

a songwriter's recording studio:
exploring the connection between
songwriting and architectural design



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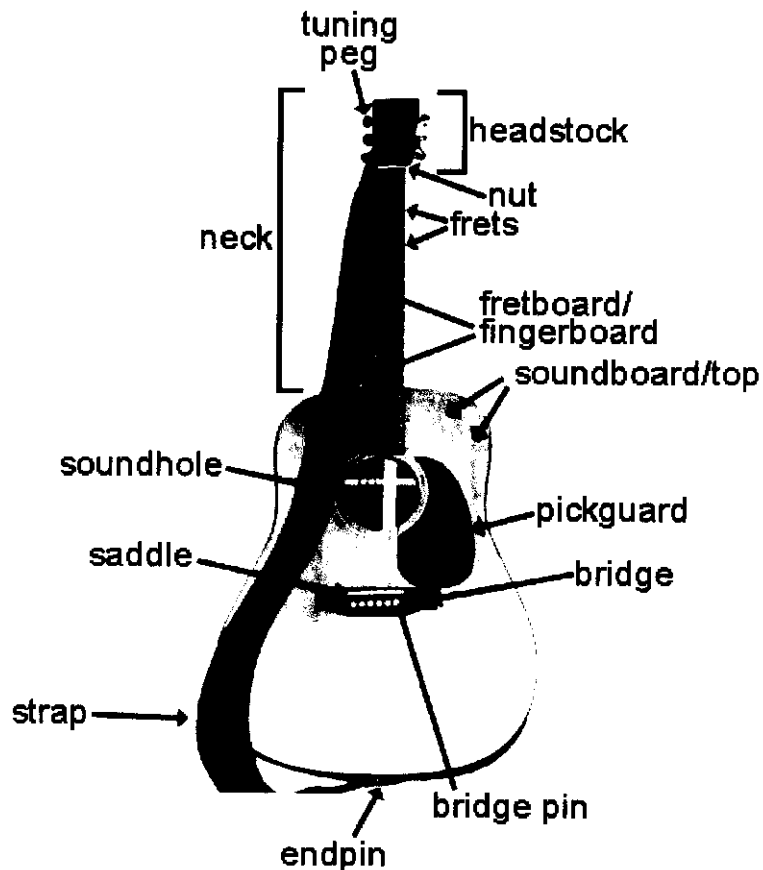
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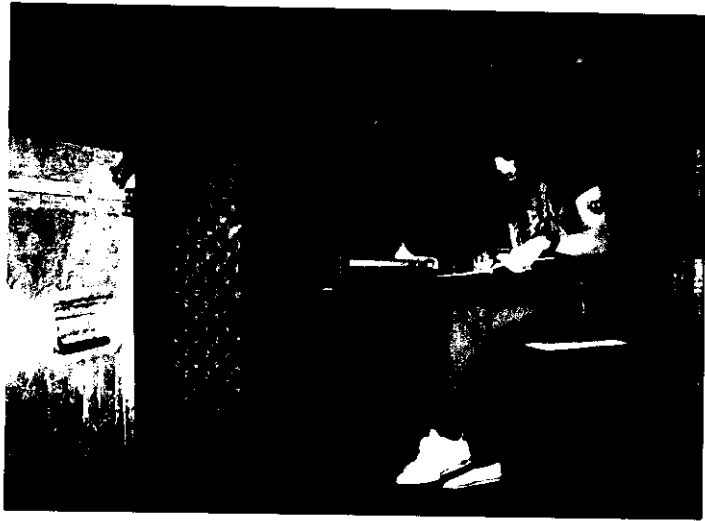
organizational data

thesis professor:
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summary

For decades rock musicians have been traveling to different destinations to write and record music. Led Zeppelin recorded several albums in country estate mansions that were converted into recording studios. Aerosmith recorded their *Draw the Line* album in an abandoned convent. Incubus recently wrote and recorded their *Morning View* album in a large house in Malibu. The Counting Crows buy a house in a different city to write and record each album.

The idea of this is for the band to live together and focus on writing and recording new material. They have all the necessary tools available to take a song from an idea all the way to the final recording in the place where they live. The basic idea of this project is the same. The difference is that rather than starting with an existing building, the facility is designed for this specific use from the very beginning.

Another difference is that the facility can fully accommodate up to three bands at a time. This will help foster the sharing of ideas, whether about songwriting, recording or music in general. It will also create an atmosphere of collaboration where artists not only work on their own songs but can also offer insights into the work of other artists. The guitarist of one band may be able to help another bands guitarist to straighten out a riff. One singer may be able to offer another singer assistance in developing a melody. The facility is intended to encourage new ideas and techniques through the interaction of the artists.

The facility also consists of several basic categories of spaces: recording, writing, performance, administration and living. The recording area consists of three recording studios. Each recording studio is comprised of a control room, several recording spaces, a mixing/mastering station, and a lounge. The writing spaces are spread through out the building. They are spaces where the artists can go to write or develop a song. They are divided into individual and group spaces. The individual spaces are balconies and small practice rooms. The group spaces are lounge areas and rehearsal rooms. The performance space offers musicians a venue to play their new material in front of an audience. Several offices are located in the administrative area. The living area consists of six apartments, each containing three bedrooms, a living room and a kitchenette.

context

venice beach, california

the place you write a song has a big effect on the way a song turns out.

-neil young

the environment has to bring something out in me that wants to be brought out...

...environment is very important. people need peaceful invigorating environments. stimulating environments.

-bob dylan



The hardest part of songwriting is getting the first burst of inspiration. An idea for a song can come from anywhere. For this reason it is important for songwriters to have access to a variety of inspirations.

Venice Beach is an area with full of activity. Within a short walk from the site there are street performers, vendors, stores and restaurants. There are basketball, beach volleyball, and paddle tennis courts, as well as a large skate park. The ocean is right there for surfing, swimming, and fishing. The ocean front walk extends for miles in both directions for walking, jogging, biking, in-line skating, and skateboarding.

