

“You have to feel a sound for it to be effective”: Sonic Surfaces in Film

In an interview with Sound Designer Alan Splet, he foregrounds the production and experience of sound as material. Elaborating on the detailed process of manufacturing the noise of fantastical sandworms for *Dune* (dir. David Lynch, 1984), he remarks that what he and his assistant produced came out “like a mild earthquake traveling under the desert” (quoted in Gentry 1984: 68). When asked why he did not just use the sound of a real earthquake, Splet recounts the practicalities of recording and problems of inferior sound quality as reasons why using an ‘authentic’ noise would not work. Putting aside the issue of aural fidelity he goes on to say:

Exactly how an earthquake sounds is kind of arbitrary. It’s really more of a feeling than a sound [...]. It’s something you can hear, but also something you can feel. You have to *feel* a sound for it to be effective sometimes. (68)

For Splet, sound is to be experienced, appealing to the body as much as the ear. While the physicality of hearing has been noted by Rick Altman (1992), Sean Cubitt (1998), Vivian Sobchack (2005), and Edward Branigan (2010), among others, it is worth thinking further about how sound is used within film and television to expressively communicate and flesh out the density of the fictional world we experience and to which we respond. Such responsiveness to the affective potential of sound is informed by phenomenological approaches which seek to understand the perception of film as shaped by our lived experience and physical interactions with the world. While such approaches consider the ‘depths’ of the body, frequently blurring the boundaries between film body, bodies on-screen and the watching body, this chapter seeks to

explore the affective qualities of surface as expressively produced by these various components of soundtrack in order to highlight the important connection between sound and feeling that Splet notes. Attention to surface therefore enables consideration of the film world as designed *and* as affective. Sound effects can match surfaces seen on-screen, fill in textural details of what is unseen, or provide a material context for an environment even if not matched directly. The progression of music, its contours and shape as modified through rhythm, harmony, and pitch, creates expressive sensations. The combination of the soundtrack elements in the mix can be registered as multiple surfaces forming an overall texture.

Surfaces themselves are not generally attended to when watching film and television, only drawn attention to in close-ups, which tend to be the preserve of the face (although, this is itself another kind of surface). Rarely are we given time to contemplate or scrutinise walls and floors, or the exterior finish of objects. We might have more time to register the impact of the body—a fist knocking on a wooden door, feet jumping onto a stone floor, a back leaning into a cushioned mattress—yet surfaces tend to remain a functional background to action, filling in the canvas of the diegesis. In the course of listening to, and looking at, the aural surfaces of film and television, this chapter aims to counter the typical designation of surface as shallow or lacking meaning. Whether like or unlike our own world, the surfaces that make up the spaces and places on-screen (furniture, décor, flooring etc.), give us something with which to measure the consistency of the filmic world. They are also affective, providing tangible parameters of an intangible object, the textures we perceive in the world anchoring its density. These textures are intimately related to the nature of the fiction, both informing our responses and sitting with the contexts that make up the world, such as narrative, genre, and mood.

Feeling sound

While sound does not exist as something we can prod or stroke, it can touch us. The process of hearing is tactile in part because of its interactions between surfaces that reflect and reverberate sound waves (Altman 1992: 21–23). The sensuous impact of sound derives from its simultaneous invisibility and tangibility, it is all around us: “The physicality of sound, as a movement of air pressure, of vibration, of interpreting exchanges from all around, forms an enveloping and effective influence” (Labelle 2013: 133). The materiality of sound, its reflective impact and enveloping cloud, could be expanded further if we consider the role it plays in establishing the tactile qualities of a particular environment. We can anticipate how a surface feels by looking at it. The way light hits a material indicates its textural qualities, reflecting off a shiny surface, or picking out the soft pile of a thick carpet. Similarly, the behaviour of a sound when it hits a surface communicates the particular dimensions and consistency of a space, and describes the textural qualities of bodies and objects through modulations in frequency and reverberation. Qualities of sound are just as important as the look of a space and the objects in it for determining texture, and for informing us about the nature of its surfaces: “They help us get the ‘feel’ of every room we enter, without ever touching any of the room’s surfaces” (Altman 1992: 23). Sound may be even more directly responsible than the visuals for mapping how the world on-screen feels, as Steven Connor states:

