SOUND EDITING – Julie Lambden

Most films are slaves to the soundtrack - particularly to the dialogue but in the production process it is often not given the same emphasis or importance as the picture.
Achieving a sound track that brings to life your film world isn't purely about filing in the gaps between the dialogue. Every sound should be purposeful and meant. A way should be found to support the images, not clutter or obscure. Silences are just as important as densely layered tracks. Remember all sound has its own rhythm, tempo, intonation, obvious in music but also in speech and sound fx.
Sound fx and atmospheres in a film give aural **clues to the films location, period or mood**. These can be spot fx eg gunshot, door close, atmospheres eg spring birdsong, rain in wales, or manipulated -synthesised sound fx to imply more experimental sound spaces.

Sound editor – Sound designer.

Skillset definition.

Most Sound Designers are experienced Supervising Sound Editors who carry out a managerial role, steering the work of the entire sound post production process, combined with the specialist role of creating the sound concept for films. Creating, manipulating and positioning sound effects are the responsibilities of Sound Designers.
The sound editor/designer also supervises all the other sound work, foley, ADR, dialogue editing. As well as the creative aspect a sound editor needs a knowledge of acoustics, recording sound and the possibilities of manipulation to achieve the desired affect.

<u>Types of sound</u>
Dialogue, Effects, Narration/voiceover, Music
These can be sync, wildtrack, postsync, playback, library or specially recorded.

Dialogue – best as sync but a wildtrack recorded on location is a good back up if the sync has camera noise or unwanted background sounds. Record this immediately after a scene is shot so that the actor remembers their performance. It is sometimes possible to cut in short pieces and for it to look convincing.
ADR (additional replacement dialogue) is sometimes necessary. This is later recorded in a studio to the picture and used to replace unusable sync. The performance is matched to the picture and the production sound (when syncing in FCP use the waveform) and

needs to be identical not improved. Of course the background ambience will be different.

Effects - Footsteps, body movements, small prop sounds (foley) can all be recorded in a studio. These are recorded to the picture and later cut in and matched exactly. Often on location the microphone has been favouring the dialogue and the sync fx are off mike. Recorded clearly and balanced small sound details can enhance images and lift a soundtrack.
Other fx can be gather from sound libraries, recorded wild on location or later. They can be manipulated and treated.
Effects can be sounds linked to specific actions(causal). The actions can be on screen or off; an off screen car crash can be vital to the narrative, atmospheres and environments. They can be expressionistic, they can give clues to emotions both to the participants in a scene as well as to the onlookers. To a neutral image tension can be built by using sound clues. They can provide a transition between scenes or between moments in a scene.

"Foley" is normally defined as sounds related to movements, whether pertaining to a character or an object (footsteps, fights, fist banging on a door), or to the result of an object's movement (pouring wine, shards of glass falling from a broken window). Named after Jack Foley (an innovative pioneer of the art at Universal Studios), Foley is recorded in specialised sound studios working to projected pictures. Skillset

Voiceover and narration - Needs to be well thought out, conceived at an early stage, add to the narrative rather than illustrate the pictures, give character and emotion and sometimes inform. The right voice is vital as it will change
the tone of the whole film. Usually a guide voice is recorded to a near locked picture (depending on how you work)and tried in the edit and then the words finalised and the voiceover artist brought in.
Music - Music can often be strong and dominate the images; it can isolate us from the films life – this characteristic is often used emotionally, stylistically and rhythmically. Music can relate to the pace of a film. It can be used to counterpoint action not takeover it, it can heighten tension, emphasise mood and give atmosphere
It can be composed- with a lengthy process of trying pieces and rewriting or library music used. Library music can be useful to try out ideas and replaced later.

Playback - Music performed in vision is usually acted to a playback guide which will later be replaced in the edit by the high quality recording.

Tracklaying

Whilst the editor is still cutting listen in a quality sound environment (theatre) to the recorded sync dialogue and judge whether is will need to be rerecorded (ADR). It might also need to be rerecorded for performance reasons. This needs to happen fairly early on so that actors can be booked and secured. Also check to see if other takes or wildtracks can be used. If these could be potentially useful pass them to the editor to cut in and try.

Before picture lock get the editor to make a quicktime file of the nearly completed film. This will give you the opportunity to prepare, think about and plan your desired sound fx which might entail research and recording (FCP operates in 48khz) and gathering (don't use MP3 file as the quality is not good enough). You can also experiment and try different versions and treatments. The editor may require essential sound fx that inform the story. The sound editor wil need to supply these or temporary versions.
*To help you in your planning use a dubbing chart to list and plan where fx should go. (**Look at the example – Icarus dub chart)***

The composer should also be given a Quicktime file at this stage to start working on the music and supplying the editor with temporary compositions. Placing music can dramatically change the cut so there needs to be a constant dialogue between these two areas.

Lock your picture. Make a duplicate and name it ???tracklay. Before picture start add 15 secs. of black slug and on 12 sec frame replace this frame with one frame of colour bars and one frame of tone. The tone should be on this precise frame on each track that you use. This is to help sync your eventual final mix to the picture and to keep things in place during the mix.

