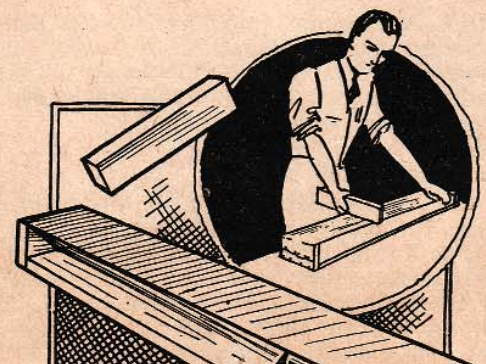
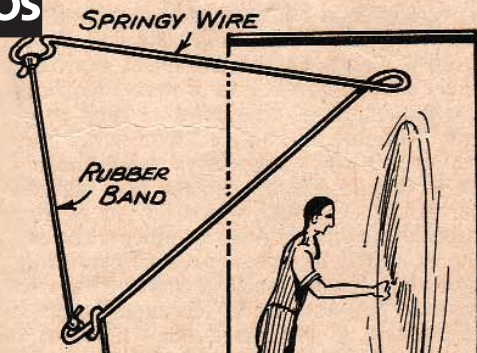


In this Article the Reader is Taken "Back-stage" and Shown How Various Effects are Produced

Sound design in the 1930s

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
Showcase: Matilda
Foley artist: Ruth Sullivan



THE ECHO

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All submissions for future issues of The Echo are very
welcome. They may be edited to fit the house style
and for length.

Adverts can be purchased by any corporate member
of the ASD, rates on request.

Views expressed editorially or by correspondants are
not necessarily those of the ASD.

Contact us at
news@associationofsounddesigners.com
www.associationofsounddesigners.com



Editorial

Over the past few months we've been canvassing your opinions on how to evolve the Association of Sound Designers into an organisation that works better for you. By the time you receive this we'll have discarded our largely unused online forums in favour of an email based group. We'll have introduced three new membership categories: Corporate Designer, Corporate Member and Non-Commercial Organisation.

These first two categories allow members who joined up via a corporate membership but who are eligible for the other membership categories the opportunity to receive the same benefits as if they had joined as individuals.

We also polled our members on what they wanted us to run training courses in, as well as where they wanted them held. This received a phenomenal result.

The most popular course titles were: Setting up a Sound System; Sound Effect Design & Management; Advanced Qlab; Ableton Live for Theatre; Radio Mic Useage; Working with Live Musicians; VectorWorks / AutoCAD for Beginners; MAX/MSP for Beginners; and

Networking (the audio and data kind, not the buying people lots of drinks kind).

Some of these topics are too big for a single seminar so we'll break them down into a few. We're planning to offer half of these course titles to our members - for free - over the course of this year.

We've changed our news delivery system a little, rather than focusing on email updates every few weeks, we're now posting news items on the website as they happen, then putting a link on our Facebook and Twitter pages to alert our members to the news. You can follow us on Twitter or 'like us' on Facebook to get these updates, with the relevant buttons on the front page of our website. The news articles are within the members only area of the website so only ASD members can access them.

Last but not least we've made some changes to *The Echo* magazine. We wanted to create a slightly less formal magazine, and one that contained more from our members. We'll still be creating really useful factual resources, but we'll also be bringing you more insight into the rest of the sound design community: focusing on a

Welcome

few of our members in each issue, who they are, what they do and how they do it. We've also brought onboard Sarah Rushton-Read to edit the magazine, allowing us a bit more time to do everything else. Sarah brings a wealth of experience to this job, having written for Lighting and Sound International for many years, as well as founding the Women in Stage Entertainment (WiSE) association.

Gareth Fry

Chair, Association of Sound Designers

For those that don't work in the technical arts, and indeed for some that do, sound design is a mysterious art that is often difficult to fathom. Most audiences, be they film, stage or music, give sound or sound design very little thought until, of course, it goes wrong! I confess that to some extent I am one of those people.

