

Group Design Project: Formal Report

Evolution Acoustics: Alex Booth

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1 Introduction

2 Location case study

Choosing a real-life location for our project was a conscious choice for our group. We decided that instead of making up prospective acoustical and spatial challenges, working around strict environments that cannot be changed would have greater realism, and would enable us to spend a greater amount of time on finding and developing solutions to the problems these strict constraints presented us. A plot of land was chosen: 160 Graham Road, Hackney, London. It is adjacent to residential areas, two train lines, and a road, and thus presented us with an ample supply of problems to plan for and overcome, especially the noise created by the road and the trainlines.

3 Background and Theory Basis

3.1 Introduction

For a building to function as both a music studio and as an educational facility, special considerations must be taken.

3.2 Educational facilities

Any building that facilitates or is used for educational purposes must comply to the education building regulations specified by the government. These specifications are laid out in Building Bulletin 93 (BB93): Acoustic design of schools - performance standards. The importance of acoustic considerations is given by the National Education Union: "Noise from adjacent rooms disrupts the learning process, especially during quiet reading times or test-taking"[3] The NEU further states the importance of tuning the reverb time of a classroom environment such that the teacher can be heard clearly at any point the classroom, but also so that the conversation of students does not

descend into cacophony. In BB93, a table of appropriate L_{AEQ} values are given for various classrooms. In this context, only the music rooms and common rooms entries are relevant. In Fig.1 it can be seen that classrooms and general teaching rooms have a matching ambient noise requirement to lecture rooms. The live room in the studio complex can function not only as a live room for large ensemble recordings but also as a class / lecture room. Furthermore, the control rooms, isolation rooms and foley rooms will be able to function as SEN calming rooms and teaching space for those with special hearing a communication needs, as they provide the acoustically 'dead' environment specified in the table, with a low ambient noise level.

3.3 Music and Recording Facilities

Mainstream music education at a secondary level primarily focuses on basic music theory of rhythm, timbre and tone, along with basic music technology requirements. In the live room, large ensemble performances and lecture-style teaching can take place, whilst students wishing to practice any instruments can use the iso and control rooms to be isolated from the noise of the live room, and vice versa for the students in the live room. For later years of education, the studio will be able to function as an excellent teaching environment for students of sound recording techniques and studio production, with three separate control rooms and one mastering room all equipped such that they can all be used for mixing and mastering.

4 Building Layout

The floor plan of the envisioned building is illustrated in Fig.2: With only one regular point of entry and exit, any entrances or exits made by students or staff can be monitored, such that issues with missing equipment or safeguarding concerns can be easily managed. Studio A has a transparent viewport into the live room. Thus, it can be used as a control room for any large ensemble recording, such as an orches-

Type of room	Room classification for the purpose of airborne sound insulation in Tables 3a and 3b		Upper limit for the indoor ambient noise level $L_{Aeq,30mins}$ dB	
	Activity noise (Source room)	Noise tolerance (Receiving room)	New build	Refurbishment
Nursery school rooms <i>Primary school:</i> classroom, class base, general teaching area, small group room <i>Secondary school:</i> classroom, general teaching area, seminar room, tutorial room, language laboratory	Average	Medium	35	40
<i>Open plan:</i> (See also section 1.8) Teaching area Resource/breakout area	Average	Medium	40	45
Primary music room	High	Medium	35	40
Secondary music classroom ¹ Small and large practice/group room ¹ Performance/recital room ¹	Very high	Low	35	40
Ensemble room ¹ Recording studio ¹	Very high	Low	30	35
Control room - for recording ¹ Control room - not for recording	High Average	Low Medium	35	40
Lecture room	Average	Medium	35	40
Teaching space intended specifically for students with special hearing and communication needs ²	Average	Low	30	35
SEN calming room	High	Low	35	35

