

Glossary

Arrangement: This is the way that instruments, vocals and sounds are organised into one 'soundscape'. They can be foregrounded or backgrounded to construct our 'point of view'. In a soundscape the most foregrounded sound can be thought of as the '*figure*', which is the 'focus of interest'; those sounds that are placed in the '*ground*' for the 'setting or context'; and '*field*' for the place where observation takes place. These different sounds will be ranked for us at different levels of importance and we identify primarily with the 'figure' sound. The way that voices and instruments are positioned as closer or more distant from us in a sound mix has important associations with social distance.

Authenticity: This is the idea that some music is somehow tied to the soul and comes from the heart as opposed to music that is contrived or of the intellect. This distinction has its origins in the Romantic tradition where creativity came from God. Those musicians who can most draw on certain signifiers of authenticity, however predictable they in fact are, and however contrived, will be thought of as sincere and as producing music from the heart.

Breathiness: In singing this can suggest moments of intimacy and sensuality. When we hear a person's breath when they speak this may be a moment of confidentiality as they whisper in our ear, or share their thoughts with us when they are in a moment of emotional strain or euphoria. These kinds of associations can be used in music.

Codal system of music: This is the system of music that is understood by people in Western societies. This is why certain kinds of melodies, instruments and sound qualities have come to have quite specific meanings for the people in that culture.

Creativity: Creativity is often contrasted to that which is contrived and particularly that which is manufactured. This means that in terms of music the act of creativity is seen to sit uncomfortably with the activities of the corporate record label. In fact it has been argued that what we know as popular music simply would not have developed

without the record companies. The relationship between the two is therefore more complex than the simple opposition held in popular culture.

Diegetic music: This is music which can be seen produced in the world represented in a film. Non-diegetic music has been added to the film afterwards and is not part of the represented film world. There are often points where the two merge.

Directionality: Here we ask to what extent we can establish the origins of a sound in a movie. Can we tell what the source is or does it seem to be coming from all around? Often this tells us which sounds are representational, those for which we can identify origins, and those that are symbolic or sensory where we cannot.

Discourse: Discourses are models of the world that are shared within societies through which people think about and understand events, actions and identities. Discourses need not represent truthfully but simply be versions of how we can understand these things. Importantly these discourses can be signified by their parts. So a whole set of events, actions and identities can be signified by elements associated by any of these. Pop artists can connote particular identities and actions through the clothes they wear and the poses they strike, for example.

Discourse schema: This is the 'activity schema' that underlies song lyrics; in other words, what happens in the song at the simplest level. When we break down a song so that we can observe the basis schema we are able to reveal the basic cultural values underlying the song.

Distortion: Raspiness in sounds can suggest contamination of the actual tone, or 'worn' and 'dirty'. This raspiness and grittiness can be associated with excitement and aggression as opposed to the well-oiled warm, soft sounds of an acoustic guitar on a folk record. Of course, distortion and raspiness can also mean pure emotion where excitement and tension are not suppressed. Distortion can mean a representation of the modern world as it really is, with dirt, lack of order, chaos.

Dynamic range: This is the range of loudness. Is there just one degree of loudness throughout a sound event or many? This can relate to self-expression versus control.

Experiential meaning potential: The meaning of sound quality may derive from associations of things in the real world. Our physical environment produces noises all the time. These may be due to

certain qualities of the element that makes the sound or the meaning of that thing in our everyday lives.

Genre: We often speak of genres of music. While there does on the surface appear to be kinds of music that share characteristics, that have sounds and look in common, that allow us to speak of musical genre such as rap, it is in reality not possible to find any fixed boundaries that allow us to make any concrete distinctions. For the most part classification is arbitrary. And the role of record companies has been important in defining genres for the purposes of marketing and radio play. Nevertheless it is possible to explore what commonalities we can find across the work and look of artists.

Hifi soundscape: This is where all sounds can be heard distinctly. It is like being in a forest where you hear a branch snap somewhere nearby and a rustle of leaves slightly further away. Sounds are not competing. The hifi soundscape is typical of ambient music, or of some kinds of folk music that wish to increase sensual effect. In this kind of soundscape there is no overwhelming background hum. Rather there is a space and calmness that can connote pre-industrial settings.

Iconography: This is simply an analysis of the content of images or soundscapes, or the landscape depicted in a text. We often find that certain artists will draw on a particular iconography both in terms of look and sound in order to communicate about their identity.

Lofi soundscape: This is typical of our modern cities. There is such a jumble of sounds that we do not really hear any of them distinctly. Heavy rock and any music where sounds of instruments tend to merge can be characterised as lofi. This kind of music is often used to connote industrial or post-industrial settings.

Loudness: Loudness relates to power. In society those who have more power are allowed to have themselves heard and make more noise. With existing amplification and recording technology it is not really necessary to shout to be heard, yet many musicians still do so. We can ask what the social meaning of this is.

Mainstream: This is often used by people in order to differentiate themselves from an imagined other. Our sense of shared identity is often formed out of oppositional stances towards others. However, the very idea of a mainstream is itself problematic. It is often something proposed by people in order to authenticate their own likes and styles. But what is actually meant by 'the mainstream' is never specified.