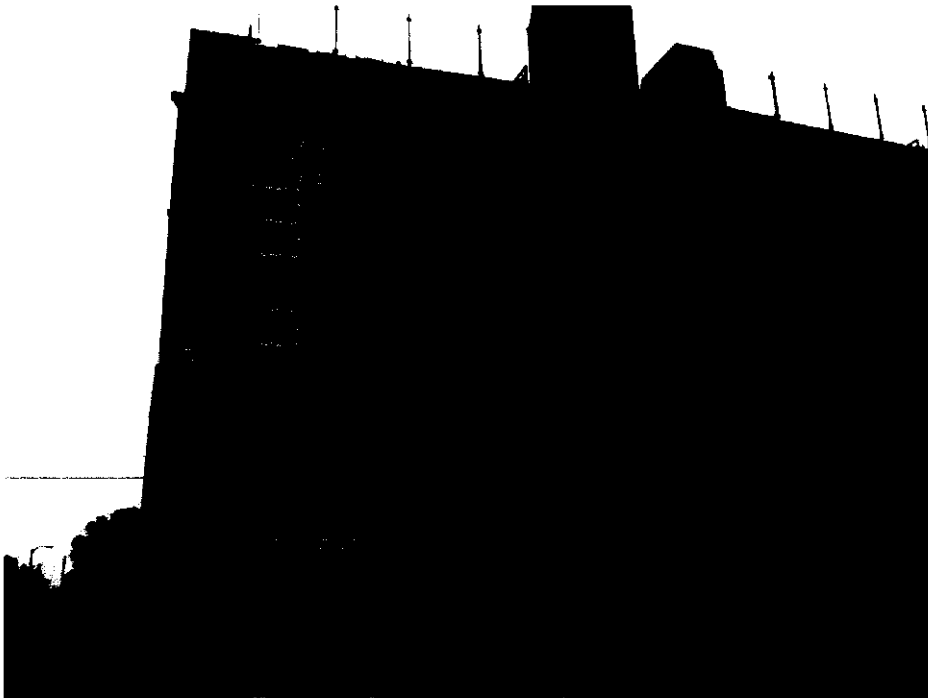
Inspiration from this activity can be drawn from either participating or observation. The area is often bustling with activity, but there are places to watch everywhere. The beach is nearly a football field deep and runs along the coast as far as the eye can see. This would give songwriters plenty of space to distance themselves from the crowds while still being able to observe. On the other hand, many ideas for songs come when you are participating in something completely unrelated. The inspiration could come while surfing, fishing, playing volley ball, or even just taking a shower.

The Venice Beach area attracts artists and other creative people. It is a place where a songwriter could feel comfortable and converse with people of similar interests.

Los Angeles, as a broader context, is a music industry epicenter. The close access to other musicians, songwriters, and the business side of the recording industry would help to streamline the writing process. Additional musicians would be available for recording. Songwriters could be called in to help with work on songs or to give a critique. Business people would also be available for consultation.



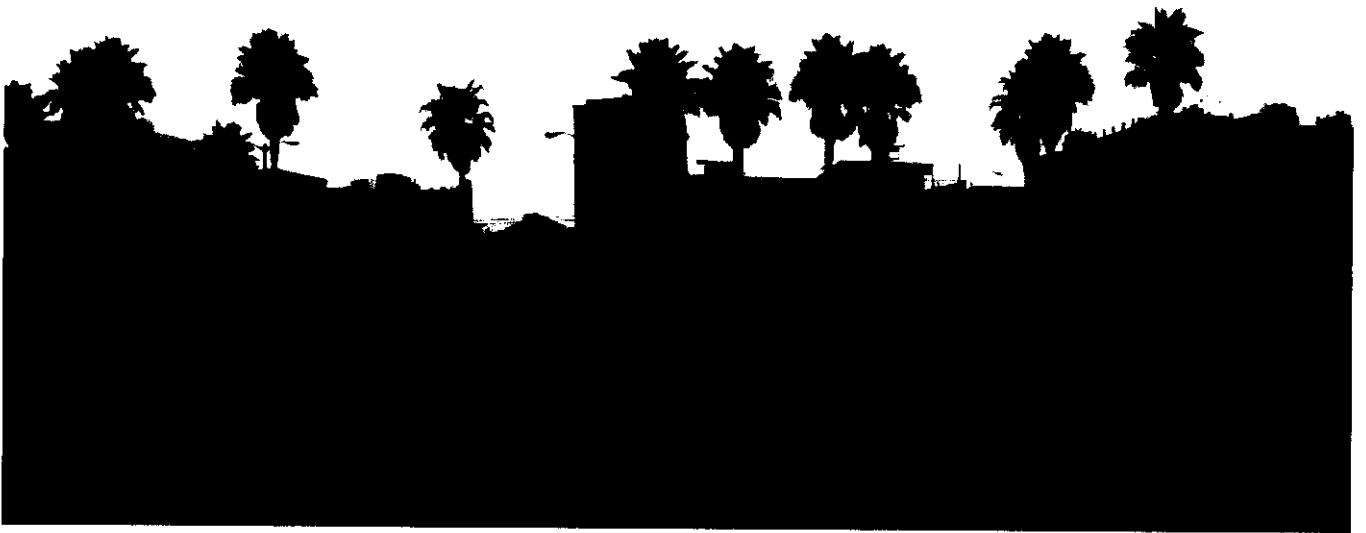
arch. context



The architectural context is contemporary and diverse. Several famous architects have designed houses on the beach.



site



concepts

thesis idea

The connection between architectural design and songwriting is explored in two ways. First, the architecture of the building is used to enhance the songwriting, recording and performance experience. The building will fully accommodate all of these activities with their specific purpose in mind. Ideas from the architectural practice will also be used to influence the songwriting practice.

Second, ideas from songwriting are used to influence the architectural design. The concepts for the buildings form are developed from songwriting ideas. Songwriting methods are also used to dictate the programming of the spaces.

programme

The goal in the design of this project is to create a creative and inspirational environment. This will be accomplished through several methods.

Offering options to the songwriters will be key in the success of this facility. Every songwriter has different methods that work for him/her. Often one songwriter will employ many different methods. Some songs are created in private. Solitude helps a songwriter to focus solely on the task at hand. They can immerse themselves in their thoughts without distraction. On the other hand many songs are written in what would seem to be a distracting environment. The activity surrounding the artist may be the inspiration for the song. Some songs are written by a single songwriter. Others are composed by the entire band. The important thing is that songwriters need different options. One environment won't work for everyone. One method won't even work for one songwriter every time. For this reason the facility will provide musicians with as many different options as possible.

A second focus of the design will be to create a collaborative environment. Often the initial idea for a song is derived from a single person but it can be helpful to have a collaborator to flesh out the song. The living spaces are arranged in such a manner to bring the artists together. Every artist will have their own sleeping quarters but the lounge and dining spaces will be shared. This way ideas can be shared in a comfortable environment. The goal is to not only foster collaboration between band mates but also to promote the exchange of ideas between bands. There will also be rehearsal spaces for every band so that the songs can be written and developed as a group.

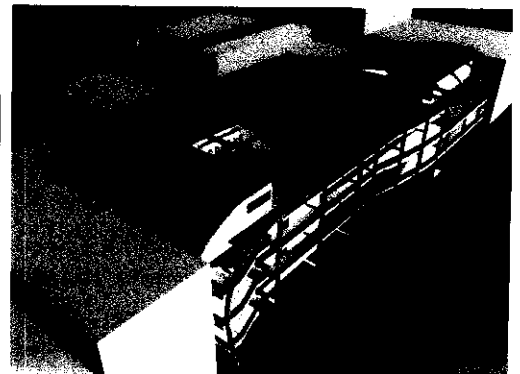
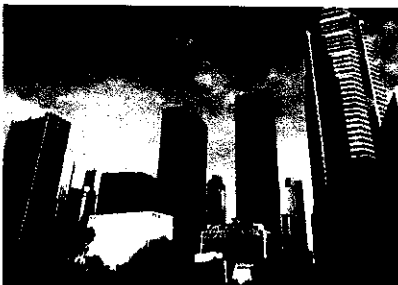
building form

A lot of time the whole thought comes, not connected to the thought before it in any appreciable way. And then you say, "Well, what will this **connection** be?" And by the time you get your choice of the third thought, you're off in a **direction**. Because three consecutive thought imply direction.

