

Sound Design for Kurt Horbst - Movie 002

This is a kaleidoscopic movie of immense complexity and depth. Chosen because it demands numerous replays to absorb all the content. It is extremely difficult to attentively focus on any one of the continuous visual transitions without being distracted by another - cross fading in either direction. Somewhat like trying to pick out a single conversation from amongst a crowd of many conversations, the observer has to deal with 16 motion filled mini screens inside the same frame of vision.

The Sound Design is based around simplifying the ability to focus on any one of the visual sequences with the aid of sonic cues. These sonic cues highlight a visual element and at times encourage or offer an alternative, yet focused and smoother perspective on any one of the simultaneous transitions.

The subliminal visual transitions are complimented with subliminal audio transitions. The types of stimulus that can sometimes shift one's focus more gently and hold it rather than distract or confuse.

As one becomes more accustomed to the movie it is easier to absorb the multiple planes of visual sequences with the help of the sound design.

It is intended that through such sound design and Foley techniques, one will begin to think more in the vertical plane pertaining to the juxtaposition of multiple sonic events occurring simultaneously for just one sequence.

Also, to further appreciate the subliminal crossovers pertaining to many vertical planes of sound design that interchange dependent on the observer's particular point of focus at any given time.

Because the movie is sourced from real world video (not computer graphics) but presented in an unusual way and thus enhanced by computer techniques, the sound design shares similar principles.

Dialogue

The Dialogue is from a recording session that I did with my friend and hypnotherapy practitioner, Marianne Turner. I isolated just the prominent mid range frequencies to create a narrower band 'telephone' effect.

As I progressed with the project I kept getting the suggestion for a theme pertaining to subliminal messaging contained within the visuals. So, I decided to explore and apply this idea in the context of an Orwellian Big Brother style mind-altering tool or propaganda device ('information movie'). But, instead of a male voice, I decided that a female voice would be more comforting, hypnotic and deceptively reassuring for such a theme. Marianne's tonality was perfect for this as are the words chosen for the dialogue. If this seems too obscure, then the dialogue definitely compliments the video from the perspective of a public announcement played upon departure and arrival whatever the theme.

Voices

At around six seconds there is a 500ms snapshot of a voice from a crowded café. I included this for a subliminal effect that evokes the presence of people as the vehicles pass by them.

Tones

I created simple but effective tones typical of high quality TV advertising. These are effective in that they act as 'earcons' and auditory icons, indicating the diagonal transition of sequence sets paging from left to right. A fuller tone is mapped to the white bus sequences and a 'bomb timer' sound is mapped to the subtler bus window transitions. No sinister connection intended!

Vehicle Sounds

The vehicle sounds that are produced via Foley are made from real world objects and enhanced with simple low frequency sine waves.

While listening to buses and cars I gauged that there are three distinct frequency spectrums that could be isolated and created via Foley and synthesis in order to get the point across without the complexity of frequency information overload and clashes with underlying ambiance.

- 1) Low Frequency Engine Tones, 60Hz - 100Hz. Simple Sine Wave Tones.

- 2) Mid range acceleration and passing Doppler effect, 250Hz - 3000Hz with Pan. Dragging Metal Coat Hangers along a rail and then applying an appropriate HPF EQ.

- 3) Higher Frequency Air Pressure / Hydraulic sounds. Dragging a Microphone across a chair cloth and applying a HPF above 2.5 kHz.

- 4) Very High Frequency Peaks for Brake Screeches (6 - 11kHz). Created by more aggressive coat hanger friction on the rail to cut a harsh resonant sound.

To add subtle variation to what could otherwise become a mundane loop of sonic events these sounds are mixed at varying volumes and occasionally presented alone. This complimented the overall surrealism of the video and added variety to obvious visual loops. For example, sometimes a car sequence is a car; sometimes a coat hanger with a sine wave and other times just a low frequency sine wave.

Pedestrian

For the pedestrian sequence I recorded various floorboard squeaks. They are representative of footsteps. This is an interesting choice as the clarity in frequency stands out above the juxtaposed ambiance of the vehicular effects and music. More so than would the frequencies of footsteps on concrete as is the reality of the footage. The surrealism of this choice compliments the video presentation just like the Foley effects chosen for the car sequences.

Music

The music is more of a sound design element than a scored composition. Designed and shaped to deliberately compliment the transitions across particular screens, it is hoped that the observer will look deeper into the background and see what is going on through the bus windows. The dynamic movement has been carefully orchestrated to assist in guiding the viewer through the movie.