

# Cutting edge music classes cultivate DIY electronic art

**Becky Kuschel**

STAFF WRITER

In anticipation of a new bachelor's degree, the music department debuts a trio of non-traditional courses this fall.

The new classes gracing the fall lineup are Electronic Sound, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Audio and ElectroAcoustic Arts Ensemble.

These courses break away from traditional music classes and combine the science of electronics and the art of music.

Students will learn some history, about composers of electronic music, experiment with classical analog studio techniques using modern software, create their own composition and perform live electronic works by composers from the past 50 years.

In DIY Audio, students will do "circuit bending."

"In this course, students will break out a soldering gun and wire together batteries, wires, capacitors, photoelectric cells and whatever bits of hardware we can find to create chaotic cybernetic sound art," said Kristian Twombly, professor of New Media and History of Rock and Roll. "We'll build microphones, amplifiers, oscillators and then stick them together and make art."

Twombly's goal with the new courses is to expand a student's way of thinking about music. He hopes they'll become more open to what sound art can be.

"Today's modern musician has to rely on a variety of skills in order to find employment," Twombly said. "We hope to give our students the skill and experiences necessary to move into fields like composition, web design, video game design,

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**Christian Twombly**

*Professor of New Media*

music production, really anything that combines technology and sound."

Collaboration amongst students to form new works of multimedia art is the centerpiece of these courses.

Twombly is even looking for teamwork outside of SC-SU's campus.

"We hope to collaborate with a group of graduate students at the University of Minnesota who are also doing this kind of experimenting in their spare time," Twombly said. "They don't have a course like this at the University of Minnesota."

The three classes are the

beginning of what could become a new bachelors degree in New Media in Music.

"We have always been aware of a segment of the student population that was interested in music from a somewhat non-traditional approach," said Terry Vermillion, the new chair of the department and percussion studies instructor. "Students have expressed an interest in making music that functions in a very specific niche outside of the traditional band, orchestra or choir. Many expressed an interest in learning how to make music for films and videos, how to make soundscapes utilizing computers or how

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**Terry Vermillion**

*Percussion Studies Professor*

to record music with a simple computer setup.

We set out to design a new component within our department's curriculum that approaches musical expression in a manner different from the established educational approach. This does not in any way undermine the importance of the traditional approach to music education, but instead it is a curriculum for those who simply wish to function in a different musical niche."

Hired in 2005, Twombly came in to teach History of Rock and Roll and some new media and music courses. By then, professor Scott Miller had already established a number of courses that focus on computer applications in music and the history of electronic music.

Then, together, Twombly and Miller came up with 11 mostly new courses.

"It has really been in the last year that we went from the idea stage to the proposal stage, finally submitting the courses for approval last fall," Twombly said. "The music department and College of Fine Arts and Humanities has been incredibly supportive and have encouraged the development of courses in music and new media."

"The new courses should have a positive effect on the department," Vermillion said. "We are hoping for new majors, new students in the classes and new interest in a program that hopes to reach a new audience."

Although these new courses are designed for music majors, they can be taken by anyone.

It is best, Twombly said, to check with the instructor before registering to make sure the student is ready to attempt the course.