Sight has a close synesthetic correspondence with touch; like the cinema, it works in takes. But the majority of the remaining sensory apprehensions of the world – wetness, texture, weight, heat, and odor – are channeled in film

through sound rather than vision. Hearing, which is anyway more intrinsically mixed than the action of seeing, seems to be more inclined to enter into synesthetic exchanges than seeing. (2013: 117)

The relationship between surfaces plays a central role in the correspondence between sound and image. This might be most evident in sound design: ensuring surface heard matches surface seen (for example, a clipped hard thwack if someone in leather shoes crosses a polished wooden floor) or a lack of reverberation accompanying sounds made in a cluttered room with soft furnishings. But, as Splet makes clear, the construction of an aural surface does not necessarily involve a straightforward replication of the visual. Like other facets of film and television design, sound effects are dramatic: “Revealing its mandate to *represent* sound events rather than *reproduce* them, recorded sound creates an illusion of presence while constituting a new version of the sound events that actually transpired” (Altman 1992: 29). What’s more, this representation has an explicitly sensory dimension. Sound personnel, from Foley artists to sound editors and designers, are involved in an expressive production or performance of sound.¹ Writing on the art and craft of Foley work Benjamin Wright states that it “has become less about matching sync and more about capturing the dramatic ‘feel’ of sound effects” (2014: 206). The vast terminology used in crafting sound, as Wright also notes, is revealing in this respect—for example, “sweetening,” “sharpening”—as is the descriptive language of dubbing mixers, their terminology of a line being “fluffed” or the mix being too “hot” conveying a tactility of surface contact.

Dramatic feel can be located in even the smallest details provided by sound. In an episode of the television series *Mad Men* entitled ‘The New Girl’ (season 2,

episode 5, dir. Jennifer Getzinger, 2008), the central character Don Draper (Jon Hamm) and his colleague Freddie Rumsden (Joel Murray) arrive at their Madison Avenue office. After entering by a glass door, they walk and chat and then, hearing delighted shrieks from an office to their left, pause to speculate on the cause of the noise. Throughout their arrival the clack of typewriters can be heard, louder at first before they open the door but still audible under dialogue, shrieks, and other environmental noise. On one level, the presence of this sound is highly functional, realistic even, as this is an expected noise in a 1960s office. It is notable because it occurs without typewriters appearing onscreen. The lack of accompanying matched visuals enables sound to ‘flesh out’ what we see, enlarging the scope of the shot, and affectively illustrating what lies beyond the frame. The qualities of the sound itself, the short, sharp tapping which creates a punctive rhythm, evokes tactility in the contact we hear. The short but vigorous tap induces a sensorial recognition of fingers on plastic and the movement needed to create that particular rhythmic clack, a sound which brings us closer to people interacting with their environment and the routine surfaces they encounter. This surface contact is everyday, a background hum, and at the same time expressive of modern life, efficiency, and activity. Moreover, as the secretarial pool which occupies this office space is constituted entirely of women, this aural backdrop is carefully linked to the female labor that goes on unseen to support these male workers. Through this sound, the offices of Sterling Cooper are characterized as a busy environment, and quite deliberately set up as a contrast to what we *do* see: the leisurely movements and conversation of two men. In this short moment we have surfaces unremarked/unnoticed but audibly present, which communicate a rich set of ideas about the fictional world. The feel transferred through the sound of surface contact is affective, informing and amplifying our engagement

with space, time, and even sexual politics. Women are audibly present, their labor providing the rhythm of monotonous work but kept as the background fabric of the workplace, while the men's more privileged standing is placed in the foreground (both literally and figuratively). The design of sound here contributes to the division of labour and the gendered lines upon which it is organised, something that *Mad Men* as a series takes as one of its central subjects.

