

WARWICK SOUND

Sound doctrines

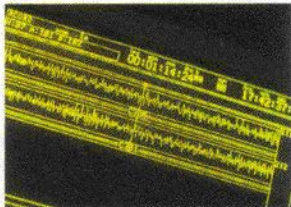
A new audio suite opens on Wardour Street this month, as optical recording house Warwick Sound applies its 25 years of sound experience to editing. Robert Buckley listens in

If you want something done right, do it yourself. Warwick Sound's new audio suite, one of the smallest licensed Dolby rooms in the UK, is a labour of love for studio manager Ernest Marsh, who has been working on it for the last year.

"I wanted a room for monitoring six-channel sound, but since I started building it, it's grown." Warwick grew out of Romulus Films, after a workers' buy-out in 1972. Now located in Wardour Street, the company has only two employees: Marsh and his assistant.

So far it has been one of the rare specialists in Dolby optical recording - transferring soundtracks for features and commercials to film for projection. But, with its new suite, Warwick is venturing into post-production: open six days a week, it will offer high-quality audio mixing for films, ads and TV, according to Marsh, at a reasonable rate.

The set-up uses a combination of new and existing kit, augmented by the soundproofing necessary for a Soho studio. Ambitions extend to buying a telecine before the end of the year and a £40k upgrade to the



An audio mixer with video projection (top left) spring from Warwick's roots in optical film (above)

optical recorder to give it Dolby Digital capabilities.

Marsh has spent 30 years in the audio business, more than 20 of those with Warwick, and believes that - while some modern technology has benefits - it also means that many in the industry have got here without knowing the basics.

"Young things who come along and don't know any different: they come up against problems which - if they'd done it on film - they wouldn't have." Then there's "all the stuff coming in compressed - sounding bloody awful."



MARK TYNAN

Marsh's horror tales include one about a mixer who admitted he couldn't mix audio using a console, only in a computer, and a never-ending stream of productions polluted by camera noise (always the camera's fault, of course, never the recordist's), including one shot in high winds on Beachy Head. Coming from the old school, though, he has plentiful filters to remove the oversights of recordists who don't consider the limits post-production has in salvaging.

The size of his new suite is Marsh's only worry, if only

because of Dolby's licensing policy: he can mix audio for TV films and ads that will air on TV and in the cinema, but the room isn't big enough, Dolby says, for cinema films - something Marsh disputes.

With its mix of the modern and the old, Marsh's baby will be his first studio built from scratch. Whether he's got it right he won't know until it opens this month. But if there really is "no substitute for experience," as he maintains, it should be a haven in Soho for producers who want expertise to go with the kit. ■

KIT SPEC

The suite consists of an analogue Amek desk and Dolby Digital EX sound system, with a fanless video projection unit for tape playback. Output and input include BetaSP, DAT drive, mini-disc recorder, CD writer, eight-track D88, Dolby Digital DTS decoder with Panasonic player for DVD audio extraction, and Dolby optical recorder.

The voice-over booth has two condenser mikes, two dynamic mikes and a rifle mike.