

# **A Pictorial History of the Columbia Records 30th Street Studio**

**Presented By**

**Dan Mortensen - Dansound Inc/Fo30St**

**And**

**The Pacific Northwest Section of the AES**

**Wednesday, September 27th, 7:30pm**

**DigiPen Institute of Technology - Michelangelo Room**

When our friend Frank Laico told us at Section Meetings between 2008 and 2012 about his career in recording, he described a wonderful yet somewhat inscrutable place called the 30th Street Studio. It was located in Manhattan NYC at 207 East 30th Street.

It was described as an abandoned Armenian Church that Columbia turned into a recording studio where marvelous sounding recordings were made for over 30 years, and which was recognized as so perfect-sounding immediately upon acquisition that the decree went out: *Don't change anything in it, don't wash the floors or paint the walls or fix it up in any way. Leave it like it is!*

It was also described as a gargantuan space (100' x 100' x 100') that had perfect reverberation.

We know that a remarkable number of extraordinary-sounding recordings came out of it that we still listen to today, but the particulars of its structure and spaces were lost to demolition, and as we asked more questions the details got fuzzier.

Dan Mortensen, co-moderator of our meetings with Frank, became more and more interested in those nagging details and has been pursuing research into it ever since his first meeting with Frank in December 2008. Dan has founded a group to memorialize the studio called Friends of the 30th Street Studio (Fo30St), and has held four meetings in New York since 2012 in which people who worked there or are interested in its memory gather to discuss it and to see the fruits of Dan's and other people's research and share memories.

The truth is that Frank was remembering through nearly 50 years of memories without much physical evidence, and as entertaining and plausible as the memories were they were not fully accurate. The spirit was entirely correct but not the complexity of reality.

Come join us and see and hear our current understanding of what the studio was over its 33 year life span and how it came to be. There will be lots of pictures, not a lot of music as this is about the studio and not its product or its people. The studio story is complicated enough.

This presentation is a dry run for a presentation at the next New York AES Convention in October, when Dan will present it on October 19 from 9-10am (Archiving and Restoration track, AR04) somewhere in the Javits Center. Your input for improvement will be appreciated.

# More

[Wikipedia](#)

[Albums recorded @ 30th St.](#)

[Memoir of Classic Recordings with Frank Laico](#)

[Anatomy of a Session with Frank Laico](#)

[An Evening with Frank Laico](#)

## AES PNW Student Recording Competition

The purpose of the competition is to engage students in the PNW Section of the AES through a competition in which AES Committee members review students' work and provide thoughtful critique of production technique of the eligible productions.

There are four categories of work to be critiqued:

- Traditional Acoustic Music (for example, classical music, etc.)
- Traditional Studio Recording (for example rock, hip-hop, etc.)
- Modern Studio Recording and Electronic Music (for example techno, dance, etc.)
- Sound for Visual Media (for example, video game music, etc.)

Participating students from local educational institutions are eligible to enter and be judged. There are three awards per category: Gold, Silver and Bronze. Winners will receive a certificate for their category and their work will be played at the December 2017 AES PNW Section meeting, to be held Thursday, December 7, 2017 at Shoreline Community College. Results of the competition will be included in the December 2017 Section Report to The National AES. There is no fee to enter, limit of one entry per student, please. Collaborative entries may also be entered; they count as an entry by an entity, the same as an individual student.

Complete details can be found at <http://www.aes.org/sections/pnw/src2017/>

## Dan Mortensen

*AES PNW 2017-2018 Section Chair*

**n.b.** *The material presented at our meetings is the opinion of the presenter and not necessarily that of the Society. You are encouraged to conduct your own research and to form your own opinions before adopting the presented material as Truth.*

**Our meetings are open to anyone interested in Audio. AES membership is NOT required for you to attend our meetings.**

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**AES** Audio Engineering Society - Pacific Northwest Section

*Around the Puget Sound, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A*

## **2017 AES PNW SECTION STUDENT RECORDING COMPETITION**

The purpose of the competition is to engage students in the PNW Section of the AES through a competition in which AES Committee members review students' work and provide thoughtful critique of production technique of the eligible productions.

There are four categories of work to be critiqued:

- Traditional Acoustic Music (for example, classical music, etc.)
- Traditional Studio Recording (for example rock, hip-hop, etc.)
- Modern Studio Recording and Electronic Music (for example techno, dance, etc.)
- Sound for Visual Media (for example, video game music, etc.)

Participating students from local educational institutions are eligible to enter and be judged. AES Student membership, although desirable, is not a prerequisite for entry. There are three awards per category: Gold, Silver and Bronze. Winners will receive a certificate for their category and their work will be played at the December 2017 AES PNW Section meeting, to be held Thursday, December 7, 2017 at Shoreline Community College. Results of the competition will be included in the December 2017 Section Report to The National AES.

There is no fee to enter, limit of one entry per student, please. Collaborative entries may also be entered; they count as an entry by an entity, the same as an individual student.

Entries must be received no later than November 15th, 2017 at 6pm. Finalists will be notified December 1st, 2017. Guidelines for your submission to be found later in this document.