Sound effects

The feel of a surface in film and television is part of an aesthetic transformation. Rendering, Michel Chion's term for the manner in which recorded sound is processed, enriched, and cleaned in order to *translate* rather than replicate actions and impacts on-screen (and off), marks the sonic texture of surfaces as central to their affect. In this term, Chion precisely captures the production of sound as invested in creating the most directly felt aural texture. We need to hear the crispness of stone, the soggy of mud, the plushness of a carpet, to perceive the difference between them, to comprehend the experience of contact with them, and to prevent a jarring disconnection between what we see and what we hear. These details are what Chion terms the materialising indices, "sound details that cause us to 'feel' the material conditions of the sound source, and refer to the concrete process of the sound's production" ([1990] 2004: 114). The further implications of Chion's point is that the production of sound effects is itself material, involving the creation and translation of sounds by bodies (Foley artists, mixers, editors). More than this, through their detailed attention to force, energy, weight, impression, and impact, these off-screen bodies are involved in communicating experience, working to describe the fictional world in material terms through gesture, whether it be a carefully placed footstep or

intricate layering of disparate noises.

The creation of sound effects involves a delicate balance between realism and illusion, rather than one or the other, in order to capture the feel of a particular environment and situate us in the fictional world. There is a non-direct communication of touch embedded in the relation between film design and affect; texture indicated by feel, look, *and* sound. The material properties of surface in a film or television programme, designates the constitution of a space (is it hard, rough, smooth, or soft?) and therefore indicate the qualities of a fictional world (is it precarious or treacherous, luxurious or comforting?). If, as Loren Ryder suggests, “Sound’s purpose is to heighten the illusion,” (quoted in Freeman 1959: 22) the rendering of surfaces can achieve the constitution of space through a variety of sound/image relationships. In *The Shining* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980), the contrast between floorboard and thick carpet as Danny (Danny Lloyd) peddles his trike through the hotel is concentrated through the matching of audio and visual texture, creating uneasy and unsteady sensations in the abrupt shifts from soft to hard. *Eraserhead* (dir. David Lynch, 1977), another example of Splet’s work, involves production of sounds that do not match but instead provide a powerful feeling of surface that informs comprehension of the film’s world. As Harry (Jack Nance) walks through a rough wasteland, there is an absence of noise, such as footsteps, that might tie him to his environment. Instead, the soundtrack suggests the impacts of different kinds of surfaces—clanks of metal against metal, for example—that although not connected to the action on-screen, create a material correspondence that communicates the harsh and desolate atmosphere of that fictional world.

For Raymond Durnat, *Kiss Me Deadly* (dir. Robert Aldrich, 1955) is characterised by a hardness in the film’s visual style: “Everything has the coldness of

stainless steel: the faces are reduced to the same grey, metallic texture. The world is devoid of sensuous-ness, each person is the *idea* of a person, an impersonating android” (1962: 31). Taking the relations of sound and sight as a way to broach the materiality of sound effects, we might ask is the steeliness and flatness of the image observed by Durgnat in *Kiss Me Deadly* supported by its aural design?

In one scene, Private Eye Mike Hammer (Ralph Meeker) goes to visit ex-reporter Ray Diker hoping for a lead in his investigation. He pulls his car up to a curb, gets out and starts walking down the pavement. His arrival is noted by another man who starts to follow him. The camera tracks with Mike, the other man visible in the distance, while clear hard footsteps are loud enough to dominate the soundtrack over the accompanying score. Mike walks up to a newsstand and pauses, his change in pace registered in short scuffs, marking the friction between the rigid sole of his shoe and the cement pavement. As the sequence progresses, there are a series of cuts between Mike, accompanied by footstep sound, and his pursuer, accompanied by silence.