Of course my background as an industry journalist and PR means I know a fair bit about the equipment from the technical specification and capability perspective. However, I find that the focus is increasingly on the technology itself and less on the end user. I was therefore delighted when Gareth asked me to edit *The Echo*.

My hope is that by editing this magazine I would answer the many questions I have, about the design process, what inspires and motivates sound designers and how they develop their ideas to add dimension and meaning to a production.

I have not been disappointed. This issue of *The Echo* is packed full of fascinating stories including Carolyn Downing's insight into the mind of Olivier Award-winning sound designer,

Simon Baker, for his work on the RSC's Matilda and the sometimes weird activities of Foley Artist Ruth Sullivan.

It's an absolute pleasure to be editing *The Echo* alongside The Association of Sound Designers. It's a fantastic magazine and I know that in time it will become a must-read for all sound professionals from all sectors of the industry. In this issue, we celebrate various aspects of the pro-audio world, from design to personal profiles, and from cutting edge kit to equipment nostalgia.

My background, when I worked at the coalface of theatre and opera is predominantly in lighting design. I know first hand how the varied talents of sound and lighting designers, technicians and engineers escape critical review in mainstream press. Through *The Echo*, and the activities of the Association of Sound Designers, I hope that we can increase the visibility of the wonderful achievements of SDs, and provide a really entertaining and informative read along the way. Now enough of me - get page turning!

Sarah Rushton-Read

Editor, The Echo

Showcase: Matilda The Musical



Matilda The Musical
Cambridge Theatre, London
Opened 24th November 2011
Sound Design by Simon Baker
Set Design by Rob Howell
Directed by Matthew Warchus

No.1: Bique Haddersly
No.2: Scot Carter
No.3: Clare Hibberd
No.4: Pheobe Gosling
Production Engineer: **Tim Stephens**
Orchestration and additional music by **Christopher Nightingale**
MD **Alan Berry (Originally Bruce O'Neill)**



CAROLYN DOWNING

If you asked Simon Baker what his top tip for any budding sound designer would be, you'd imagine he'd draw on his wealth of experience in a wide variety of genres, from both straight plays to musicals, including the mega Lord of the Rings, and with companies such as Kneehigh, whose work takes him from Cornish climes to the bright lights of Broadway. But no. It's much simpler than that. "Tell the story" he says. No wonder then, with such wisdom and passion, he has courted a number of award nominations (Olivier - Lord of the Rings 2008, Brief Encounter 2009, Tony - Boeing Boeing 2008, Brief Encounter 2011). It was, however, Matilda the Musical that finally brought him the Olivier accolade of Best Sound Design earlier this year. I wondered how he felt to win after all those near misses "Scared - I thought I'd misheard and Emma (Rice - my partner) had to tell me that it was me".

Simon is especially pleased that his work on Matilda was recognised in this way "I'm pleased to have won it for this show for many, many reasons, mainly as it's been such a tough journey." As one can imagine, Simon has seen a lot of changes in

the industry over the years, as he explains "Analogue to Digital in all areas. Conventional to line array loudspeakers. Pretty much everything has changed. The thing that hasn't is the job. We are still there to use sound to tell stories." Simon was ideally matched from the get-go to be part of the team commissioned to tell the well-known and well-loved Roald Dahl story Matilda.

Anyone familiar with the original Roald Dahl version will know it's quite a dense book so I was amazed at how it was translated into the concise family-friendly format of a commercial musical, without seemingly missing a beat of the story. I asked Simon about how the creative team collaborated in this storytelling process: "I've worked with Matthew and that team a lot. Most of us did Lord of the Rings together and I've also worked with Matthew on many of his straight plays. When you've worked with someone a lot quite a bit goes unsaid. You understand each other's shorthand. I knew that for him the key to the story was in the Matilda fantasy sequences which we later learn are the back story of Miss Honey and Trunchbull. Telling these and finding the language for them was going to be key. I know Matthew well enough to understand his story process - if I could make these work then the rest would be OK."