Where possible when tracklaying a ***dialogue*** between two people place each of the two voices on a separate sound track on the timeline. Put voice A on track one and voice B on track two then voice A back on track one. This will achieve what is known as a chequer boarding affect and enables the mixer to apply an effect or level to the whole track easily without having to shift other voices out of the way. (By doing this you save time and money) Add overlaps to help smooth between two voices. If there are large gaps

between the dialogue that the overlaps don't fill, an equivalent atmosphere is needed. Make sure any 'off mike' lines have been replaced. Sync fx are often attached to lines – judge whether these need a different level change or needed to be re-recorded and synced to the picture. Sync production fx can be added to another track. Dialogue is always recorded as mono so should only appear on one track unless two microphones have been used for insurance during filming eg a boom mike and a radio mike.

Narration, voiceover and postsync will be put on the next tracks.

The organization of you're your tracks is very important to help ease the mix and not waste time. When organsing your tracks make sure that mono and stereo tracks are not placed on the same track as this will cause problems in protools. Generally spot fx will be mono – but not always, and atmos. will be stereo.
When organizing your tracks try to arrange fx that are similar and part of the same scene either on the same track or nearby tracks. Try not to have one 'splash in a puddle' on track 5/6 and another 'splash in a puddle' on track 30/31 put it on track 7/8. This makes it easy for the mixer to deal with. The two fx might need to be smoothly mixed/faded together one to the other so put them on separate pairs (if stereo) of tracks on above the other.

FX – Can be recorded as either stereo or mono and should divided onto the relevant tracks. These can also be divided into 'spot fx' (accurately placed or synced to an action), or atmospheres which can be general or particular. Try using several stereo backgrounds to give a little vibrancy but don't swamp or detract from the picture. When recording fx think about the perspective and point of view of the picture that it will go with.

If several sounds are happening at the same time these will obviously need to be on separate tracks as well as sound that crossfades. Long crossfades can help blend different qualities of sound. Sometimes the perspective of a sound changes within a scene, sometimes from shot to shot, it might help to split the group of sounds connected onto a different set of tracks to achieve this change in the mix – but don't make it too difficult to organise. Think of it as though you were going to mix yourself.

Again arrange layers of atmos near to each other eg a layer of 'wind in trees' over a layer of 'heavy rain'.

Label your sound clips appropriately eg pen writing on paper or city atmos. with birds a.m. these names will appear on your clips on the

timeline (this should be done t the original clip when it is brought into FCP|0

It is a good idea to look at, and analyse your picture listing all the picture cues with the incoming timecode, in the first column of your **dubbing chart** or cue sheet (there are blank chart and examples on Blackboard) - the dubbing chart is a graphic representation of the laid tracks. A straight line indicates a 'cut in' at a set level. A ⟩ or a ⟨ indicates a fade. These marks on adjacent columns indicate a mix from one to the other. The purpose of the dubbing chart is to convey information to the mixer. What sound is on what track at a particular time. As the editor or sound editor of the film you are extremely familiar with the story, the mood and tone and where you have laid different sounds, fx etc but the mixer will very often encounter the film for the first time on the day of the mix so every piece of information is useful. A paper dubbing chart should be taken to the dub and given t the mixer. It also provides a place for the mixer to make notes eg levels, fx used.
There is an example of a digital dub chart that EDIchart sell also on blackboard. This is an electronic file of the timeline that conveys exactly the same information as the hand written dub chart. It is easily read by the dubbing mixer but still relies on the clips being named. I have never used an electronic version of a dubbing chart and for small project I can see that they aren't really necessary but for a feature with many tracks and possible premixes they could be useful. Ultimately it is all about communicating information.

The Mix
Export OMF files from FCP – File export audio to OMF. You are now given a choice. If you have made level changes and fades that are useful you can tick this to take the information in with the OMF file, add at least 5 sec handles to your files.
Click and save to a folder labelled Mix. Also make a standard definition (720x 576) normal quality quicktime movie (inc the rough sound) of your tracklayed timeline and place in folder.
Bring a neat final version of your dubbing chart or a readable print out of you timeline or both. Remember the dubbing mixer has never seen your film and you need to communicate your wishes.

When mixing was done using film magnetic stock, because of a limitation on the number of tracks that could be played at one moment premixes were made and these were then balanced together and mixed down to the final mix. Premixes are still used when there are a large amount of tracks. Dialogue was balanced and mixed. The music and fx (M&E) were also balanced and mixed. This is also useful if the dialogue is replaced – dubbed for foreign versions. By premixing it gives you the opportunity to focus on

specific categories of sound, getting the details right, applying reverb, panning. Mixing digitally the same practice can also be followed but there will be no loss of quality.

A sound file is exported from protools of your mix. It will either be an Aiff or a Wav at 48khz. Bring in the file to you FCP project and layback (sync up) to the locked picture. You can use the frame of tone to help sync. Check the sync by watching the **entire** film. Then get rid of the tone and leader. Playout to tape and make an a full resolution QT file.

Books

Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice and Sound Effects Cinema. Edited by David Sonnenschein (Michael Wiese Productions)
Film Sound by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton (Columbia University Press)
Audio-Vision : Sound on Screen by Michael Chion (Columbia University
Press)