BTEC National Level 3 Extended Certificate in Sound Engineering (Music Technology)

WHAT DOES THE COURSE INVOLVE?

The Extended Certificate in Sound Engineering allows you to build the skills necessary to successful work in a recording studio and live sound environment. In addition to this, you will also learn about the physics of sound and how acoustics can be controlled to build the best possible sound environment.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

The course is comprised of five units. Four of these units are internally assessed and consist of practical tasks, research, and presentations:

- Sound Recording Techniques (3 tasks, including a multi-track band recording)
- Mixing and Mastering Techniques (2 tasks, including producing a record for commercial release)
- Live Sound (2 tasks, including running your own gig)
- Studio Design and Acoustics (3 tasks, including planning the design for your own home studio)

At the end of the two-years, you will complete the externally assessed unit DAW Production Exam, which takes the form of a 15-hour music production task, split over several days (a bit like Art/Graphics GCSE)

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE – PRACTICAL TASKS

1. The majority of work completed during the course will be undertaken on a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW), so familiarise yourself with how they work. This is especially true if you did not study music at GCSE level, or used notation programmes like Sibelius.
    - ***Logic Pro X is the DAW we use***, but if that is not feasible then other, free options include-
    - GarageBand (iMac/Macbook desktop version! not iPad/iPhone)
    - Cubase (30-day trial) https://new.steinberg.net/cubase/trial/
    - FL Studio (unlimited time free trial, but very stripped-down) https://www.image-line.com/flstudio/
    - Pro Tools First (free, very stripped-down version of a very expensive DAW) https://www.avid.com/pro-tools
    - Ableton Live (90 day trial) https://www.ableton.com/en/trial/
    - Reaper (60 day trial) https://www.reaper.fm
    - Bandlab (a free browser-based DAW) https://www.bandlab.com/
    - Audacity (not strictly a DAW, but an excellent audio editor) https://www.audacityteam.org

2. Using one of the DAWs, attempt one of the Rockschool Music Production Grades (there's no shame in doing Grade 1) You can find that material here: https://bit.ly/2yGBRKq

3. Using one of the DAWs Try recording and editing a simple song – e.g. guitar & voice. Your phone will have a good enough microphone to get you started with.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE – READING/RESEARCH

1. Watch the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Logic Pro X Masterclasses (Part 1 & 2) to gain a deeper understanding of how to use Logic Pro X
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqm8Q3jlNVI
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZfA4c6GCwM

2. Become familiar with basic audio equipment and terminology such as:
    - XLR leads
    - ¼ inch jack leads
    - Condenser and dynamic microphones
    - Microphone polar pick-up patterns (cardioid, hyper-cardioid, Figure 8, omnidirectional)
    - Mixing desk channel strip

3. Use this link: https://bit.ly/2yGBRKq This will give you access to the entire VLE for Music Technology where you can research all of the above terms, and many, many more.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Like getting good on your instrument or getting better at any skill – ***it requires practise!***
So, keep trying things out. Use the different tools and experiment!

A particularly fun, quick, and easy task you can do is to drop in your favourite track, and then play around with the different tools and settings (Audacity works well for this).

What does EQ do? Experiment and find out!
What does a compressor do? Experiment and find out!

The proof is in doing it yourself, and hearing what it does!

See you in September,

Mr. Thompson