This artistic collaboration certainly had a great

"The key thing is to hear the words, the vocals are the key - always. Without the words, you're sunk."



effect on this 30-something woman who was transformed into a gawping five year girl on entering the auditorium – pure joy indeed. I was immediately enveloped by a myriad of colours and supersized scrabble tiles spelling out that very word - 'joy'. My next thoughts soon brought me down to earth however: how did Simon attack that challenge? I spied, within the chaos of letters, a tiny Meyer line array system, 16 Mina to be precise. The rest of the rig is Meyer: a combination of UPM-1Ps, MSL-2s, UPJs and USWs, though the surrounds (all 56 of them) are Martin Effect 3Rs, Simon's favourite surround box. Simon tells me more about how he arrived there: "The design is based around a cascade of oversized scrabble tiles. These cover the proscenium. At the Cambridge this was our biggest challenge. How to keep the look and feel of the set yet still get sound through them. The first thing drawn on the show was the Pros speaker positions. We were pretty locked into this system from that point on."

Roald Dahl's beloved book Matilda is taken by the pigtails and exploded into two and a half hours of delight for young and old. The young being the centre of attention as the youthful eyes and ears in the audience follow Matilda and her school friends through their adventures. I was struck by the gentle nature of the mix compared to other musicals I've

experienced. It seems that this is something Simon is passionate about, "It is subtle - for many reasons. Firstly, theatre is a storytelling environment, a seated experience. Making a show as loud as it goes, whilst on trend, just feels wrong to me. Matilda is a tiny girl lost in grown up world trying to find a voice. Making each vocal or number massive would mean the scale of the story and the scale of the visual would be out of proportion with the sound." I wondered if the young audience had any bearing on his design choices. Simon draws on his own personal experience to explain, "I have two children, 9 and 13 years, who see a lot of theatre and live events. Take them to a concert or gig and there are happy with 'loud' - they are participating in a different way, they can move around, stand up, wander off. Sit them in a theatre when the show's too loud and they put their hands over their ears. They want to participate, to engage but the sound won't let them in - what one designer may see as excitement is actually doing the opposite – it's pushing people away. I watch the audience a lot to gauge their reaction. At its core Matilda is a family show - our demographic means we have a lot of children come and watch. The subtlety is a brave choice but it is a choice."

The result of such subtle and sensitive work was

beautifully crisp vocals, and considering the intricate Tim Minchin word play and small voices involved in the many ensemble numbers, I didn't miss a word. Simon describes the challenges involved in creating this: "The show is tough to do. Its a dense score and a dense vocal often sung by tiny voices. The rhyming meter is erratic at times and the lyrics challenging. The biggest struggle for me was making the overall dynamic shape work. There's a point when you believe the level coming from the little girl DSC and a tipping point where you don't. The level of the Matilda dictates what happens everywhere else. The key thing is to hear the words, the vocals are the key - always. Without the words, you're sunk."

As Simon goes on to explain, dealing with the intricate vocal score and creating such an eloquent sound did not just happen overnight, or with any amount of telekinesis..... "We worked long and hard on them. I used a MADI recorder during band calls and previews and recorded every line, then would stay up all night working on it. The challenge, as with any show with children, is the multiple team system. Matilda has three teams of 10 plus 4 Matildas. That means the matrix of voices is huge. Finding a path through that, not being reliant on click tracks and therefore keeping the scale of the vocal believable and yet audible was the challenge."



The show started its life with an incredibly successful run at the Royal Shakespeare company's Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. It must have been quite a transfer of a show of this nature from thrust to proscenium. I asked Simon to outline the challenges involved and it seems it was quite a relief to be moving to a more conventional venue! "The Courtyard is grim for a musical like this. No matter where you put a loudspeaker it seems to only cover a few seats - that means lots of loudspeakers but you can't then get a solid vocal block sound. The stage front is also very low so again you can't get a decent front fill position. Without a solid centre or front fill you're in trouble - I was in trouble at the Courtyard. The Cambridge is more traditional." However difficult it was creating the technical elements of the show at the Courtyard, it did mean Simon was well prepared for the move to the West End "Having had the experience of doing the show at Stratford we knew a lot about what the system needed to do. It then becomes a process of working out how to do the show in the new space. Before you know it you're in to the land of complex technical drawing, line array calculations and madi rack allocations and the fun of creating a new show creatively seems miles away." Simon was joined in that land of complexity by an ever hard working team – "Tim Stephens was my Production Engineer who was great at keeping

me in check and organised. The show team are all brilliant and continue to be so - it's a tough and demanding show to run."