In this moment, sound dramatizes character, provides detail of texture, and illustrates a crucial distinction between the pursuer, who walks softly in order not to be noticed, and the pursued, who does not. The loud and regular thwack of Mike’s footsteps indicates his initial obliviousness to being followed, and then his performance of obliviousness once he has spotted the tail. The clear timbre of the footsteps informs us of the particular materials coming into contact (leather sole and cement floor) and the forceful, almost sharp, nature of their impact. The amplitude of the sound registers Mike’s walk as confident, even violent. A very slight reverberation on the end of each step fits with the wide and fairly empty street, and the additional hard surfaces (walls, asphalt, cars) around. These characteristics of the

sound effects are clearly functional, not only supporting what the image tells us, but also expanding information provided visually, and further mapping out material details of the body moving through its environment. The sonic dramatization of the action serves to bring a three-dimensional quality to the image.

At other moments in the film, the extent to which footsteps are emphasised shifts, indicating an expressive coloring of this otherwise functional sound effect. In the scene I have described, the heightening of footsteps could have been used in service of highlighting Mike's isolation and vulnerability. However, considering the dynamic feel of the sound rather informs comprehension of Mike as a robust presence. The confident thwack of shoe meeting pavement conveys strength and, as he continues with the knowledge that he is being followed, the force of the sound projects a certain amount of performed toughness. In this way, the materiality enscribed in the sound of one surface (pavement) carries over to another surface (body) in order to give it further substance. He is rendered less the flattened android Durgnat perceives in the visuals, and more a hardened but emphatically solid body, a fleshy form whose sensuous bulk anticipates eventual impacts through the forceful clash of foot and floor. Affective physicality is also aurally highlighted in the opening shot of the film, a woman running barefoot along a road. Unlike Mike's footsteps, the rapid slaps of her bare feet on the asphalt register both hard and soft, the collision of vulnerable flesh with the hard, unyielding surface of the road. The strength of the slap indicates an effortful impact, while a consistent brushing as she runs communicates the roughness of the road, with small pings and scratches suggesting an abrasion between soft skin and pieces of grit or stone. In both scenes, sound tells us about bodies in motion, and of surfaces (about to be) knocked together, a concern with impact and collision. The emphatic fullness of the sound effects fill, or flesh out, the

flattened, surfaces of the visual textures to bring the sensation of an imminent violence. Here we have almost a sensory contradiction between sound and image, the sound's fullness embodying a substantial difference in depth and solidity from the image's metallic textures.

While certain kinds of diegetic worlds may treat surfaces in different ways, and particular kinds of surfaces may be more prevalent in certain genres, it is important to note that in film and television, sound effects are used consistently to shape the materiality of the world being depicted and the nature of our involvement in it. Brandon Labelle writes about the role of sound below the line of audibility in creating “sensorial latching,” an “embodied sense of being *on the ground*, where footsteps down boulevards or alleys, along carpeted staircases or across wooden floors, make for a primary rivet aligning body with place” (2013: 136). It strikes me that although the example above features sound effects that are rather more consciously apparent, we might consider how sound works imaginatively and materially to latch us into an environment.

Music

The texture of a surface communicated through carefully designed sound effects encourages an embodied engagement with film and television space as a material, three-dimensional environment. Yet, the soundtrack involves other types of surface that also shape the affective qualities of a fictional world. In expanding attention to aural surface beyond the sound effect, we move into investigation of predominantly figurative, but no less tactile, surfaces. The capacity of music to expressively enhance and direct feeling is a fairly central one, and scholars have underlined its affective contribution to film and television in a number of ways. Claudia Gorbman describes

music in sensory terms, as an immersive and softening force, a “bath of affect,” as well as a binding structure, which adheres “shot-to-shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience” (1987: 6). In addition to this, music itself can communicate tactile qualities: 1) through the surfaces of particular instruments—consider the difference in the impact of a drum beat (wood on skin) or a violin note (hair on strung metal or gut); and 2) in the surface details of composition that generate shape and movement, contour, rise and fall, development and resolution.

