

A space to grow a

When an outreach programme providing multimedia for young people in deprived areas launched its latest campaign, it equipped a mobile studio with the latest a-v. *Geny Caloisi* climbed on board

RollingSound is an education and training project aimed at less advantaged youngsters who may have not had the chance to express their creative potential. With a specially converted bus as its mobile base, a new outreach scheme was launched in central London at the start of November, offering users the chance to experience a wide spectrum of audio and video technologies and produce original pieces of work. The bus was unveiled in Lewisham at a family-friendly ‘urban’

themed event that showcased the available courses: 3D animation, video game design, photography, film editing and web design.

Also known as ‘The Lab’, this learning space, the brainchild of Hiten Thakrar, was created to fit inside a single-decker bus. The clean and modern design houses eight PC-based learning terminals — plus one for the teacher — and a range of 37 and 42in HD-ready Philips flat-panel screens that can be used to display shared content. Everything is HD, and the bus comes with a Blu-ray player with all screens HD ready. The TFT monitors fold neatly away against the wall when not needed using Vivanco Single Arm Wallmounts (10-32in).

Sound is also well catered for, the bus has Yamaha HS50M Biamp two-way powered speaker (pair) and also SE Electronics condenser microphones for capturing sound. Oxford-based conversion company The Bus Business, fitted the vehicle.



Inside the RollingSound's mobile 'Lab', where the TFT screens fold away neatly to save space

TESTIMONIALS

NAV UBHI — MUSIC PRODUCTION / DJING

BEFORE ROLLINGSOUND

‘I applied for engineering at college, but I didn’t get in — which was good in a way, because I didn’t really want a career in that. I was just hanging around at home and my parents were nagging at me to get out and do something.’

THE COURSE

‘I went to Connexions to see what I could do, and left my details. Someone called and explained about RollingSound, he told me about the AMP courses. I got a leaflet with details of the AMP programme, they do DJing and music production, which I am well into.’

‘I did the music and DJing foundation and was fast-tracked through to the Academy, which felt good. I met Hits, the DJing tutor; I thought I knew quite a lot about DJing, but he has really taught me everything I want to know.’

‘I have also been doing music production, this has been safe, and I have got so into making beats that my parents have bought me some equipment so I can keep doing it at home.’

NOW

‘I have just applied for Lewisham College, and it looks like they are gonna accept me. I was doing work experience with RollingSound, before they bought me on as a paid assistant. I am also one of RollingSound’s peer-mentors, we are doing the Silver Arts Award.’

‘I am also making lots of beats and mix CDs in my own time — so keeping up with my skills.’

Engaging young people

In 2006, independent think-tank Demos approached the London Borough of Lewisham with the aim of completing a piece of work around teen engagement. The six-month research was youth led with no pre-determined agenda other than insight and engagement in young peoples lives.

Young people from voluntary and community organisations as well as those working with statutory organisations, were involved in the process to identify how they could be engaged in order to improve their outcomes in life. The result of this research is ‘The Lab’, which cost £140,000 to build and kit out.

Providing youth support

RollingSound is London’s largest youth outreach multimedia provider. It has worked with every London borough on projects ranging from week long youth club music workshops, to cross borough NEET Multimedia training over two years.

‘We have been at the forefront of digital multimedia education for five years. We specialise in developing relevant, inspiring and engaging courses through new technologies and creative multimedia,’ said Simon Bennett, RollingSound’s director. Bennett’s idea for RollingSound began life as part of his Commercial Music degree at Westminster University. He set up the company some three years ago with class mate and friend Tom Hegarty.

RollingSound have a pool of over 50 male and female CRB checked tutors, all of whom are active in their respective industries. Each course can be

KEY FACTS

RollingSound, an education and training project for young people, has launched a new scheme in London by converting a bus into a mobile studio.

- * www.rollingsound.co.uk
- * www.lewisham.gov.uk
- * www.thebusbusiness.co.uk

and learn a trade



accredited by ABC Awards, Arts Awards or AQA. The organisation doesn't just roll in its truck, it can also transform a room in any school into a multimedia suite to teach the courses. Alternatively, there is the RollingSound Academy, a multimedia training suite in New Cross, South London.

Peer Mentoring

RollingSound has a vested interest in developing peer mentor programmes and have been piloting several projects in recent months and subsidised them.

The organisation believes that peer mentoring is an empowering tool for young people. It not only gets them interested in teaching but gives them the self-confidence to take on into other walks of life.

Mentoring takes two forms, the first is to train young people to deliver a creative discipline, the second involves getting the mentors to build rapport with their mentees outside of the creative discipline to help nurture their confidence and motivation.

Through this scheme RollingSound now employ five young people as paid tutor assistants. Those who are no longer with them are all either back in education or employment. ■

TESTIMONIALS

STEPHEN MAZONIS — VIDEO GAME DESIGN

BEFORE ROLLINGSOUND

'I left school because I had problems with some of the other students. Then I was really just hanging around at home, watching TV and playing computer games.'

THE COURSE

'I went down to Connexions because I wanted to do something with my life — but I didn't know exactly what. I met with Claire, who told me that RollingSound was running a video games design course, I couldn't believe there was a course in something I feel so strongly about.'

'I ended up spending the whole day (both am and pm) at the sessions, turning up early to help set-up and leaving late to talk with the tutor.'

'John (the course tutor) became my mentor, and I started to learn some stuff that no-one else was doing — that felt cool. I was then given an interview with RollingSound to become course assistant.'

NOW

'I am now a paid assistant on RollingSound's Video Games Design courses. Over the summer I worked full-time for them, I even ran my own course the other day. Some weeks I can earn around £250, and that's only working 3 hours a day. It feels really good, I used to be the one with no money, now when I speak to my friends who are working at Sainsbury's — I am like 'I was making computer games with young people all day — you?'

TESTIMONIALS

DANIEL EDWARDS — DJING / PRODUCTION

BEFORE ROLLINGSOUND

'I was part of a crew called Fatal Assassins, I was doing some production and DJing. I did a course at college because I wanted to learn how to do tricks — but they were not teaching me what I wanted to learn, so I stopped attending.'

'I was hanging around with the wrong people and that was distracting me from thinking about my future.'

THE COURSE

'I did the RollingSound DJ Academy in 2006, Hits (the tutor) worked with me individually — and I progressed with my DJing skills.'

'Hits knows so much about DJing — I feel like he trained my brain too — I know so much about hip hop and urban music. After the course I got a Bronze Arts Award.'

NOW

'I have just got a manager for my DJ work, and DJ all around London. During the day, I now work full time as an assistant with RollingSound and so am getting better and better at music production and DJing — because I am out teaching it every day.'

'It is such a good feeling to teach young people what I know, it's a great feeling. I am also peer mentoring some young people and doing my Silver Arts Award, and am now an Arts Awards advisor. Check out Daniel's mix at his MySpace which so far has had 200,000 hits.'

* www.myspace.com/pesterandblakos



RollingSound mobile studio 'The Lab': converted by The Bus Business in Oxford