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MART 330.01: Principles of Sound Design

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MAR 330 Principles of Sound Design

Fall 2014

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McGill 126

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Course Overview

“ Principles of Sound Design” is an exploration into audio technique and creative sonic theory. The class defines sound design as a crucial aspect of filmmaking (DFM), Multimedia Design (IDM), and as a unique art form, and is based on utilizing the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) to create dynamic and innovative sonics for visual artists to incorporate into their projects.

Outcomes and Objectives

We begin by developing an understanding of our relationship to sound itself, with a constant ear to the new possibilities that digital sound may afford us. From the history of sound design to the current trends and newest technologies, we embrace the creative power of sonic manipulation. Through exploration of contemporary audio theory and it's implications, the student will learn to *listen* and understand the sonic arts in a new and masterful way.

The challenge of the media arts student is to integrate the capabilities and possibilities of the digital process with a refined aesthetic expression. This class intends to empower the individual by addressing the need to achieve the highest possible fidelity and most creative expression using whatever the artist has at hand, from analog to digital, guerrilla field recording techniques to post-production technology and from high budget to no-budget projects. This is achieved by *informing and challenging* the student, as well as teaching both hardware and software considerations.

At the conclusion of this course students should be able to:

- Understand the basics of recording and editing techniques in virtually any sonic environment, and be able to apply these skills to other media.
- Understand the use of sound as a narrative tool and artistic palette.
- Understand basic DAW protocols and tools, including audio libraries, MIDI interface, Final Mixing and Mastering, ADR considerations, and Foley arts.

- To problem solve creatively and critique intelligently in relationship to sonic arts.
- To apply these understandings professionally in the field and work with other media artists effectively.

Class Structure

The class will incorporate lectures and lab work in various increments, with a “project based” set of priorities. Projects and assignments specific to Sound Design will be assigned, but as students develop their semester assignments from other classes, those projects will be reviewed for possible sound design considerations, i. e., a film or animation project from another class will become a sound design project as well.

Tools and Requirements

Software:

The standard software during lab time is LOGIC PRO. (PLEASE NOTE that this IS NOT a software class. LOGIC is many things, including a composers tool and midi interface. For the needs of the sound designer, only a portion of the program will be presented.) The student should demonstrate competency and familiarity with this program during the course. However, one aspect of the class is to realize that most A/V digital engines are in fact quite similar, and that variation and creativity in audio production can be determined by the choices and selection of appropriate tools . If a student wishes to explore any other software to generate a project, they are encouraged to do so. Ableton, Reason, Cubase, Audacity, Acid, Live, Peak, many others and even Garageband each have different functionalities that could be useful. Programs and people are often suited to each other in unique ways, and the exchange between students and their preferences can be dynamic. The basic requirement is that all finished products be exported as (2-channel) .AIFF files for final presentation or export to Final Cut, AfterEffects, or hey, whatever.

Headphones: Simply, you must have them. Remember that your work can only sound as good as your playback system. The enjoyment and the quality of your work is dependent on what tonalities and frequencies you can hear. A good pair of "cans" can be had for \$25-50*, and is strongly encouraged. NOTE: "earbuds", common with the ipod and other portable devices, are NOT recommended. Reasons for this will be discussed in class.

Another consideration is that headphones should never be the only way you hear your work. Sound systems vary widely and even low fidelity systems can inform you as to where some of your work will be lost to others. Automobile audio systems can be an excellent place to shake off ear fatigue and hear your work in

a new way. Note that computer speakers are notoriously thin-sounding and should be avoided.

** I will gladly consult on the myriad types and costs on request.*

Recording Devices: Although various recording devices (ZOOM) will be available from the department, a quick method of obtaining field recordings is required for each student. In order to broaden our concept of technology, the class is not concerned with the fidelity of the device. You need only find a way to record sounds remotely. Remember that your cell phone might be a possibility, and that if you have a computer, you have a recording device.

The Sonics Lab (Room #214)

As of Spring 2013, an audio studio has been opened for use of the Media Arts Students. It is designed to accomodate personal use for individuals and small groups for assignments and projects associated with Media Arts only. It offers an ADR space with assigned mics, MIDI, a mixing board, quality headphones, a balanced 5.1 Surround Mixing Station, a nice comfortable OSHA grade chair, and a developing Foley Lab.

