

SOUND Year 9 Half Term 5

Overview

Sound is a complex aspect of Film Studies, made up of a wide-range of technical aspects. In analysing it, we focus less on the technical aspects as a musician would, rather explore how it creates and emphasises meaning.

HISTORY	HOW TO ANALYSE SOUND				
The earliest films had no sound and were silent.	<p>1. Identify the mood or feeling that the sound creates. If it doesn't create mood, what is it literally telling us?</p>	<p>2. If the sound is score or soundtrack, move onto stage 3. If the sound is any other kind, identify the type of sound using precise vocabulary, for example, diegetic sound effects created through use of foley.</p>	<p>3. If the sound is a score or soundtrack, first identify and describe the general pace. Whilst it may change as the song develops, pay attention to the most dominant pace.</p>	<p>4. Then, identify and describe the general pitch. This will likely change or fluctuate as the song develops, so pay attention to the most dominant or loudest uses of pitch that stand out.</p>	<p>5. Finally, consider how the two different aspects of pitch and pace combine to create an overall feeling or atmosphere, using the ideas below.</p>
Filmmakers experimented with sound, including having a band or pianist in the projection room, for many years before the first film with a soundtrack was released in 1927.					
THE JAZZ SINGER (1927) was the first feature-length film to feature a soundtrack. Starring jazz star Al Jolson and directed by Alan Crosland, the film featured dialogue and music alongside sound effects.					
Since then, sound has continued to develop and evolve, with the introduction of stereo sound, surround sound and most recently, Dolby Atmos. Each designed to create more immersive and detailed sounds that not only replicate the sound in a scene but often trying to evoke the feeling of being in a scene.					
Whilst films tend not to feature bespoke and grand scores like they used to, films are still generally soundtracked by a unique series of scores or suites or music alongside specifically curated sound effects, called foley.					
QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:	NOW USE THE IDEAS BELOW & CONSIDER WHAT THE SOUND DOES:				
	Pitch and pace:			Adjectives to consider using:	
Is the music fast or slow? Does it increase or decrease in pace?	<p>HIGH PITCH: At its highest, a high-pitch score may feel uncomfortable & are often used in horror films for this reason. However, it also provides a sense of happiness and playfulness, maybe even a silliness.</p> <p>LOW PITCH: At its lowest, a low-pitch score can create dread, and threat. It can also suggest seriousness & calm.</p> <p>FAST PACE: When at its fastest, tempo can make audiences feel silly, absurd, or harassed. A slightly fast tempo creates energy and a feeling of movement or energy.</p> <p>SLOW PACE: A much slower pace suggests lethargy, but also suggest tension or anticipation.</p>			<p>Shrill, inciting, emotional, distinct, dramatic, thrilling, playful, silly, refined, arresting.</p>	
What does the pitch of the music suggest about the action?					
How do you think that the sound is trying to make us feel?				<p>Soulful, smooth, somber, depressing, calm, portentous.</p> <p>Frantic, breathy, rejuvenating, riveting, uplifting, motivating.</p>	
What types of sound can you hear?					
What sounds are most dominant, either in volume or in significance to the film and the action on screen?					
Can you characters hear anything besides their own voice? What can they hear? How might that influence their reactions?				<p>Melancholy, purposeful, tense, refined, calming, mysterious.</p>	
Do the sound effects or music contribute to the genre?					
What is the dialogue telling us about? How is it being delivered?					
How does the mix of sound overall contribute to meaning?					

SOUND Year 9 Half Term 5

Glossary

WORD	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Diegetic	Sound that occurs within the film's world and which the characters can hear, for example, dialogue, sound effects etc.	The <i>diegetic</i> sound of the trees.
Non-diegetic	Sound that occurs outside the film's world and the characters cannot hear it, for example, the score, voiceover.	The voice-over is <i>non-diegetic</i> .
Dialogue	Literally meaning two people talking, but generally refers to the speech of anyone in the film.	Their <i>dialogue</i> is very naturalistic.
Voice over	The inclusion of a narrator speaking on top of the visuals on screen. May be spoken by someone who appears elsewhere in the production or by a specialist voice actor depending on the type of film and story being told.	A <i>voice over</i> helps the audience.
Score	An original piece of music that is written and tailored for a specific film. Film scores are composed to enhance a film's story and emotion. Composers create the music for a film based on the direction given from the director.	Throughout the film, the score was excellent and emphasised mood.
Soundtrack	Applies both to the name for a song that already exists and is used within the film and a collection of pre-existing songs that are selected for either use in the film or as part of a marketing tool for the film.	What a diverse & interesting <i>soundtrack</i> they compiled.
Sound effects	A sound other than speech or music made <u>artificially</u> to create realism, add authenticity, to emphasise something or to develop character.	There were some evocative <i>sound effects</i> used in the opening.
Foley	The art of creating sound effects using practical tools and techniques to create sounds that may not be naturally occurring.	I wonder how many of those <i>sound effects</i> were created by <i>foley</i> ?
Post-production	The term used to describe the filmmaking process overall once filming has completed. For example, foley is usually created post-production.	Almost all of the <i>foley</i> work was done in <i>post-production</i> .
Sound design	Sound design is how filmmakers flesh out the aural world of a film to enhance the mood, atmosphere, and/or tone. Sound design components include sound effects or SFX sound design, mixing, Foley sound design, dialogue, and music.	It's a strange film, so the <i>sound design</i> has to be slightly odd too.
Synchronous	Synchronous sound is when the audio of a film is synchronized to the visuals, otherwise described as the film being "in sync."	The score is <i>synchronous</i> to the frantic action we see throughout.
Asynchronous	Asynchronous Sound is a situation when audio tracks are out of unison with the visuals in the frame. It can sometimes be intentional and sometimes accidental. In intentional examples, this can be used for comedic reasons or to emphasise something of significance.	It's odd to hear, but the <i>asynchronous</i> choices in the <i>soundtrack</i> are interesting picks
Contrapuntal	These are sounds that are used in deliberate contrast to the action that is being shown on the screen.	The <i>contrapuntal</i> score was jarring.
Parallel	These are sounds that compliment the mood, tone, or atmosphere of a scene.	The score was <i>parallel</i> in mood.
Ambient	Ambient sounds in film represent the background noises that are present within a particular scene or location.	The <i>ambient</i> sounds were clear.
Sound bridge	An editing technique used to transition from one scene to another through sound. Sound bridges, also called an audio bridges, allow filmmakers to transition in or out of a scene by "bridging the gap" with audio	In using a <i>sound bridge</i> , it's easy to understand the links made.
Tempo	How 'fast' a piece of music is played.	<i>Tempo</i> helps to create the mood.
Pitch	How high or low a note or chord is.	Horror films often use a high <i>pitch</i> .
Diegetic	Sound that occurs within the film's world and which the characters can hear, for example, dialogue, sound effects etc.	<i>Diegetic</i> sound is often overlooked, but is a key part of sound design.