writing on behalf of Ted Goslin, who is applying for the position of General Editor with ESPN.

I had the privilege of working with Ted when he was the senior editor of Mobile Electronics magazine and witnessed his growth as a writer and manager. From day one, he worked under challenging circumstances because of the unique partnership my company, the publisher, had with the association that owned the title and that controlled the direction of the content. Despite an ongoing struggle over sales and execution, Ted was professional through and through and always put the quality of the print magazine and website first. He displays much passion for his work, taking on the lion's share of content creation over the period that we worked with him. Mobile Electronics was much the better for it.

He also regularly displayed a keen eye developing stories and content package and is a great collaborator. Ted is an asset to any organization smart enough to recognize his talents and to retain his services. If I had the resources, I'd hire him in a heartbeat.

If you have any questions about Ted or would like more detail on my time working with him, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ryan" being more prominent than the last name "Gray".

Ryan Gray  
Chief Content Officer  
STN Media Group



May 29, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter concerns my recommendation for Mr. Ted Goslin, who was recently employed at SQA Services, Inc.

As to the substance of my recommendation, I have the greatest professional respect for Ted. He was employed here for the last several years and performed incredibly well in a very challenging environment. Unfortunately, due to business conditions, Ted was laid off as part of a cost-reduction exercise. It was a very difficult decision, to say the least, because Ted did everything we asked him to do and more.

My quick take on Ted... He possesses an exemplary work ethic, is loyal, reliable, super smart and a class-act. He works well under pressure, is flexible and adapts well to an expanding workload. He has a contagious, can-do attitude and is a team player that was quick to assist teammates when they were backlogged. He also managed deliverables for three of our largest clients here with a consistent workload in an intense deadline-driven environment. What's so neat about Ted is that he does all of these things while staying incredibly humble and quietly confident.

Ted is not afraid of hard work. If our sales were higher and we still had the necessary funding for his role, our firm would be making every attempt to keep him, because people like Ted help companies succeed.

Ted is worthy of any challenge that requires trust and dedication. I would be pleased to give verbal testimony to Ted's qualities as a person and will readily offer my assessment regarding his suitability to exceed expectations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike McKay', written over a horizontal line.

Mike McKay  
President/CEO  
SQA Services, Inc.

**SQA Services, Inc.**

550 Silver Spur Road, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor • Rolling Hills, Ca 90275 • Phone (310) 544-6888 (800) 333-6180 • Fax (310) 544-5541  
Website: <http://www.SQANET.com> Email: [SQANET@SQANET.com](mailto:SQANET@SQANET.com)