Priorty in the sound lab is determined by faculty, with a hierarchy of Graduate Students, BFA assignees, and lesser life forms upon sign off.

All equipment in the Sonics Lab must never leave it, or a great hell-fire will descend upon the fool who takes so much as a mic clip.

THE RULES:

CELL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF

NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THE LAB

NO WEB SURFING DURING CLASS

USE HEADPHONES AT ALL TIMES

This lab has been established so that students in the Media Arts program can have a dedicated workspace in which to do their course work. You will have Griz card access to this lab all day, every day. Be aware, however, that the building is not always open, so you may have to work around that. Our office will establish a class list with Campus Security, whom you may call to get in after hours.

The lab may not be used for non-course related purposes. Only students enrolled in the course may use the lab.

Lab Requirements: You will need your headphones for this class, and it is highly recommended that you bring an external data storage device to class all the time. Interface cables will be needed to input from your PRD if you choose to do so.

Peer Review

Peers are cool. Feedback and critical response are highly valuable and should be a constant part of the creative process. Class discussion of ongoing projects will be mandatory.

Grading

The final and most important consideration in grading is the growth of the student. Art projects often "fail" (even for the masters) for any number of reasons, from unrealized aspirations to unforeseen outcomes. Oddly, they sometimes succeed beyond expectation for the very same reasons. Success in the arts is highly subjective, yet effort and growth are easily determined. A project is defined by the *choices made during the creative process*, and growth can be measured through those choices. Students will be challenged to not be afraid to explore or make mistakes, and grading will be on the *intent and integrity of the individual's projects* and the effort made to see them through to completion. The student's ability to integrate the capabilities and possibilities of digital audio with their aesthetic sensibility will be factored in as well as the use of techniques and theory taught during the course. Punctual delivery of the files, attendance, and overall organization will also be a major consideration.

Extra Credit

If a student has the opportunity to work with ANYTHING in an audio capacity, or work with other aspects of audio design (i.e., musical recordings, theater, etc.) during the course, extra credit MAY be approved by the instructor. (max. 3 points)

Exercises

Exercise grades will be based primarily on the student's ability to understand and integrate the applicable principles and techniques covered in the corresponding tutorials.

Reading

Various texts will be assigned for reading. Texts will generally be short articles on sound related topics, and are mandatory for all students.

Course Calendar:

The spring semester includes 14 weeks of classes. MAR 330 level classes meet twice weekly, with each week representing a specific lesson, lecture or lab.

(NOTE: DEPENDING ON CLASS ORIENTATION, CLASSES WILL BE IDM OR DFM SPECIFIC)

Week 1: The History of Sound Design/Deep Listening

Week 2: Listening to Media/Terms and Ideas

Week 3: Storytelling with Sound

Week 4: Dynamics of The Mix

Week 5: Dialog Concerns: ADR and Diction

Week 6: Scoring and Music

Week 7: Sonic Motifs and Sound as Character

Week 8: Foley as an Art Form

Week 9: Noise and Silence

Week 10: The Cultural Impact of Sound Design

Week 11: Personal Sound Libraries / Sound Sources

Week 12: Directing Sound: The Other Movie

Week 13: Conclusions: Future Audio Technologies/Gaming, Surround Sound

Week 14: Finals

ASSIGNMENTS

There are 9 projects slated for the semester. They will be assigned accordingly based upon various metrics such as tech availability, holidays and other projects, and growth of the student body as deemed by The Professor. They are:

1.) Five Sounds (.5 wks)

2.) Deep Listening (.5 wks)

3.) Editing Vox (.5 wks)

4.) Sonic Self Portrait (1 wk)

5.) Sonic Environment (1 wk)

6.) ADR and Foley Games

7.) Video Without Sound

8.) Sound Design For Film

9.) Performance (TBD)

Have a good semester.

THIS COURSE SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academics honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

The Code is available for review online at

www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/Index.cfm/page/1321.