

SPECIAL PROJECT

SOUNDING THE SCENE AND THE UNSEEN

(Design Research Seminar)



INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CENTRE
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY
MUMBAI - 400076
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Under the guidance of
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“

To hear a sound is to see a space

”

Industrial Design Centre

IIT BOMBAY

A Report on

SOUNDING THE SCENE AND THE UNSEEN

Design Research Seminar

(Special project)

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ABSTRACT

Sound is equally important as Visuals in a film. It creates an emotional attachment to the visuals. It completes the film. The filmmakers generally give importance to the visuals. A bad cinematography can be tolerated but the poor sound quality is more annoying.

INTRODUCTION

Sound is half of the experience. Try playing a movie without sound. Even the oldest movies had at least a soundtrack. It's our natural habit that we are used to hear and see things together. We have 5 senses. We can see, hear, touch, smell and taste things, which gives us an experience in whole. Although we don't always use all the senses together, but individually all of them have their importance.

Talking about the movies, we mostly use the sense of 'seeing' and 'hearing.' These two are the most used senses of our body, and mostly together. So while watching a video clip or a movie we are using both our senses together. If we close our eyes and only listen to the sound, we still can visualize what's happening in a movie. But it's hard to imagine what a person is saying or what background music is playing or what kind of Foley sounds are being used if we mute the sound. Both are equally important.

But sound has a plus point. We can use it for showing things, we can not see in visuals. For example, sound of thundering, Sound of a train in distance, Sound of a fan inside a room, a dog barking etc. Our mind accepts a sound even if we can not see the source. But the same is not applicable for the visuals. Generally whatever we can see through our eyes, we can hear them too. For example, if we can see a car passing by, we can hear its sound also. But if we show the visual of a car passing by, and then there is no sound, our brain will know that there is some problem. The audio conveys all the emotional impact of the visuals. If we watch our favorite scene from a movie without the audio, we will soon discover that our emotional attachment to that scene is gone.

Presence of a sound is never noticed but the absence of a sound is always noticed.

RESEARCH WORK

ELEMENTS OF SOUND DESIGN

These are the basic elements of sound design:

Dialogue

Foley

Sound Effects

Music

Silence

- DIALOGUE:** A conversation between two or more people. Sometimes its necessary to narrate the story. Although in old movies there were no dialogs, but now a days, most of the movies have dialogs.
- FOLEY:** Its the everyday sound effects which is added to the film during post production. For example sound of footsteps, creaking sound of a door opening, sound of falling on a floor etc.
- MUSIC:** Background music can play a big role if we want to make an audience emotionally attached to the film. Sometimes a piece of music is attached to a scene so much that even if we just hear the music we can tell that the music is from that movie. It gives a theme to the movie. (mostly Background scoring not bollywood music) for example. Harry Potter soundtrack or James bond sound track.
- SOUND FX:** Sound effects are useful when we want to make a funny movie or animation. A lot of sound fx were used by animated cartoon series like Tom and Jerry, Fred Flintstones, Mickey mouse, etc
- SILENCE:** Silence is an essential tool if we know how to use it. Sometimes we can make a scene more effective if put a silence in between to loud sounds. for example a fighting scene of some robots or aliens, then suddenly everything goes silent and then - boom. Or may be for a horror movie we can use silence to build up and then surprise the audience with a scream.

PRINCIPLES OF SOUND DESIGNING

There are different styles in which we can use a sound with the visuals to tell a story. Majorly the sound is divided into two categories: **Diegetic** and **Non- Diegetic**.

Diegetic Sounds

Sound whose source is visible on the screen or whose source is implied to be present by the action of the film. Diegetic sound is any sound presented as originated from source within the film's world. Diegetic sound can be either on screen or off screen depending on whatever its source is within the frame or outside the frame. Another term for diegetic sound is actual sound . For example:

- Voices of characters
- Sounds made by objects in the story
- Music represented as coming from instruments in the story space.

1. The first and the simple way is to use the normal sound for the video. Both happens exactly at the same time. Simple example, we can show a car comes and stop in front of a temple and sound of a car and it stops.

2. Other way is to use a sound but not showing the source of the sound. Same example as above, but this time we can show only the temple and the sound of a car is audible. No car can be seen. But we know that somewhere a car has come and stopped just by listening to the sound of it.

