

Pro Tools HDX at the University of East London

Preparing students for industry with “real world” audio solutions

When the University of East London decided it was time for their students to experience an industry-standard recording environment, Jigsaw24's audio team sourced, tested, pre-configured and installed a Pro Tools HDX setup, then provided handover training for the department staff.

Using Pro Tools to give students professional-level skills

The University of East London run popular courses on all aspects of music, from performance to production to music industry management. While they had a well-equipped studio and live room where students could get to grips with recording, they were well aware of the importance of training students to use hardware, software and recording techniques that were relevant to the industry.

“Before now, our studios were focused on being simple and easy to use, designed to give students an introduction into the world of recording,” explained Neil Martin, a Technical Associate in UEL's music department. “With more academic focus shifting into the production process - and our music courses changing to reflect that - it was time to find a solution that would meet these extra demands. We wanted to offer our students a real taste of the equipment they'd use in professional recording studios.”

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Neil Martin, Technical associate, University of East London.

The team knew they wanted to be able to have groups of students working in the live room and recording studio at once, so another major concern was finding a setup that would support a large number of users working with a high number of tracks.

Pro Tools HDX, the latest hardware-based version of Pro Tools, and the Avid C24 control surface, neatly took care of both concerns. “We chose Pro Tools HDX primarily because of its leading position within the industry,” said Neil. “We also wanted a complete hardware DSP driven solution in our control room, and that was beyond the realms of any host-based software we were currently using. Being able to offer students the chance to use the most up to date version of Pro Tools will add immense value to the courses we offer.” Staff hoped that, given Pro Tools's pedigree, using it would help them teach students skills and techniques which would be industry-applicable in the long term, while the fact that HDX was DSP rather than software-based meant that they would have far more power and stability than was possible with their existing Apple Logic recording software.



Working with...



In a nutshell...

Who are University of East London?

University of East London have been educating individuals since 1898 and are now one of the most diverse universities in the UK, with more than 120 nationalities represented on campus.

What did they need?

As the focus of their courses moved from performance to production, UEL wanted cutting edge audio equipment that would prepare their students for work in a professional recording environment.

How did we help?

Having worked with UEL since their first studios were installed a decade ago, we were the natural choice to help them design and configure a Pro Tools HDX setup that would support their teaching goals, then kit out the live room and recording studio. We also provided handover training to staff, so they could hit the ground running at the start of the academic year.

What were the benefits?

- Our pre-configuration and testing of hardware and software means UEL have a reduced risk of downtime.
- Students are now developing industry-applicable skills, and staff are more equipped to meet curriculum goals.
- Staff and students are motivated to create more complex projects.

Decision made, the team got in touch with us to develop a Pro Tools solution to fit their budget, their existing systems and their space: "Jigsaw24 are a company with which we have a well-established rapport that has been cultivated over many years. They have been with us ever since the early days of specifying and installing our very first recording studios over eight years ago, and we trust their expertise. Every query we had was answered quickly and thoroughly in a polite and friendly manner; there was always someone available on the other end of a phone or a computer."

Pre-testing equipment to ensure a smoother startup

Once UEL and our audio team had chosen their hardware and found some plug-ins to complement it, Jigsaw24 audio consultant Rob Holsman set up the system in our demo room and put it through its paces. He soak and burn tested the hardware before loading up the software and running a range of sessions to check everything was compatible. This meant that he was able to spot and fix possible problems with the system or any of its parts before it was delivered to the university, reducing the risk of any downtime post-install. Rob also installed 30-day trials for popular Sonnox plug-ins, so the music team at UEL could try out the software before deciding if it was right for them.

Installing the system and getting the staff up to speed

Our professional services team kept UEL informed throughout the system test so that they'd be aware of any issues or possible delays and, when everything was ready to go, arranged the delivery and installation of the hardware and studio furniture around UEL's schedule, so any disruption was kept to a minimum.

"Working with the team at Jigsaw24 was smooth and straightforward," said Neil. "They were very flexible in allowing us to complete part of the installation (building the furniture and doing some preliminary configuration to the computer before sending it off pre-flight), which saved us time and money."

As he'd been involved in the project from the start (and holds a range of Avid qualifications) Rob was the obvious choice to install and configure the new system. He integrated the Avid hardware into UEL's existing systems, and recabled their existing wall boxes to ensure they could support the required number of students.

Once all the hardware was in place, he loaded up the Pro Tools software and plug-ins. As well as registering the university's software licences and installing each component, Rob ensured that every piece of hardware and software was as up to date as possible, and configured the software settings and user preferences to suit UEL's teaching style. This meant that staff wouldn't have to configure the system while they were still learning to use it, and could focus on honing the recording skills they wanted to pass on to students.

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Rob then tested the system again to ensure everything was in working order and properly integrated with UEL's existing systems, and provided handover training to the UEL team so that they knew everything they needed to start recording, and troubleshoot any issues that arose.

"Rob is a man who clearly knows his onions!" said Neil. "We had the occasional technical hitch during the installation process, but these were quickly overcome. I enjoyed working with Rob throughout the consultation and installation."

And what did the students think?

Students will be let loose on the recording studio early next semester, and UEL staff are looking forward to putting the new system to work. "Initial reactions to the new control room have been very positive," said Neil. "We have already given a few students a 'sneak peek' and their faces were filled with awe. The academic staff are also as equally impressed. We look forward to the new studio being at the heart of exciting new recording and music production modules, which make up part of the BA (Hons) Music Culture and BSc (Hons) Music Technology degree programmes."

Want to know more about our audio solutions for education? Get in touch on the details below.