While aural qualities of surfaces rendered through sound effects affectively describe physical gestures through visceral components of impact and force, music can be considered to be figuratively—but no less affectively—gestural in its “selection of sonic and rhythmic properties in sonorous motion” (Coker 1972: 18). Musical surface is the expressive function of a horizontal pattern, provided by melody and tempo, and organized through pitch and rhythm. Just as the action of someone walking along a surface consists of the relationship between steps and pauses, between pace and terrain, musical movement consists of relationships between notes, between sound and silence, and both map out sensation. Although musical meaning has been expressed through the analogy of expressive bodily action, I would like to focus on the affective force of musical gesture.² Gesture as movement through pitch conveys an expression of structure that could be a smooth and rounded progression or a sequence of jagged and jarring points. Rhythm and tempo dictate the consistency of a surface in the force and energy of development through the space provided by pitch, made more palpably visceral through relative correspondences to our own heartbeat and experiences of movement. Musical surface can acquire density through repetition, recurring patterns, or motifs accumulating or building layers, or, through increasing the number of strands of music and complicating their interrelationship

(polyphonic/homophonic/heterophonic texture). Alternately, the surface could be smoothed or thinned out through slower pacing, less movement in pitch, and decreasing the number of strands of music (monophonic texture).

There is a possibility that developing understanding of music as a surface supports another close relation between sound and image, or that at the least, the horizontal progression of music enables transference of material qualities between it and the surfaces we see. Such correspondence could be understood as a gestural similarity between action and music, one of three ways in which musical gesture connects to the body, as noted by Iazzetta (2000: 262). Another way music can create affect is to offer a counterpoint to the surfaces we see. Music in *Marie Antoinette* (dir. Sofia Coppola, 2006) frequently clashes with the visuals, especially through the incorporation of a variety of pop songs on the soundtrack which contrast with the film's period setting. One such instance occurs as the newly dubbed Marie Antoinette (Kristen Dunst) is transported from the border of Austria to Versailles, the chosen music track—"The Melody of a Fallen Tree" by post-rock group *Windsor for the Derby*—is emphatically modern, both materially and melodically. The music is spare and subdued, comprised of electric guitar, bass, keyboard, and snare/tambourine. The materiality of the instrumentation is not hidden, so the jangly electrical noises and reverberations that emerge as the melody breaks clearly mark out an anachronistic mismatch of twenty-first century instrumentation and eighteenth century events. Moreover, the textures of music and décor themselves are placed in contrast. The period detail of the plush carriage interior and complex costuming and accessories is elaborate and fussy. In comparison, the music registers as simple and sparse, comprised of few strands and a gently elongated guitar melody featuring only slight degrees of rise and fall. The raw edges evident in the texture of the music as it

progresses further conflict with the containment expressed by Marie Antoinette and the soft luxury of her material surroundings (velvet, silk, brocade, fur and feathers). The clash of modern sound and historical image creates a sense of friction between past and present not just in terms of tone, but in the material juxtaposition of surfaces as well.

The audio-visual textural mismatch has an expressive function, for the sensory friction parallels the rupture being imposed on Marie Antoinette herself. Moments ago, we witnessed her being forced to shed her Austrian self at the border, stripped naked and remade in a new French identity. The trauma of this event is keenly felt as we experience the loss of her Austrian possessions in close-up, Dunst's face crumpling when she is forced to give up her puppy, and then deflected as we see her strip in a long shot, Dunst's back to the camera. When she emerges from the tent her hair is now stiffly curled and greyed, the sheen of her pale blue dress and matching hat, gloves, and shoes, repelling touch (unlike her soft, pale yellow Austrian dress). In keeping with the harder surface of her new image, any feelings Marie Antoinette has are subsumed. The music's sparseness matches her newly distanced expression, its lack of decoration reflecting her own blankness.

