



EDUCATING THE NEW  
GENERATION OF PERFORMANCE  
CAPTURE ARTISTS



"At the beginning I was saying, 'I don't know what this is, I don't know what it entails'," says actress and entrepreneur Victoria Atkin, discussing her first performance capture job. "I'd come off Hollyoaks, a big soap opera in England, and I was over in America and I had a goal to be the next action heroine. My manager at the time pitched this performance capture video game job that was all secretive. They said, 'come on, let's just try and do it'."



Victoria Atkin,  
Actress and  
Entrepreneur

The role turned out to be Evie Frye for Ubisoft's 2015 blockbuster, Assassin's Creed: Syndicate. It changed the course of Atkin's career, and soon she would be able to add 'performance capture educator' to her list of roles.

In the decade since that first motion capture job, Atkin has acted for AAA games including Call of Duty titles, Ghost of Tsushima and Horizon: Forbidden West. Spinning out of that work, she launched the Vicon-sponsored Performance Capture Podcast, now in its sixth season, and a series of online courses designed to prepare professional actors for motion capture roles.

"It's so fun, you can play as if you were still a kid. And that's what most of us get into acting for," Atkin says. "It's capturing the essence of a soul."

"I realized, and I'm still realizing, that there's a huge gap in knowledge education around motion capture for actors," Atkin explains. "There's a lot of education about the production side of it, but not really from the perspective of being in the volume and acting."

Although Atkin says that, fundamentally, acting for performance capture draws on the same skill sets as other forms of the discipline, she has seen some of the challenges that newcomers can face. "I know some fantastic theater actors that come onto the mocap stage and they struggle because they're used to props and costumes and sets. It's the same with voice actors—they're just used to using their voice. Now, suddenly, they have to use their whole body."





VICON STANDARD 2024

## BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP FOR ACTORS

It's this knowledge gap that led Atkin to her current path as an educator. "I don't even know what came first, the podcast or my classes, but I just got on this train of wanting to educate people," she says. "I want this work to be recognised. I want the people that are in this work to be recognised. There's no category for it in the Academy Awards—there are no categories for it, really, in any sort of awards. And there are so many people who are working so hard and doing such fantastic work that I want to celebrate that. I want to create an archive of the people in this industry so that when we're not here, people understand that this was where it started and this is how it grew."

It was Covid that ultimately prompted Atkin to start her coaching, courses and podcast. "During the pandemic a lot of people reached out to me while TV and film were all completely shut down," she says. "A lot of us who had already established ourselves in

voiceover were working non-stop. Anyone who had a home studio and a lot of credits had people coming to them to keep projects going. And other people who had not done this before were going, OK, this is an opportunity to make money."

An actor approached Atkin for a coaching session, but she quickly realized that she could achieve much more with a regular class. She started her 'Weekly Workouts' course, which brought together groups of students for online classes over the course of four sessions per week.

As lockdown restrictions eased Atkin shifted focus. Now, her teaching is available as an E-course called 'Video Games With the Pros', put together in collaboration with fellow performance capture specialist Michael Antonakos, who has starred in games including Assassin's Creed Odyssey and Gotham Knights.

The podcast was started as another way to showcase the possibilities of motion capture for actors. Vicon was an early sponsor. "We had a meeting

in LA about how this could benefit everybody, how Vicon would be able to give back and celebrate the work, and how it was able to support new people in the industry and share information with people who are already in the field. Because a lot of us kind of stumble into this work—it's still an emerging field and the technology is growing and improving all the time."

Atkin also hoped that the podcast would help her to expand her knowledge and improve her performances on the capture stage.

"I have this dialogue with actors who know me in this field, but I don't really understand the tech. And my question was, 'do I need to understand the tech as an actor to make my work better in this field?'" Atkin says. "It was almost an experiment—let's listen to directors, producers, and other people who are working in the field. And 100% it has helped my work. Even if I don't have the full technological understanding, I have compassion and I have an understanding of people's jobs and responsibilities.

"I think it's helped me as an actor and as a coach to share that information, so that everybody's coming at it as a team. It's such a collaborative effort that there's no room for ego."

## 'IT'S ADVANCING EVERY DAY'

In the course of the last decade Atkin has seen dramatic changes in performance capture. "It's so different," she says. "I mean, doing Forspoken with Square Enix recently, there were so many more facial markers than there would have been a few years ago. It took a lot longer to put those on and get going.

"I've even noticed that the directing styles are changing to adapt to the medium too. The acting shouldn't really change—everything that we're doing should be based in truth and bringing the character to life. But it certainly is heading, in my opinion, towards more filmic performances in many ways because of the close-up. Becoming so close and so detailed, the hybrid between theater in the round and a film close-up is becoming even more heightened. It's knowing that you're taking up space like you do in the theater, but your performances don't need to be that big because there's a camera closer than it will ever be in film on your headcam."

Atkin believes that the advances in both process and technology are yielding powerful results. "The final product now is just incredible with these systems," she says. "It's just

getting better and better. Vicon is on the leading edge of this. I'm so grateful to be working at a level where I have the privilege of being captured by these types of systems. Not all of the games that are being produced have their motion capture done with Vicon systems, so I've been extremely fortunate to be working on these AAA titles."

Atkin believes the advances will continue. "This is not going away," she says. "This will probably become the leading way that actors are used in the future."

Victoria's next course PCAP WITH THE PROS which she conducts in May & November each year is now sold out for participants but she encourages anyone who works with actors in the volume to audit the 6 week course with her to understand the actors process in this arena.

Visit [www.bookvopcap.com](http://www.bookvopcap.com) to find out more.

<https://victoriaatkin.com/#pcap>

For further exploration of performance capture in the entertainment world, listen to **The Performance Capture Podcast**, sponsored by Vicon.

