

contact

Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music (1971-1988)

<http://contactjournal.gold.ac.uk>

Citation

Orton, Richard. 1975. 'Electronic Music Studios in Britain - 1: University of York'. *Contact*, 12. pp. 33-35. ISSN 0308-5066.

Electronic Music Studios in Britain ~ 1

The University of York

The first equipment for York University's Electronic Music Studio arrived in 1968 – a G36 Revox tape recorder and Uher A121 mixer – even before the Music Department became established in its premises in the Lyons Concert Hall building. On moving there, for a couple of years the studio existed on a rather makeshift basis, though it was allotted from the first the room that it now occupies. This is a 'room with a view' overlooking grass and trees from the first floor, about 20 feet x 16 feet in size, that had originally been assigned for a graduate room. Two smaller rooms complement the main studio: one a maintenance workshop, the other an editing room which has more and more tended to be used as an additional studio. This latter room also presently houses a small library of tapes, books and records of electronic music.

During 1970 the University made an establishment grant which enabled a thorough design to be carried out, and involved the purchase of a lot more equipment. The University has continued to support the studio financially in both maintenance and purchase of new equipment ever since, though, of course, never to the full satisfaction of all users! Nevertheless, the University deserves credit for supporting what must have seemed a remote pioneering venture at that time, though happily many other universities have since followed suit. The 1970 design for the studio was made by Michael Jeans-Jakobsson and myself, though it was adapted and developed by Jim Webster, the Department's technician from 1970-73. The heart of the design was the 12-in, 4-out console mixer, custom built by Calder Recordings of Hebden Bridge, from whom we also bought some of their splendid 1000 series capacitor microphones.

The basic philosophy of the studio has always been to provide access to sounds from whatever source for the use of composers. As it has turned out, there has been a considerable emphasis on high quality recording equipment, including a Nagra IV-S portable tape recorder and Dolby noise-reduction units, perhaps to the detriment of synthesizing and processing equipment, which still remains rather meagre: a few items of Moog equipment, two VCS 3 synthesizers with ancillaries and an assortment of filters. This imbalance is due partly to the fact that, once having decided to aim for the highest recording quality, it is difficult to stop short, and partly to the soaring prices of synthesizing equipment, particularly from American sources. A large ARP unit, for instance, seems highly desirable, though rather remote in terms of what is financially possible.

Whatever the equipment, more important is the use to which it is put. When the York studio first began, it was virtually impossible to find teaching in electronic techniques at any musical institution in this country. Since 1969 the teaching in the York studio has been in the form of intensive four-week courses held each year and available to all members of the Department. Each takes the form of theoretical and practical instruction in electronic sound and the use and uses of available equipment, listening seminars with music taken from the studio library and a creative project drawn from the student's own suggestions.

We have been fortunate in attracting a number of highly capable and creative postgraduates who have made electronic music here, and who have generated an interest and involvement in what is going on. Trevor Wishart has been active in the studio since 1969, making in succession *Machine*, *Journey into Space* and now *Red Bird*, as well as some smaller pieces. Martin Wesley-Smith, who arrived in 1971 from Adelaide having already made *Vietnam Image* there, made *Media Music* and some smaller pieces before his return to Australia last year. Denis Smalley, a New Zealander, arrived in 1972 having studied with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales in Paris, and he has been working a great deal on compositions using instruments and tape. Two recent compositions, *Slopes (Pentes)* and *Gradual*, have been awarded prizes in international competitions. Many other postgraduate and undergraduate composers have played an important part in promoting a community of experimental and compositional activity; among them Andrew Bentley, who has been making tape-theatre works, John Cardale, Tom Endrich, George Fraser, Martin Gellhorn, Jonty Harrison, Stanley Haynes, Kevin Jones, Ed Nelson, George Nicholson, Keith Potter and Keith Roberts.

York University Electronic Music Studio
Department of Music
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Heslington
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Current Personnel

Director: Richard Orton
Senior Technician: David Malham
Technician: Paul Ewen

A Selection of works composed in the studio.

