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Background

The Electronic Music Unit (EMU) came into existence in the year 2001 within the organisation of a new music education institution, the Elder School of Music (ESM).

The ESM is the product of a merger between the two primary music education institutions in South Australia - the Elder Conservatorium (EC), University of Adelaide, and the Flinders Street School of Music (FSSM), Adelaide Institute of TAFE. The creation of the ESM, and consequently EMU, was a rapid undertaking of approximately 18 months. This ensured the process was challenging, albeit engaging.

History

The FSSM and EC have histories in music technology and education that are contrasting in both length and background.

The FSSM, under the direction of Diana Weekes, established a vocational training centre for music technology in 1994 called the Music Technology Centre (MTC). The MTC taught a certificate course and some elective degree subjects in music technology.

The EC has a longer tradition in music technology and electro-acoustic music starting around the 1960s, with the involvement of people such as visiting Dutch composer Henk Badings, Peter Tahourdin and Tristram Cary¹. Education included elective subjects, integrated course materials, and some specialised courses, but was patchy at best and significant gaps can be noted across the historical timeline. The most recent event of importance at the EC, prior to the creation of the ESM, was the establishment of PATU (Performing Arts Technology Unit) by Stephen Whittington. PATU was a centre for the instruction of and research in the broader electronic arts, and this laid another foundation of core resources and philosophies for the current EMU.

Education

EMU is unique in South Australia, and somewhat rare in Australia from what I can gather, in the fact that it offers both sandstone university and vocational style education within the same institution. This is not unexpected considering its history and does create a unique environment with a diverse student body requiring different educational outcomes.

Electronic Music Unit (EMU) – Studio Report

The education offerings include newly created and revised courses. Currently, the main focus of certificate and undergraduate courses is on creative outcomes through technical, historical and cultural knowledge. The certificate course is industry directed whilst the undergraduate course focuses on the student as artistic practitioner.

Resources

The combining of the MTC and PATU into EMU provided an immediate benefit in terms of physical resources and methodology in managing and using resources. This has further been accentuated through with ties to Media courses at the University of Adelaide.

Currently EMU has the following facilities: Audio computer lab running a range of audio and MIDI software; Recording Studios (2) with adjacent vocal booth and recording space; Synthesis studio including a range of past and present devices²; Music lab for more general musical purposes and an Electronic keyboard lab for keyboard training and music theory.

Research

Research focuses in EMU currently centre around key areas such as Film music and sound, application development, meta-musical forms and algorithmic composition.

Staff

Current staff include Stephen Whittington (Head of Music Technology – on leave 2005), Christian Haines (EMU Coordinator / Lecturer), Mark Carroll (Lecturer), Luke Harrald (Lecturer) and Peter Sansom (Technical Officer).

More Information

<http://www.music.adelaide.edu.au/emu/>

1. Special thanks to Sonia Wilkie for her research into the EC's electronic music history.
2. Noteworthy, are a Moog Modular (the first one imported into Australia), 3 EMS VCS3s + 2 Synthesis.