

University recording studio offers use of quality equipment for small fee

by Kyle Silvers

An investment, estimated at \$100,000 has created an electronic music and recording studio in the Musical Arts Center, open to any University student.

"It's a nice little recording studio," Dr. Burton Beerman, director of the studio, said, adding that it is not as large as it initially was intended to be.

The University-owned studio, which was designed by Beerman, actually is a four-room suite built on a rotating floor to ensure sound insulation. Open 24 hours, the studio is available to everyone at the University for \$15 an hour; non-students are charged \$30.

"I HOPE students realize that they have access to the studio for \$15, including the technician," Beerman said. He added that this is a reasonable rate because similar studios usually charge \$125.

David Lau, an Ann Arbor recording technician who teaches a weekly recording technology class here, selected the equipment, Beerman said.

One room in the studio is a classroom. A second room is separated from the classroom by a movable partition, and contains electronic music equipment and a studio control booth. Another is the recording studio, separated from the control booth by a double-paned window, and the fourth room is another electronic music studio and a technicians' work area.

THE LARGEST studio contains an eight-track, one-inch format, fully remote controllable Otari tape deck, DBX noise reduction equalizers and digital delay units.

It also contains an AKG 20 stereo reverberation unit, which adds hall reverberation to prevent a flat sound, Beerman said.

It is certainly the largest by ADG," he said, adding that its sound is comparable to that of larger units.

The studio also is equipped with a Korg Vocoder, valued at \$1,200-\$1,500, which produces a sound often used for commercials in which instruments seem to talk. The University of Toledo also has one, Beerman said, because the professor who established the UT system is a University graduate.

ANOTHER FEATURE of the studio is a Prophet-5 synthesizer with digital sequencer, estimated at \$4,500. It is the kind now used by many big rock groups, Beerman said.

"It's got a memory built into it," he explained. "That allows it to have 40 keyboards in one. Herbie Hancock has used it for several years."

The studio also includes several speakers. "We went through a lot of things to pick them out," Beerman said, explaining that four other speakers valued at \$1,400 each are located in Kobacker Hall. "The speakers are used by all the big pro-line studios," he said, and are connected to the studio, which permits recording of the concerts in the halls.

"IT'S ONE of the first studios to have this equipment in the country," Beerman said.

The second studio provides flexibility, he said. For example, its keyboard can create exotic scales, compared to the traditional scales produced by the keyboard in the larger studio.

"We're very pleased with these studios," he said. "We

designed them in such a way that they would do different things."

But for all its technical superiority, the studio is not without its problems, Beerman said.

"ANY TIME YOU'VE got sophisticated equipment and not a full-time engineer, you have enormous problems," he said. "When a piece of equipment malfunctions, it must be repaired by students, area technicians or be returned to the manufacturer."

Security presents another problem, Beerman noted, citing as an example an incident in which \$30,000 worth of equipment was stolen from Queens College in New York.

The studio is protected by steel doors, which makes it more impregnable, he said.

BEERMAN SAID the electronic music and recording courses are open to all University students. However, he said the University does not offer a degree in electronic engineering because it is relatively useless in finding a job.

"It's a very strange market right now," he said. "Part of being a recording engineer is bringing the business in with you."

But a University graduate would be more marketable than one from a school offering a degree, such as Ohio State, because of the scope of experience that can be gained here, Beerman said.

"WE TEACH students how to build the equipment as part of our courses," he explained.

Most of the larger colleges and universities, including Oberlin, Ohio State, Cincinnati and the University of Michigan, have studios, but many of these rely on "outdated equipment," Beerman said.

"I think ours is comparable and in many ways better. It's one of the finest, for sure. Very few universities have recording studios per se. Being a new building, we designed it from scratch for that purpose," he said.

He explained that Michigan, where he received his postgraduate degrees, located its studio at the top of an auditorium, with no acoustical insulation from noise below.

Beerman said the University's studio often is used for commercial purposes.

"A NUMBER of things going on here are commercial," he said. "We hope to be doing a lot of commercial work for our own faculty."

However, the studio primarily provides experience for the student engineers and generates money for its own upkeep, Beerman said. The 15 hourly rate is used to maintain the equipment and to pay the student engineers, who receive minimum wage, he said.

Beerman, who has been on the faculty since 1970, would not guess how many hours a week he devotes to the studio's operation. He is not paid to run the studio, he said, but does receive release time.

He said many events take place at the studio. Next quarter, Beerman and his class of honors students will write, produce and perform a ballet, possibly using electronic music produced in the studio.

On June 6, the University will host a festival of electronic music, featuring student and faculty works. Studios from Tiffin, Toledo and UT will participate.