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ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

Electro duo making sonic waves with younger crowd

By Andrew Taylor

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BESPECTACLED and grey-haired, Professor Roger Dean is not acting his age.

But Dean, former vice-chancellor of the University of Canberra and former executive director of the Heart Research Institute, is adamant that creating electro music is not a hobby only for a computer-literate, bedroom-bound teenager.





Playing with sound ... Hazel Smith and Roger Dean. SAHLAN HAYES

"They probably get as many tips from us as we get from them," Dean, 63, said.

"There's nothing wrong with the backroom boffin, the young teenager producing something fantastic.

"The methods they do it by are usually rather simpler ... but no less interesting for that."

A professor of sonic communication at the University of Western Sydney, Dean is artistic director of *austraLYSIS*, an ensemble that mashes up music, words and images.

The ensemble's latest work is *Film of Sound*, a collaboration with US video artist Will Luers in which sound dictates what appears on screen.

"It's a bit unusual compared to film in general where sound is a trivial part of the budget," Dean said.

The performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on Saturday also features Hazel Smith, a poet, academic and fellow electro musician in *austraLYSIS* who provided the words for *Film of Sound*.

"It's very different from many people's idea of a film," she said. "There's no kind of plot or characters or dialogue in the normal way so the words actually appear on the screen."

It's a far cry from the ensemble's forerunner, *LYSIS*, which Dean and Smith formed in Britain in the 1970s when the high point of technology was the audio tape.

Dean's day job is researching how sound is used to communicate.

One of his projects involves using sound to represent large amounts of data, which could be used in banking, oil exploration and medicine.

Surgeons, for example, might need to focus on their hands but require other information about a patient such as their physiognomy or the progress of their operation.

"Sometimes any other information that might be useful is essentially inaccessible because of that focus," he said.

"If there are other categories of information they need to be aware of continuously ... then that can be represented as a sonic stream."
