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COM 321

16 February 2023

Sound as a Listening Experience: Report 1

No human can travel to a place on Earth without sound accompanying them. If they journey to a quiet cave, the sounds of their footsteps and breaths will follow them, reminding them about the spacious and empty environment. Sound is a powerful indicator of where someone is, and the way it is received is important for revealing how a person is feeling about where they are. A sound from a different setting can completely change the perception of someone sitting in their own home, even convincing them that they are somewhere else. This shows that sound should not be disregarded as a mere product of reality; instead, it must be treated as a whole experience along with reality, since it can reveal much more than what meets the eye about what someone perceives about their location.

A sound that is worth noting is Voltage Dreams, a track by Zinan. It is a three minute long audio of a rainstorm, and it was found in a sleep playlist on Spotify. I tried listening to it to fall asleep, and I can say that it definitely helped the process. Listening to this sound in the dark really convinced me that I was in a rainstorm; I can hear the individual raindrops hitting some surface, and the wind blowing through the rain was evident as well. Contrary to what one might think about a “sleeping playlist song,” this track included sounds of thunder. However, the thunder was very distant, signifying that we are far away from the center of the storm. This distance created a sense of safety and comfort for me as I fell asleep in my bed, and I think this is one of the most crucial aspects of the sound in fulfilling my intended purpose. This sound was a

comforting and securing experience, and it can easily be heard in real life. Even if it was, I would treat it as a listening experience because it mainly brings a sense of comfort.

Another sound worth noting is NYC Lazy Sunday, by Ambientics. It is a track consisting of sounds commonly heard in cities. However, unlike most city tracks that contain every sound blaring at the same time, this track made me feel like I was walking on a sidewalk in New York City. The birds tweeting made me feel like they were sitting on trees above me as I was walking past them, and the vehicles passing by became louder and quieter as they approached and passed by me. It made me feel like I was truly traveling through the city by calmly walking on a sidewalk. There was even one part of the audio where a truck traveled besides me on the road and braked, probably in front of a red light. Another part of the audio contained a woman on the phone, getting quieter from me walking past that location. Most of this description came from what I felt from the audio, which signifies the fact that it really captures the experience of walking on a sidewalk in a city.

Another sound is a song by Queen, called Bohemian Rhapsody. This is a rather popular song, and it is known all over the world. I chose to listen to this song because it has multiple phases that really solidify it as an experience. It starts off curious, containing lyrics such as “is this the real life?” and “open your eyes, look up to the skies and see, (Queen)” along with a tone that is rather open but mysterious, which makes the song uncertain in a way. It then changes to a mellow tune and the lyrics are a cry to a motherly figure, portraying guilt about the killing of a man. Finally, the song evolves into an exciting and defiant description of a boy facing hardship, and although it is a sad topic, the song’s tune is quite the opposite. The combination of all these moods makes this song impossible to be perceived as anything other than an experience; the tones made me feel the emotions that the lyrics were describing.

In conclusion, sound does not have to be treated as a mere indication of what reality portrays. Although it is a byproduct of reality in the literal sense, treating sound as a listening experience can reveal far more about what it portrays than just simply listening to key parts of the sound. Some of the sounds used for this report are sounds that can be heard every day, but it is because I listened to them as an experience that I discovered what they made me feel. It was as if they transported me to a place where the sound was happening; each sound had a story that my mind could not help but imagine. I think that any sound has a story, it just has to be treated as an experience for the story to unfold.

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