One of my favourite elements of the show was the integration of sound effects within the musical score, another aspect that was developed during the production time in Stratford. I asked Simon to describe his initial thinking behind the sound effects design: "I knew the show needed magic rather than fantasy. I knew it needed to be larger than life rather than cartoon. It needed to be sound effect equivalent of Quentin Blake illustrations." So it seems it required a great deal of subtle imaginings, teetering between genres that often sit side by side.

This sense of an integral sonic design was most probably due to the collaborative approach within the team "Chris (the Orchestrator) and I have worked together before and our keys programmer Phij Adams is also a usual fixture on the team so collaborating comes naturally. If one person has an idea - which ever way round - then we give it a go." This collaboration is particularly apparent when we follow Matilda on her first day at Crunchem Hall Primary School, the scholarly residence of the much-feared headmistress Miss Trunchbull and the beloved Miss Honey. The school gates are made

up of lettered blocks which become the playful visual toys of the ensemble number "School Song". It was a joy to hear the blocks adding an extra percussive element to the song and I was intrigued to hear about the origins of this idea, or was it a happy accident? "It was an accident – it's actually a nightmare as the blocks fall on the down beat of the first syllable on all the key words. We worked long and hard with different types of blocks to make it work." It wasn't such a joy for everyone, then!

Pure storybook magic was conjured in the other major theatrical moments, especially the Amanda Thrip pigtails throw. Even with an investigative eye, I was unable to see the mechanics. I was intrigued as to how Simon approached this from his department. "These ideas normally start with me making a series of demos and then keeping forwarding the idea until it works. I love making those kind of moments and understanding what Matthew likes in space means that whilst tricky to do technically, creatively they come quite quickly."

Finally, I asked Simon what he'd wanted to be when he grew up? "This is what I wanted to do ever since I watched a Blue Peter episode about BBC radio phonic workshop and how they made the TARDIS sound. Since then I've always wanted to run off with a group of mavericks and tell stories."

A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS

RICH WALSH

Job Description: Sound Designer & Senior Sound Department Project Manager at the National Theatre.

Profile: Rich has been designing sound for theatre for 21 years, and has spent the last 11 at the National Theatre.

Product name: Soundminer Pro

What it does: Wrangles sound effects.

Why I like it: The sense of liberation I get when I can find and audition a specified sound within milliseconds from a library I invested just a few £k in is fantastic. Of course, it only works if you take the time to populate the familiar libraries with loads of useful metadata (much more than just a description in iTunes) and catalogue your own recordings. When done well, you can search really fast using a thesaurus that is optimised for sound words (ie explosion = explosion, boom, blast, etc); audition – with varispeed and a waveform overview; process through a rack of your VST plugins; then spot to timeline in Pro Tools, doing all necessary sample-rate conversion (etc) on the way. You can have multiple ‘spotting lists’ so you can file sounds for different parts of a production and send them to the right Pro Tools sessions. It’s a hefty investment, but it pays for itself in time saved within weeks. If you can’t afford Pro, there are various cut down versions. Throughout the course of my career I’ve used paper catalogues with audio CDs, FileMaker databases, M&E Pro and then MTools – before stumping up for Soundminer 10 years ago. There’s even a roulette wheel so you can hear sounds you might otherwise never know you owned. Oh, and Skywalker Sound & Pixar use it!

www.store.soundminer.com

Product name: iZotope RX 2

What it does: Noise reduction and spectral repair.