3. We can build an environment without even showing it in the visuals. We will take the same above scene for example. We can show people going to temple and the sound of temple bells can be coming from a distance. This will establish the location. We are not showing the temple, but just to establish the location the sounds related to that particular area can be used.

4. Another way that we can use the sound is through music. Music or Sound effects can be used to match the mood of the action. It can be used to make us feel the emotions like happiness, sadness, fear etc.

Non-Diegetic Sounds

Sound whose source is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the action. Non-diegetic sound is represented as coming from a source outside story space. The distinction between diegetic or non-diegetic sound depends on our understanding of the conventions of film viewing and listening. We know of that certain sounds are represented as coming from the story world, while others are represented as coming from outside the space of the story events. A play with diegetic and non-diegetic conventions can be used to create ambiguity (horror), or to surprise the audience or comedy. Another term for non-diegetic sound is commentary sound. For Example:

- Narrator's commentary
- Sound effects which is added for the dramatic effect
- Mood music

1. Generally we can use it for narrating a story for saving time, like something has happened 1000 years back and if we don't want to show all that, we will quickly narrate the story and establish it to current scene from where we want to start the movie.
2. Mostly for comedy movies or animated films we use sound effects which adds up the humor. For example a boy falling in a pit and we give a 'toin' sound.
3. We can use the sound that seems to exhibit conspicuous indifference to what is going on in the film's plot. It creates a very strong sense of the tragic.

SOUND ANALYSIS IN MOVIES



PSYCHO (1960)
(ALFRED HITCHCOCK)

The movie starts with a very tensed soundtrack , anticipating that somethings gonna happen. But nothing shocking happens during the first 15-20 minutes of the movie. But still it builds the tension in the audience's mind for a long time. The same piece of music keeps repeating to build the tension across the movie.

They have used only the string orchestra rather than a full symphonic ensemble. I think this is one of the reason that the soundtrack of the movie stands out from other movies of the same time.

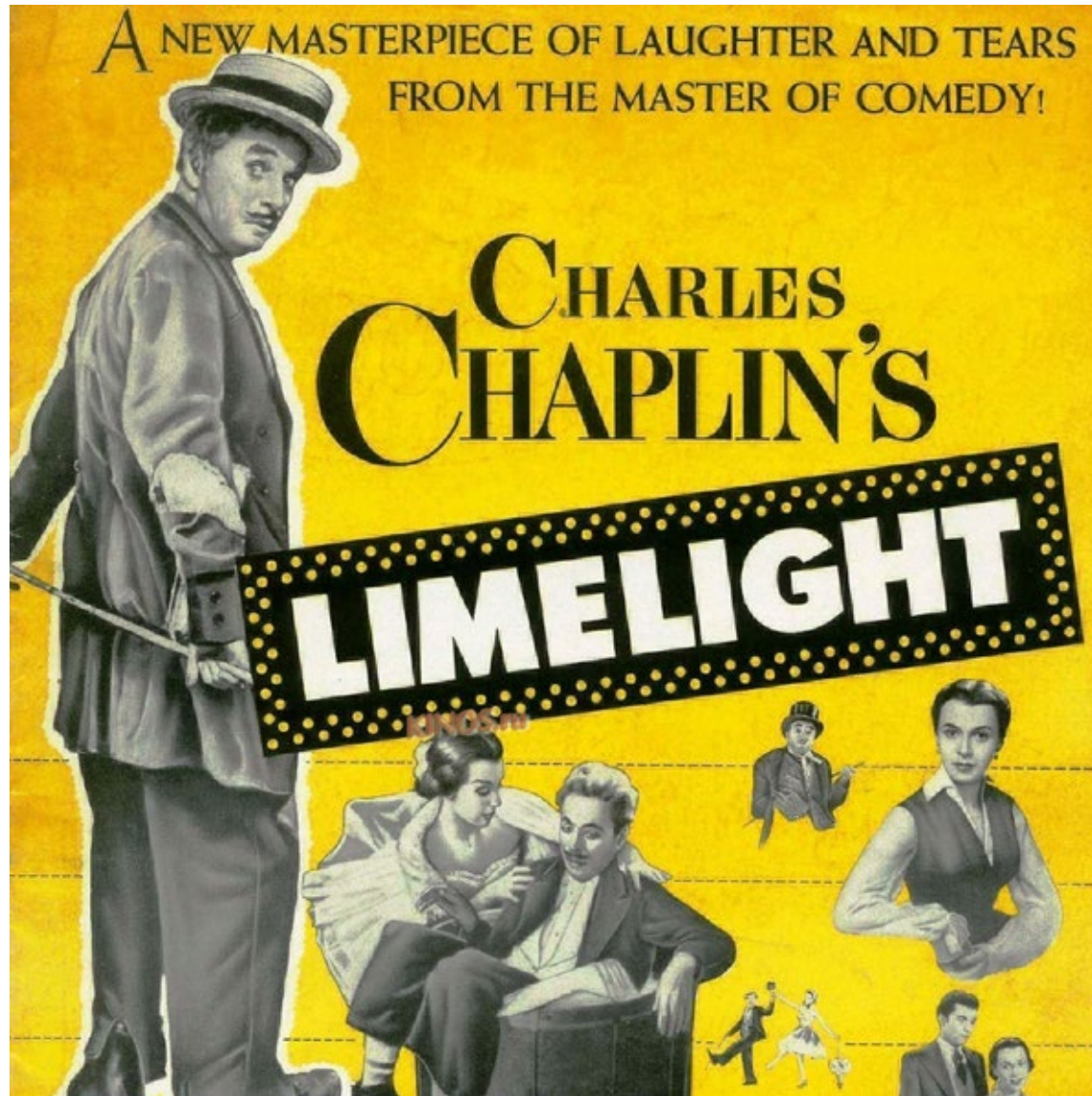
The famous 'Shower scene' has a really high pitch string sound, added with the special effects of bird's screeching sound to intensify the effect of the girl screaming. We don't hear the girls voice but the sound is really high pitched screeching, and the mic was placed near the instrument to get the sound extraordinary effect. Its is also said that they have used a mute device for rest of the soundtrack other than the shower scene. Also the screeching sound of the bird is a metaphor that Norman used to collect stuffed birds.

