

CASE STUDY

The Glasgow School of Art

SCOTLAND, UNITED KINGDOM

New SIT campus fuses spatial audio with networking for future-facing learning



GENELEC®



THE BACKGROUND

As a recognised centre of excellence for the study of Sound for the Moving Image, The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) School of Innovation and Technology (SIT) has an enviable track record in producing highly employable graduates with a deep knowledge of film/TV sound production & post-production, immersive audio, electronic game audio and experimental sound practice. Now, having relocated to a brand new campus location in central Glasgow, the GSA's Genelec-powered sound studios are perfectly equipped to continue preparing future generations of audio professionals.

Previously based at the GSA's Pacific Quay Campus in Glasgow's Digital Media Quarter, SIT has seen its graduates go on to achieve success with a range of industry leaders including the BBC, Electronic Arts, Rockstar Games, and major post-production facilities in Scotland and beyond. The relocation has now brought SIT much closer to the main campus but involved recreating Pacific Quay's three main studios – a Dolby Atmos Room, a Surround Sound Room and the spatial audio Soundlab – in a brand new space.





THE CHALLENGE

To help execute the project, the GSA enlisted the invaluable expertise of local reseller and integrator Mediaspec. “We needed to closely replicate these studio spaces so that our students would continue to have access to professionally specified facilities,” explains Ronan Breslin, Programme Leader, MDes Sound for Moving Image, GSA, “Relocating the Soundlab was a particularly difficult proposition as we had previously shared this facility with renowned consultants Arup Acoustics – who weren’t in a position to move with us. So, we needed to build a new Soundlab from scratch.”

The principal aim of the new SIT facility was to create a flexible, future-facing teaching and production environment capable of supporting industry-standard Dolby Atmos workflows, traditional 5.1 surround mixing, 3rd-order Ambisonics mixing, with support for voiceover and Foley recording too. Designed to provide students with access to industry-standard monitoring environments across multiple spatial audio formats, the decision was made for all studios to be integrated via a Dante network – which represented a major technical step forward.

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Programme Leader, MDes
Sound for Moving Image,
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THE SOLUTION

“There was a great deal of discussion around how the rooms would look, how they would be acoustically treated, and what kind of infrastructure would underpin the playback and monitoring,” comments Breslin. “However, all stakeholders agreed that Genelec monitors would be essential throughout the new facilities. We had already been using Genelec monitors at Pacific Quay, and we were always impressed by their reliability, accuracy and consistency in translating mixes to other platforms. The venerable 1029 monitor has underpinned the sonic framework for multiple exhibitions and installations over the last few decades, and now the 8010 model continues that tradition. As an art school we would have been daft not to choose Genelec,” Breslin adds.

To deliver on the vision for the new campus, new spaces – including a 7.1.4 Dolby Atmos studio and a 16-speaker Ambisonics Soundlab – were commissioned and integrated by Mediaspec, with network infrastructure provided by the GSA’s internal IT team. 11 Genelec 8030 two-way nearfield monitors were transferred across from the Pacific Quay

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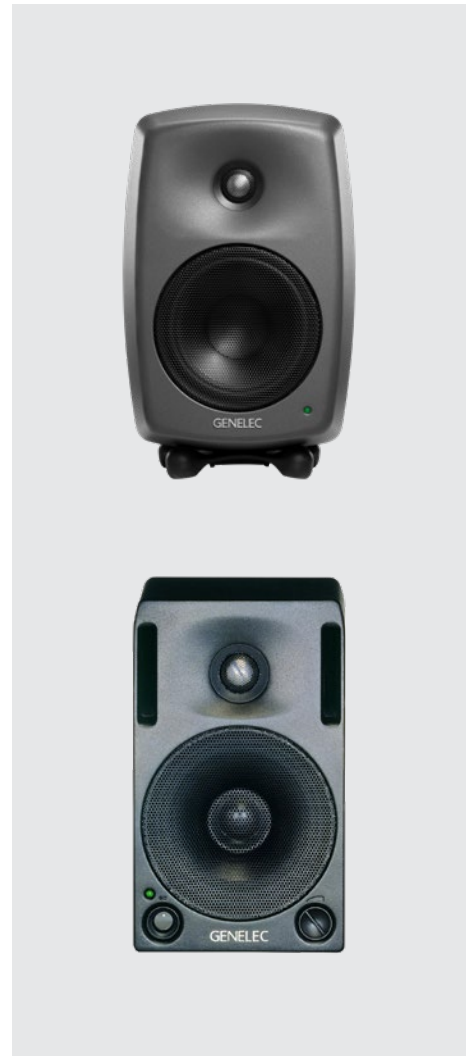
campus to equip the Atmos room, complemented by a 7060 subwoofer, while 16 of the super-compact 8010 two-way nearfields were purchased for the Ambisonics room, supported by a 7050 subwoofer. The campus's compact 5.1 surround sound studio utilises the GSA's existing 1029 two-way nearfield monitors, and a separate voiceover booth and Foley studio are also accessible via the Dante network.

Of course, as with all major projects, there were some technical challenges to overcome, as Breslin reveals:

“Since Ambisonic sound does not have a low frequency enhancement channel as part of its defined characteristics, we found that initial playback testing with the 8010 monitor array in the Soundlab revealed very good immersion and localisation characteristics, but the low end required reinforcement. Therefore, Mediaspec suggested that we deploy a 7050 subwoofer in the room – which we fed with summed 100 Hz LPF audio – and this did indeed remedy the issue, following some experimentation with positioning.”

The other challenge arose from the implementation of the Dante network, a new element of the studios. Breslin explains: “However, by optimising the network, establishing correct clocking and routing configurations, and carrying out comprehensive system-wide testing and validation, a stable and reliable infrastructure was achieved.”

With the commissioning complete, staff and students have had plenty of time to get to grips with the new rooms – and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.



“All the studios sound incredibly clear,” comments Simon Weins, Sound Technician & Lecturer at the GSA. “The 8030s in the Atmos studio allow for a very detailed image of a mix, which is crucial for our students when making final decisions in their projects. Together with the rest of our system, this allows our students to work at the highest professional level. The stereo imaging is precise, and the low frequency detail is exceptional.”

Meanwhile in the Soundlab studio, the Ambisonics system has been a genuine revelation. “The 8010s may look small but paired with the 7050 they produce a genuinely powerful, full-range sound. Despite the compact footprint, the imaging across the full sphere is remarkably stable and coherent,” enthuses Weins.

The 5.1 studio’s use of the GSA’s existing 1029 models also demonstrates the ability of both vintage and modern Genelec monitors to dovetail seamlessly into even the most cutting-edge and demanding of environments. “The 1029s have been in our possession for almost twenty years, continuing to provide reliable service throughout,” observes Breslin.

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Simon Weins
Sound Technician &
Lecturer, GSA





L - R: Ronan Breslin, Daniel Neil, Dr Jessica Argo.

THE CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the success of the move, Weins is quick to recognise the ability of Genelec monitors to provide a truthful sonic reference in any space: “Genelec’s clarity and consistency have translated seamlessly from our studios at Pacific Quay to our new home at West Regent Street, minimising the impact that the move had on the workflow of our students and allowing them to continue their work in a professional environment. Overall, the relocation has been a real success for us, with the new facilities being used more than ever.”

THE DETAILS

Integrator
Mediaspec

7.1.4 Dolby Atmos Studio

- 11 x 8030C
- 1 x 7060B

5.1 Surround Sound Studio

- 5 x 1029A

Ambisonics Soundlab Studio

- 16 x 8010A
- 1 x 7050C