Why I like it: Compared to Digidesign’s DINR and Bias’s SoundSoap, iZotope RX 2 can actually remove noise without making what remains sound like it’s underwater! What’s more, feeling a bit more like using Photoshop, you can remove coughs and dropouts by cloning the audio on either side – which is pretty special. Even if you don’t need to repair something, it’s really informative to look at the spectrogram of, say, birdsong. It’s also interesting to make selections in the frequency domain and listen to them. There’s an offshoot new product called Iris that has real potential for sound design. Apparently Peter Gabriel uses RX to make weird new sounds rather than clean up old ones... I last used it on Our Father at Watford Palace Theatre: I did a rough demo recording of a voice over in a dressing room and was able to remove hiss from my pre-amp, traffic, aircon and even the sound of the chair creaking mid-word to clean up the file enough to use it without having to redo the whole thing completely.

www.izotope.com/products/audio/rx/

Blasts from the past

SOUND DESIGN IN THE 1930S

In the 1930s Gramophone records containing sound effects were widely available and cost 4 shillings each. Each side of the disc carried between three and six sound effects, separated by a quarter-inch wide smooth surface to aid placing the needle in the correct place.

Gramophones had horns to acoustically amplify the sound on the record, meaning that the needle being placed and lifted would also be amplified, and there was no volume control. Where budgets permitted a Radiogram would be used – essentially a gramophone with an amp, speaker and crucially a volume control!

Two radiograms could then be used sequentially to create a continuous sound track, like crowd atmos, using the volume control to cross fade between machines. A radiogram could produce a louder sound than a gramophone but was significantly bigger, which had to be factored in to the offstage space available. The sound quality of gramophones and radiograms was poor, so certain effects such as thunder remained unachievable with this medium.

A variety of electrical effect machines could be hired in. The Strand Electric Engineering Company produced a machine to mimic an offstage car. It consisted of a sewing machine and an electric motor, which had leather straps attached to the flywheel, all connected to a dimmer. At low speed the leather straps produced a rhythmic tap, which became a continuous purr at higher speeds. The contraption was contained in a ported box, which could be covered to create the effect of the car getting closer or further away.

Strand produced a similar machine to create the sound of an airplane. A crucial difference between now and the 1930s was that labour was cheap, and technology was incredibly expensive, unreliable and not very sophisticated. 'Effects men' were employed to produce live sound effects from the wings of the stage, and would also operate the gramophone(s). A senior effects man would be responsible for creating a range of sound effects using their voice, various contraptions and by conducting stage crew.

A lot of time and effort was put into the creation of these 'noises off': for the 1926 production of 'The Ghost Train' at the Garrick Theatre, seven stage hands were utilised to create the sound of the train using the following equipment: a garden roller pushed over slats of the wood (for the joints in the rails); three cylinders of compressed air (whistle, steam and exhaust); a large tank; a large thunder sheet; a thick thunder sheet and mallet; a whistle; a side drum and wire brush; another side drum and padded mallet; a bass drum; some heavy chains; and finally sandpaper for a distant puffing effect.

