

# INSPIRATIONAL SOUND DESIGN: *STAR WARS*

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When recording the sound effects for the original Star Wars movies, sound designer Ben Burtt came up with a lot of strange ideas. One of the challenges he faced was coming up with a sound for the laser blasters that the Storm Troopers used – it didn't exist in real life, so he had to imagine what it would sound like if it was real.

He found the answer in the middle of nowhere – he was on hiking trip, when he got caught on the metal wires of a radio tower. This made a sound that he found so interesting, he tried to deliberately re-create it. He found a telephone wire, and hit it with a wrench until it made the sound he wanted. From then on, most of the guns in Star Wars are different metal wires or coils being struck – Some of the larger guns are the sound of him hitting slinkies!

# INSPIRATIONAL SOUND DESIGN: *FIFA*

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In the FIFA games, have you ever wondered exactly who is cheering when you score a goal? They're real people! The sounds of the crowds were recorded at actual football matches, and the sound designers have put in a lot of effort to make sure that the crowd's reaction matches what you've done in the game. The cheers that play will be different depending on whether you've scored a regular goal, a tie-breaker goal, or an own goal.

This type of sound design isn't just for games though! During COVID restrictions, professional footballers would have to play matches without a crowd in the stadium. They realized that they actually played worse without a crowd, so the stadiums started playing the sounds of the crowd for them to listen to, taking the recordings directly from the FIFA games. Surprisingly, this made the player's performance improve again!

# INSPIRATIONAL SOUND DESIGN: *LION KING*

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# INSPIRATIONAL SOUND DESIGN: *JURASSIC PARK*

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In Jurassic Park, sound designer Gary Rydstrom was tasked with creating the sounds of dinosaurs – this is a tough job, since we can only guess from fossils what a dinosaur might sound like! Gary took recordings from dozens of animals, such as horses, dolphins, dogs and elephants and digitally layered them together in editing software to create different sizes and types of dinosaurs.

These were a combination of animals he'd recorded himself, and 'library' effects he had – recordings other people had done, but that he was allowed to use.

An iconic sound doesn't always have to come from a dramatic place though – for scenes where dinosaur's eggs are hatching, he recorded himself crushing up ice cream cones to get a thin, crunchy sound.

# INSPIRATIONAL SOUND DESIGN: *SPIDER-MAN*

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In *Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse*, the sound team had over nine months to work on the sound design of the film – far longer than most teams are given! This allowed them to put a lot of time and effort into their work, making sure that they were absolutely perfect, and fit the director's vision.

One sound that they put particular effort into was the sound of the supercollider – a giant machine from the end of the film. Along with using electronics such as computer monitors and other mechanical devices, the team recorded some rather unique audio using a special microphone.

An electromagnetic microphone allowed the team to pick up ultrasonic sounds from electronics, sounds with frequencies humans can't normally hear. This gave the collider a futuristic, otherworldly sound.

# AUDIO NARRATIVES: COWBOY

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Sometimes sound is all you need to tell a story. Try re-creating this scene using only audio. You can add, change or remove any aspects you like – make the story unique. You may need to get creative with your recording!

*A cowboy walks into town. His boots click against the dusty ground, his metal spurs jingling with each step. His outfit is made of cotton and leather, and it creaks just a bit as he walks.*

His trusty horse plods along beside him, whinnying occasionally, and batting her tail at flies that buzz in the scorching sun.

We hear the town clock, old and worn, strike twelve – high noon. Its chimes ring out across the town, and the cowboy grabs his pistol from its holster, and fires it.

# **AUDIO NARRATIVES:** *KNIGHT VS. MAGE*

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Sometimes sound is all you need to tell a story. Try re-creating this scene using only audio. You can add, change or remove any aspects you like – make the story unique. You may need to get creative with your recording!

*A knight is stomping across a battlefield – their armor is heavy, and clatters as they move. They unsheathe their sword, and swing it through at the air with a grunt of exertion. We hear it crash against an opponent's shield. They swing a second time, but are blocked again.*

Their opponent lets out a laugh, and with a dramatic woosh, summons a burst of magic into their hand – either fire, lightning, or pure magic itself. They send it hurtling at the knight, who falls to the ground with a metallic crash.

# AUDIO NARRATIVES: *SHIPWRECK*

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Sometimes sound is all you need to tell a story. Try re-creating this scene using only audio. You can add, change or remove any aspects you like – make the story unique. You may need to get creative with your recording!

*A ship is sailing across the waves. The sea is choppy, lashing at the sides of the boat. The wooden deck is creaking, and the sails are fully deployed, as the strong winds propel it forward.*

But the weather is taking a turn, and a storm is breaking out. Now rain is buffeting against the canvas of the sails, and against the ship's hull. Thunder rolls, with fewer breaks in between the crashes, until it's clear that it's growing closer. Suddenly – CRACK! – lightning has struck the mast, and the ship sinks beneath the waves.