Address enquiries for performance to the address above; we will then refer to the composer. Asterisked titles are available on recordings entitled *Electronic Music from York* from the studio. (For a review of these, see CONTACT 9 (Autumn 1974), pp. 31-33.)

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|---------------------|---|
| Andrew Bentley | <i>MOAN*</i> (1972)
<i>Kanashikere</i> (1973, tape with puppetry)
<i>Telephones</i> (1974; tape with theatre of animation)
<i>The Naked Light Show</i> (1975; tape with film and mime) |
| John Cardale | <i>Dionysus*</i> (1970)
<i>1956 Manifesto</i> (1972) |
| Tom Endrich | <i>Visitation</i> (1971) |
| Martin Gellhorn | <i>. . . and now let's play through to the end . . .</i> (1972)
<i>Compression ICES 1972*</i>
<i>Feed Back with Filter Modulation</i> (1973) |
| Jonty Harrison | <i>Logorhythm</i> (1975)
<i>In Two</i> (1975) |
| Stanley Haynes | <i>Variants I</i> (1970) |
| Kevin Jones | <i>Organisation</i> (1973) |
| Dominic Muldowney | <i>Awake - so to sleep</i> (1974) |
| George Nicholson | <i>Equation</i> (1970) |
| Richard Orton | <i>KISS*</i> (1968)
<i>Kiss Combine</i> (1970; tape with four vocalists)
<i>For the Time Being*</i> (1972)
<i>Clock Farm*</i> (1973)
<i>Ambience</i> (1975; bass trombone and tape. Written for James Fulkerson.) |
| Richard Pickett | <i>Light Black*</i> (1970; tape with puppetry) |
| Keith Sherlock | <i>Cranes at Sunset</i> (1971) |
| Denis Smalley | <i>Violonectomy</i> (1973; tape, two synthesizers and cello)
<i>Cornucopia</i> (1973; tape and amplified horn)
<i>Gradual</i> (1974; tape and clarinettist playing three amplified instruments)
<i>Ourobouros</i> (1975) |
| Martin Wesley-Smith | <i>Media Music*</i> (1972)
<i>The Austral-bloody-aise</i> (1972)
<i>Grrr</i> (1973)
<i>Narcissus</i> (1973; tape with mime) |
| Trevor Wishart | <i>MACHINE an electronically-preserved dream*</i> (1971)
<i>Journey into Space</i> (1973)
<i>Red Bird</i> (work in progress) |

List of main studio equipment as at September 1975:

Calrec 12-in 4-out custom-built mixer
Quad stereo power amplifiers (2)

Four KLH 5 monitor speakers
Two VCS 3 synthesizers
DK1 keyboard for above
EMS sequencer 128
EMS pitch to voltage converter
Moog voltage controlled oscillator
Moog voltage controlled amplifier
Moog fixed filter bank
Tequipment D51 dual beam oscilloscope
Four Mullard high pass filters GF/001/02
Two Rhode and Schwarz tunable filters UBM BN12121/2
Department design phase unit
Eight Dolby 361 audio noise-reduction system units
Eight Revox stereo tape recorders (5 high speed; 3 low; 1 varispeed)
Teac A3340 four track tape recorder
Two BE1000 bias stereo tape recorders
Two 1/2" bias four channel tape recorders
EMT echo plate EMT 140
Nagra IV-S portable stereo tape recorder
Various microphones, windshields, headphones, power packs, test tapes and test equipment

This is the first of a series of articles designed to acquaint composers, technicians and other studio users as well as our general readers with current activities in electronic music studios. At present the series will be confined to those in Britain. Studio directors are invited to submit *brief* articles, following the layout displayed above, for inclusion in future issues. It must be stressed that only brief articles will be considered for publication, and that, since we only have space enough for one studio per issue, a waiting list may develop. The next studio to be featured will be that at University College, CARDIFF.

ANALOG SOUNDS

DIRECTIONS FOR NEW MUSIC

a new quarterly
journal.

editor: jacob meyerowitz
analog sounds is published quarterly at
145 w 55, new york, ny 10019
subscription: \$15.00 for one year
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C O N T E N T S october 1974 number 1

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