

# Music and Sound Recording

Newsletter

## Work Placements

### Abbey Road

By Ian Stickland, third year BMus Music and Sound Recording (Tonmeister)

A typical day at Abbey Road Studios starts for me at around 8:30am when I begin preparing the studios for the day's sessions. When I first started I was employed as a runner but, having spent the last nine months gaining knowledge and experience, I now spend much of my time assigned to specific projects as an assistant engineer.

I have assisted on a wide range of different recording projects including: a week of performances for XM satellite radio which were broadcast live worldwide; a recording by The London Symphony Orchestra of Greenberg's symphony no. 3; and even recording the score for films such as the Chronicles of Narnia.

When assigned to a session it is my responsibility to set the floor, ensuring all the microphones, headphones and playback monitors are in the correct place. This is no easy task when there can be as many as 80 microphones and 150 musicians on a session and every engineer has their own preferred way of setting up. Once the session begins I may be required to run a hard disk recording system such as Pro Tools or digital 48 track tape, session DATs and CDs as a back up and to ensure the clients and engineers are well stocked up on all important cups of tea and coffee!

So far my placement year at Abbey Road has given me an enormous amount of experience in a much wider range of projects than I ever expected. I've had the opportunity to work with amazing musicians including Paul McCartney, John Barry and Stevie Wonder and gained an excellent insight into the industry as a whole.

### Floating Earth and Signum Records

By Alex Cross, third year BMus Music with Professional Placement Year

When I was applying to university I had always hoped to complete a work placement of some sort. Several other universities did have placement options but none offered such a beneficial placement as Surrey. On the BMus Music with Placement Year you can undertake a full, 12-month placement which enables you to really experience professional working life. Completing such a substantial placement gives you the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the music industry whilst taking on a specific job role and becoming a valuable member of a work team.

I began my placement last May after completing my Year 2 exams. I have been working as an administrator for two companies called Floating Earth and Signum Records, which are run from the same office in West London. Floating Earth is a music recording company and Signum Records is a classical record label. As I work for two separate companies the work is very

varied and I have been able to experience two different sides of the music industry.

Throughout my time at Floating Earth and Signum my responsibilities have grown. In addition to my day to day office duties I am heavily involved in the marketing and promotion aspects of the companies.

I have also had the opportunity to enjoy some of the perks of working for a recording company. These have included accompanying engineers on studio sessions, location recordings, broadcasts and television recordings. I have found the most valuable and beneficial part of completing a work placement has been the social aspect of my job role. Not only has the high level of interaction with producers, engineers, composers, artists and executives led to a development of self confidence and communication skills, but I have gradually built up a large list of contacts that will prove invaluable in my future career.

## 7th British Contemporary Piano Competition



The 7th British Contemporary Piano Competition will take place at the University of Surrey from Thursday 26th to Saturday 28th October 2006

The competition, founded by Phillip Mead in 1988, is open to pianists of any nationality aged between 18 and 35 on 26th September 2006.

For further information about the competition visit: [www.britconpc.co.uk](http://www.britconpc.co.uk)

## Staff interview

# Dr Tim Hughes

Dr Tim Hughes moved from the USA last year to join the teaching staff at the University of Surrey. He teaches popular music harmony and popular song analysis. He is also an active guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter.

### Why did you choose to come to the University of Surrey?

I didn't really have any intentions of moving to England. All the other positions I applied for were in North America, but I really liked this University and the position on offer. It was a wonderful opportunity for me.

People in the US are aware of the University of Surrey. Some of the lecturers here, Allan Moore and Chris Mark for example, are widely read over there. The Pop music profile has also really shot up.

### What is the best thing about teaching at Surrey?

The students are definitely the highlight for me - the students and the subject matter. You used to have to be a conventional musicologist and teach classical music, whilst doing research into popular music on the side. Popular music is still a fairly new field but it's now becoming more and more accepted and I feel really lucky to be able to teach popular music all the time. Also my colleagues in the Department have been really supportive, friendly, and inspiring.

### What are your lectures like?

I have a very interactive teaching style. The great thing about teaching popular music is that I can have Aretha Franklin, Kurt Cobain and the Arctic Monkeys helping me teach. I use my iPod all the



time in class - I'll load up songs for each lecture. There's nothing like a loud Ramones song to energize your lectures

### What is it like to work in the Department of Music and Sound Recording at Surrey?

It's great! The Department is very friendly. They have high standards but are also really supportive. There's a lot going on in my area and my programme is going up rapidly.

### What kind of music do you listen to?

I've got all kinds of records - I'll listen to anything. I like Stevie Wonder - I did my doctoral thesis on him. I've done a lot of research into Soul - Marvin Grey, Aretha Franklin etc.

I worked for a while at the Experience Music Project doing electronic exhibits. That was mainly related to Jimi Hendrix and I've just got an article published on Nirvana - it's about a concert they did in Seattle before they were known.

### What kind of music do you play?

I haven't played a live gig for a couple of year's now. My style is somewhere between rock and punk - between Jeff Beck and the Replacements. Lately I've been writing songs for me to sing and play on the acoustic guitar.

## Where are they now?

By Julia Williamson, graduate of the BMus Music with Placement Year

When I graduated in 2004, I started working for the Philharmonia Orchestra in their Community and Education Department as their administrator. I am now Education Manager, where I am responsible for running the department and their community & education programmes in all the orchestra's residencies, including London, Bedford, Leicester, Bristol, Basingstoke and Canterbury.

I run a department team of four people and am responsible for devising community and education programmes, ensuring that the programmes are managed and fundraising through Trusts and Foundations.

Doing a placement year as part of my course at the University of Surrey played a big role in me getting where I am today. I spent my placement working in the Education Department of the London Symphony Orchestra as their assistant.

It is almost impossible to get a paid job in the orchestral administration world without previous work experience and the placement gave me this experience before I graduated which meant that I could get paid work straight out of university.

My course and placement showed me that there are many options out there to music students who do not want to play professionally or become a teacher but still want remain in the music industry. They also prepared me well, giving me background knowledge in arts management and administration.

## English Language courses for non-native speakers

No matter what degree you are studying at the University of Surrey, The Centre for Language Studies offers a range of English language support courses to help you improve your English. Academic writing support is also available for native speakers of English.

We also offer individual, one-to-one sessions where you may discuss writing a research essay with a tutor. Please check our website for details and do not hesitate to contact a member of staff for further information.  
[www.surrey.ac.uk/TLC/English/index.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/TLC/English/index.htm)