Yet, like Marie Antoinette, the music hides its complexity, the apparent simplicity obscuring depth beneath. On the surface is the guitar melody, which presents a series of unresolved gestures—a sequence of notes which rise and fall through a narrow range of pitch and occur in slow bursts broken by significant pauses between them. The melody is thickened by the rhythmic bass, the beat elaborated with a regular variation of three notes moving down in pitch, and a sustained keyboard note, which fills in the space underneath the movement of rhythm and melody without a break. The soft contours of the melody are further complicated by progressive rise

in pitch of the keyboard note and rhythmic energy of the bass in the background. The unresolved back and forth of the melody expresses a reluctance to move, or perhaps an awkwardness in movement, while at the same time, the pulse provided by the bass exceeds a resting heartbeat and so generates a visceral sense of energy and quickened movement, the combination resulting in music that is both melancholy and hopeful. So, despite her loss, the sense of newness and excitement at Marie Antoinette's arrival at the French court is hinted at aurally. The rhythmic uplift in tempo seems to offer the possibility of subdued excitement—a movement matched by the audible thud of horses' hooves and a feeling mirrored in the combination of a close-up on her slightly flushed face and shots of light coming through trees. The sensations generated by the music invite us to share both outer controlled surface and inner mixed emotions. Although the music does not 'fit' with the historic look of the film, it *is* materially tied to her. For K.J. Donnelly, music “performs a primary role in eliciting emotional responses in the audience and in providing consent and encouragement for the audience's emotional responses” (2014: 127). This moment further elaborates the point that music can place us materially with the character, so that we are enveloped into the complexities of their experience, and drawn into the sensations generated by expressivity of surface textures and motion.

The mix

The work of sound personnel involves the weaving together of many strands, whether combining different layers of sound to create one thread, or in bringing together Foley, natural sound, recorded sound, and so on.³ Sound in film and television is a textured process, a layered constitution of multiple surfaces including effects, dialogue, and music. Just as the texture of music “concerns the number of musical strands or layers

occurring simultaneously and the type and nature of the connections among them” (Buhler et al. 2010: 47), we might think of the character of these individual strands of the mix and how their interrelationships contribute to an overall feeling. While an itemization of the main strands perhaps suggests the relationship between them are clear cut, the extent to which these distinctions between parts of mix are increasingly blurred has been discussed both elsewhere (Reay 2004; Donnelly 2014) and within this volume: for example, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson’s chapter concerns sound design and its interactions with music. Not only is attention to the mix a less developed topic in studies on film sound,⁴ but also much less considered are its sensory possibilities.

In the final episode of *Mad Men*’s first season ‘The Wheel’ (season 1, episode 13, dir. Matthew Weiner, 2007), there is a climactic moment that brings Don’s professional and domestic lives together. At a pitch meeting with Kodak for their new slide wheel, he talks about selling the customer a sentimental bond, rather than just relying on the thrill of the ‘new’. He suggests this deeper bond is nostalgia: “It’s delicate, but potent.” The lights are dimmed and the projector turned on, and as Don continues the pitch he clicks through slides of his own family. The sounds combined are: the click of the carousel and whirr of the projector, Don’s voice, and musical score.

To consider each part of the mix individually presents a range of surfaces, potentially too varied and variable to register as single evocations of materiality. Nonetheless, to unpick the sensory qualities of each presents an opportunity to consider combinations and textures in their finer detail. The click of the slide carousel registers the hardness of machine, as surfaces of metal and plastic combine to move each slide into place, while the projector adds a soft hum, creating a background presence of air circulation, not a surface as such but the feel of thickened air in the

background creating a volume of space. Don's voice is persuasive but never overtly sentimental, his tone controlled and consistent. His voice rises and falls enough to generate movement and interest in his expression, but without wavering too far up or down in pitch to undermine his steadiness. The impression given is of firmness, with no chance of the emotional charge of the sequence cracking his exterior smoothness and solidity, unlike his colleague Harry Crane (Rich Sommer) who leaves abruptly at the end of the pitch in tears.

