CALL FOR PAPERS

Sound Decisions: Risks and Experiments in Media Sound History

An area of multiple panels for the 2015 Film & History Conference:
Journeys, Detours, Breakdowns
November 5-8, 2015
The Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor’s Club
Madison, WI (USA)

DEADLINE for abstracts: June 1, 2015

AREA: Sound Decisions: Risks and Experiments in Media Sound History

Film sound scholars and critics often identify the major events that are said to have changed the direction of film sound history. Such events include the decisions to adopt new technologies like magnetic recording and digital surround sound, or specific aesthetic decisions like the design of King Kong's roar and the use of silence in 2001: A Space Odyssey. However, this tradition generally neglects the series of “journeys, detours, and breakdowns” that engineers, filmmakers, and sound practitioners experience before they arrive at their decisions.

Our area asks: In what ways did these events actually change the direction of film sound history? Why do scholars consider certain technologies and sound designs to be more influential than others? What are the factors that cause new uses of film sound to become successes or failures? How might case studies of industry practice dismantle our current understanding of important events in film sound history?

In line with the conference theme, our area seeks papers that build upon existing scholarship through discussions of the institutional and social contexts that give filmmakers the freedom to experiment with the aesthetics and technologies of film sound. Further, our area is looking for papers that focus on the many stylistic risks in film, television, radio, video games, music, and podcasts that remain excluded from film sound histories but that inform the way filmgoers design their soundtracks and the way filmgoers listen to such soundtracks.

Potential topics might include (but are not limited to) case studies of:

- sonic experimentation in documentary and avant-garde media
- sonic practices in radio, television, video games, and other media
- styles and technologies of non-American media
- social constructions of good and bad sound practices
- vocal performances and star personae
- conceptions of sonic authenticity and fidelity
- economic contexts, including changes to sound labor and union negotiations
- budget constraints and new uses of old technologies
- histories of failed technologies and the laboratories that developed them
- complications with contracts, patents, copyrights, and related legal issues
- the politics of restoring and remixing older sound designs
archival “breakdowns and detours” in the study of sound

In the spirit of the conference’s theme, we also invite papers that discuss the use of Journey’s music in such works as *The Sopranos* and *Tron*, the use of Tom Petty’s song “Breakdown” in media, and discussions of the sound and music design for the 1945 film *Detour*.

Proposals for complete panels (three related presentations) are also welcome, but they must include an abstract and contact information, including an e-mail address, for each presenter. For updates and registration information about the upcoming meeting, see the Film & History website (www.filmandhistory.org).

Please e-mail your 200-word proposal by June 1, 2015, to the area chairs:

Eric Dienstfrey  
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Katherine Quanz  
Wilfrid-Laurier University  
FilmHistorySoundArea@gmail.com