# A HORSE'S HOOVES

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The sound of a horse's hooves is probably the most famous piece of foley there is! It's easy to create, and you can make lots of different variations.

### **You'll Need:**

- A coconut shell, cut in half and hollowed out.

### **Instructions:**

Take the two halves of the coconut, and tap the hollow sides together, like you're re-assembling the coconut. Tap them quickly, and with a rhythm, two taps then a pause, almost like a heartbeat. Foley artists will often only mimic the first two hooves, not all four, simply because it sounds better. People rarely notice a difference! You can try tapping them against different surfaces, too, like grass or sand, to give the sound more detail.

# BIRD'S WINGS

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Feathers have a very distinct sound, since they're individually very soft, but become quite solid when layered together.

### **You'll Need:**

- A feather duster.

### **Instructions:**

Hold the feather duster by the handle and smack it quickly and repeatedly against the palm of your hand. This will create the sound of a bird quickly taking off. For the sounds of a bird swooping around and changing direction mid-flight, try waving the feather duster through the air at different speeds.

# BAT WINGS

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Bat's wings are made of a thin, leathery material. The softer the leather material you can find for this, the better, as it will have more movement and not be as stiff.

### **You'll Need:**

- Leather gloves

### **Instructions:**

Place the gloves on top of each other so they align. Then, hold the gloves by the wrist and flap them about so they smack together. You can also try slapping the gloves off your hand for a more solid sound.

# WALKING A DOG

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Even if you have a dog at home, they may not be the most cooperative when it comes to recording.

### **You'll Need:**

- Leather gloves
- Tape
- Paperclips

### **Instructions:**

Take the pair of gloves, and use the tape to attach the paperclips to the fingertips, so they poke out like claws. Then, use your hands to walk along the floor, re-creating the click-clack of the dog's claws.

# RATTLE SNAKE

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Most snakes don't make a lot of sound as they slither about, but the rattlesnake is a pretty notable exception.

### **You'll Need:**

- A Cabasa
- OR dry rice and a container

### **Instructions:**

A cabasa is an instrument best known for how much it sounds like a rattlesnake! It's made of wood and comprised of a cylinder with a handle, and a chain of metal beads wrapped around it, kind of like a big ice cream cone. Twist the beads to create a sound. Alternatively, you can fill a container with dried rice and shake it for a sound with more 'rattle' to it.

**RAIN**

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There are many different ways to create the sound of rain, from light drizzles to heavy storms. You can even try combining these with other sounds, like lightning, or thunder.

### **You'll Need:**

- A watering can
- OR Uncooked rice & paper (ideally grease paper)

### **Instructions:**

Fill a watering can with water. Then just pour it out – This is best done into a bath, or outside onto pavement or grass.

Alternatively, you can take a piece of paper, and place it over a small bowl. Grease paper is best for this, but regular printer paper will do as well. Then, pour some dry, uncooked rice onto the paper.

# THUNDER

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Thunder is a great way to make any storm a bit more intense, and you can layer it in with the sounds of rain and lightning.

### **You'll Need:**

- A thunder sheet
- A baking tray

### **Instructions:**

A lot of foley artists will use a custom-made thunder sheet to create thunder, but a baking tray will work in a similar way. A thunder sheet will have a little more bend to it, and you can wobble it to create a rumbling sound, like you might do with a piece of laminated paper. For both the thunder sheet and the baking tray, you can also hit them with whatever object you'd like for a close-up thunder crash.

# LIGHTNING

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Electricity is a hard sound to create artificially. For an electrical buzz you could record a lightbulb up close, or a any piece of tech you have at home, but for a strike of lightning, you need to get a little creative.

### **You'll Need:**

- Cellotape

### **Instructions:**

The sounds of lightning itself are often drowned out by thunder, and it's good to pair the two together for a more impactful sound effect, but you can get an electric-like crackle using just a roll of cellotape!

Cut a piece of tape, and lay it solid surface, such as a window, a baking tray, or anything plastic. Rip the tape off quickly for a sharp crackling sound that you can layer and manipulate until it sounds just right.

**WIND**

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Wind is a strange, because there is no one 'sound of wind'. The sounds that wind makes are created the objects it's hitting off, and the friction as air moves across it.

### **You'll Need:**

- Some leaves or branches you can find on the ground outside.

