

Music department goes 'state of the art' with digital

By Shawn Wickham

UNCA audio engineering technology students will have the jump on music students in other universities because they will learn to use "state of the art" (or what is current) equipment.

Dr. Joyce Dorr and Dr. Wayne Kirby, of the UNCA music department, talked with several other universities who offer audio engineering technology. Of these, only UNCA offers "hands on" experience with the equipment.

Kirby said that multi-track (24-track) digital recording studios are located primarily in New York and Los Angeles.

This is because the equipment is not standardized (produced in a set quality or quantity); therefore, it is expensive.

Kirby said these problems may be ironed out in the next year or so.

How will the digital equipment work, and how does it compare to the more widely used method of recording?

Analog (the primary method of recording albums and tapes) takes an acoustical signal (such as the vibration of a guitar string) "converts it into an electrical signal, then into a magnetic signal," Kirby said.

Then the process repeats itself backwards and the signal is again acoustical. "In other words, it can be heard out of your home speakers," he explained.

"Each time energy is converted, there is an analog happening," Kirby said.

Digital recording differs from analog recording in that it takes an acoustical signal, converts it into an electrical signal, then samples the sound at a fast rate.

The UNCA music department will make digital recording equipment available to students Spring semester, 1985.

Each time it samples, the sound is converted into a number. Instead of an electrical analogy, a stream of numbers, or digitation, occurs.

This way, the information is effectively digitized, stored on tape, reconstituted back to an analog, and then amplified, said Kirby.

The main advantage of digital recording is that there is no longer a problem with tape hiss. In other words, a cleaner sound is recorded. Also, a wider dynamic range is available because it can pick up extremely loud or soft sounds.

According to Kirby, this is ideal for classical music.

UNCA's digital recording equipment was purchased from Audio Techniques, Stanford, Conn. It cost \$2500 and was purchased with the proceeds from last year's "Celebration of the Arts" and the "Holiday Concert."

Jeff Comer, who is taking part one of the audio engineering technology course, said that he's looking forward to working with digital equipment. He feels that it is opening up a lot of new doors.

Andy Huenreberg, another student taking the course, said, "I can't wait. It's state of the art, and the only way we'll get gigs is if we're up on the state of the art equipment."

Kirby is active in the field of digital recording both as a producer and engineer. He is releasing an album next month on the Kirby Digital Recording (KDR) label, entitled DOUGLAS JAMES PLAYS BACH, BARRIOS, AND BROUWER.

It features Douglas James, former teacher of classical guitar at UNCA.



Staff photo by Phil Ross

Dr. Wayne Kirby of the UNCA music department has his hand on the future of audio engineering technology students, in the form of digital recording equipment.

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terest but Williams talked to some of the faculty and they expressed some interest.

"We also want some faculty members to come (if they don't have too much to do)," said Miller. "We will take anybody—experience or no experience."

"If we can prove to the faculty and administration that we are going to put out a quality book, we might go somewhere," said Cabe.

Miller added, "If it's not going to be quality, then we don't want one."

Why does UNCA need a yearbook?

"I think a yearbook is basically to show the changes of the campus, student life and campus atmosphere," said Cabe.

She added, "It's the best advertisement for the school."

"High school students frequently look at yearbooks in order to help them decide which college to go to," said Miller.

"I think with the new Highrise and more students we need one," he said.

"I think a yearbook is an historical account—it shows how the university has grown," said Cabe.

The last yearbook on campus, about 5 years ago, failed to generate enough

interest to keep it going.

Dean Hines, the last sponsor, said that the lack of interest and the inability to keep staff were the reasons the old yearbook failed.

"We would start out with 15 people at the beginning, and by Christmas we would have four or five, and by the end of the year, only two or three staff remained," said Hines.

Right now this yearbook is in the organizational level. Finances, support, and cooperation will determine if UNCA publishes a yearbook this year or next.

Funding for the book will not come out of student fees this year. The revenue will have to come from ad sales and charging for the book.

"Next year we [the SGA] could vote on it to see if the yearbook would receive any money from student fees, but first we have to prove ourselves," said Miller.

The SGA is backing the yearbook but Chancellor David Brown wants some figures to back up the support. This is one reason the meeting on Thursday is a very important one for those wanting a yearbook.