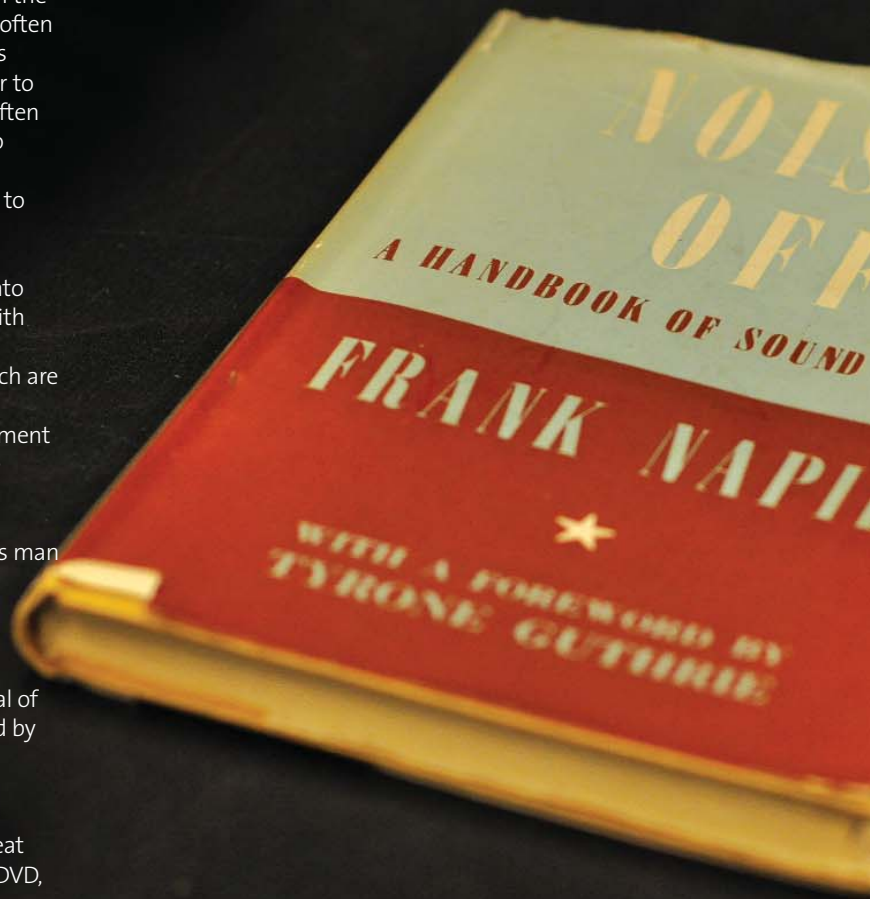
Simpler effects were used regularly: wind machines, thunder sheets, rain sticks being some of the most common. One of the main advantages performing these effects live was that the effects man could play the device like an instrument, responding to what was happening on stage, or even driving what was happening on stage. Effects men were expected to be sensitive to the sound they were creating. Of course, this wasn't always achieved and the techniques weren't always executed with skill – one of the relics of this era is the use of coconut shells to emulate horses hooves,


something now known more for its potential comedy value – though the technique is still used to this day by Foley Artists. Vocal mimicry was often used for certain types of effect, such as animal calls. Various methods were employed to either acoustically amplify the performer's voice, or to muffle it to give the sound distance. The effects man's voice would often be called on to produce a whole range of other sounds that were too complex to achieve mechanically – from musical instruments to motorcycles - though other effects would often be layered on top to achieve more realism.

Frank Napier's 1936 book 'Noises Off' provides a fascinating insight into the job of being an effects man, a job that bears many similarities with that of the sound designer today. He describes his normal process of mapping out the effects in advance with the director, deciding: "Which are the most telling moments for silences, climatic sounds or steady crescendos.... During rehearsals, inspiration and the needs of the moment will etch in the details, and gradually a complete composition will be composed".

He also describes how the most important qualities of a good effects man includes sensitivity to the rhythm and drama of the sound they are creating such that a sound that is made offstage supposedly by a character, must have the emotional value of that character at that moment. Whilst he made considerable use of technology, he was aware of its severe limitations but, "Consequently there is a great deal of fun left in the effects man's life: the business has not yet been ruined by mechanisation"!

A lot of the techniques of this era transferred into the film industry, notably Foley work and the sound design of animated features. A great featurette on their use in animation can be found on Pixar's 'Wall-E' DVD, narrated by Star Wars sound designer Ben Burtt.





London-based Ruth has created sounds for Hollywood films, including *The Hours*, and British TV dramas, such as *Downton Abbey*. In fact she is one of just ten professional freelance Foley Artists working in the capital. As she tells *The Echo* magazine: 'Creating the sound of zombies eating human entrails will always be an interesting job to do!'

The sound illusionist

RUTH SULLIVAN, FOLEY ARTIST

How do you describe what a Foley Artist does?

