

Sound in Film

- **Dialog + Music + Sound Effects**
- **Foley sounds** follow the actors – sounds of touching, breathing, walking, clothing, etc.
- **Dialog** is the voices of the actors.
- **Sound Effects** include Foley, objects, actions, environment / ambience.
- **Diegetic**: we see the source, or if not, the characters can hear it too. Includes voices
- **Nondiegetic**: comes from outside the story space, like film score music, or a narrator.
- A **Soundtrack** includes all of the above. 1

What is “Sound Design”?

- *Making decisions to communicate the right messages*
- *Creating the overall sound character for the video, film or game project*
- *Supporting the visual or story elements*
 - *Beginning in the **planning** stages of the project, a sound landscape (“map”) is developed to support the thematic material, including **action** and **object** sounds, **environmental** sounds, **Foley** sounds, **dialog**, and **music**.*

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Job Titles in Film Sound

- Production Recordist
- Sound Editor
- Sound Mixer
- Sound Designer

Production Recordist

- Recording during the actual filming of the movie
- S/he'll have a microphone on the set, and will gather dialogue and some sound effects if they are available during the actual shooting.

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Sound Editor

- Person back in a studio who generally has a collection of sounds
- Able to go out with a portable recorder and bring back and edit sounds and fit them into the soundtrack

Sound Mixer

- Person whose job is to blend together all the different sounds that make up the soundtrack

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Sound Designer

- Might do all the above: recordist, editor, and mixer.
- A relatively new kind of job, for a person who is in on the planning and involved with the director in making sound an integral part of the content delivery.

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Sound Production Sequence

- 1. *Collaborate with director*. What is s/he trying to communicate? (“pre-production”)
- 2. *Sound Asset Collection* (“production”)
 - Buy or record or build?
 - Build Example -mix an organic sound with a non-organic. Common in *Star Wars*
 - Inventing/recording Original Sounds
 - High quality and consistent level, tone
 - Make as dry as possible
 - Musical score if budgeted.
 - Loop editing is the least expensive. Can be OK+

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Sound Production Sequence

- 3. *Sound Processing* (“post-production”)
 - Compression, layering, EQ, Normalizing
- 4. *Mix and Master the tracks* (“post-production”)
 - Automation of effects such as levels
 - Balancing, normalizing, creating consistency
 - Producing alternate mixes for media variations

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Pre-Production Documents

- A Rough Outline or **Concept**
 - Statements by director
- **Story Board, Director's Summary**
 - A range of documents from a set of illustrations to a formal proposal, or scope of work
- **Sound Map or Blueprint**
 - A plan to be approved by the director
 - Adjectives describe sound, such as “Innocent, sinister, pulsing/driving dramatic, dark, magic light, magic dark, etc.”
 - “Cues” for music.
 - Ideas for sounds, mood changes, transitions

Sound Map Elements

- 1) **Environment** – nighttime, city, etc
- 2) **Foley actions** – walking, falling, things the actor does
- 3) **Objects** – wind, siren, crashes
- 4) **Clues to Emotion** – positive, negative, hurried, etc. Sounds and music.
- 5) **Moments of physical or dramatic transition** – things are changing for better or worse – Sounds and music.

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Sound Design Working Principles

- **Support the Images on the Screen**
 - Collect sounds that **match** the action, set the **scene**, create the **feeling**, tell the “**back story**”.
 - Manipulate sound elements such as warm or harsh overtones, or even pitch intervals to **suggest emotions**, etc.
 - Use music that suggests emotions, including methods such reoccurring themes for characters – (“leitmotifs”)

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Sound Design Working Principles

- Edit **timing, levels, location, compression**, etc.
- Listener overload? **About 4 (3-5 max)**
- Use EQ to **separate the frequency** ranges of potentially competing or masking sounds.
 - (Have a gentle peak at 2.5 k for one, and 1.5 k for the other)
- **Creative ideas?** Object sounds that morph into music, or vice versa. Make communicative intervals out of non musical sounds that occur together in time. Use sounds that remind the listener of other sounds. Metallic drums behind the terminator. A wailing siren for a quiet but desperate character.

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Sound Design Working Principles

- **Creative idea:** How did the Starwars sound designer set up the missile explosion in the asteroid chase scene so that the audience *anticipated* it?
- Preceded it with a moment of pure silence!

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Sound Design Working Principles

- Make the **key sound elements** easier to notice/hear
 - Frequency range
 - Placement in sound field
- **Support focus points - “beats”** in the production
 - We have a sound we want someone to notice:
 - It can be or be perceived as “louder.”
 - *Level* or *relative level* or *frequency*
 - We can open a hole in the tracks.

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