



Sound Recording Technology
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Conference Summary

Fourth International Art of Record Production Conference
November 14 – 16, 2008

William Moylan, Conference Host:

“We feel a great sense of privilege to have been given this opportunity to present ourselves on this important international stage by hosting this conference in its first appearance in North America. It is gratifying to have seen our efforts produce a conference that was a great success: attendees were exhilarated at their experience and impressed with the host institution; timely and significant issues and research were shared and explored; important connections were made between our campus and many others world-wide; and our community and students were enriched.”

200 leading academics and industry professionals from throughout the world assembled on the UMass Lowell campus to share research and industry trends and current concerns. We saw strong attendance from Australia, all of Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America, and Canada and the United States. Our international image as a leader in the discipline of Sound Recording Technology was certainly enhanced, and we used our world-class facilities to their best advantage for presentations and workshops.

It was a full weekend as Friday evening began with a panel on economics of record production by leaders from the US and UK recording industry chaired by producer Richard James Burgess, the distinguished panel included Maureen Droney (P&E Wing of the Recording Academy), Mike Howlett (head of the UK’s Producers Guild), and producer management leader Joe D’Ambrosio. Conference Keynote was then provided by industry legend Phil Ramone. A reception followed Phil Rmaone’s book signing.

Saturday morning brought all attendees to the UMass Lowell campus for paper sessions and workshops.

In all 47 academic papers were presented in the conference, having been selected by peer review from over 100 submissions. These papers were presented throughout Saturday and Sunday morning in four topic streams.

These speakers represented leading scholars and industry figures from throughout the world. Countries represented included Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Norway, Scotland, Wales, and from throughout the US.

Concurrent to these paper sessions were two types of workshops offered by industry leaders and UMass Lowell faculty and graduate students in the world-class SRT Facilities. Our API “Vision” console in our newly renovated control room was the center piece for “Unraveling the Mix” workshops featuring Jim Anderson, multi-Grammy-winning engineer and President of the Audio Engineering Society, bringing current-year Grammy-nominated multitrack masters to the studio for attendees to explore and to experiment in mixing them to surround sound and stereo.

The superb SLS playback system and acoustics of our Critical Listening Studio allowed workshops. Two on-going streams of well-known recordings were played to allow attendees to experience known recordings in an environment suitable for detailed, critical listening in surround sound and in 2-channel stereo formats. UMass Lowell graduate students gave two presentations: “Compressed Audio Demystified” Digital Format Comparative Listening Presentation and a recording analysis of The Beatles’ “Strawberry Fields Forever” for how the recording process shaped the music and transformed its sound qualities.

The conference ended Sunday afternoon with a distinguished panel of three record producers (Steven Epstein, Nathaniel Kunkel, and Paul Miller) and mastering engineer Bob Ludwig. The panel spanned many types of music (classical to pop to rap to experimental) and many generations. The panel was moderated by the editor of *MIX magazine*, Sarah Jones—a 1993 graduate of UML’s SRT and Music Business programs.

We were privileged to have Phil Ramone with us to present our keynote. He reflects perfectly the dimensions we were seeking to establish for our conference. We know Phil Ramone as a legendary producer who has worked with some of the world’s greatest artists in creating touch stone recordings spanning a great many genres of music. Of equally great significance to us is that alongside of the great works of art he has help craft, he has consistently stretched to incorporate new and even experimental technologies and techniques into his work. This embracing of technology to create great recordings of great music and extraordinary performances, while continually extending and reshaping our art of record production is what makes us deeply honored to have had him, as this spoke to the core of this conference. This perspective also represents the underlying philosophy of the UMass Lowell SRT program for the past 25 years.

In addition to providing the Keynote, Phil Ramone spent some free time meeting with our senior-year and graduate Sound Recording Technology students—providing them with an extraordinary experience they will never forget.

The conference will be made possible through the generosity of our sponsors: API, Alacronics, Avid Technology, Bag End Loudspeakers, Bose Corporation, DPA Microphones, Focal Press, MIX magazine, Newbury Comics, and SLS (Superior Loudspeaker Systems). We are grateful for their support.

Simon Zagorski-Thomas (director of the Art of Record Production) is quoted:

“Thanks again for a brilliant conference - it's getting even more brilliant on reflection as the enjoyment of the moment lacks perspective. The more I think about the panels and Phil's keynote, the more I realise how important they were in building bridges between the academic and professional worlds.”