Figure 1: The tabulated L_{AEQ} requirements of an educational environment

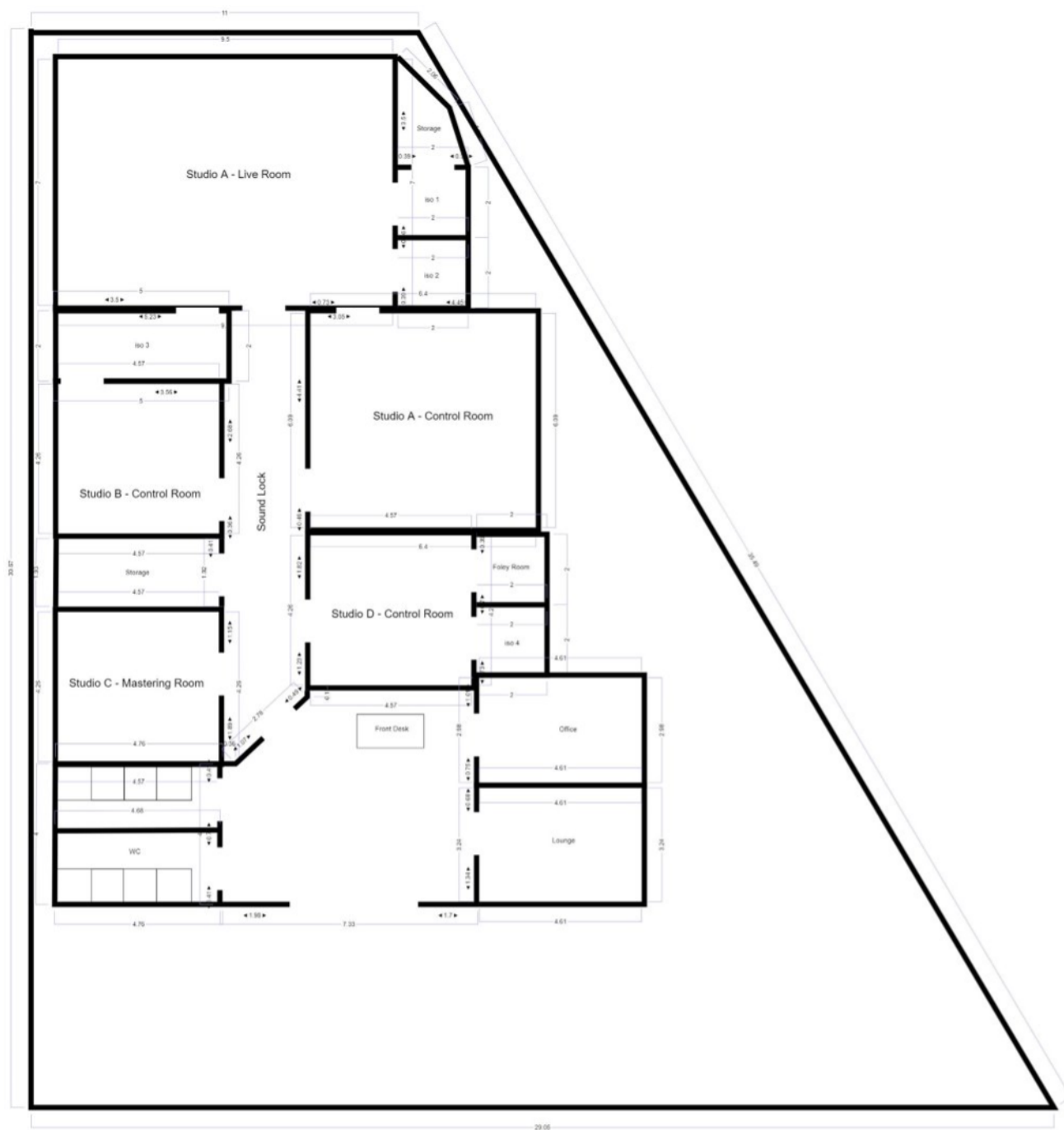


Figure 2: The floor plan of the music educational facility

tra. The same applies for the viewport between iso room 3 and the live room. It is important to consider the AV-over-IP networking technology used by the studio; it allows for fluid redirecting of the signal chain in a recording environment. For example, the live room can be also be used as a control room for a recording in iso room 3, with minimal adjustment to the hardware present in either room. All that may need to be changed is the software patching of the AV-over-IP. This further allows any student to become proficient in using AV-over-IP technology, a fast advancing technology in the modern studio environment.