In general terms, a Foley Artist recreates any sound an actor makes in a scene, for example footsteps, the rustle of moving fabric and clothing and anything they do with props. We build up tracks (layers) of sound until everything except dialogue is covered. There are just ten of us doing this professionally in London!

What's a typical day for you?

We usually start by watching a few minutes of the film/programme then record a 'moves track'. This entails following the movements of the actors on screen manipulating some suitable material, usually soft denim. We can add other materials like leather or police jackets on another track. Then we go through each scene recording footsteps, literally step by step, for each of the main actors. We also do background tracks for crowd scenes if necessary.

We have to make sure we're on the right surface, which is harder than it might seem as we don't always get a clear shot of the floor. Also you can't always rely on the original recorded sound for clues. For example, the servants' area in Downton Abbey LOOKS like flagstones but is recorded on a wooden floored set, so obviously we have to record our footsteps on stone. The actors' dialogue will also have to be re-recorded as the original sound is stripped away.

How did you become a Foley Artist?

Completely by chance! I applied for what I thought was a dancing job - it turned out that two established Foley Artists, themselves former dancers, were recruiting people to train up so they could run a small agency of artists. When they explained what the job entailed I couldn't believe it!

What steps are there on the career ladder are there for you?

None really! Once you're an established artist you're likely to remain one - until you choose to move onto other projects... It's always nice to get a big feature film though! And obviously it's great when you do a good job for an editor or a studio and they call you back for more work. But it's not the sort of career that allows you to move into other areas, it's so specific.

What's been your favourite project to work on, and why?

It's a funny job, being a Foley Artist, and certainly some of the best projects may not always be the best in terms of production values. For example, I will always remember working on Highlander IV (straight to video!) because we had so much fun chopping off heads and exploding buildings! I also did all the Foley for Dead Set, the horror drama series by Charlie Brooker. This entailed making outrageous sound

effects of zombies eating people's entrails, which are always fun to do. Working on Mamma Mia! was SO much fun, whereas the intricate sound effects for Any Human Heart were completely absorbing and incredibly rewarding to make.

What has been the most difficult project to work on?

Actually, some of the films I've done in Lisbon – a beautiful city where I've experienced some of the highlights of my career - have been the hardest! There's always a shortage of time allowed and very few props in the studio. It's a real challenge to produce the work but also hugely rewarding too.

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Figuring out ways to produce certain sound effects and creating exactly the right sound in sync with the picture. Working with different people in different studios. Running on the spot all day can be challenging, too.

What are the working hours / pay / employment stability like?

Working hours vary according to the studio but on average we work an eight-hour day plus an hour for lunch. Freelance work is never particularly stable and projects will often get

moved around if the editing is behind schedule. Sometimes you'll have work booked a month or two in advance but often you won't know from week to week if you're working or not. It makes for an interesting life.

What is your one big bug bear when it comes to sound, or your industry?

Probably the lack of time and acknowledgment! We seem to be required to produce more work and in far greater detail than ever, particularly as technology has advanced so much with more and more complex editing. It's common to assume that the need for Foley is being sidelined in our digital world but although there's a great deal of pre-recorded sound that can be added to a soundtrack, there's no real alternative to the simplicity of an artist adding extra effects in a studio.

A pre-recorded sound effect of a glass being put down may be easy to find but we can make it sound as though the actual actor on screen is putting it down - and on the right kind of table! Equally you can find dozens of footstep recordings online but fitting them to the actual

movement of the actor is incredibly time consuming. An artist can follow an actor's steps and record them in a couple of takes. Basically, we will make the right sound according to what is happening on screen at the time, not sounds that were made for another project and just might work, if you edit them for long enough. We can make a scene come alive. Lack of acknowledgement of the importance of Foley is very hard, especially when budgets are being squeezed all the time. It seems ridiculous when you know how much programmes can be sold for or how much films make at the box office.

What is the one piece of equipment that you find most useful?

Um, my feet? Perhaps my coconuts?! I found this nice quote which kind of sums it all up: Joe Sikorsky, who worked with Jack (Foley), recalls "Jack emphasised you have to act the scene... you have to be the actors and get into the spirit of the story the same as the actors did, on the set. It makes a big difference."



