

The Space Between, Thursday Radio 3 Stereo

The sounds that emanate from the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop are an integral part of BBCtv and Radio programmes such as *Play for Today*, *Dr Who* and *PM Reports*. As stereo reaches a wider audience, Workshop presents a special programme. David Gillard meets . . .

The men in front of the machines behind the sounds

TODAY THE BBC's Radiophonic Workshop at Maida Vale is a sprawling hive of electronic activity. It has three offices, four working areas, a complex battery of synthesisers and multi-tracked tape decks – plus a shampoo bottle which can provide some extraordinarily successful sounds if you blow into it expertly enough.

It's a far cry from the scene 15 years ago when Desmond Briscoe started the Workshop.

'Then,' he says, 'we had one room, an ex-war-time sound-mixer, salvaged from the Albert Hall, plus two enormous tape machines. Equipment which, even in 1958, was virtually redundant.'

Now the Workshop and the sounds it creates are an integral part of programme planning, providing specialist music for every BBC department, from schools and religious broadcasting to the signature



DAVID CAIN

I eventually realised that music and drama were what I was interested in and the Workshop combines both. I'm interested in mediaeval music and I use sackbuts – a sort of early trombone – and the cornette in many of my compositions . . .

tune for *Play For Today* and the way-out incidental music for *Dr Who*.

In 1957 Briscoe was a studio manager with radio drama. It was he who conceived the ingenious sound patterns for Samuel Beckett's first radio play, *All That Fall*. The techniques explored in that play set the scene for the Workshop and, a year later under Briscoe's supervision, the department was born.

Since then, they've done pretty well everything from 'sound poetry' and incidental music to programme signature tunes and radio jingles.

You can hear a varied sample of the Workshop's prolific output in *The Space Between*.

DAVID CAIN is considered the Workshop's expert on mediaeval music. Surprising, perhaps, considering he graduated to the department via a maths degree, studio-manager-ship and a year in Hamley's selling model trains.

He's 31, been with the Workshop seven years, but remembers that even when he was

studying maths he spent most of his time playing double-bass in a jazz band and writing and arranging jazz scores.

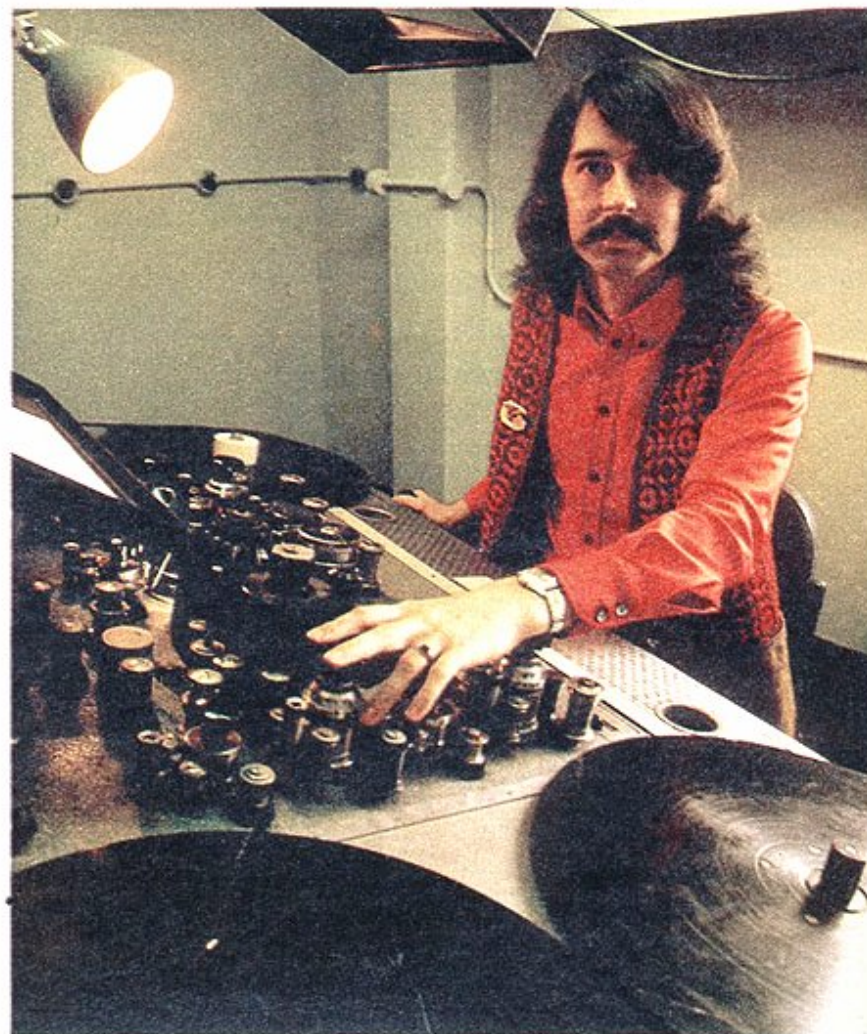
His first project was the eight-part radio serial *War of the Worlds*, for which he composed mainly electronic music. Then he did Tolkien's *The Hobbit* trying to create, he says, 'a reality which nobody could pinpoint as having anything to do with our world.'

MALCOLM CLARKE it's been said, specialises in children's programmes and nervous breakdowns. It was meant as a joke but Mr Clarke, 30, says it's quite true, really.

