

Berkhamsted Audio Engineering and Composition Society

The Berkhamsted Audio Engineering and Composition Society would hold bi-monthly meetings, open to all for a small subscription which would be used for administrative purposes. It would produce a twice yearly journal with meeting proceedings and other articles as appropriate. Consequently, it would become the centre for such matters, regionally and nationally. It would maintain a web site, through which it would be open to international membership.

The BA ECS would be governed by an elected committee of core members (suggested as five individuals), managed by an elected President. Committee membership would be reviewed annually, as would the position of President. Initially, these positions would be filled by those coming forward at the time of establishment, invited from professional organisations in the field. The committee would liaise with professionals in both the music and production industries with a view to set and maintain standards. A BA ECS approval scheme would be established as appropriate.

In particular, the BA ECS would start by addressing the following matters;

1. Microphone techniques used for recording both live sound, sound recorded in studios and sound recorded on location. A focus would be placed upon recording true stereo sound for music whilst acknowledging the use of ambisonics and surround sound for film and TV production. Recommendations would be made and products tested and approved where applicable.
2. Digital recording techniques would be evaluated and recommendations produced for different applications. The subject of high resolution digital recording will be explored with live recordings made and blind listening tests set up with a panel of volunteers. This exercise may be undertaken in collaboration with an existing studio, live music venue or an existing orchestra. Factors such as compression and limiting within the digital domain will be explored and recommendations made accordingly. Extensive equipment tests will be undertaken with full results published in the journal and made available to manufacturers. Distinctions will be made between recording music and film / TV production where appropriate.
3. Digital Audio Workstations will be explained, with their basic usage taught to interested members as required. In addition, extensive tests will be undertaken with respect to realised audio quality while the limitations of recording this way shall also be acknowledged and described. In this respect, the use of sampled instruments shall be evaluated with tests undertaken as appropriate. The audio manipulation made possible by working this way shall be explored and conclusions arrived at accordingly. In particular, the use of simulated tools such as compressors, equalisation, artificial reverberation and so on shall be explored and conclusions developed.
4. Musical composition using Digital Audio Workstations shall be explained and basic techniques taught to those interested via workshops. These workshops will cover recording using sampled instruments, manipulating tracks to produce harmonies, recording live instruments, mixing the final work and producing music scores where appropriate. Distinctions will be made between simply producing music and producing

music and sound tracks for film. In this context, aspects such as working with SMPTE time code will be explored and skills taught via appropriate workshops. These workshops will typically be accommodated within the bi-monthly meetings or may, eventually, be separated out as educational systems in their own right. In such a case, this would be undertaken in collaboration with Dacorum Borough Council.

5. Any matters appertaining to audio quality will be examined with conclusions and recommendations made where appropriate. The pursuit of audio quality and fidelity to the original sound will be paramount at all times and the BAECS will strive to set and maintain standards in this respect. It is acknowledged that credibility among the wider world will take some time but, by setting the highest of standards right at the start, the BAECS should quickly become recognised in this field.

The above five points represent a very full programme of activity. However, with a good committee and effective liaison among professionals and technology suppliers, we should be able to cover the ground. Secretarial services will be required and Dacorum Borough Council should be able to help in this respect. The existing Dacorum Archive staff, located behind the Civic Centre might be a good place to start, or a small office within the Civic Centre could be established. In either case, the commitment would be little enough.

Next steps;

1. Circulate this document among a cross section of individuals, both within the Town and Borough Councils and externally among professional organisations, in order to gauge support for such a venture.
2. If the idea is supported in principle, invite existing Councillors and external Professionals to volunteer to be part of the initial committee. Selected individuals would need to bring specific skills with them, either technically, artistically or in management.
3. The first step for the Committee will be to consolidate the objectives of the society and establish a website from which contact may be made. They may then set about promotion, with help from Dacorum and others as appropriate. A date will then be set for the first meeting and an agenda drawn up accordingly.

In all matters, ex-Councillor and Audio Engineer Julian Ashbourn will happily liaise and recommend actions as the BAECS is established.