All entries must be submitted to:

AES Competition  
c/o Professor Steve Malott  
16101 Greenwood Avenue North Room 809  
Shoreline, WA 98133

### **Categories**

## **Category 1 — Traditional Acoustic Recording**

Category 1 is suitable for recordings of acoustic instruments, vocalists, and ensembles recorded live in natural acoustic settings such as performance halls, churches, theatres, soundstages, pavilions, and similar environments. The recording may take place with or without an audience present. Entries in this category will generally be recorded using combinations of individual microphones and microphone arrays so that the musical balance, perspective, and spatial orientation are largely a function of the ensemble, the acoustic space, and the recording technique. The final stereo or surround balance may be mixed and recorded live. Alternatively, tracks may be recorded to multitrack media and mixed in post-production. Editing is allowed, but overdubs are prohibited. This category may include classical, jazz, folk, or any other genre of music that is performed and recorded live in a suitable acoustic environment. Electronic instruments are allowed, provided that they are reproduced through acoustic means (e.g., amps and loudspeakers) and are recorded live using the microphone techniques described above. Since this category is defined by the live application of stereo and multichannel microphone techniques employed in traditional "classical" music recording, live performances of exclusively close-miked ensembles must be entered in either Category 2 or 3 according to their specific criteria.

1. Emphasis on the craft of acoustic music recording on location
2. All live acoustic or electroacoustic sources
3. No overdubs
4. Editing and mixing allowed
5. All recording and mixing performed by the entrant(s)
6. Stereo or surround delivery format

## **Category 2 — Traditional Studio Recording**

Category 2 is suitable for recordings that are created in a recording studio or similar facility using multitrack studio techniques and technology. Music of any genre is permitted, and both editing and overdubs are allowed. Electronic instruments such as electric guitar, electric bass, and keyboards may be recorded direct and/or by acoustic means. Conventional signal processing techniques (e.g., equalization, dynamics, reverberation, etc.) during recording and mixing are permitted. Since this category is defined by the creative and proficient use of microphones and studio recording techniques, MIDI sequences, sample replacements, and sample loops from pre-recorded sources are prohibited. In other words, all sonic and musical elements must be performed by musicians and recorded by the contestants specifically for the project. Mixes based on highly processed and synthesized sources should be submitted in Category 3.

1. Emphasis on the craft of multitrack studio recording and mixing
2. All live acoustic or electroacoustic sources
3. Editing and overdubs allowed but not required
4. No sample loops or sample replacement from synthesized or prerecorded sources
5. No MIDI sequences
6. All recording and mixing performed by the entrant(s)
7. Stereo or surround delivery format

## **Category 3 — Modern Studio Recording & Electronic Music**

Category 3 is intended for all multitrack studio projects that do not meet the restrictions of Category 2. All options are allowed with respect to sound sources, recording techniques, creative production, editing, processing, and mixing. Music of any genre is permitted, including, but not limited to, pop, rock, dance, rap, hip-hop, electronica, recordings of live DJ performances, and re-mixes. "Anything goes" in this category, provided that recordings do not violate applicable copyrights. Note: While the use of samples, MIDI, electronic instruments, and other creative process are highly encouraged in Categories 3 and 4, the AES Student Recording Competition is, above all else, designed to judge excellence in audio recording and production. As such, the composition elements discussed are secondary to the recording process.

1. Emphasis on the full exploitation of the recording studio as a musical instrument
2. Any combination of real and virtual sources allowed
3. Captured in a studio environment onto multitrack tape or DAW, fully programmed on a computer, or anything in between
4. All modern recording, signal processing, editing techniques are allowed
5. Programming, sequencing and sampling, including sample loops and sample replacement/enhancement allowed
6. All recording, production, and mixing performed by the entrant(s)
7. Stereo or surround delivery format

#### **Category 4 — Sound for Visual Media**

Category 4 is intended for any type of sound recording created to support a visual experience. The category is open to all visual media, including narrative and documentary video and film, advertising, video games, signature graphics, and image spots. Sonic elements such as dialogue, narration, sound design, and musical scores are permitted. These sources may be derived from production sound, sound effect libraries, synthesis, and original "wild-track" recordings made by the contestant. Audio content must be arranged specifically for use with the video. Music videos, live concert or in-studio style video recordings, or any other music-only works are not acceptable submissions. All category 4 submissions must have non-musical sounds in one form or another (such as narration, sound effects, voices of characters, sounds made by objects in the video, or ambient noise from the environment). Music accompanied by video can be submitted as audio only to any other category as long as they meet the engineering and mixing requirements for the category. For projects involving video games, you may capture raw gameplay and layback audio to that video, or you may implement the audio adaptively and via an appropriate audio engine / middleware and capture that combined audio and video output. Note: While the use of samples, MIDI, electronic instruments, and other creative process are highly encouraged in Categories 3 and 4, the AES Student Recording Competition is, above all else, designed to judge excellence in audio recording and production. As such, the composition elements discussed are secondary to the recording process.

1. Emphasis on the craft of recording, editing and mixing sound to complement visual media
2. Any combination of dialogue, music and sound design elements permitted
3. All editing and mixing performed by the entrant(s)
4. Stereo or surround delivery format

## **ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

Contestants must complete and include one entry form per submission. Entries must be well-labelled and on

CD (categories 1,2,3) or DVD (category 4) as appropriate. Media must be enclosed in a protective sleeve with the contestant's name, email address, telephone number, name of the piece, length, recording date and recording location. The media shall be similarly labeled.

The PNW AES Committee reserves the right to disqualify entries that are submitted into the incorrect Category or that otherwise violate the criteria listed above.

Nominees must be present at the December 7th, 2017 Awards meeting to win.

Entries will not be returned to contestants. Decisions of the Judges are final.

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**Audio!Engineering!Society**  
**PNW AES Section**  
**Student Recording Competition**

**Entry Form**

<b>Name (please print)</b>		<b>email address</b>	<b>phone #</b>
<b>Address</b>		<b>AES Member # (AES membership, while desirable, is not required for entry)</b>	
<b>City, State, Zip</b>		<b>School or Institution</b>	<b>Graduation Year</b>
<b>Category (1-4)</b>	<b>Entry name</b>	<b>Instructor/Advisor</b>	
<b>Statement/Production notes (optional)</b>			