Digital Revolutionizes Music

Lab

Brandon Magaha records Katie Falk on a digital audio recording station in the MIDI lab.

Music is cooking in the newly renovated digital audio lab. You can compose a song, record it, save it as an MP3 and have it posted on MySpace to a world-wide audience all in the same day. Or you can collect your fellow musicians, record a piece in the sound booth using microphones, mix it, edit it and produce a CD.

As music technology has advanced, equipment cost has gone down, allowing students in JCCC's digital audio lab to use the same digital audio software and hardware that professionals use in studios worldwide. With the new computers, digital synthesizers are loaded right into computer hard drives, and music is digital from start to finish.

"Students can take a ProTools session they make in this lab and interface with almost any professional studio in the world," said Mike Moreland, associate professor, instrumental music.

The digital audio lab, housed in room 364 of the Office and Classroom Building, is home to four music technology classes that focus on digital technology and creativity, as well as open-lab times seven days a week. Each student has a workstation for mixing, manipulating and editing musical information. Nearby is a sound booth and a mobile digital audio recording station, which can be used to record from the booth or moved to record student concerts anywhere on campus.

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) classes, which started in 1995 with Moreland teaching part time, have developed from elementary MIDI sequencing and the basics of songwriting to two more advanced classes in the spring 2008 semester – *Digital Audio Techniques I* and *II*. In addition to Moreland, who became full time in 2000, there are two part-time MIDI music instructors – Dr. Victor Olvera and Tom Ransom. All three members of the faculty have professional experience in performance, composition and recording.

"These classes are a combination of music and technology," Moreland said. "This is not just about technology. Our students learn basic music theory like rhythm, form, melody and chords."

Digital Audio Techniques I covers writing lyrics, microphone types and techniques, and how to conduct a recording session. *Digital Audio Techniques II* teaches topics of copyright issues and mastering techniques, and students compile a portfolio of their work. A digital music entrepreneurial certificate is in development so students can prepare to establish home-studio businesses.

Stylistically, students are encouraged to work on any style of music that they want – rock, hip-hop, blues, country, experimental.

Moreland has students who have gone on to earn composition degrees at prestigious universities like Berklee College of Music, Boston; perform professionally; or establish professional home studios.

"MIDI has only been around 25 years, and the type of digital audio interfaces that we use have only existed for about four to five years. There's been a revolution with digital music – that's for sure. People are producing music in an entirely new way," Moreland said.