And I think direction is sufficient. When you have a strong sense of direction, then **meaning** clings to it in some way. People bring meaning to it, which is more interesting to me than for me to tell meaning to somebody. I'd rather offer **options** to people. Options that have very pleasing sounds.

-Paul Simon

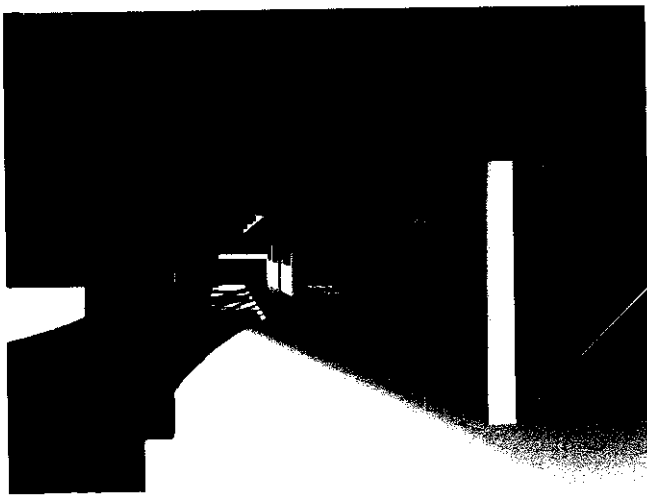
The form for the building was derived from this quote about songwriting. The building is located on the beach between the ocean and the city. The building's form is designed as the connection between these two elements. The wave form of the ocean and the grid of the city were combined to create this connection.



massing/circulation

The buildings surrounding the site are somewhat smaller along the beachfront than the project. For this reason a decision was made to break up the building into three pieces that would more appropriately match the massing of the context. This worked well with the programme of the building. The buildings functions' were divided into three categories: performance, living and recording.

The climate in Venice allows all the buildings circulation to be on the exterior. This will also provide a visual connection between the separate massings.

