

**CULLEN, MICHAEL**

**(MSc Sound Design)  
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## **Sound Design – Film Sound Reviews.**

Project supervised by Martin Parker.

Number of pages: 9.

### **The Conversation**

Directed by Francis Ford Copolla

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### **Citizen Kane**

Directed by Orson Welles

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### **Spirited Away**

Directed by Hayao Miyazaki

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## THE CONVERSATION

**Sound: Walter Murch**

### Scene 1 (00:00 – 07:30)

The title shot is a defining moment in cinematography involving early use of an electronic zoom, programmed to gradually zoom in for a full three minutes.

The scene opens with barely perceptible ambient noise and a piece of Jazz as the overriding score. *Establishing Sound, Non-Diegetic Sound, Anempathetic Sound, Sound Hermeneutic.*

**(0:33)** Sound of dog barking. *Off Screen Diegetic, Sound Advance, Selective Audio, Semi-Sync, Spatial Signature, Room Tone.* Selective Audio - because the dog bark has been selected in spite of ‘people noise’ that is obviously surrounding it.

**(0:36)** Sound of a man shouting that morphs into the female vocal from the Jazz track. The shouting appears to come from an apartment rather than on the street. On closer inspection the male voice is actually part of the jazz track but has a psycho-acoustic influence that fits the ambience and perspective of the environment as presented via the zooming lens. *Anempathetic Sound, Sound Hermeneutic, Non-Diegetic Sound.*

**(1:10)** A modulating radio communication sound previously used by Walter Murch in George Lucas’ THX-1138. This is a foreground effect that references the observer behind the telescope sight represented by the zooming camera lens. The modulations, coupled with the slow zoom, set the tone and pace of the movie as the viewer is drawn toward the mime artist. *Diegetic Sound, Sound Hermeneutic, Thematic Establishing Sound.*

**(1:35)** The Jazz Score ends with reverberant applause. *Non-Diegetic Sound.*

Distant sirens from police cars or emergency vehicles are audible as a background effect. This adds to the reality of being closer to street level. The zoom reveals closer

detail visually and the sound designer chooses to compliment this sonically. ***Diegetic Sound, Point-of-Audition Sound, Soundscape.***

(1:45) The modulating radio effect is repeated as a foreground effect over the sirens. The camera begins to pan with the movement of the mime artist drawing the viewer away from the title sequence and creating the transition to the visual introduction of the central character Harry Caul, a surveillance expert played by Gene Hackman. At this point it isn't obvious that he is the central character.

(1:55) Footstep and multiple conversation sounds as the zoom continues. ***Diegetic Sound, Semi-Sync, Soundscape.***

After 2 minutes the focus shifts from the mime artist following Harry Caul as they walk across Union Square to a shot of what is probably implied as the source of the opening zoom, a surveillance guy on the roof of the City Paris building with a telescopic microphone.

The next shot represents the view through the telescope, with the cross hair on screen, focusing on a young couple that are the subjects of the conversation. Their lip syncs are in time with the sounds of more radio transmitted voice modulation. This informs the viewer that the couple are the subject to surveillance. Interesting to note that these modulations were recorded on location at point of dialogue using radio microphones. ***Diegetic Sound, Point-of-Audition Sound, Sound Hermeneutic.***

In the next shot a bush obscures the couple. The voice modulation effect continues, thus confirming that the couple are still engaged in conversation. ***Off-Screen Diegetic Sound.***

(3:50) Couple in shot and in conversation. Speech is normal. ***On-Screen Diegetic Sound.***

The Jazz score returns and the camera switches to a saxophone player in the square. ***Non-Diegetic Sound.***

**(4:10)** The girl starts to sing. Her singing is clearly audible. In the background, the soundscape consists of birds and people in the square. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Sound Balance, Soundscape.***

Conversation and modulation continue. But now, the audio is presented from the perspective of the monitoring equipment inside the surveillance van, reel-to-reel tape decks and speakers. Obviously the sound is really the result of post-production as there is little evidence of any interfering soundscape that would normally be present.

***Off-Screen Diegetic Sound, Point-of-Audition Sound, Room Tone.***

**(6:09)** Analogue camera sounds as Stan photographs two girls through the van window disguised as a mirror. ***On-Screen Diegetic Sound, Point-of-Audition Sound, Room Tone.***

**(7:11)** It is interesting to note another instance of ***Selective Audio***. Inside the van there is only the audio from the men's voices and a distinct absence of soundscape.