5 Noise Criteria

Unwanted noise both from within the studio and from without is an issue of great consideration for recording studios. A potentially perfect take can be ruined by microphone bleed of a truck passing by or an underground train shaking the floor.

6 Interior Acoustic Design

When designing rooms for optimal interior acoustic performance, we must take into account the frequency-based and reverberant performance of the room.

6.1 Reverberance

The reverberance of a room is quantified in the form of an RT_{60} . The value of a room's RT_{60} defines the time taken for an acoustic impulse's (a short, fast transient, loud sound) SPL to decay by 60dB. To calculate the RT_{60} of a cuboid room, Sabine's equation is most often used:

$$RT_{60} = \frac{0.161V}{A} \quad (1)$$

Where V is the volume of the room, and A is the total absorption of the walls, ceiling and floor. As different rooms within the complex have intended use cases, they will require a variety of RT_{60} values, depending on said use case. For example, as the live room needs to have a natural, projecting and reverberant sound such that large ensembles blend together and a teacher can speak to the entire room with ease, it needs to have a larger RT_{60} than other rooms. Comparatively, the control rooms and isolation rooms will have a much lower RT_{60} . The values of RT_{60} for each room are tabulated in Fig.3 Rearranging Eq.1, we can

Room	Desired acoustical characteristics	Target RT_{60} value	Target total absorption
Live room	Realistic, moderate reverb	≈ 1.5	≈ 20.286
Control room A	Neutral, very low reverb	≈ 0.4	≈ 52.554
Control room B / D	Neutral, very low reverb	≈ 0.4	≈ 26.25
Mastering room C	Totally dead, no reverb	≈ 0.2	≈ 52.5
Iso 3	Neutral, very low reverb	≈ 0.4	≈ 12.075
Iso 1 / 2 / 4 / Foley room	Neutral, very low reverb	≈ 0.4	≈ 4.83

Figure 3: Table of target RT_{60} s and total absorption for each room

solve for each room's A :

$$A = \frac{0.161V}{RT_{60}} \quad (2)$$

Taking these target total absorptions, we then calculated the required contribution from each surface to the total absorption of each room using an Excel spreadsheet. To find the contribution of a surface, the absorption coefficient of it's material must be multiplied with it's surface area. Different construction materials have different absorption coefficients, and as such the material of each surface must be chosen in order to dial in the correct contribution to total absorption from the surface. The materials chosen, absorption contributions and total absorption of each room are tabulated in Fig.4.

6.2 Room modes

Cuboid rooms can facilitate standing waves, which can lead to problems with uneven frequency response throughout the room, and thus an uneven listening experience. This uneven characteristic is caused by the nodes and anti-nodes of the standing waves not moving in space; the locations of the nodes are known as 'room modes'. A standing wave is a wave travelling through a medium, in this case the string, oscillating in time. However, due to the distance between the boundary conditions being an integer multiple of the incident wavelength, after reflecting when reaching the boundary conditions of the medium, it appears to not oscillate in time, due to the constructive or destructive interference of the incident and reflected wave [4]. In order to predict the frequencies at which standing waves will appear, the X-Y-Z dimensions of the room are taken as integer multiples / factors of the standing wave frequencies. Thus Eq.3 can be solved for f_n , where n is the harmonic number of the standing wave, $c = 343\text{m s}^{-1}$ is the speed of sound in