The score is the most complex element as it gradually builds in amplitude and density while other strands of the mix are more consistent in their horizontal trajectories. The music starts with a sustained chord provided by stringed instruments, the edges between notes softened to create an indistinct blur of noise. As the chords gain more definition and contoured movement through a rise and fall of pitch developing in a circular motion in a minor key, a high-pitched tinkling fragment of melody—sparse but reverberating, played by vibraphone and piano—is just audible over other strands of music. As Hamm delivers the central line of the pitch, “It’s not called the wheel, it’s called the carousel,” another melody line is taken up at a lower pitch, strengthening and anchoring the delicate sensation of circular movement in conjunction with the higher tinkling bursts. After the dialogue has ended, the score resolves with two repetitions of a sturdier melody line brought in by clarinets, which focuses the moment, bringing it to a close through a slight movement up and then a more sustained progression down in pitch. The edges of the melody are softened by the accompanying vibraphone while the piano provides a repetitive refrain in a higher pitch, its own lack of resolution in the phrasing furthering the circling motif. The music gently echoes the movement of the slide projector, combining the circular progression and the up- and- down motion of a carousel. This smooth motion and its

steadying intensity draw us further into the moment, working as a sensorial latching to help us feel the experience Don describes.

Taking the surfaces provided by the different layers of sound together, there is a contrast between soft (projector) and hard (clicks of slides), between even and firmness (dialogue), and loose circularity (music). As one might expect, the mix privileges the dialogue, bringing Don's voice to the foreground, with the music only taking over and filling up the track once he has stopped speaking. Although the dominance of his voice and its steadiness creates an even and regular overall surface, the hard clicks of the carousel insert consistent breaks, or bumps in that fabric, perhaps to evoke the sense that this movement backwards and forwards in time Don discusses is not as smooth as it might seem (he refers to the Greek root of nostalgia as meaning "the pain from an old wound.") The click, which clearly conveys a forceful and hard impact, momentarily interrupts Don's firmness, the soft hum, and gentle movement of the music. The result is a correspondence between sound and image based not in replication, but one where sound experientially dramatizes what we see, the the feeling Don describes is evoked through an aural rendering and weaving of effects, dialogue, and music.

Conclusion

Sensory theory encourages a thinking through the body, in order to comprehend how much we understand through sensation and felt experience. Sound, and especially the degree to which film and television sound is constructed—or rendered—with sensory properties in mind, constitutes a major part of this kind of engagement. Sound further dramatizes a thinking through the body, in the physicality of its production, whether through sound effects that retain the trace of gestures made by the Foley artist or

editor, or the expressive physical movements of players and conductor released through musical performance. Elsewhere I have argued for the contribution of one particular part of the sound production process—Foley work—to the affective qualities of on-screen bodies and our sensory engagement with them (2014). This chapter has built on that sensorial connection to explore the affective materiality of different facets of the soundtrack through a discussion of surface. While sound is certainly responsible for describing and providing detailed tactile properties of surfaces, its affective potential can flesh out and expand an environment beyond the screen, dramatize action and characters, and mirror or evoke experience. The ‘feel’ of sound is functional and expressive, responsible for a sensorial connection that can translate the image, develop its scope, create a connection to it through meaning rather than representation, or even produce friction between the two. The sonic surfaces encountered have shown that the materiality of surfaces matters and is meaningful. These details therefore have a great deal of impact, often subtly made, on how we engage with fictional worlds and the feelings they generate.

Biographical Note

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Related Topics

Danijela Kulezic-Wilson - Sound Design and its Interactions with Music: Changing Historical Perspectives.

Nicholas Reyland - Screen music as narrative and/or affect: theoretical and critical perspectives.

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¹ I have written elsewhere about the expressive performance of Foley work (2014) and in general would stress that interviews with a variety of sound personnel indicate the extent to which the process of creating the soundtrack can be seen as a sensory, even embodied, process (see LoBrutto 1994; Gentry 1984).

² See Ben-Tai (2012) for an in-depth discussion of musical gesture.

³ See Sergi (2004) and Chion ([2003] 2009) for detailed discussions of how technological changes, such as Dolby, have increased the layered qualities (and possibilities) of sound design.

⁴ See Altman et al (2000), for sustained attention to how we might analyze the mix.