### **Instructions:**

Try blowing directly into the microphone to get the sound of air passing by. You may need to adjust the microphone's sensitivity. You can create low or high pitches by changing the shape of your mouth. If you want a stronger wind, you can layer multiple recordings together by editing. Then, take the leaves you've collected from outside, and shake them in front of the microphone, and layer that in for extra realism.

# WAVES

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The ocean and its waves can create a great variety of sounds, from peaceful beaches to raging storms.

### **You'll Need:**

- A bath, or a large basin or bucket

### **Instructions:**

Filling up a bath can be a great way to create waves, just make sure that the microphone is kept a safe distance away from the water. However, bathrooms that have tiles in them can be very reverberant, so they may not make a great recording space! If this is the case, then you can also fill a bucket or basin with water and take it outside. Use your hands to splash the water around, or pick up the basin and tilt the water back and forth. Think about how intense the waves are, and how often they might roll.

# CRASH BOX

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A crash box is used in foley to create the sounds of destruction. You can fill it with whatever materials you want.

### **You'll Need:**

- A lidded plastic box
- Tape (preferably gaffer tape)
- Various scrap materials

### **Instructions:**

First, choose what kind of material you want to use. You could use metal, wood, or even mix different kinds. We'll use metal as an example. Find some unused metal pieces that you're okay getting damaged – Think metal screws, old cutlery, whatever you might have lying around.

Once you've filled up your box with whichever items you'd like, place the lid on and seal it tightly with tape. Then, do whatever you'd like with the box – Shake it about, throw it, kick it, just make sure it's sealed shut.

# UNSHEATHING A SWORD

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A real sword wouldn't really make that classic "Shiiiiing!" sound, but it's become so iconic that we add it anyway to make the scene cooler.

### **You'll Need:**

- A blunt butter knife & spatula
- A thin clothes hanger, or drumstick

### **Instructions:**

Take the knife and scrape it quickly along the edge of the spatula. You can use either the dull side, or the ridged side, depending on the kind of sound you'd like to create. Try both and see how it differs!

For the 'swoosh', take a thin item like a clothes hanger, or a drumstick, and swipe it through the air. This can also be used for an arrow or other object flying by.

**FIRE**

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Fire is a really versatile sound, that can add a cosy atmosphere to a scene, or could be used as a weapon. It all depends on how you use it.

### **You'll Need:**

- Crepe Paper

- Plastic bag

- Bubblewrap

### **Instructions:**

For fire, you want a crinkly, crunchy material, like crepe paper, or a thin plastic bag. All you need to do is scrunch it up into a ball. You can layer them together to give it more texture, or add in the sound of bubble wrap being popped. This is great to give a bit of realism to the fire, it can add the pops and clicks that you might get from a fresh wood fire.

# SHATTERED GLASS

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Whether it's dropping a bottle, or throwing someone through a window, the sound of glass smashing is an iconic sound.

### **You'll Need:**

- A baking tray

- A freezer

### **Instructions:**

Firstly, you're going to want to fill your baking tray with water. You don't want to use too much water, as you want it to be a very thin layer, but make sure it covers the whole surface of the baking tray. Then, put it in the freezer and wait for a bit until it becomes fully solid, with no water left. When it's ready, remove the sheet of ice and smash it in any way you want.

# GUNSHOTS

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There are plenty of unconventional sounds that, if you put them together, sound like a weapon.

### **You'll Need:**

- A door handle
- Popcorn

### **Instructions:**

The “cha-chunk” of a gun being primed is the mechanism inside readying, and something oddly similar can be found in door handles. You might need to try a few different doors but quickly pull down on a handle when it's open to hear the bolt on the side move in and out.

For the gun firing, foley artists often use the sound of popcorn kernels popping, though you may want to pitch the recording down.

# WALKING ON SNOW

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Crunchy snow is great for winter weather, an arctic expedition, or a fantastical land.

### **You'll Need:**

- Sand

- Cornstarch

### **Instructions:**

The basic sound can easily be created using sand! Just record the sound of you walking through it. However, snow tends to have a 'crunch' every few steps. Cornstarch will sound almost identical! Get as much of it as you can, and press your foot gently but firmly into it. You can avoid mess by putting it in a non-creaky bag – pillowcases also work well for this! Then perform the actions together, or edit them together after recording!

# WALKING ON DRY LEAVES

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Real leaves will do the job just fine, but sometimes recording outside isn't ideal! Background noise, weather and wind can ruin a lot of takes.

### **You'll Need:**

- Magnetic tape (From a VHS or Cassette tape)
- OR Newspaper

### **Instructions:**

The best crunchy, dry sound you can get would be from magnetic tape! If you have any old VHS or cassette tapes at home that no longer work, you can try taking the tape out of them, then put it in a pile to create a surface to walk on. However, you can also use old newspaper! Scrunch up a few pieces of newspaper or magazine then walk on the spot on it.

