

News Release



USC Thornton Unveils a New Degree in Music Production

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As a complement to its highly successful 5-year-old Popular Music major and its redesigned Music Industry degree program, the USC Thornton School of Music Division of Contemporary Music announced a new bachelor's degree in Music Production that encompasses the creative, technical and business aspects of professional music.



The inaugural class will enroll in Fall 2015.

The new Music Production major was designed by music technology chair Rick Schmunk and USC Thornton Vice Dean Chris Sampson with help from legendary audio engineer and educator Gimel “Young Guru” Keaton, who is a USC Thornton artist-in-residence. Assistance also was provided by Miami-based DJ and producer Greg “Stryke” Chin.

The major reflects the current and evolving nature of professional music making in the digital age, where the job description of today's contemporary musician often includes composing and arranging, live and studio performance, audio engineering/editing and mastering, music synthesis and programming, as well as most of the business responsibilities related to music.

“We’ve seen first-hand the power of creating a highly collaborative music community at USC Thornton,” said vice dean Sampson. “Adding musicians from the new Music Production major into this community will greatly enhance the experience for all our students.”

Applicants must be academically admissible to USC, and will be required to pass an audition with USC Thornton. “We plan on keeping the program small and selective,” said music technology chair Schmunk. “We want to identify and work with the next leaders and innovators in this field.”

The inaugural class consists of seven elite students from across the country. Incoming freshman Jeremy Siegal, a native of Philadelphia who was named a Presidential Scholar at USC, said the program was exactly what he was looking for. “It has a great combination of composing and producing computer and studio-based contemporary music,” he said. “I’ll be learning to be a better musician, working in collaboration with musicians, and not just sitting at a computer.”

During the spring 2015 semester, USC Thornton invited a handful of students in the Popular Music

program to be part of a pilot class in Music Production. They raved about their experience.

“The first week they sat us down and said, ‘Here’s an artist, here’s a couple of the artist’s songs, now you have to make a record, and it’s due in a couple of weeks,’” said Brian Jones, who was named USC Thornton’s outstanding undergraduate for 2015. “We never had access to the studios to produce stuff before. We all were just so excited.”

Jones said the importance of a program like this will be the constant interplay between Popular Music and Music Production students. “It will be amazing educational experience for everybody,” he said.

Alex Pachino, another recent graduate from the Popular Music program, agreed. “Knowing how to use a studio is an art form in itself,” he said. “People have naturally gravitated to digital recording, and it is awesome that Thornton has created an infrastructure to teach people how to get good at it. I’m jealous of the students who get to do this program for four years.”

Students enrolled in the program will develop skills in the recording studio and in live performance. New digital technologies have expanded innovative opportunities for live performance, allowing for real time filtering, manipulation and combination of tracks to create more elaborate live experiences. Performing producers, who are some of the highest grossing touring musicians today, synchronize highly elaborate stage design, lighting and video with their music. Music Production students will be expected to collaborate with songwriters, artists and bands at USC Thornton, as well as video directors/designers and video game designers in USC’s School of Cinematic Arts, the USC Roski School of Art and Design, the USC Viterbi School of Engineering and the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

This forward looking curriculum, along with USC’s location in Los Angeles, which has long been a center for the music industry and contemporary music, makes USC Thornton an ideal place to study music production.

“I had gone to Grammy Camp last summer on USC’s campus, and fell in love with the campus and the Thornton School of Music,” said incoming freshman Jamison Baken, who hails from Montana. “When I found the Music Production program on the website, it fit every description of everything I wanted in a music program.”

More information is at music.usc.edu/departments/music-technology

[Above image: Popular Music student Alex Pachino produces a recording session at Henson Studios, working with guest engineer Don Murray. The session was part of a pilot class for the new Music Production degree. Photo by Andrew Garver]

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