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BA (HONS) POPULAR MUSIC PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION

We would like to take this opportunity to firstly welcome you to the BA (Hons) Popular Music Performance and Production degree at Southampton Solent University. Our many congratulations. We really hope that this will be an exciting, challenging and valuable chapter in your musical and creative lives. And so, in readiness, we'd like to provide you here with a little more detail regarding our expectations and recommendations, so that you perhaps feel a little more prepared when you first start.

It is essential that all of our students procure a pair of personal, studio-quality headphones before attending the course. Indeed, these will aid you throughout your 3 years with regards to maintaining a level of consistency between mixing/monitoring in different environments (e.g., at home, in the studios, in the music labs, etc.), whilst providing greater clarity/sensitivity and near-flat frequency response. A flat frequency response just means that all of the audible frequencies, comprising music, are equally represented, i.e., that the headphones do not affectively 'colour' the sound (which most domestic headphones unfortunately do; akin to applying an EQ envelope).



We would therefore encourage you to conduct your own research into what headphones would suit you (ultimately, everyone has their own preferences). Please try to avoid open-back or wireless/noise-cancelling headphones, buds, or indeed over-priced branded headphones (unless they particularly 'float your boat' and are high-quality).

EAR PROTECTION

During the course, there may be times when you're exposed to high volumes of sound for short periods of time, e.g., within certain studio environments (e.g., recording a drummer) or when rehearsing and performing. We therefore recommend that all students make sure they have their own personal earplugs/defenders for such occasions. Indeed, we take ear protection very seriously on the course; our ears being the most valuable asset we have as contemporary music artists. The good news is that basic personal ear protection is provided.

However, cheap ear plugs do not provide a great listening experience, as they mainly block out higher frequencies, leaving you with a muffled/distorted sound. It is for this reason that we recommend the slightly more expensive, reusable earplugs that are designed for musicians (typically ranging between £15 - £30), to give a flatter frequency response.





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However, if you're feeling particularly fancy, then you may want to consider the more expensive option of moulded/custom-made earplugs (these are generally more comfortable and better sounding).

INSTRUMENTS AND PERFORMANCE EQUIPMENT

For the elements of the course involving rehearsal and performance, drum kits, backline, PAs, keyboards and microphones are provided by the University. For second study players, basses and guitars are available to borrow for on campus activities. You'll also need the following:

Bassists and guitarists

An instrument in good condition with a decent quality lead, strap (plus plectrums if appropriate).

Drummers

Sticks, hot rods, brushes and a drum key. You may also wish to use your some of your own hardware such as kick pedal and cymbals.

Vocalists

It's not essential, but it is worth considering buying your own mic, particularly to reduce the spread of droplet infections. You might wish to take advice from your vocal tutor prior to purchasing a mic.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If you're not already familiar with the music software that we use on the course, do feel free to download a copy in advance of joining us (they usually have a free trial period), to familiarise yourself with their functions/processes. We primarily use Logic Pro X (for Mac), and Avid Pro Tools (for Mac and PC); although we will use other music software on the course from time to time. Acquainting yourself with this software will certainly help with regards to a more gradual learning curve at the beginning of the course, though it is not essential as we do briefly cover the more basic functions at the very start.



Please be aware that there will be times when you will require USB memory sticks/flash drives and SD cards for personal recordings, submissions, etc. The number required will vary, depending on optional modules selected, etc. However, one of each will certainly be required. You can either purchase these in advance, or as/when you need them once you're here (recommended).

Aside from the University's specialist music facilities and onsite equipment, many of our students also find it beneficial to purchase their own copy of the DAWs we use, as well as other personal items of equipment (for example: a MacBook or iMac, a pair of studio monitors, a digital audio interface and a



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MIDI controller keyboard), so that they're able to continue working on their music projects from home, or indeed, on the move. Who knows when inspiration will strike? Although buying these items is certainly not a prerequisite of the course, it maybe something worth considering later down the line, once you've started with us.

We're really looking forward to welcoming you to Southampton Solent University later in the year and wish you the best with all your current musical endeavours.

Patrick

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