RUTH SULLIVAN, FOLEY ARTIST

TV includes: Downton Abbey, Spooks, Hustle, Any Human Heart, Whitechapel, Merlin, Case Sensitive, Inside Men, Outcasts, Wild at Heart, Skins, Body.

Films include: Troy, Eyes Wide Shut, Mamma Mia!, Proof, 28 Days Later, 1408, The World Is Not Enough (Golden Reel nomination), Paul, Death at a Funeral, Snow Cake, Keeping Mum, Still Crazy, The Hours, My House in Umbria, Running Free (Golden Reel nomination) and The Life and Death of Peter Sellers (Emmy winner).

“it’s not the sort of career that allows you to move into other areas, it’s so specific”

Mini profiles

NICK POWELL

Composer and sound designer Nick has worked extensively with the National Theatre, and achieved success in writing for the screen - including BAFTA winners *Beneath the Veil* and *Death in Gaza*. He's also toured and recorded with many bands including Mcalmont & Butler and Strangelove.

What are you working on at the moment?

Currently working on a new OSKAR (my band) and preparing 'The Danton Case' for Stadsteatern Gothenberg.

What's your favourite part of your work/process?

After the horror and insecurity of the composing process, I love the tech when it's about placing sound within a space in a way that serves the whole.

What would you change about your work / the industry?

The industry? I wish that theatre held more relevance for a wider cross section of people. The reason a lot of people think theatre is boring is because a lot of it is. My work? Well, I guess I always want to be better. I want that flash of excitement and inspiration you sometimes get when working on a project to be translated more successfully to the finished work.

Top tip?

If, like me, you're more from the compositional/ sound manipulation end of things, make sure you work with and befriend some great engineers! I've been lucky enough to work with some fantastic engineers. You know who you are.

What are you listening to at the moment?

Still in mourning for LCD Soundsystem since James Murphy stopped the band last year, so still listening them a lot. Ligetti's requiem (a reference for my Danton show in Sweden) - amazing!

For more on Nick's band, visit www.oskaronline.com



Far left: Nick Powell
Left: Matt Padden

MATT PADDEN - HEAD OF SOUND, NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

Based in Glasgow, Matt has been Head of Sound for the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) since 2008. As well as designing for NTS, Matt has designed sound for shows by *Vanishing Point* and *Corcadorca*. He is possibly the only sound engineer to have worked with Sting in such a way that he saw only saw his feet throughout the process. When he's not wearing headphones, he takes photographs.

What are you working on at the moment and what is your role?

Enquirer at the NTS - it's a new site-specific theatre production based around interviews with leading figures in the UK newspaper industry, in the context of allegations of corruption, bribery and illegal practices. I'm Technical Sound Designer, and I'm also acting as Programmer/Associate on our other shows.

What's your favourite part of your process?

Making the large and complex sound system seem like it isn't actually there!

What would you change about your work and the industry?

I would like more time to get everything done and better sound control positions in venues.

Top tip?

Beat-matched cued transitions in Qlab (hint: looped bars of silence and a devamp).

What are you listening to at the moment?

Gentle rain on an office roof and soft shoes padding down the corridor ...

ASD MEMBERS

Professional Designers

Bobby Aitken
Paul Arditti
Simon Baker
Dominic Bilkey
Danny Bright
Steven Brown
Paul Bull
Andy Collins
Tony Davies
Simon Deacon
George Dennis
Ian Dickinson
Carolyn Downing
Mark Dunne
Gregg Fisher
Sebastian Frost
Gareth Fry
Tom Gibbons
David Gregory
Paul Gregory
Paul Groothuis
John Harris
Theo Holloway
Martyn Hunt
Simon King
Em Laxton
John Leonard
Tom Lishman
Steven Mayo
Adam McCready
Jon McLeod

David McSeveney
Jon Nicholls
Gareth Owen
Colin Pink
Mic Pool
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