The shower scene is a Non-diegetic sound because the visuals show that the girl is being stabbed but a rally high pitched soundtrack is playing in the background, intensifying the effects. Also complete silence is used just before the scene to anticipate that something is about to happen.

A NEW MASTERPIECE OF LAUGHTER AND TEARS
FROM THE MASTER OF COMEDY!

CHARLES
CHAPLIN'S

LIMELIGHT

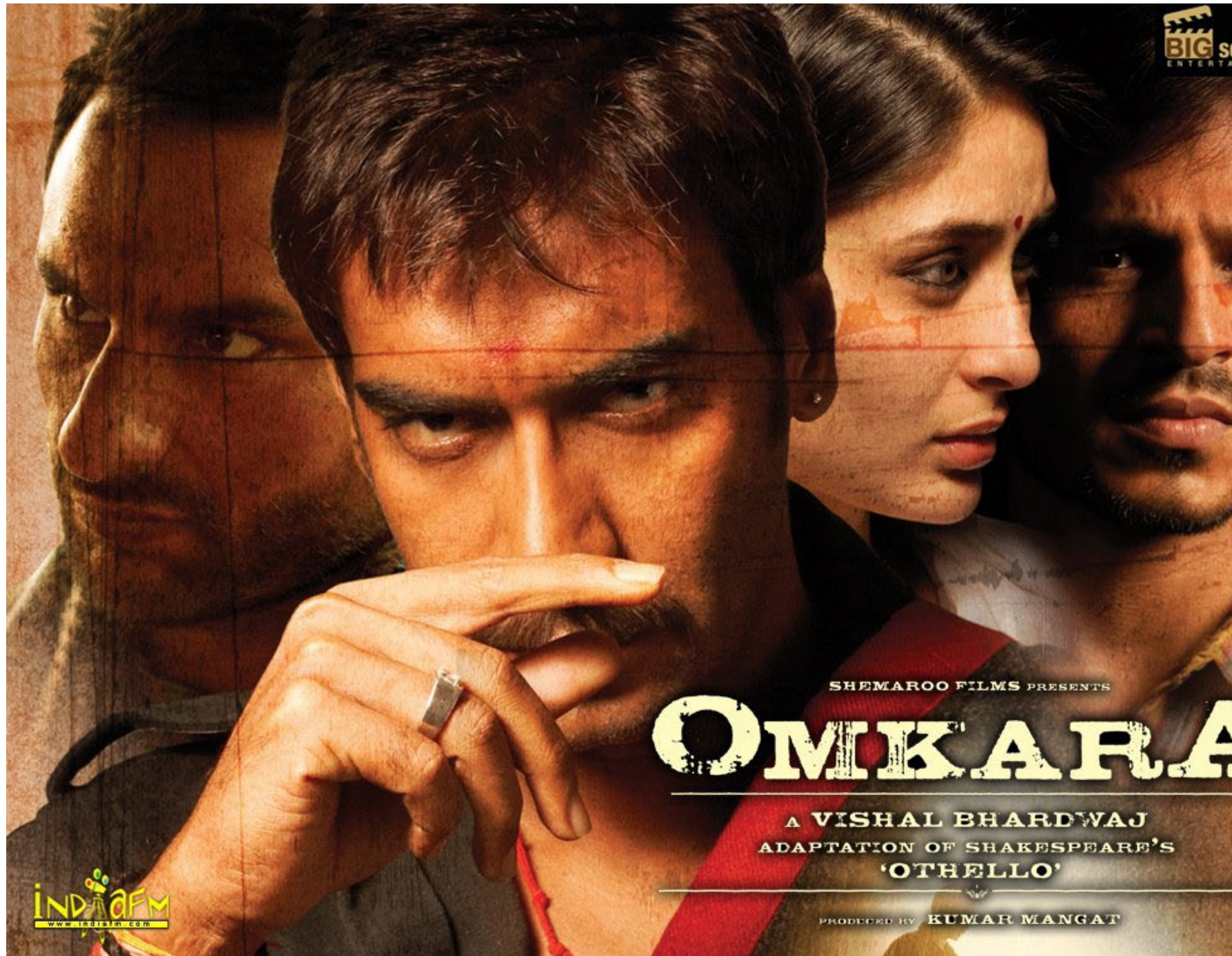


LIMELIGHT (1982)
(CHARLES CHAPLIN)

As soon as the movie starts it uses a theme song, which continues to play whenever there is an emotional scene. This music keeps us reminding the emotion of the actor. While he is sad or gets emotional about his life.

In the very first scene when the movie starts it shows a scene of a city, and a background music is playing. The camera pans to a building and it zooms into a door the volume of the music decreases as it enters the door and the camera starts showing the interior of a room where a lady is lying on a bed unconsciously holding a poison bottle. This is how the first scene is established. Then the scene is cut to the outside of the building and the volume of the music also increases. This shows that the sound source is somewhere outside the building.

There is one scene where the conversation is going on. The actress can not stand, but when suddenly she while speaking she stands up, she gets surprised. And she starts screaming, "Look Calvero, I am walking, I am walking..." and she keeps repeating and the music starts and her volume fades. This increases the intensity of her excitement.



OMKARA(2006)
(VISHAL BHARADWAJ)