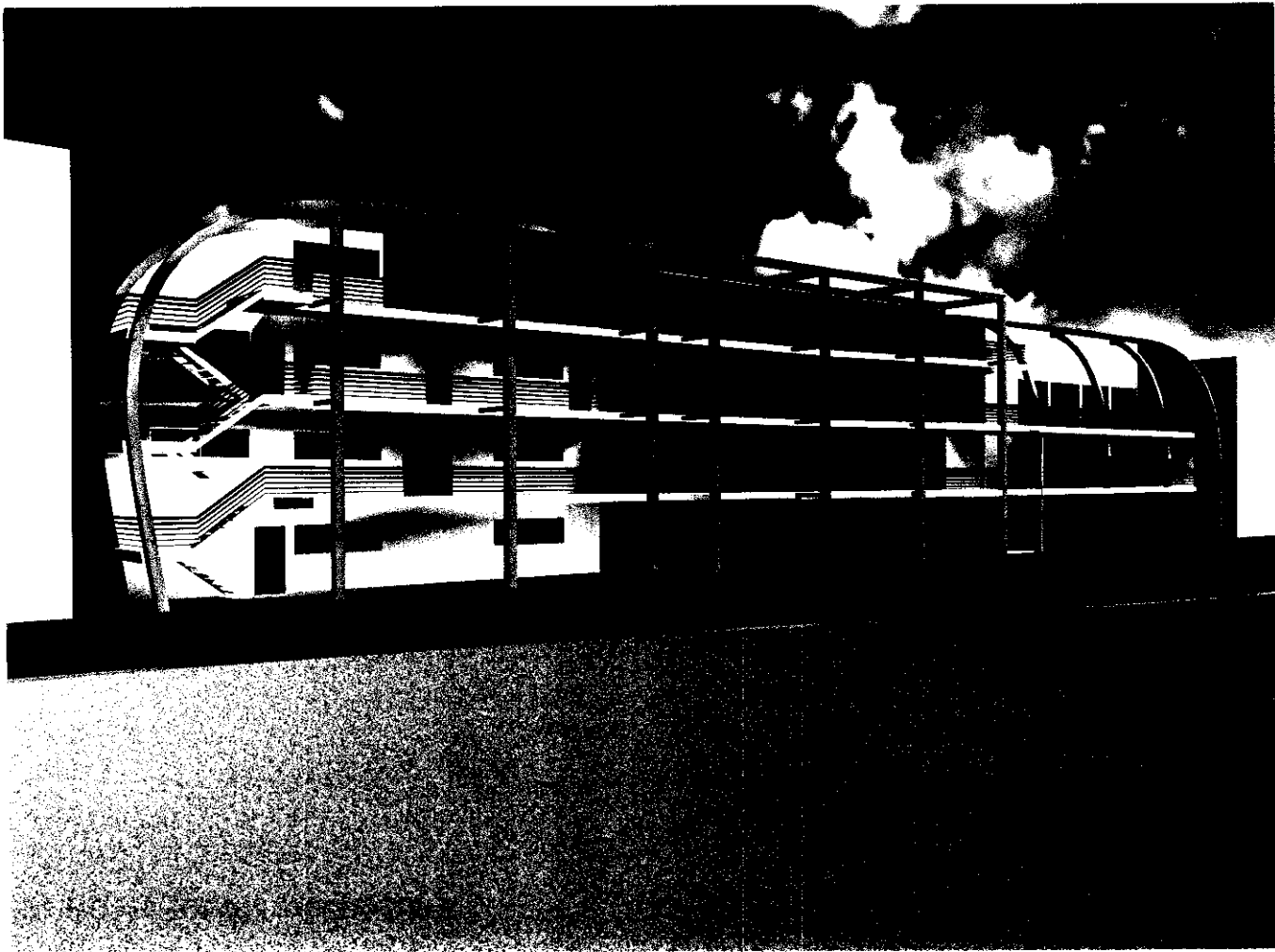


introversion/extroversion

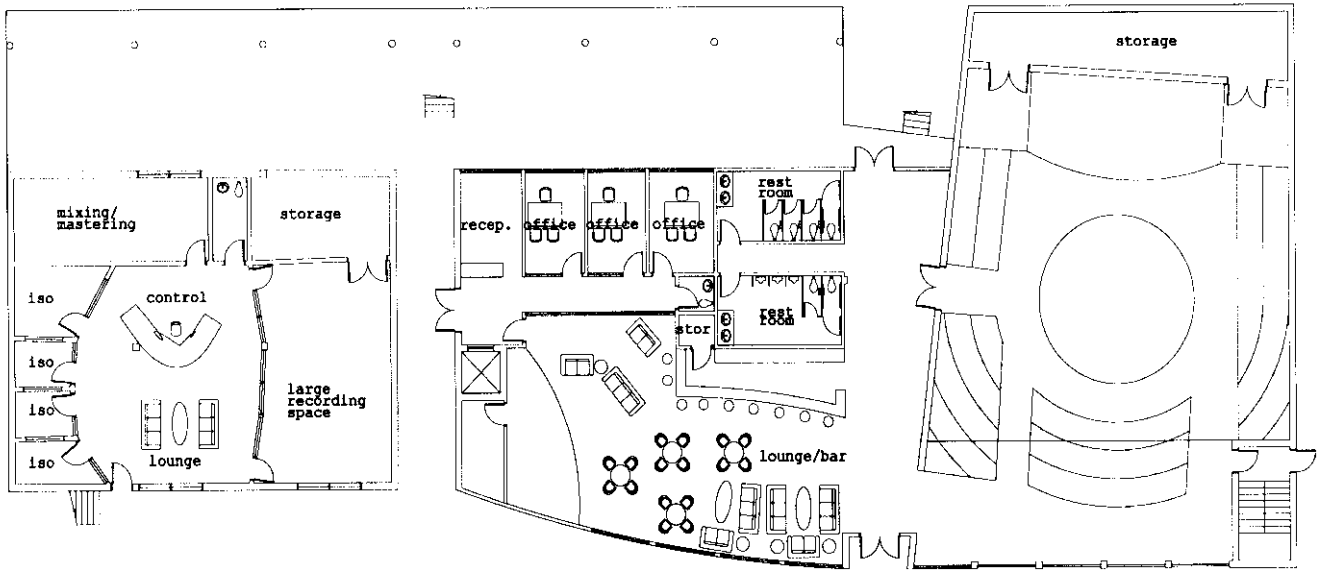
The exterior translation of interior function is done through an analysis of the introverted and extroverted qualities of the interior spaces. The performance space is covered in solid panels that can be opened during performances. This expresses the extroverted nature of the performance space. When a performance is taking place the panels open up to allow the audience to expand out to the beach.

The living area is as open as possible on the side facing the beach. This will allow the songwriters to look out at the activity and internalize it. The alley side of the living area contains the apartments. This is where the songwriters will go for privacy so it will be more solid with punched openings.

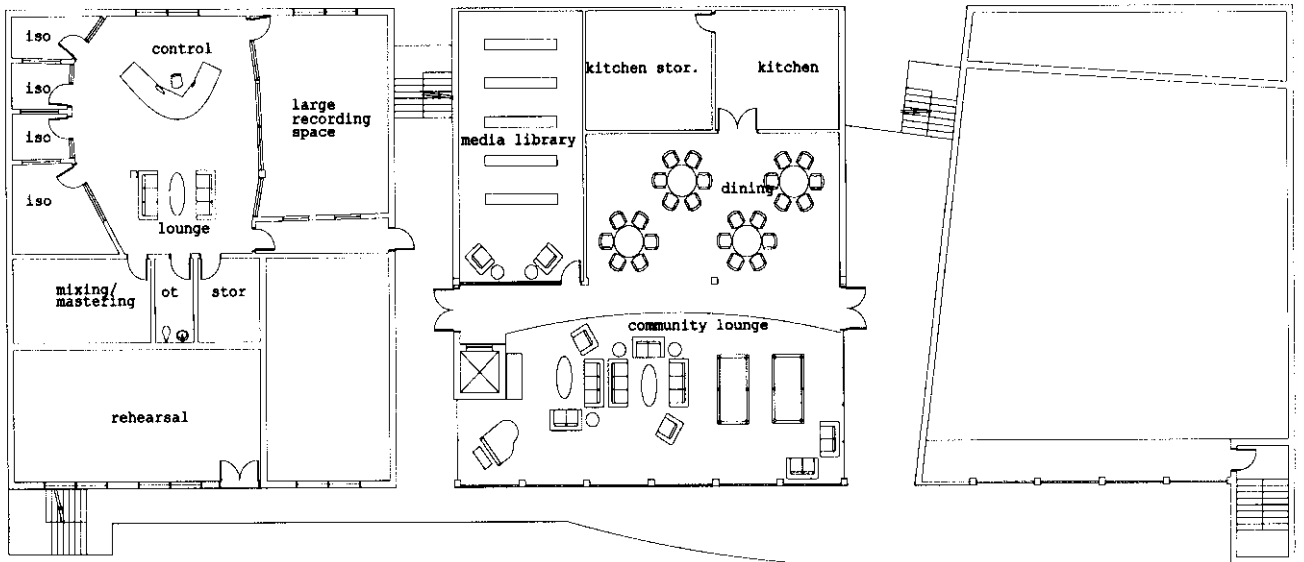
Recording is a mostly introverted process because most of the songwriting is already completed at this phase. The studios also have major acoustical considerations. For these reasons the recording areas will be mostly solid with punched openings.



