

Post Production

MU60008E

Level 6

'Elephants Dream'

Assignment 2: Production Diary

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Pre Production

The first stages in the project was deciding on a clip. Working together meant that it had to be ten minuets while finding a lesser known animation in good quality proved difficult. The only real option was Elephants Dream an open source movie from the blender foundation, not a well known Hollywood production though still animated to a high standard. It was also ideal because a high definition version and its music was available for free download under creative commons licence.

We presented this animation to our module leader who advised we get an extension after a volcano cancelled our flights back to the UK over the Easter break which delayed work. It was made clear that the project was a large undertaking and after this meeting we started to create a spot list immediately. A hut was then built for recording dialogue and samples the following morning; this was used extensively throughout the recording process and remained standing for ten days.

Dialogue

Dialogue was recorded with a both a coincident stereo array of Shuniyin CY90s at a distance of about 5 foot and an Akg C414 at a distance of about 2 foot. The Akg was placed so that it was far enough back to avoid the proximity effect; its capsule placed above the nose angle cutting downward to avoid plosives and other unwanted noise while capturing a good close sound [Beauchamp 2005 p36]

These microphones were placed in the recording hut which was basically a sealed enclosure made from mattresses resting on a bed frame. This acted as an isolation booth while an open section at floor level reduced an 'over deadness' of the space inside.

Breaths & Clothing

These were recorded with the C414 and stereo array in the same hut. It provided a low noise floor without reflections, an ideal environment for quiet sounds [Filmsound.org 2007]. However some of theses samples required noise reduction to eliminate pre amp hum.

Footsteps

The walking surfaces throughout Elephants Dream change quite frequently and as such a few different approaches were taken. The first scenes concrete floor was created in the hut, we brought up concrete slabs but they sounded plastic; surprisingly a carpet sample that was placed on top of this slab gave the desired effect of hard concrete.

The steps in the second scene (glass panels) were created from a glass coffee table; as the panels were rotating in the video we recorded the underneath with a phase inverted SP B1 and the top with a Stereo pair (Cy90s) so they could be automated to later. To achieve depth in the onscreen shot the steps were acted out moving them towards the appropriate space in the stereo field for natural panning.

The third set of steps (carpet) were recorded in the hut and again the actual surface (in this case carpet) didn't sound right, so a folded towel was used in its place.

The fourth set of steps were on a metal walkway followed by disks that came up to meet the characters feet. These were created by placing samples along side some acted footsteps on a metal lamp shade; as the movement was quite quick in this scene the steps had to be time aligned by eye/ear. The fifth set steps were also the same metal lamp shade as the surface was the same.

The sixth set of steps were in a tiled bathroom and so we set up our equipment in the kitchen; a tiled surface and similarly sized space to the on screen environment.

Sound Effects

The video contained many 'other-worldly' sounds both diegetic and non diegetic most of which being metal, brick or electrical noises. The smaller effects were recorded in the hut and the larger ones sourced with a portable recorder.

The first scene (wires) was created through extensive layering and processing of several samples; in particular masking tape and distorted voices/feedback for the were ran through a practice amplifier to achieve a degraded and electrical sound. This was then layered with whipping air samples created by flicking a drumstick past the microphone. The clunks heard were created by layering metal kitchen utensils with clangs on a manhole and timed with the plugs.

The second scene utilised many of the same samples with a stereo array used to capture jangling metal for the birds; these were recorded with the stereo pair and panned 'naturally' by positioning the object in relation to the microphone. The voices were processed through the amplifier which was physically moved past the stereo pair in order to create natural movement rather than panning. These were all layered even heavier to create the scenes final climax.

The third scene utilised samples gathered from banging large skips to create a foundation layer for the giant clock mixed with recordings from a grandfather clock gathered from an antique clock shop. The phone was created by editing several bells bought at a local toy shop. Both the clock ticks and the phone were timed irregularly to help match the visuals; synced to whatever was onscreen when but timed non-linearly so as to match the video fades and tie into the movies 'living machine' concept. The type writer robot was created by layering fader movement noise on a digi 002 with a fast metal clicking noise obtained from a fence on a sample gathering expedition.

The fourth scene contains creaking skip samples for the moving disks and an explosion effect created from a can of deodorant and our immersion heater turning on. A robot was also created from banging a metal flask and layering with further samples form the kitchen.

The fifth scene was the hardest in terms of sound design; it consists from a giant metal arm throwing a lift/pod into the air through giant metal shutters. The shutters were created from a layering of knife and skip samples. The giant arm was created by filtering a digital cameras lens and timing skip samples to different parts of the arm. For loud clangs a manhole beaten with a shoe was used to add extra weight along with transient processing to achieve resonance. The whooshes from passing scenery were created from passing car noises edited together appropriately. As the pod falls apart samples edited from other parts of the skip such as the latch and rattling chains can be heard also. The robot noise was created by scraping and clicking various metal objects and layering them

The sixth scene was created from samples gathered predominantly in our kitchen; a washing machine for the rotating barrels, toaster hum and skip samples for the walking projectors and filtered a microwave for the ambience. Processed noise from the guitar amp was also used for the camera flash and changing slides.

The seventh scene is based in a bathroom and contains minimal effects; two tiles, a moving wall, a robot and toilet falling over. The moving wall was created by dragging brick across a metal bar and the toilet falling was a heap of bricks being pushed over. The robot eye was created from another filtered camera.

The final scene of the building falling down was created from several sample gathering sessions. The noises for the Colossus of Rhodes were recorded with an Akg D112 to capture as much low end as possible and were created from a very large brick grated slowly against a metal bar attached to a wooden door with the microphone stand placed on top to generate sympathy resonance. This was layered with samples of falling rocks that were recorded with a CY90 stereo array, a 414 and a D112 for each of respective traits. The final sample was 'machine wind' generated from our immersion heater.

Mix

As new effects or ambiences were created the layered versions were bounced and added to a master session. This consisted of object noise/SFX, steps, breaths, clothing noise, dialogue and music. These were then automated to the desired volume along with any desired processing such as various reverb on the dialogue. These stems still went above the Pro Tools LE maximum track count and so had to be bounced in two parts and recompiled into a final audio track.

This final track was exported at 24 bit 48khz so it could be authored to DVD.

References

Beauchamp, R. (2005) *Designing Sound For Animation*, Focal Press UK.

Filmsound.org (2007) *Recording small intimate foley*, {Online} Available: http://filmsound.org/QA/intimate_foley.htm {Accessed 15/05/2010}