



PHOTOS: JOSHUA SUDOCK, THE REGISTER

STUDIO TIME: Singer-songwriter Davina Proeung, 17, lays down a vocal track in the recording studio.

YOUTHS FACE THE MUSIC

Anaheim's Project RYTMO helps lay the groundwork for a future in the industry.

By **ERIK ORTIZ**
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ANAHEIM • Joey Arreguin recognizes the musical potential in each of the youngsters who swagger into his North Street recording studio.

He sees it in Anthony Al-mendez, 18, of Santa Ana, who takes pride in the songs he engineers.

In Davina Proeung, 17, of Garden Grove, who finds performing an emotional release.

In Jacob Florentino, 20, of Santa Ana, who bounces up every time he drops a new beat.

Since Project RYTMO (Reaching Youth Through Music Opportunities) began in 2004, about 150 youths ages 14 to 21 have participated in free weekly sessions to learn about music and technology, while laying the groundwork for a future in the industry.

Thanks to an \$85,000 grant from the Santa Ana Workforce Investment Board, which oversees federal funding for job retention and development in that city, Project RYTMO will have permanent sites in Santa Ana at the Orange County Children's Therapeutic Arts Center and the KidWorks program at the Donahue Center beginning next month.

As part of the nonprofit program's goal, at-risk and adjudicated youth usually make up the roster.

"People in Santa Ana, they're in gangs or things like that," Al-mendez said. "I've got my music."

Arreguin, an accomplished songwriter who's created music for shows such as "The Sopranos" and Suzanne Somers' ThighMaster workout videos, was introduced to the Anaheim studio 10 years ago.

He decided to buy the space in 2000, dubbing it the Love & Laughter Music Recording Studio. After organizing a summer workshop for teens

Project RYTMO is a nonprofit program that teaches music technology to youths and offers them a place to record and learn about the industry. While relying on grants, organizers say they're always in need of donations such as:

- New or used computers, printers and copiers.
 - Music instruments (drums, guitars, keyboards, bass, wind instruments, etc.).
 - Music software and sequencing programs.
 - Digital recording equipment and gear.
 - Sponsors for 10 hours of recording studio time.
- For information, call 877-943-7121 or visit www.rytmo.org.

and seeing the impact it had, he created a curriculum with the help of his wife and daughter.

"We had noticed that so many of our kids' friends who were interested in the music industry had nobody to go to really learn about it," said Arreguin, 51, a Loara High School graduate.

Project RYTMO began, giving youth classes on music theory, recording techniques and practical advice about a career in the industry.

That first year, the program got a \$60,000 grant through the U.S. Department of Labor to purchase computer workstations and hire part-time staff.

The main studio is crammed with high-tech engineering and mixing equipment, as well as old-school analog recording machines. An adjacent classroom features several computers loaded with the latest music software.

The catch for participants, however, is that the songs they



THE MIXING BOARD: Kyle Manns monitors the Project RYTMO recording console as Davina Proeung records her vocal track. The program helps fuse music and technology.

write can't use profanity or derogatory lyrics.

"If their songs are angry, we talk with them to find out what they're really trying to say," said RYTMO program and media director Mike Anderson.

On a recent afternoon, a dozen young kids were working and collaborating. Participants Proeung and Florentino went back and forth on a song about a guy and girl pining for each other's attention.

"Where's your chorus?" Florentino asked.

"I don't know," Proeung responded.

"Well, hum something," he said. "Hum a melody and put the words to it."

Proeung said she found out

about Project RYTMO at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Garden Grove. When representatives came to talk about the program, she was immediately hooked. She's been going to the studio for more than a year.

Florentino found out about Project RYTMO through a friend. One day he hopes to become as big as his favorite hip-hop producer, Timbaland.

Later, after several of the youth received certificates for graduating from the program's latest session, Florentino smiled.

"It's tight here," he said before getting back to his music.

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