# WALKING ON GRASS

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Real grass will do the job just fine, but sometimes recording outside isn't ideal! Background noise, weather and wind can ruin a lot of takes.

### **You'll Need:**

- A thin plastic bag, like a shopping bag or bin bag.

### **Instructions:**

When choosing a plastic bag, the cheaper and thinner the better! The re-usable shopping bags you might get from Tesco or Lidl won't work as they're too thick. When you've found a bag you're happy with, just lay it down and walk on the spot to get the sound of dry grass rustling under your feet.

# WALKING ON MUD

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Muddy footsteps can tell you a lot about a scene, like the location, the weather, or how easily the character can walk around in it.

### **You'll Need:**

- A damp sponge
- OR A damp towel

### **Instructions:**

Take either a sponge or a towel, and soak it in water. Then place it down on a surface you don't mind getting wet, and step on it for a watery squelch. If you want more detail, making sounds with your mouth can be very good for this! Think of the gross 'squish' when the shoe lands in the mud, and the sound of suction when it's pulled out for the next step. You can easily create these by making weird mouth sounds.

# A BODY FALLING

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Have they tripped, or were they pushed – or punched? You decide.

### **You'll Need:**

- A heavy book, like a phone book or dictionary
- A fabric that matches what they're wearing.

### **Instructions:**

Take a large book, and wrap it in a fabric. Generally the more fabric you use the better, as it will disguise the sound of the book itself falling, as it's mostly just there to add weight! This can vary though, and too much fabric might sound too muffled, so test different versions. Try and use fabric that matches what the character is wearing, like a leather jacket or a cotton t-shirt. Once the book is all wrapped up, just drop it to the ground on whatever kind of surface the character is standing on.

# SPACESHIP DOORS/ AIRLOCK

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Sci-fi movies often require some creativity, since a lot of their sounds don't have real world counterparts! Thinking about how they'd realistically work can help though, so how about a spaceship that uses hydraulics – That's when compressed air is used to move mechanical parts around.

### **You'll Need:**

- A plastic bottle of a fizzy drink like lemonade

### **Instructions:**

Make sure the bottle isn't too full, with roughly half of the drink still in there. Then, make sure lid is on really tight, and give it a shake! Then unscrew the lid very slowly, recording the sound of the fizzing as the air escapes. This should give a 'shhh' sound like a sci-fi airlock opening!

# SAILBOAT

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This works for a small wooden dinghy, or massive pirates ships!

**You'll Need:**

-A creaky wooden floor

-A bedsheet

**Instructions:**

Find the creakiest wooden floor you can – a wooden door that creaks as it moves works well too. Simply record yourself pressing your foot down hard on the floor, and move your weight from left to right. This will mimic the sound of the ship's deck creaking as it sails.

Then, take a light bedsheet by its corners and flap it up and down to create the sounds of a sail being buffeted by wind. Change the amount you shake it and the strength you use to change the wind speed.

# CAR TIRES

When a car dramatically skids through the streets, it's the friction between the wheels and the tarmac that let out that high pitched screech. An easy trick to create the same sound uses the same principals.

### **You'll Need:**

- A hot water bottle, the rubber kind with ridges on the side

### **Instructions:**

Fill the hot water bottle up about halfway, so that it has some weight to it, but is still bendy. Grip it tightly with two hands, one at the neck and one at the base, and drag it across a surface – this could be a table, the floor, or the ground, as long as there will be friction between it and the hot water bottle.

# RACING CAR

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One of the loudest parts of a racing car skidding down a track isn't the wheels, or even the engine, but the car's exhaust. There's an easy trick for re-creating this high-pitched drone.

### **You'll Need:**

- A metal drink can

### **Instructions:**

Make sure the metal drinks can is empty, then snap the metal tab off the top. Create a crease in the middle of the can so it bends, and then try and pinch it so that it's flat in the middle, giving it a shape almost like an hourglass. Then, blow into the top of the can so that air passes into it, but still has room to escape. Flick the bottom half of the can every so often to create a change in pitch like the car is turning.

# HELICOPTOR

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When a helicopter is in flight, you're hearing two main things, the gusts of air that it's creating, and the motor that spins the blades.

### **You'll Need:**

- A fan

- A pillow

### **Instructions:**

Find the largest fan you can, and set it to maximum volume. Then, just record the fan. After that, you'll need something for impactful for the motor, as it sounds like distinct 'beats'. Take a large, solid pillow such as a sofa cushion, and either hit it quickly and rhythmically with your hand. You can increase/decrease the speed to make it sound like the helicopter is starting up or slowing down. Then layer these two recordings together.