

BA(Hons) Creative Music Technology, Stage 1
CRMT130 Designing Sound
Assessment 2: Individual Report
Circa 1000 words (bibliography not included)

CREATIVITY:

Please describe your ideas, processes, materials and methods. This should cover, recording techniques, audio processing and editing. What did you use? What were your most significant decisions? Explain your decisions?

I started with an approach informed by what the original author of the book that the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was based on described. Ken Kesey writes about "The Combine" as narrated by his character "Chief" Bromden. The Combine represents the dark machinery "humming behind the walls" in the institution. I used a synthesis approach to reflect The Combine using the Sculpture synth in Logic along with Modulator (an LFO) to produce a dramatic rising effect to emphasise the first scene. I used a further Sculpture synth effect after the first scene changes to the Chief walking down the corridor, to produce a menacing machine like effect. When the Chief identifies his means of escape this continues but I also used a recording of a lift to provide metallic straining sounds that represent the Chief lifting and breaking off the machinery but also to represent his struggle and mangling of the internal machinery of the Combine which he ultimately uses to provide his escape. The lift was recorded using a Zoom mike plugged into a laptop as an audio interface. I also started adding a crossover of musical and abstract sound design and foley to provide an American Indian theme inspired by the character of the Chief. There is a large drum sound on the first scene change provided by the Logic drum kit and some distortion added to it. Then, along with footstep foley, the Chiefs footsteps are echoed in a Shamanic like Indian drumming. I also recorded sound effects produced by bowing a cymbal that provide further dramatic effect to the Chief straining in the shower room to rip off his means of escape. I also added a more musical element of the sequenced synth Alchemy as the piece is very dark up to this point and needed a more positive tone as this is the characters final escape from tyranny. The musical element juxtaposes well with the darker more abstract and foley elements. Finally I re-amped the work I had done by booking a space (the "Void" in AMATA) that closely matches the space represented in the film. This was done by using a Electro-Voice ELX112P Powered Speaker and a Zoom mike. The footsteps foley were also recorded in this space.

SKILLS:

What new skills have you acquired during the course of the module. Which of these are from outside of the taught materials? How did you apply them to your project?

I had to learn the technique of bowing a cymbal which requires the correct pressure and speed along the cymbal edge to get the correct effect. I also learnt how to "re-amp" foley and effects in an appropriately matching space. This is what Walter Murch calls "worldising".

PROFESSIONALISM:

Please identify the professional benchmark you are working towards; which sound designers have informed your project?

Walter Murch described many of his techniques in the extras on the THX1138 DVD (Lucas 1970), including his re-amping "worldising" technique that informed my project.

RESEARCH

Which ideas, books, articles, journals, lectures, film and video informed your project? Please explain why. Quotation and citation is expected in this section.

I had originally realised that "The Combine" in the video game Half Life 2 (Valve, 2004) was originally inspired by The Combine in Ken Kesey's book One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Kesey 2006). The game has multiple sequences taking place in locations that have machinery and/or sound effects that emphasise a machinery humming in a way that emphasises the dehumanising machine like effect of the Combine.

"The way you see the change in a person you've been away from for a long time, where somebody who sees him every day, day in, day out, wouldn't notice because the change is gradual. All up the coast I could see signs of what the Combine had accomplished since I was last through this country, things like, for example - a train stopping at a station and laying a string of full-grown men in mirrored suits and machined hats, laying them like a line of identical insects, half-life things coming pht-pht-pht out of the last car, then hooting its electric whistle and moving on down the spoiled land to deposit another hatch." (My emphasis) (Kesey 2006)

Half Life 2 took a cinematic approach to sound design.

"Half-Life 2 composer and sound designer Kelly Bailey selected sounds from at least nine different libraries, including the Foley Sound Library, The Hollywood Edge, and The Premiere Edition Volume 1. No expense was spared ensuring the right noises fit the game's tense mood." (Whitson, 2022)

Ken Kesey's book contains descriptions of the sounds of The Combine.

"They laugh and then I hear them mumbling behind me, heads close together. Hum of black machinery, humming hate and death and other hospital secrets. They don't bother not talking out loud about their hate secrets when I'm nearby because they think I'm deaf and dumb."

"There's a whine of fear over the silence. I hear the machinery in the walls catch and go on."

"The machinery in the walls whistles, sighs, drops into a lower gear." (Kesey 2006)

Other works and techniques also inspired the design.

"The Godfather" sound designer Walter Murch put unmotivated, screeching elevated subway train noises on the soundtrack, which speak to Michael's mental state:" (O'FALT, 2019)

"A rhythm that is too regular cyclical can also create an effect of tension, because the listener lies in wait for the possibility of a fluctuation in such mechanical regularity." (Sven 2004)

"In Terminator 2: Judgment day Linda Hamilton was running bare feet to the sound of clicking heels. (her outbreak from the asylum)" (Sven 2004)

CRITICAL THINKING:

Evaluate your work and reflect on the experience ... what worked, and what would you do differently?

A key realisation was the “worldising” of the synthesised effects using a physical space that was similar to the one depicted in the film. However due to time constraints some foley recordings did not get “worldised” in the same way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Please list everything you have read, watched and listened to that directly informed your project. The list should be formatted according to the Harvard referencing system.

<https://ask.fxplus.ac.uk/harvard-falmouth>

Half Life 2. 2004. Valve Bellevue Washington, Valve.

KESEY, Ken. 2006. One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest. London: Penguin.

LUCAS, George, Robert DUVALL and Donald PLEASENCE. 1970. THX 1138. Warner Brothers DVD.

O’FALT, Chris and Chris O’FALT. 2019. ‘23 Films That Revolutionized Sound Design’. IndieWire [online]. Available at: <https://www.indiewire.com/gallery/films-great-sound-design-making-waves/the-godfather-3/> [accessed 1 Feb 2023].

SVEN, Carlsson. 2004. ‘Temporalization’. www.filmsound.org [online]. Available at: <http://www.filmsound.org/chion/temporalization.htm>.

Whitson, H. (2022). Half-Life 2’s Legacy of Iconic Sound Design. [online] Game Rant. Available at: <https://gamerant.com/half-life-2-iconic-sound-design-legacy-storytelling-immersion/>.

Collaborators:

Please declare all collaborators and make clear your own work.

All my own work. No collaborators.