Metaphorical association: Both images and sounds can have much meaning for us through metaphorical association. A thick, heavy typeface found on an advert suggests something durable and stable through association with thicker objects in the real world. A deeper-sounding guitar will sound more ominous than a bright high-pitched one due to our association with deeper sounds in the natural world. Much of the meaning potential in sounds we examine in this book derive from metaphorical association.

Modality: This term has been used to describe the resources in language that we have for expressing degrees of truth; for example, words like 'may', 'must', 'will' or 'perhaps', 'certain' and 'probable'. A high modality statement will be one which will reflect a high degree of certainty, a high degree of connection with naturalistic truth. The same principle can be applied to both visual representations and to sound. In images we can ask if the scene is depicted how we would have seen it had we been there in terms of things like articulation of detail and tonal range. In terms of sound we can also ask if the sound in a movie or on the radio is heard as it would have been had we been there; for example, in terms of reverb, volume, distortion.

Multimodality: We can think of some forms of communication, such as a piece of text, as being 'monomodal'. There is only one mode of communication employed: language. In contrast an advertisement that comprises both image and text communicates its message *multimodally* as more than one mode of communication is used: both language and images. In multimodal analysis we can examine the way that different modes of communication work together. In this book we are interested in the workings of three modes: image, sound and word.

Nasality: In vocals this can give the impression of reluctance and lack of enthusiasm, and a whining feel. Alternatively, a jazz singer may use soft, warmer open vocals.

Notes on the scale: There are eight notes in a scale ranging from 1 to 8, where note 8 is the same as note 1 but an octave higher. These have all been shown to have meaning potentials and uses:

- 1 – anchoring, stable
- 2 – something in between, the promise of something else
- 3 – stable and happy
- Minor 3 – stable but sad or painful
- 4 – building, creating space
- 5 – stable, like the 1st note

- 6 – generally happy like the 3rd
- 7 – slightly thoughtful and longing
- Minor 7 – pain, sadness

There are notes in between some of these notes that are not part of the scale. When used along with the above notes these can create a sense of trouble and unease. They are most commonly found in use in jazz.

Perspectival depth: This is the range from there being no background or foregrounded sound to maximum layers. In a movie soundtrack or any soundscape we can listen for the way that certain sounds have been unnaturally foregrounded.

Phrasing: Linguists have shown that shorter, sharper phrasing in speech is associated with truth and confidence. We find the same meanings in music, in vocal lines and melodies. Longer lingering phrases are associated with emotional openness.

Pitch: This has metaphorical associations of high pitches with optimism and brightness and lower pitches with menace, gloom and foreboding.

Pitch range: Melodies with large pitch ranges are associated with emotional expression. Small pitch ranges are associated with emotional restriction or stasis.

Provenance: This is simply when a sound comes to have a particular meaning in a particular culture. Pan pipes suggest nature or simple, ancient cultures, especially from Latin America. Such associations may have no actual connection to any real time or place. The point is that associations have become established and whose origins could be discovered. Yet in our own usage these associations will have been forgotten.

Resonance/reverb: Echo can be used to suggest space as they are normally experienced in large spaces or massive landscapes. They can therefore be used to suggest something ominous, grand or epic.

Rhythm: This is the way that sound is ordered into structured patterns. We can relate different kinds of rhythm to different kinds of physical movement, particularly walking: jerky, smooth, stamping, skipping.

Semiotics of sound: This is the study of the meanings of sound types, qualities and arrangements. Sounds in this approach are

treated not unlike words as having arbitrary meanings that have been established in a particular culture.

Sensory modality sounds: Here the sound does not represent a thing such as romance or horror or fun but rather is produced in order to seduce scare or make you feel happy.

Soundscape: This refers the entirety of the qualities that comprise what we hear, the kinds of sounds, how they are arranged. When we sit in a room we are positioned in a soundscape and able to hear sounds that are closer and further away. If we live in a busy city these sounds will create a different kind of soundscape than if we live in the countryside. A piece of music and a film soundtrack also create soundscapes.

Subcultures: This is the idea that those who follow a particular kind of music form a subculture, for example 'punks'. However, it seems to be more often the case that simply some people like to have a particular haircut or wear a particular jacket as it is 'cool' or has 'cultural capital' rather than being part of an identifiable subculture. Music and clothes can be seen as markers of distinction and status. Of course, this can involve an extremely conformist seeking of acceptance and status, realised in the first place though acts of consumption.

Tension in sound: This ranges from the very tense to the more relaxed sound of the wide open throat, but the same can be suggested by the manner in which an instrument is played. Are guitar strings allowed to ring out or tightly restricted, for example?

Unison: Where instruments and voices work in *unison*, where they have the same volume and play the same notes, metaphorically, this can indicate social cohesion. Where instruments all work together, where voices sing in complete harmony, they represent themselves as one unit. Alternatively there can be foregrounding, or voices can be individualised to some degree, through volume or sound quality.

Vibrato: This is when a sound wavers in pitch. Metaphorically it relates to our physical experience of trembling. The meaning of vibrato will depend on its speed, depth and regularity. High regularity might suggest something mechanical or alien. Increasing and decreasing vibrato is common in movies to create romantic moods, indicating increasing and decreasing levels of emotion. Absence of vibrato can suggest constancy, forward moving and steady or free of emotion.