

Chapter 3: Elements of Sound: Three Scaffolded Assignments

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featuring the work of Averi Ager, D'Arcee Neal, and Dorian Blue

3. “Alien Abduction” by Averi Ager

In this Concept in 60 Seconds example, titled “Alien Abduction,” Averi Ager tells the story of an alien abduction by creating a soundscape and making use of recognizable genre conventions.

Artist Statement

I intended for this piece to be a paragon for alien abduction scenes. I constructed the story with all the cliché elements of an alien abduction; the person is alone, they're in the wilderness at night, and they're not sure of danger until it's too late. The narrative takes place over audio when similar concepts often happen on screen, so I focused my efforts on creating a soundscape for the listener to recognize.

I wanted to make sure listeners could hear the hiker's interactions with their environment and clearly indicate the actions of the ship. Achieving the first goal proved easy enough. I downloaded hiking and running sounds from freesound.org that included details like footsteps and snapping twigs in high quality.

The spaceship's actions were much more difficult to communicate. For example, I wanted the sound right before the spaceship wails to communicate the wailing was turned on from a mechanical source. I created the switch sound by sandwiching it between two recordings of a television glitch and played with their reverb to make it sound more alien and powerful. I also included wind rustling through leaves and trees falling to indicate how close the ship was and how low to the ground. A lot of the sounds needed to work systemically to give the feel of a working machine or like actions had consequential sounds, so I'd mix some sounds together and export them as one file into a master mixdown.

Transcript

[owl hooting, footsteps, animals in the distance, insects]

[a low hum begins quietly and gains volume, coming closer]

Voice: What the fuck is that?

[loud mechanic drone]

Voice: Oh shit!

[quick breaths, running footsteps through underbrush]

Voice: Fuck!

[thump]

[hum of ship draws nearer, voice yells]

[door closes loudly]

[Silence]

[alien noises]

References

Leafs67. (2012, May 12). Walking in long grass [Audio file]. *Freesound*.
<https://freesound.org/people/Leafs67/sounds/155589/>