Considering that the van is parked in a busy square, with crowds of people and musicians playing near by, indicates a recording created in a studio situation using **ADR** (Automated Dialogue Replacement) post-production techniques.

## **CITIZEN KANE.**

**Sound: James G Stewart. Composer: Bernard Herrmann.**

### **Scene 5 (16:30 – 20:05)**

**(16:30)** Scene 5 opens with scored orchestration as the camera pans from top to bottom while focused closely on a statue of Walter Parks Thatcher. *Non-Diegetic. Empatheitic.*

**(16:40)** Miss Anderson's voice is heard before she comes into shot. The striking characteristic of this voice is the natural acoustic qualities of the room. The relative depth of the room is only evident when Miss Anderson and Mr. Thompson are in the frame. *Off-Screen Diegetic, Sound Advance, Spatial Signature.*

This is a remarkable recording capturing the very essence of the large cold stone pillared library room that matches the cold authoritarian disposition of Miss Anderson.

The orchestrated music continues in the background as Miss Anderson speaks. *Empatheitic.*

The recorded reverberations of Miss Anderson's footsteps, as she walks toward the vault, complement the size of the room that is presented visually. *On-Screen Diegetic. Spatial Signature, Sound Balance.*

**(17:05)** Even the large door that leads to the Vault Room has a sound quality and reverberant characteristic of its size and location signifying attention to detail with regards to set design and audio post-production. *On-Screen Diegetic, Spatial Signature, Sound Balance.*

The acoustics generated by the conversation between Miss Anderson and Mr. Thompson in the vault room is superb.

(17:39) The decay on the reverb generated by Jennings as he closes the door to the safe indicates the depth of the Vault Room as presented visually on camera. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Spatial Signature, Sound Balance, Semi-Sync.***

(17:42) As Miss Anderson exits the room she closes the door. An establishing sound in the form of an orchestral note from the music score blends with the impact sound of the closing door. A perfect audio-visual transition is created and cues up the next shot of Mr. Thompson perusing Thatcher's memoirs. ***Establishing Sound, On-Screen Diegetic, Spatial Signature, Sound Balance, Semi-Sync.***

(18:06) The ensuing music cues up a remarkable transition in mood and location from the sombre setting of the vault to a shot of Kane as a young child playing happily in the snow. ***Non-Diegetic, Empathetic*** leading to ***On-Screen Diegetic, Sound Balance, Semi-Sync, Soundscape.***

Such attention to detail with regard to transition techniques is evident both aurally and visually throughout this film, thus confirming why Citizen Kane is a masterful piece of art and direction.

(18:22) The next shot is a remarkable piece of cinematography. It is completed in one take with one manual camera-zoom.

The audio perfectly compliments the activity presented by the zoom, commencing with a young Kane shouting while playing in the snow and drawing back into the room as if the camera is actually coming in through the open window. At this point Kane's mother is the main focus and then on to the ensuing conversation between Kane's parents and Mr. Thatcher. Mrs. Kane walks toward the camera in time to the zoom rate adding a subtle transition of depth to the overall focused shot and the surrounding sounds. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Sound Balance, Semi-Sync, Soundscape.***

The camera zooms out and back into the room maintaining both foreground and background imagery in focus as well as keeping the audio levels relative to the depth of the shot. For example, the voice of young Kane still playing outside and coming in through the open window is just audible under the close-up and much louder interior debate between his parents. ***Sound Balance.***

At one point the sound of young Kane (Kane is obscured by Kane's father and Mr. Thatcher) is obviously distant, while the two men are balanced perfectly mid-shot with Mrs. Kane close up to the camera and now seated at a table. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Sound Balance, Semi-Sync.***

**(18:55)** The focus of all characters and their sounds are clear and balanced. This is confirmed a few moments later as the three adults discuss business while young Kane, again in shot and in focus, plays outside in the snow. His shouts are clearly audible under the intense debate between his father and Mr. Thatcher. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Sound Balance.***

**(19:47)** Mr. Kane shuts the window. This mutes young Kane's playful shouts. The emphasis in terms of audio is focused on the two men. Interesting is the observation that young Kane is momentarily muted while he is the subject of conversation. ***Sound Balance, On-Screen Diegetic.***