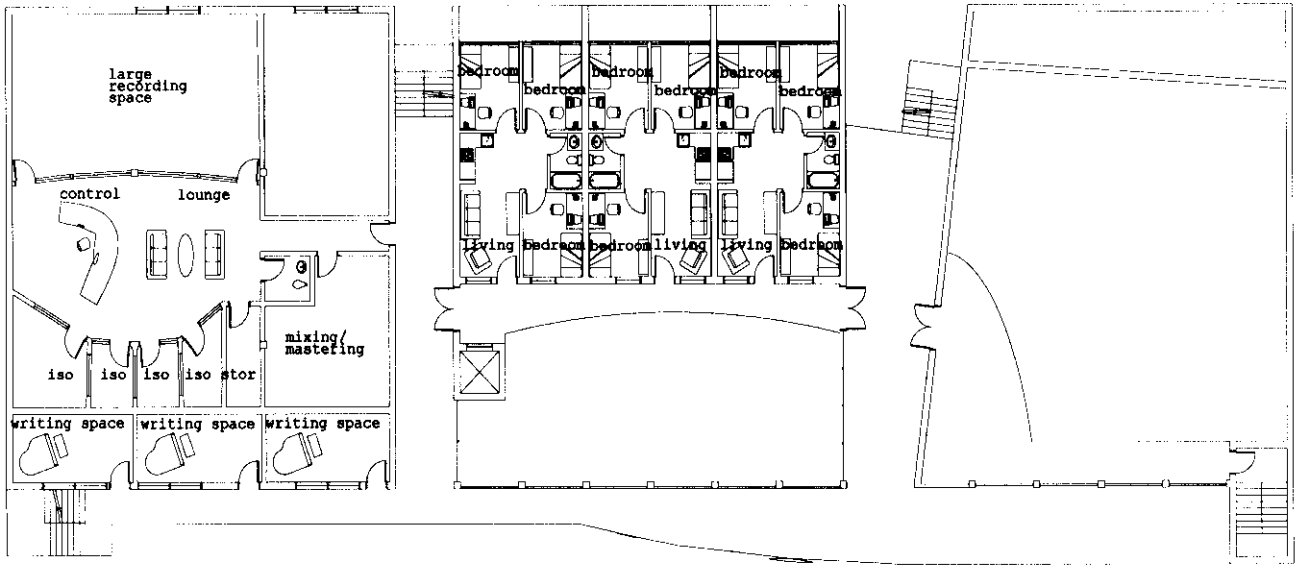
results



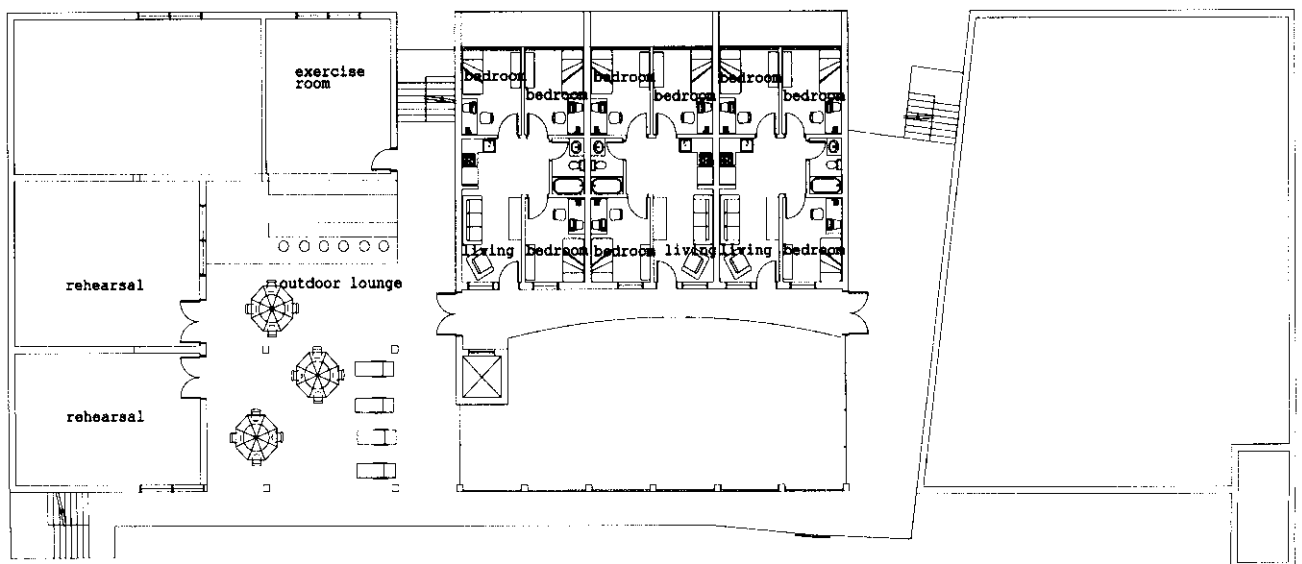
ground level plan



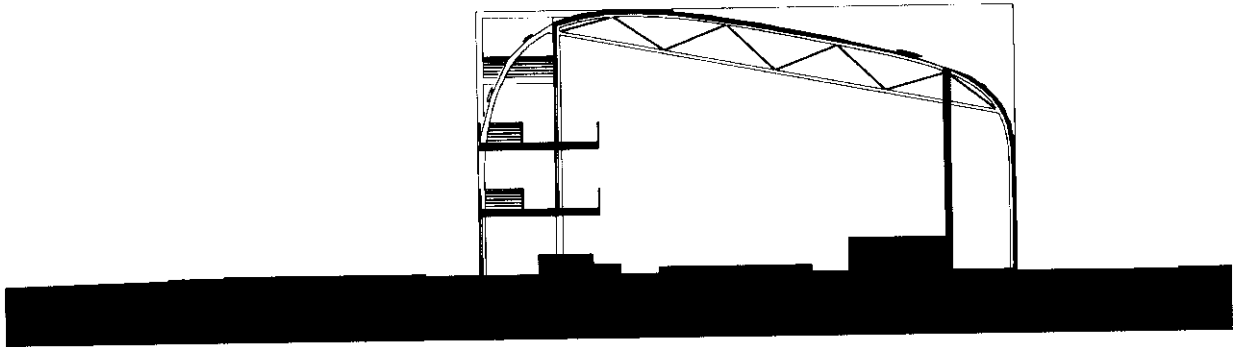
second level plan



third level plan



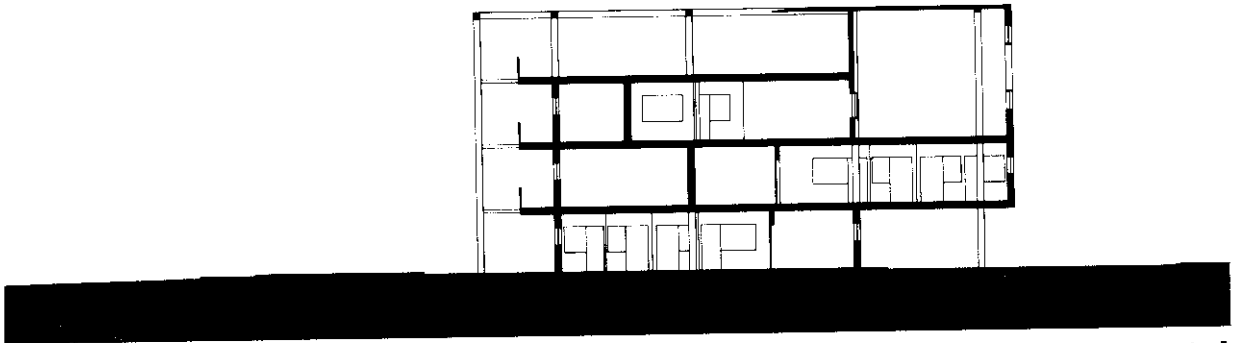
fourth level plan



performance section



living section

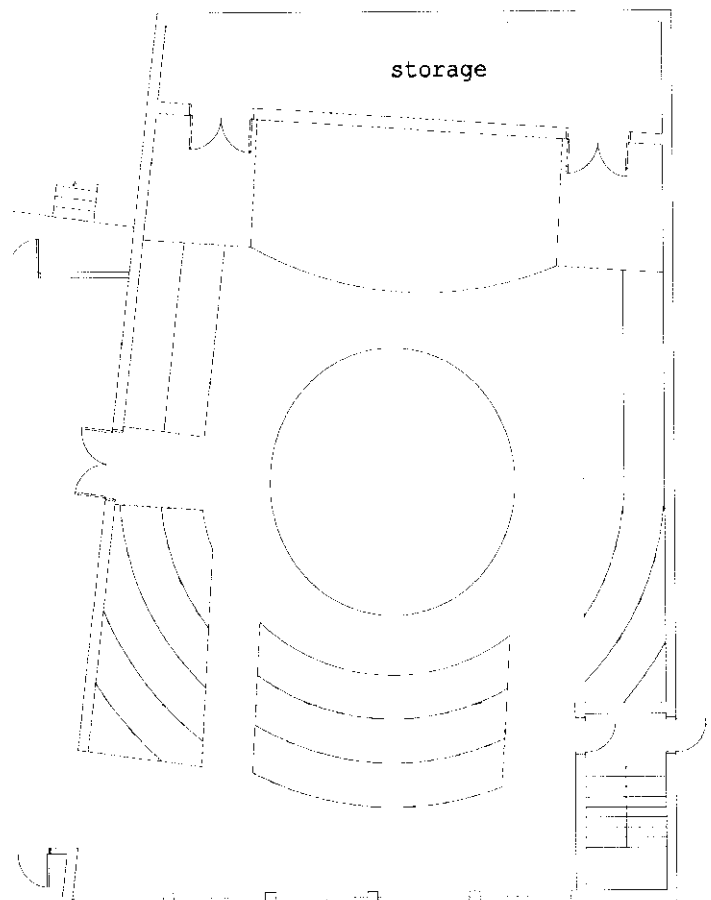


recording section

performance

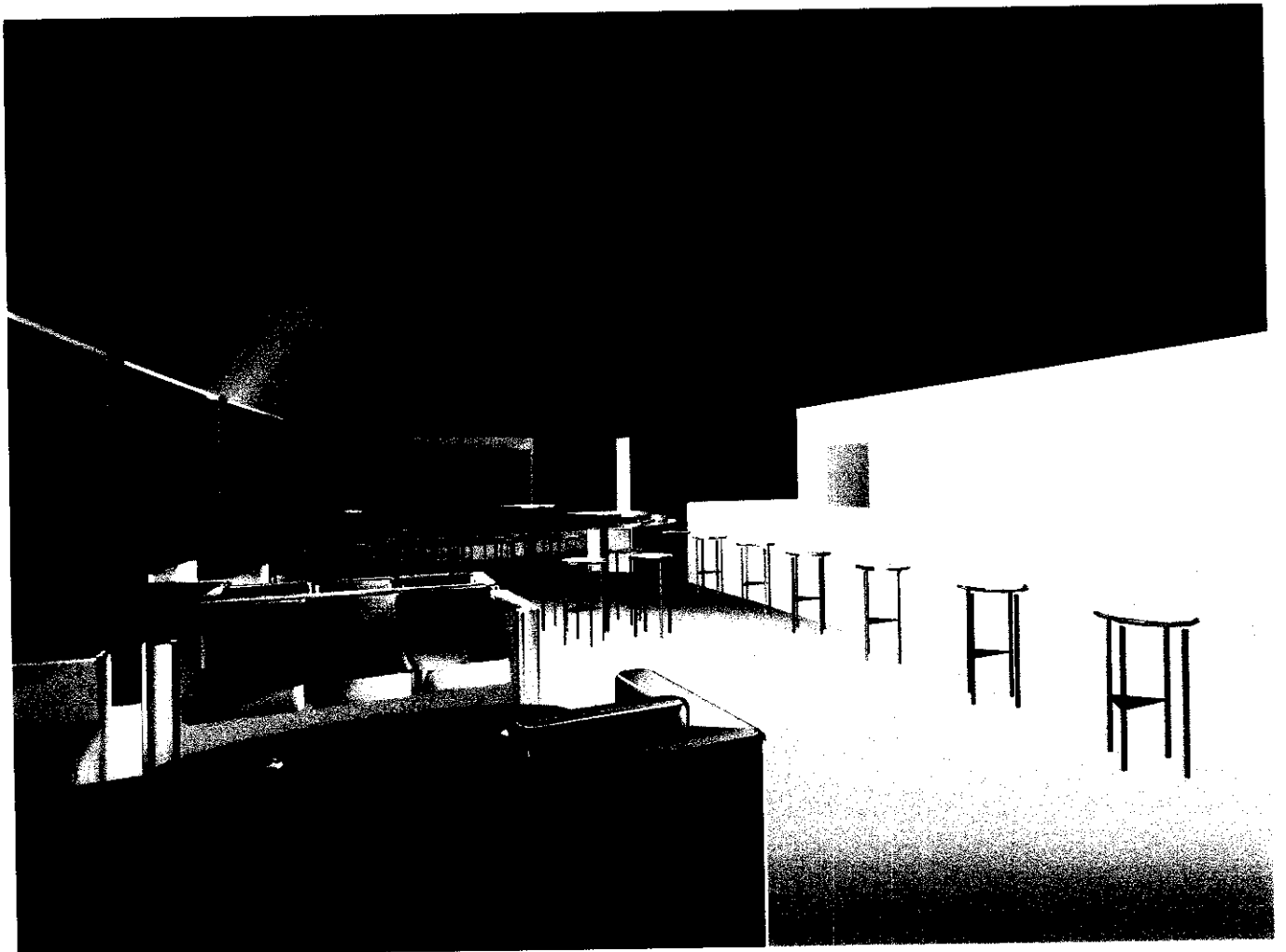
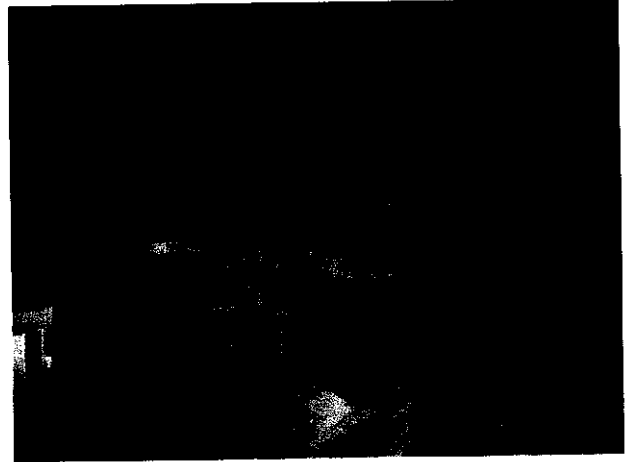
The performance area will function in two ways. When a band is rehearsing they generally stand in a circle so they can give each other visual cues for changes. For this reason when a band is still in the songwriting process they will use a center round stage with the audience surrounding them. This way the band can give a performance to a private audience to get feedback about new songs while maintaining the comfort level of a rehearsal.

Normal performances can also occur in the same space on a standard directional stage. For this kind of performance the center stage would lower into the ground to allow open area for the audience.