This reputation rests on his many compositions for schools and children's programmes, and much work on such harrowing mind-dramas as Strindberg's *Road to Damascus* and David Mercer's *The Bankrupt*.

'In fact,' says Mr Clarke, 'these areas may look diverse but I think they're about the same thing. One is the development of a mental state, the other the deterioration of it.'

An ex-engineer and ➤➤➤



MALCOLM CLARKE

What troubled me with music was that however carefully you wrote it down on manuscript somebody had to perform it. With Radiophonic composition the end product is absolutely mine and there is no question of my intentions whatever

9 ← studio manager, Clarke has been with the Workshop four years and says he's always been a musical person - he used to play four instruments. 'I always hated musical conventions,' he says. 'Now I can compose to film-frames instead of bar-lines.'

PADDY KINGSLAND Desmond Briscoe says: 'We've moved into the pop field in a very successful and sophisticated way with the work of Paddy Kingsland. He's a writer of beautiful tunes - something you don't always find in the pop world.'

Kingsland is 26 and has been with the Workshop three years. He started with the BBC as a technical operator, only playing lead guitar with pop groups and bands in his spare time. Then he became a recording engineer for pop programmes, progressing to the Workshop.

He's done a lot of jingles ('I don't write the lyrics') for local radio plus signature tunes for programmes like *Kaleidoscope* and *Scene and Heard*.

He's hoping to compose a

pop record of Radiophonic sounds.

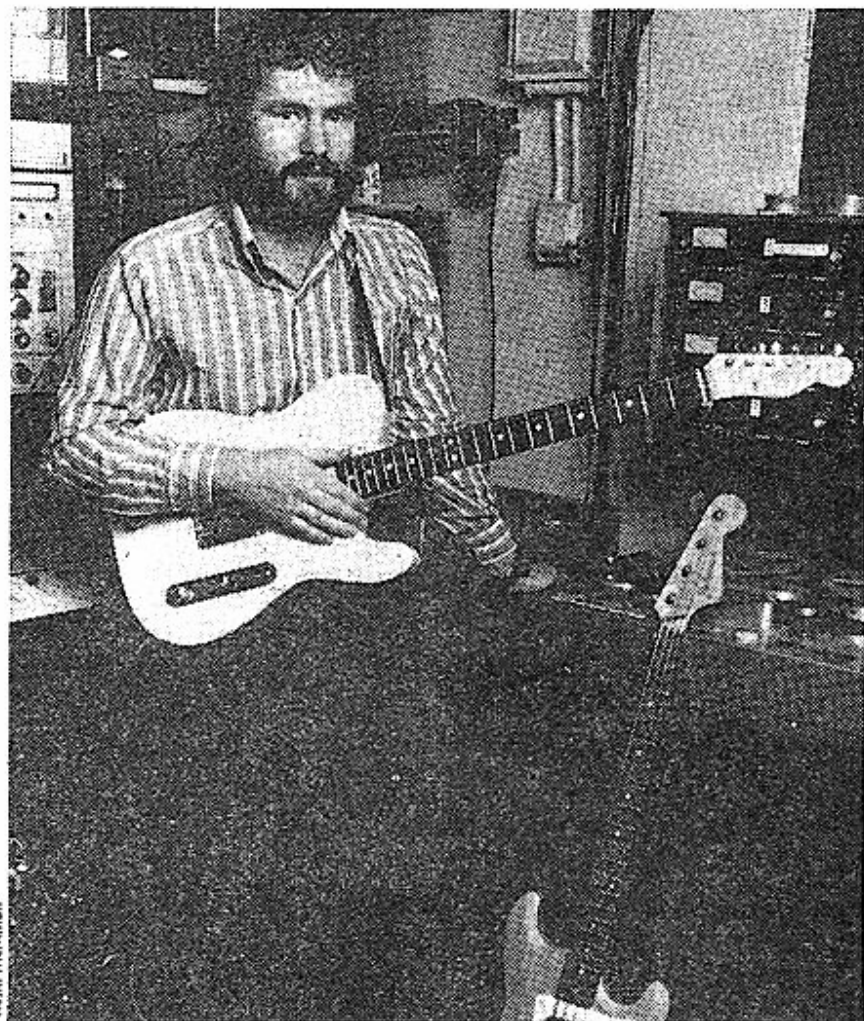
RICHARD YEOMAN-CLARK splits his time between composing and acting as the Workshop's technical look-out or facilities man or, as he puts it, 'acting as a link between the creative staff and the engineering staff and the outside world of electronic and sound studios.'

He arrived at the Workshop three years ago 'at about the same time as synthesisers, so I've grown up with them, really. The technical and creative sides absorb me equally.'

'When I play the synthesiser or tapes, I know what's going on inside. I know what the machines are capable of.'

Most important are the tape machines, he says. 'They can do anything - even create a base for a signature tune from the sound made by blowing into an empty shampoo bottle.'

Yeoman-Clark has even been known to create a composition from the noises made crunching a stick of celery. A sound with a bite you might say.



Keith McMillan

PADDY KINGSLAND

6 *My background is technical rather than academic. I'm still learning to sight-read now. I had written some pop numbers before I joined the Workshop . . . But now I would like to do more drama work. You feel that you can contribute more*