There is a scene where omkara and his gang is talking with another gang. While talking, slow dispute starts happening. Till this time there was no fighting scene shown. Then suddenly the title song of Omkara starts fading in and the fight starts. This is how the hero of the movie Omkara is introduced properly after 20 minutes. All these times the Omkara's role was anticipated that he is a fighter. Suddenly when we see him fighting with the music which describes his nature, it adds up to his image as a very strong character.

There is a scene in which 'Langada Tyaagi (Saif Ali Khan)' was about to allot the new position of 'Bahubali'. The scene opens by showing a river side and the bells from a temple can be heard. The camera pans to a temple on the top of a hill. The sound of bell increases. Then it cuts to the people sitting inside the temple. The volume increases again. When they are selecting the new post for their leader, the bell keeps ringing in the background. But unexpectedly when Omkara selects Keshu Firangi (Vivek Oberoi) instead of Langada Tyagi, the sound of the bell increases more, showing the face of him. It depicts that he is shocked and could not understand what is happening.

There is one scene where a gang try to assassinate 'Bhai sahab'(Nasiruddin Shah). The scene starts with a crowded market. Two people in a scooter follows his car, stops them and shoot 3 bullets inside the car. The victim is not shown in the visuals, the camera is still shows the assassinator shooting inside the car through windows and the music starts. it cuts to another scene at hospital where Omkara is walking towards Bhai sahab's ward. The camera pans to the door through which finally they shows him lying on a bed and the music stops. Then the same piece of music starts when Omkara is chasing the guy who tried to kill Bhai Sahab. This continuation of music shows the link of similar scenes.

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