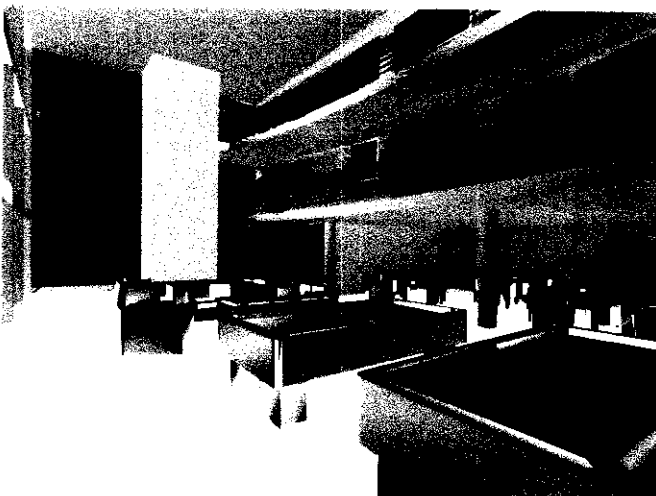
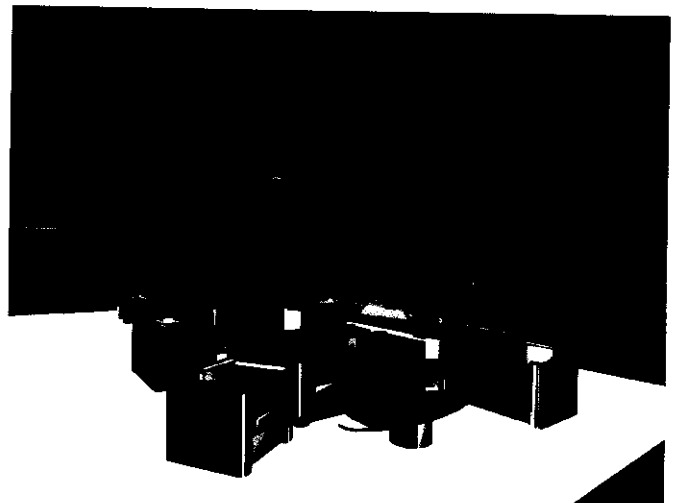
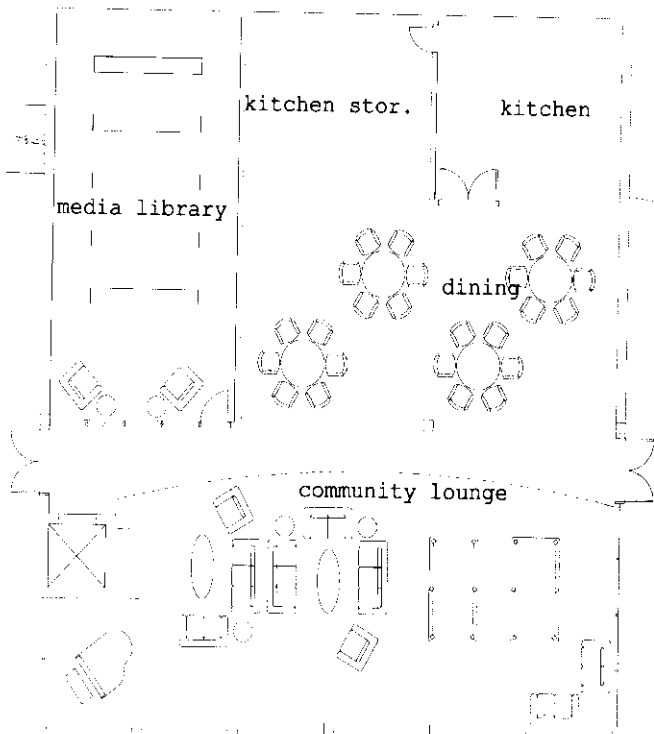
bar

The bar area will be used in conjunction with the performance space. The bar will provide a gathering space for the record release parties and other industry functions. It also has a stage that can be used for smaller acts.



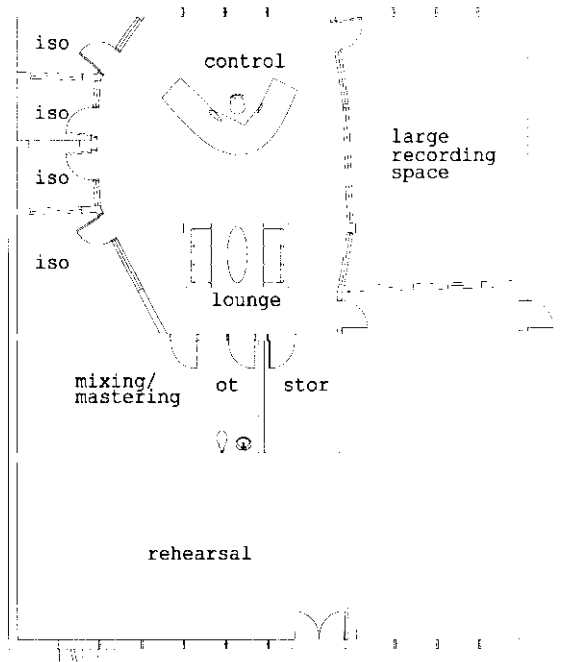
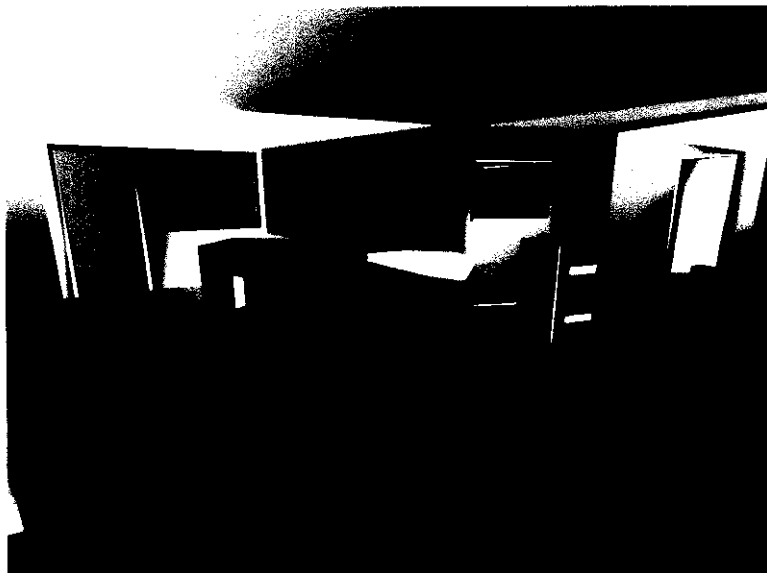
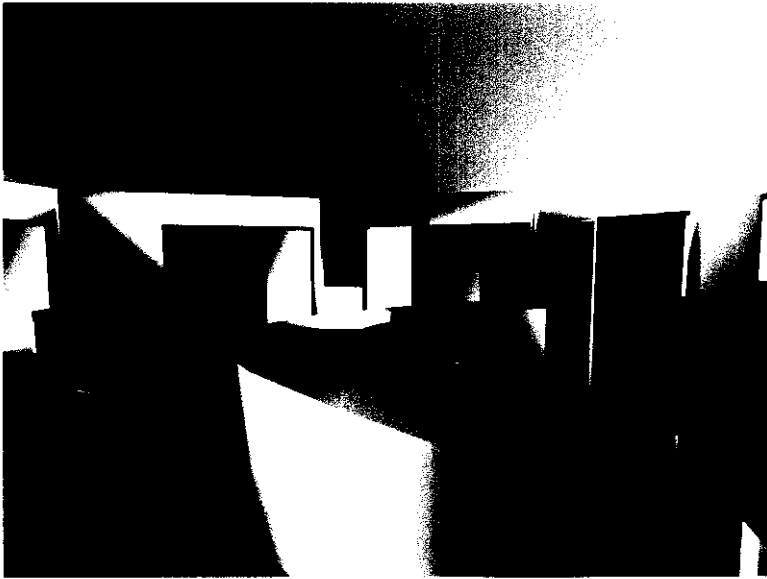
community lounge

The community lounge will provide the artists with a place to relax. It will also give artists a place to share ideas with other musicians.