ROOM	Live	Control A	Control B/D	Master C	Iso 3	Iso 1/2/4/Foley
SA X	70	40.803	28.542	28.542	12	12
ALPHA X	0.015	0.5	0.5	0.65	0.176	0.13
ABSORB X	1.05	20.4015	14.271	18.5523	2.112	1.56
MATERIAL X	Painted concrete	Acoustic Timber Panelling	Acoustic Timber Panelling	Muslin covered cotton felt	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Plasterboard w/glass wool
SA Y	95	42.88	30.619	30.619	30	12
ALPHA Y	0.015	0.5	0.2	0.65	0.176	0.13
ABSORB Y	1.425	21.44	6.1238	19.90235	5.28	1.56
MATERIAL Y	Painted concrete	Acoustic Timber Panelling	Acoustic Timber Panelling	Muslin covered cotton felt	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Plasterboard w/glass wool
SA CEILING	66.5	38.976	19.42	19.46	10	4
ALPHA CEILING	0.176	0.176	0.176	0.65	0.176	0.176
ABSORB CEILING	11.704	6.859776	3.41792	12.649	1.76	0.704
MATERIAL CEILING	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Muslin covered cotton felt	Plaster tiles w/rockwool	Plaster tiles w/rockwool
SA FLOOR	66.5	38.976	19.42	19.46	10	4
ALPHA FLOOR	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
ABSORB FLOOR	6.65	3.8976	1.942	1.946	1	0.4
MATERIAL FLOOR	Treated wood	Treated wood	Treated wood	Treated wood	Treated wood	Treated wood
TOTAL ABSORPTION	20.829	52.598876	25.75472	53.04965	10.152	4.224
TARGET TOTAL A	20.286	52.554	26.25	52.5	12.075	4.83
ERROR	-0.543	-0.044876	0.49528	-0.54965	1.923	0.606
Corrections?	Ceiling mounted diffusers	None	Carpet on floor	Carpet on floor	Wall mounted absorbers	Carpet on floor

Figure 4: Table detailing room construction to achieve room's target RT_{60}

air, and L is the length of the dimension in question.

$$f_n = \frac{c}{2L}n \quad (3)$$

This equation will only solve for axial room modes; an acoustic wave in three-dimensional dimensional space does not only reflect back unto it's self, but also at various angles of reflection. These angular second and third reflections of an axial room mode are known as tangential and oblique room modes, as shown in Fig.5.

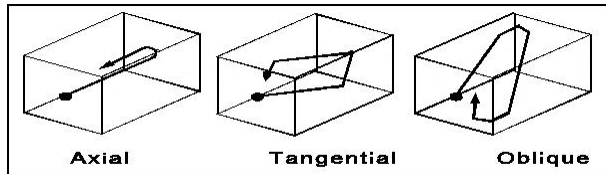


Figure 5: An illustration of three types of room mode [1]

Using Excel and Eq.3 frequency values for axial room modes on the X-Y-Z axis up to the 9th harmonic were calculated; the full tabulated results can be found in Fig.6 We then moved on to the issue of dealing with the found room modes. The room modes with the greatest impact on the even listening field are towards the lower end of the frequency spectrum; the number of nodes in a standing wave of 5cm wavelength in a room 9m wide makes it's effect inconsequential, whereas a wave with a 4.5m wavelength will only two locations in the room where it reaches it's true peak amplitude. In order to prevent these frequencies becoming standing waves, we must target them for absorption. Resonant membrane absorbers are very useful in this context - they provide

relatively precise targeting and attenuation of problematic frequencies. Eq.4 formulates how to solve for the depth and mass of a membrane absorber to target a certain frequency, where d is depth, m is mass per meter square, and f is frequency:

$$f = \frac{60}{\sqrt{sqrtmd}} \quad (4)$$

Setting $m = 1\text{kg m}^{-2}$ for ease of production allowed us to simply solve for a d that would cause the membrane absorber to target the first room modes of each room:

Rooms	Wall to place Panel	Distance from Wall (cm)
Live Room	Length	2.4
	Width	4.5
	Height	1.2
CONTROL A	Length	1.8
	Width	2.07
	Height	0.5
CONTROL BD	Length	0.9
	Width	1.05
	Height	0.5
MASTER	Length	0.9
	Width	1
	Height	0.5
Iso 3 / Foley Room	Length	0.2
	Width	0.2
	Height	0.4

Figure 7: Table detailing the depths of membrane absorbers used to target first harmonic room modes

7 Noise Insulation

The most effective method for preventing noise from entering a room is designing the structure of the room such that the vibrations travelling through solids and

Rooms		Number of Mode								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Live Room	fl	24.57143	49.14286	73.71428571	98.28571429	122.8571429	147.428571	172	196.5714	221.1428571
	fw	18.10526	36.21053	54.31578947	72.42105263	90.52631579	108.631579	126.7368	144.8421	162.9473684
	fh	34.4	68.8	103.2	137.6	172	206.4	240.8	275.2	309.6
CONTROL A	fl	28.24302	56.48604	84.72906404	112.9720854	141.2151067	169.458128	197.7011	225.9442	254.1871921
	fw	26.875	53.75	80.625	107.5	134.375	161.25	188.125	215	241.875
	fh	51.34328	102.6866	154.0298507	205.3731343	256.7164179	308.059701	359.403	410.7463	462.0895522
CONTROL BD	fl	40.37559	80.75117	121.1267606	161.5023474	201.8779343	242.253521	282.6291	323.0047	363.3802817
	fw	37.63676	75.27352	112.9102845	150.547046	188.1838074	225.820569	263.4573	301.0941	338.7308534
	fh	51.34328	102.6866	154.0298507	205.3731343	256.7164179	308.059701	359.403	410.7463	462.0895522
MASTER	fl	40.37559	80.75117	121.1267606	161.5023474	201.8779343	242.253521	282.6291	323.0047	363.3802817
	fw	37.63676	75.27352	112.9102845	150.547046	188.1838074	225.820569	263.4573	301.0941	338.7308534
	fh	51.34328	102.6866	154.0298507	205.3731343	256.7164179	308.059701	359.403	410.7463	462.0895522
Iso 3 / Folley Room	fl	86	172	258	344	430	516	602	688	774
	fw	86	172	258	344	430	516	602	688	774
	fh	57.33333	114.6667	172	229.333333	286.666667	344	401.3333	458.6667	516

Figure 6: Table detailing axial room modes for each room

sound waves causing said unwanted noise are prevented from entering the structure. This can prove challenging, as acoustic waves can travel through almost any solid of a reasonable structural thickness, and a solid structure is by far the easiest and most common way to design the built environment. In anechoic chambers found in acoustic research institutes, rooms are suspended from large mass dampers within rooms, with the chamber having a completely separate set of foundations from the rest of the building. REF. This construction and design, whilst incredibly effective at reducing outside noise from coming into a room, is very costly and restrictive. Instead, our studio was acoustically designed with the aim of reducing outside noise, whilst still providing a familiar built environment. Elements we considered included: Absorption, damping, decoupling and distance. Absorption of unwanted noise can be achieved by placing acoustic insulation between each wall section, as illustrated in Fig.8.

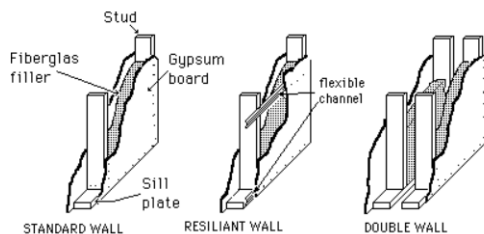


Figure 8: Filling wall partitions with acoustic insulation [2]

Decoupling the superstructure of the building from the outside world was achieved by planning large mass dampers 'springs' into the superstructure, as seen in Fig.

8 Studio Layout

9 Conclusions

References

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