

# Videography 101

## Sound Design

Ben Ellis, October 16, 2022

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**Sound is often overlooked in the filmmaking process.**

### **Visuals are King**

- Most put the visuals of film at the top of their list
- Audio and music become an afterthought

## Visuals are (not) King

- Film audio represents an extremely crucial element of the filmmaking process
- Good sound design will elevate your project
- Realistic audio design will help the audience believe the world you've created
- When beginning your project, remember that sound does not serve the image but is an artistic endeavor in its own right.

As an audience member, we react to sound on a subconscious level. If we hear a sound design with mixing that has been done professionally, we will intuitively feel like we're occupying the space shown on screen.

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space

The first way sound design can elevate your film is by creating a sense of off-screen space. The visuals in the film show the audience what you want them to see but sound can give the audience a greater sense of what is going on off the screen. This adds a fullness to the world of your film.

What they teach you at sound design school is to create an ambient noise soundscape that acts as a cradle for all other sounds- like dialogue and diegetic sounds. Diegetic sound just means sounds that are included in the actual world of the film: so the sound of someone typing on a keyboard, a song playing from a radio on screen, the sound of a person sneezing, etc.

Ambient sound can be room tone, the sound of the fridge humming, light voices in the background, or another room. They help create a sense of space within the sound design of the film. But you don't need a sound design degree to understand the science and artist elements of sound design.

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space
- Sound Bridge

The second way to elevate your film is to use the sound design technique called a sound or audio bridge. An audio bridge is a kind of transition that takes the audio from the next scene in the sequence and uses it in the one before. So you hear the next scene before you see it.

This is an effective way to transition a scene and a great way to elevate your project. Audio transitions can boost your project by breaking away from the usual cross dissolve or fade in and fade out.

Sometimes with the sound design where to start is to look at some examples and then try the technique for yourself. The next time you are editing try creating a sound bridge yourself. By watching examples and reading up its also a great place where to learn sound design.

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space
- Sound Bridge
- Film Music

The third way to elevate your project is through film music. Music is the most effective way to make your audience feel, tug at their heartstrings, raise tension, or set tone. There is a rich history of film music history from the earliest movie theaters having live orchestras to today's ability to stream film scores on Spotify.

It can be hard to secure free film music or music licensing for film but it can also be a great opportunity to work with other artists and film composers to make original music for your project or you can try your hand at creating your own music. Often the music doesn't have to be complicated and intricate to be effective. Sound design for beginners can also mean creating your own film music.

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space
- Sound Bridge
- Film Music
- Emotion

As we've touched on, the sound design and mixing have the ability to convey emotion in your film. If you think a particular scene or beat isn't landing, maybe what's missing is sound or music. Sound designer Tasos Frantzolas said it best in an interview with Lights Film School,

"We go to the movies to feel something. Sound is one of the two main senses that people experience in cinema. Therefore, it's one of the tools that filmmakers have in order to help create an emotion, show something that is not on the screen, make us scared, or create comedy. Sound supports the story and can enhance a scene: every sound can carry a meaning."

**Tasos Frantzolas**

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space
- Sound Bridge
- Film Music
- Emotion

As you learn more about sound design from books and sound design tutorials, it's important to remember the greatest function of this art is to make the audience feel. When taking sound design courses, keep in mind how the skills you learn will be applicable to creating real emotion.

## How Sound Design Enhances Your Film

- Off-Screen Space
- Sound Bridge
- Film Music
- Emotion
- Location

Another great tool of sound design software and how sound design can elevate your project is by setting the location. As discussed with the idea of off-screen space, sound in film can be very grounding and help set the location of your scene.

The background and atmospheric noise tells the audience where the scene is taking place. Although these sounds are usually quiet, they are essential to a scene. Why? Because they appeal to the audience on a subconscious level.

Without them, the scene will feel unnatural to the audience. Without them, the realism of the scene taken away and it stands out to the viewer, even if they aren't sure why.

If the scene is taking place on a busy street, the background noise should be that of a busy street. There should be sounds of people talking, car horns, and the light sounds of engines revving. If the scene is in a forest, the

background noise would be of blowing wind, leaves rustling, and many animal sounds. It would feature anything that will inform the audience of where the scene is set.

