

Arts & Entertainment

Musical summer of learning

FILM and TV composer Art Phillips is a part of the Griffith University Gold Coast Campus's musical summer which is giving students a professional insight into songwriting as a creative craft.

Phillips, 39, a one-time Los Angeles-based session musician and musical arranger who has worked with showbusiness big names such as Demis Roussos, Barry Manilow and Australia's own Ricky May, has been conducting workshops.

Phillips, who came to Australia in the mid-1980s and quickly made a name for himself as a leading freelance TV and film composer, has also

introduced the budding crafts men and women to other musical forms such as jingle writing and soundtrack work.

The Song And Composing Summer School, which was the brainchild of the university campus's head of music Greg Whateley, was a great opportunity for hands-on experience, according to Phillips.

"In the past this type of university work has tended to take a classical direction, but Greg is being extremely innovative and giving his students something more hands-on," says Phillips.

"I think this will give them a more realistic introduction to a particular kind of work which requires special skills and application.



□ Jack King (left) and Art Phillips team-up to teach Coast students how to marry movies and music, at Griffith University's Coat campus.

"The soundtrack work, for instance, demands that musicians have the ability to work within a team and be able to compromise with bosses who don't always have the composer's technical ability."

On Wednesday Phillips, who has been working on a new ABC documentary series *The Flying Vet*, gave the students the opportunity to gain a behind the scenes glimpse of the working relationships between himself and ABC producer Jack King.

The composer and producer recreated some of their early conversations centred on the series about an outback vet and showed the students how the worked was developed for the screen.

Phillips said the 12-15 minutes of music required for a half-hour show took five to six days to compose before he started working with the producer on each individual episode.

The *Flying Vet* premieres on February 23 at 8pm and coincides with the release of Phillips' CD of original music from the six half-hour shows.

Phillips, who is

vice-president of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers, said his organisation had between 80 to 100 members, but only 25 to 30 were likely to be working at any one time.

The composer, who has worked on American TV shows such as *Laverne And Shirley*, *Family Ties* and *Happy Days*, said that while there were obviously more opportunities for screen composers in Hollywood, the Australian industry allowed more diversity.

"In Hollywood, it's expected that composers will stay within their chosen field and those who swap around are frowned upon," says Phillips.

"But here in Australia there is more opportunity to try different things such as TV and film work, followed by songwriting and even jingles.

"It makes for a much more interesting and varied professional lifestyle."