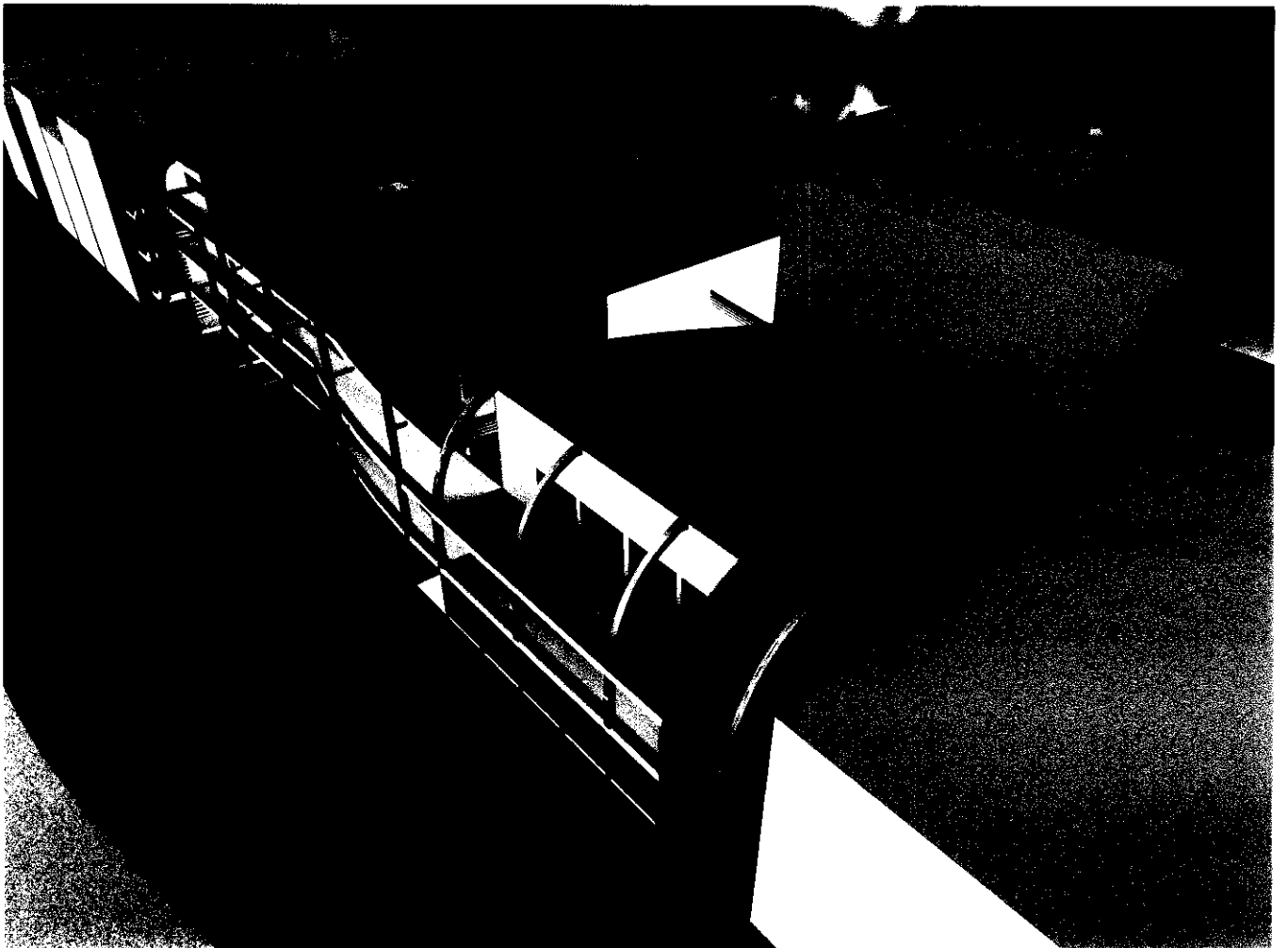


recording studios

The recording studios are designed for optimum performance. The control room is in the center with isolation booths and recording spaces on either side. The walls are angled in order to eliminate standing waves. A lounge area is also provided so the artists have a place to relax while waiting for their turn to record.



exterior images







programme

1.0 Performance Space	5750 SF
1.1 Public Entry	300 SF
1.2 Pre-Performance Lounge/Exhibition Space	1000 SF
1.3 Concession Service	250 SF
1.4 Public Washrooms 2@225 SF	500 SF
1.5 Performance Space	3500 SF
1.6 Storage	200 SF
2.0 Facility Administration Suite	870 SF
2.1 General Managers Office	180 SF
2.2 Recording Studio Managers Office	120 SF
2.3 Performance Managers Office	120 SF
2.4 Conference Room for 8	200 SF
2.5 Secretarial and General Office	200 SF
2.6 Occupancy Toilet	50 SF
3.0 Recording Studios 3@2740 SF	8220 SF
3.1 Control Room	580 SF
3.2 Large Recording Space	600 SF
3.3 Isolation Room 2@50 SF	100 SF
3.4 Isolation Room	70 SF
3.5 Isolation Room	120 SF
3.6 Mixing/ Mastering Station	500 SF
3.7 Musician Lounge Space	600 SF
3.8 Storage	120 SF
3.9 Occupancy Toilet	50 SF
4.0 Media Library	400 SF
5.0 Rehearsal Spaces 3@900 SF	2700 SF

6.0 Private Exploration Spaces	1080 SF
6.1 Isolated Practice Rooms 3@80 SF	240 SF
6.2 Inspiration Balconies 6@80 SF	480 SF
6.3 Community Inspiration Spaces 3@120 SF	360 SF
7.0 Food Services	2000 SF
7.1 Dining Area for 20-30 people	1000 SF
7.2 Kitchen	1000 SF
8.0 Living Units 6@660 SF	4040 SF
8.1 Bed Room 3@120 SF	360 SF
8.2 Living Area	250 SF
8.3 Kitchenette	50 SF
8.4 Bath Room	80 SF
9.0 Community Lounge	1000 SF
10.0 Service	400 SF
10.1 Receiving Dock	100 SF
10.2 Receiving Storage	200 SF
10.3 Garbage/Trash Area	100 SF
11.0 Mechanical	1640 SF
Net Area	21860 SF
Grossage	<u>10930 SF</u>
Total Area	34430 SF