

Harris Institute

World-Renown School Advances Facilities, Curriculum & Enrollment Capacity with the Addition of AWS 900+

Located in Toronto, Canada, the Harris Institute was founded in 1989 by industry pro and CLIO award-winning producer, John Harris. In its 20-year history, the school has been a leader in audio and music industry education—and was named by *Mix* magazine as one of the “Finest Media Arts Institutions”. The Institute’s Producing/Engineering Program (PEP) is a one-year Honours Diploma program featuring 57 courses in the art, technology and business of audio production, with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and advancing technologies. The college’s 68-member award-winning faculty—all active in the pro audio community—teach small classes comprised of 6 to 20 students, who have come to the school from over 70 countries around the globe. A unique partnership with The University of the West of Scotland enables Harris graduates to earn degrees in eight months in Glasgow and also includes an exchange of senior faculty and an international artist exchange program coordinated by students at both colleges. Graduates of PEP have gone on to hold leading positions throughout the music industry.

Additionally, the Ministry of Culture in Ontario plans to fund Harris Institute’s Professional Development Program (PDP) in 2010, which offers selected courses online.



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– Harris Institute Founder, John Harris

The Challenge

Harris Institute’s studio complex, known as MARS (Multiple Access Recording Soundworks), housed an Amek Big console for 6 years prior to installing the AWS 900+ in 2008. The console was located in the largest of 3 control rooms designed by founding faculty member Martin Pilchner—nominated numerous times for a Mix Foundation TEC Award as “Designer of the Year”—and used to interface with the other control rooms for audio post (Pro Tools) and electronic music production (Logic Audio). In 2007, Harris decided to embark on a major overhaul of the facility, including upgrading gear in the main control room, which included finding a console that could handle analog audio as well as control of digital audio workstations.”

“The facility itself, designed by Pilchner in 1997, continues to serve our purposes extremely well,” Harris explained. “The upgrades included rewiring the three control rooms to improve connectivity, the building of 12 workstations in the electronics lab, new storage/display fixtures for cables and mics, various cosmetic improvements, and the installation of the AWS, Argosy Mirage desk and X Rack. The senior audio faculty advised me that the quality and features of the AWS made it the ideal console for the facility and well suited for educational purposes. After six months of exploring and researching our options, we decided upon the AWS, primarily because it combined a world-class analog production console with a comprehensive DAW controller. We felt it offered the ‘best of both worlds’ in a standalone package.”

The Solution

Once Harris had identified the **SSL AWS 900+** as the ideal audio centerpiece for the studio he was able to arrange for its purchase working with **SSL's Partnership Manager Quinton Nixon**, along with pro audio supplier, **HHB** and local retail chain, **Long & McQuade**. The upgrade and installation process was seamless, and they were able to get the room up and running in time for the fall semester.

"The process took approximately 4 months to complete," Harris recalls, "with the actual console installation, occurring during a two-week break in classes and with the aid of two faculty members, six students and the Studio Manager. [Partnership Manager] Quinton Nixon did a training session with our faculty at the end of the installation. It was a very smooth transition."

The Benefits

Overall, the AWS 900+ has delivered on its promise as an exceptionally versatile, intuitive and inspirational teaching and learning tool. The impact of its addition within Harris' celebrated facility and educational program has been significant according to Harris and PEP Program Director, Tom Heron.

"The **SSL AWS 900+** console and the **XLogic X-Rack** are the best purchases Harris Institute has made in its 20-year history," Harris stated emphatically. "Students and faculty are excited and motivated to be learning and working on a world-renowned, state-of-the-art **SSL** console. As a teaching tool, its overall versatility and 2-in-1 feature set—with **Total Recall™** and motorized fader mix automation—allow a wide variety of audio recording principles to be dramatically demonstrated and practiced on the compact console. The learning curve has accelerated significantly for students being taught on and using the **AWS**."

The simplicity of the **AWS** has enabled students to quickly get up and running says Heron, which allows them to explore the more complex routing features of both the channel and the master section. "This helps educate the students on the concepts of signal flow and what is possible in a professional console," he adds. "The ability to switch between the analog and **DAW** focus modes allows the student to experience a "virtual" console control interface. It is also great for demonstrating just how complex a recording



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session can become and helps to reinforce organization as one of the keys to directing a successful session. The **AWS** can also demonstrate the idea of a split console design with the analog side being the input section while in **DAW** focus mode, the fader becomes the monitor section".

Heron cites his favorite **AWS** features as being the internal routing of the output paths (cues, FX, buses, direct outs), configuration flexibility, the ability to configure the Insert, Dynamic and EQ in almost any order, and the audio source selections in the fold-back section. "The console's **Total Recall™** and automation, and the integration of the **Pro Tools** interface with a complete analog console, is phenomenal."

The **AWS** is also in use by undergrads in the Recording Arts Management (**RAM**) to produce CDs for the school's record label, Confidential Records, as well as by students from the University of Toronto to record sound for a film, and has even been used as a setting for a number of television shows.

In addition, the **SSL** has also become the focus of the institute's marketing and enrollment initiatives, to which Harris has noted a significant increase. "The **AWS** is a centerpiece of all of our marketing initiatives and a highlight of the tours we do for prospective students. Enrollment has increased by 10% to maximum capacity since the installation of the **AWS**. I would highly recommend the **AWS** to any school focusing on current developments in audio production and who are interested in a high quality, versatile and compact console."