**(19:55)** Almost immediately, Mrs. Kane opens the window and the shouts are audible again. ***Point-of-Audition Sound.***

**(19:57)** The camera shot is now from a second camera pointing back at the area where the initial zooming camera would have been placed. ***On-Screen Diegetic, Off-Screen Diegetic, Sound Hermeneutic.***

## **SPIRITED AWAY.**

***Sound: Shuji Inoue, Kazuhiro Takeshige.***

***Composer: Joe Hisaishi.***

**40 minute Nippon TV Special Documentary on the bonus DVD.**

This review outlines techniques employed during the dubbing, sound design and scoring of one of the finest Anime films to date.

### **Dialogue / Dubbing**

**(23:15)** Director Hayao Miyazaki chose a basement projection room and converted it into a recording studio for the dubbing process. An interesting choice as many people were present, all of who had to maintain silence during takes. The dialogue for each character was recorded in sync with the animation projected onto a large screen for the benefit of each voice actor and member of production staff present.

**(23:17)** The room itself is like a small cinema with 4 rows of seats. The second row hosts the key AV equipment where the director, producer, engineer and editors sit.

The key observation here is the openness of the studio. There is no glass wall separating the production crew from the actor's microphones. In order to reduce additional noise, no manned cameras were allowed in the room.

Miyazaki has been directing anime for 20 years, but this is the first time he has managed a dubbing session in this way.

**(24:24)** He even makes the comment “You really notice how this place is different from a recording studio... You have to watch if your stomach rumbles and all sorts of things.”

During some of the takes, Miyazaki and his crew would laugh and thus render the recording unusable. However, because the actor, director and production crew are all in the same space and thus participating in the same moment, everyone seems far more relaxed. Miyazaki could offer instant and informal feedback to the actor after a take and liaise immediately with the engineer who is monitoring the recording on headphones and who is more likely to notice any technical anomalies.

In principle, this accelerates the dubbing process, as the key personnel are able to correspond immediately and reduce the need and cost for post-dubbing alterations.

It would be interesting to discover just how much the natural room reverb influenced decisions relating to DSP reverb at the post-production stage.

## **Sound Design**

**(33:03)** The location theme for the movie is a bathhouse for gods. Therefore, Shuji Inoue, the Sound Designer, visited actual bathhouses to record sounds of splashing water and steam. Other important sounds included sweeping the wet wooden floors, and capturing the large natural reverb inside the bathhouse when maneuvering the stools and water tubs.

Inoue's team was also allowed to record the authentic ambiance inside the kitchen of a busy restaurant. They also recorded the preparation of the dining area followed by eating sounds, utensils and finally the clearing of tables.

The sounds of the family car were recorded from the real model that the animated car was based on. Particular attention was paid to the sound of uneven road surfaces with several microphones placed along a short stretch of very irregular paving.

## **Foley**

**(34:41)** At ‘Tokyo Kinuta Toho Sound Studio’, Mr Noguchi, an animation Foley Artist for more than 20 years, added sounds one by one to every small movement.

The art of Foley involves manually creating a huge array of sounds. One of the most fascinating areas of Foley involves footsteps.

Mr Noguchi splashes barefoot in a tub of water for the bathing scenes and wears a different shoe for each character for walking and running sounds.

Even when dubbing just one character, Mr Noguchi wears a different shoe on each foot, thus adding more subtlety to the character’s movement. This was highlighted to great effect when dubbing the sounds of Chihiro running down uneven steps. One shoe had a more muted sonic character than the other.

Mr Noguchi sits on a stool and taps his feet in time to the character. The stool is next to different surfaces so that he can mimic the different tones as required. At other times he mimes together with an assistant to accurately reflect multiple footsteps.

## **The Score**

**(37:33)** Joe Hisaishi is the man responsible for scoring all of Hayao Miyazaki’s movies. The New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra in the ambience of the Tokyo Sumida Toriphony Hall performed Joe Hisaishi’s score.

To record the orchestra, Mr. Hisaishi employed a microphone for every instrument. There were separate microphones to record the natural reverberation in the concert hall. A total of 60 microphones were used. The echo was mixed independently of the instrument recordings. Hisaishi was enamoured with the natural spatial character of the concert hall and it is very educational to note how this natural reverb was used instead of more conventional DSP effects.