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Lane only Illinois high school to have sound engineering studio

By Ivaylo Pasev

Music finds its way to the ears of many Lane students everyday. Whether it be blasting through car speakers for those who drive, or playing from headphones, or even just the Lane song and National Anthem signaling the start of the school day.

Everybody has their own preference, their own style, and their own favorite artist. People often remember and credit the artist that performs the song, but what about the producer, who also plays a key role in making a song? That person behind the soundboard that makes sure the beat drops at the right moment and the rhythm is just right. That person who puts together the pieces of the musical puzzle.



Now there is a whole class at Lane dedicated to the production of music called Sound Engineering. Lane is the only high school in Illinois to have a professional sound recording studio. Mr. Hudson, the teacher of the Sound Engineering classes already has some ideas about the future of the new class. He plans on recording the Lane Orchestra, Band, Choir, and Jazz Band, along with professional musicians from the community. Hudson does not want to reveal many names as there has not been an official confirmation from the artists yet.

Before students can start recording, they will be introduced to the fundamental beats used in Rock, Hip- Hop and other genres of music. Students will have the opportunity to create whatever kind of music they want. They will have the ability to record themselves as well as their classmates to complete class projects.

"The students are welcome to bring whatever they have to the table," Hudson said. "We are going to record the genres of music that are represented by the ensembles here as well as whatever mixes the students make creatively."

Although Sound Engineering is primarily a technology class, students are tested on basic scales of the piano keyboard. Classes like Guitar require certain routines in terms of rhythms, reading notes, learning new chords, and ultimately learning new songs. Sound Engineering requires learning new software techniques, learning how to work with the hardware, reading engineering text, and finally making musical products. It is a different set of routines and requires a different set of skills. Skills that will be built through software programs like Protools and Reason 7.

"The class is very diverse since we have people who have never played instruments to those who are good at playing the piano, and so far Mr. Hudson has explained things thoroughly," said Robert Alvarez, Div. 481.

Alvarez has had no experience recording music prior to taking the class. The use of software to recreate the sounds of many musical instruments is one of his favorite parts of the class. His interest in music and enjoyment he has gotten from the class so far have inspired him to look into Sound Engineering as a career possibility.

Other students like Dante Bonilla, Div. 464, have had some experience with recording music. Bonilla has DJed for parties as well as the Lane-A-Palooza and dropped a few mixes as well. He learned the basic concept of DJing when he was 12, but started taking his hobby more seriously two years ago. His understanding of music software programs has increased because of the Sound Engineering class. Along with Architecture and Engineering, Bonilla's top interests and career possibilities also include Sound Engineering.

"... it's great if you're passionate in creating music. Also, for the record, Mr. Hudson is a boss," Bonilla said about the class.

The students are currently learning about how sound behaves in many mediums. Their first project is creating an audio track containing a song form of aaba (containing 8 bars each) and learning some keyboard.

The students will be working on projects like this one on new Apple computers located on the catwalk in room 154. Below them, on the main floor, a guitar class takes place at the same time. So far, Hudson says, the two classes have not had any problems and have not prevented each other from being productive. He even wants the two classes to possibly collaborate on future projects. However, when it comes to working on more complex projects "we're going to have to figure that out," Hudson said.

Bonilla admits that the guitar class can become a little bit distracting when he is making his beats, but "once you're in the zone, you start to forget that things are happening below" he said.

Mr. Sweet, the guitar teacher, and Hudson are working together to formulate a plan for the two classes to have a little more privacy. They want to expand the Sound Engineering class next year to four or five classes instead of this year's two.

Every day in the sound engineering/guitar room different projects are taking place to make it look more like a music classroom. Legends like Jimi Hendrix "supervise" the classes, their images painted on the walls by students most of whom graduated last year and donate their time for the improvement of the classroom environment. Many of these alumni donated their time over the summer to sand drywall and work on the room.

A new carpet was supposed to be put in on Sept. 20, but water that had leaked into the room from the rain the day before delayed the installation. Renovations like the carpet (which is supposed to absorb sound better) have already been postponed many times. A 32 channel digital mixing board had to be shipped back because there were problems with the equipment. Delays on major things like the carpet installation, have forced other renovation ideas to be pushed back.

"We just feel like gypsies because we can't put anything down," Sweet said. "As soon as the flooring goes in, we're going to put stuff where it really belongs so it will start to look like a classroom. I hate feeling like I'm living in a suitcase."

Sweet's patience is running out as the room has been "under construction" for the past 14 months. After the carpet is put in though, two couches, a coffee table, and numerous musical magazines will make up the lounge area where students can come after school to practice or just to relax.

All of these upgrades are possible due to fundraisers like last year's Lane-A-Palooza event (music festival for high-school bands), Guitar show, and Battle of the Bands which raised close to \$20,000. Sweet says he wishes not to do the Lane-A-Palooza event this year because, even though it raised a lot of money, the stress level of organizing an event this big was just too much.

"The Lane-A-Palooza nighttime, extravaganza, super, fire... I can't do it... I got a family, I got little kids at home and they missed me last year and I can't do that to them anymore." Sweet said.

This year's version of Lane-A-Palooza was Lane Unplugged which was a smaller, more relaxed version. It took place during the day and students who attended got signed out of sixth, seventh, and eighth periods to see mostly students, but some teachers and administrators, doing some acoustic sets for two hours.

The past year has been stressful for the music department and so will the following couple of months, but as Hudson believes, "I think fear and stress are best overcome with preparation. We've been doing a lot of preparation."