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**Title: Exploring Sound Design and Music
Composition in a Range of Professional Projects**

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Abstract

Exploring sound design and music in a range of professional contexts requires professional elements. With this project report, I intend to showcase my professional ability in music production, Foley, and Sound Design. For this, obtaining a product that could determine my potential in sound design and music was challenging, for which I have chosen a short film, "Amidst the Crowd", which is a collaboration with an original film from a UEL film director, Mr. Ashwin DAVID JOY who is also a filmmaking student at my university. The second work is with a director, Mr. Sanal, from my hometown. It is also a horror-based short film named "CHAKITHAM", which later on the run turned out to be my first project due to some technical issue with the director Ashwin. Along with these main projects, I will approach an Audi advert to improve and develop my knowledge of adding sound and music to the visuals.

Understanding different emotions for the given visuals Involves my compositional work along with Foley and sound design to achieve them. Both the movies have a horror-based theme, which I was always keen to work with. My last project was also horror-based, which will benefit me during the production of this project. I will be looking into various sound designers and music producers to observe modern techniques and technologies to achieve my goal. I will be researching further on sound design and Foley to gain the most effective way of producing them by collecting materials on mic techniques, effects plugins list and their uses, etc.

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Main Body

1. Introduction

During my time at the university, I discovered my passion for music and sound design. I will be working on various different projects during this time. For the first project, I will showcase the effective merging/blending of music, Sound design and Foley to the visuals, which I have learned during my previous years at my university. Thus, film directors Mr Sanal and Mr Ashwin came to me to discuss two different scripts falling under the same genre, horror, which they were going to direct next. Sanal presented a short film in my own language named 'CHAKITHAM', and it all buckled up to go, whereas Ashwin had the shoot almost done for his short film "Amidst the Crowd", but due to some technical reasons, the post-production went down. My all-time favourite genre was horror, and I was always keen to explore my potential in Foley, Sound Design and Music in the same. Musically, I already had some compositions in my mind that I could develop with different patches and tones. I believe horror is all about detailing minute ingredients. Spatial audio plays a huge role in horror because the viewers require music/sound from different dimensions, which they don't expect.

Exploring the 5.1 or 7.1 surround mix in depth was another criterion of this project. I aim to make the viewers experience every music detail in different dimensions by revealing every detail with clarity and depth. Musically, I would like to follow minor keys and tritone chords that can develop the scary atmosphere required for the film. Sones well said how to make music scary for a horror film (Sones, 2022). I also explored Intimidating Instrumentation, Sinister silence, and Eerie intervals because these add-ons greatly impact the movie's scary feel. Dissonance, the use of clashing notes, plays an important role in horror music; dissonant chords do the same. I will be exploring these two musically for my project.

2. Literature Review

Chion M. (1994), Audio Vision, New York: Columbia University Press.

I have found this book useful because Chion suggests the combination of audio and visuals leads to a much greater effect than either of them alone could have, stating the relation between sound and vision and describing how sound can transform the perception of what we see as visuals. As a result, this will help to gain a better understanding of the relationship between visuals and audio. Chion

asserts that sound may have faces as a counterpoint and companion to the image being projected. Chion also talks about the most important aspect, which is the voice and describes how music supports the voice. His argument, however, is the theory of reciprocity between sound and image, which contributes to an in-depth understanding of my project.

Karen Collins. (2020), Studying Sound: A Theory and Practice of Sound Design

Professor Collins explains an in-depth analysis of the principles and applications of sound design, ranging from its use in sound effects to its imaginative application for storytelling. Collins presents an indispensable and fundamental introduction to understanding, working with, and analysing sound on all levels. This book is impressive and pedagogically brilliant for all of those studying sound in this century. It describes the theory and mechanics of sound and is an essential guide to sound design methods for anyone who really admires the process of sound design. This book will also help me to gain a greater understanding of how the use of sound design can affect an audience.

Cohen, A., 2001. Music as a Source of Emotion in Film.

According to Cohen, music is the strongest cause for emotional responses within a film. This book will not only provide me with further insight into the imperative role that music plays within the films but also give a wider understanding of music within the film because music also contextualises the historical relationship between the two elements. This book is structured into four main sections. Initially, it sets the stage for discussing the emotional aspects of music and film. Subsequently, it delves into the role of music within films, analysing how it bridges the gap between fictional and non-fictional elements. It then presents empirical studies on music's influence and structure within films, followed by a summary of its various functions. Thirdly, it introduces a cognitive framework to comprehend the phenomena of musical soundtracks. Lastly, it examines the composer's pivotal role in infusing emotional depth into film through music.

3. Methodology

Using practice-based research, I tried developing an in-depth understanding of how sound, music, foley, and visuals interact with one another and parallelly influence viewers. For this, I divided the entire project into three stages: Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production. With the help of study materials, videos, articles, and podcasts and obtaining knowledge from various industry professionals and their techniques, the aim was to

obtain an industry standard output for Sound Design and Music for the visuals.

Phase 1: Pre-Production

This stage includes all my Experimentation and Investigation regarding the project. I initiated this stage by collecting several audio-visual elements and also using established techniques of industry-professional practitioners within the field of sound design, Foley, and music production. I also did some primary searches, like interviewing industry professionals, that benefit my project to widen the knowledge and library that I have already gained. This stage helped me to decide what techniques would work efficiently within the budget by analysing and putting together all the techniques from various professionals, along with my knowledge of the subject, whilst also analysing the relationship between sound and visuals. In addition, I conducted secondary research by collecting data from the internet, articles, books and podcasts, which helped me understand more in-depth.

Phase 2: Production

This stage includes the Development of the project. I initiated further development based on the knowledge and ideas I gained during stage 1. I edited the sounds and music during this stage and implemented them into the visuals to get the desired output. Logic Pro X, which is an industry-standard Digital Audio Workstation, will be used to edit the sessions and input audio into the visuals frame by frame. Once all the editing was done, I proceeded with the mixing of audio, which included volume panning, Equalizing, surround mixing, compression and adding reverb to blend all audio into a stereo track.

Phase 3: Post-Production

This stage will conclude my project by having a completely developed audio-visual work. Here is where I will be mastering the overall stereo track to attain the required LUFs value using the loudness meter, and this can be achieved using the limiter and multi-pressor. Once the mastering is locked, I will export the final stereo track as a WAV file to compile it into the final visual out and release it online.

4. Impact

As a result of the nature of my work, it influences audiences of all backgrounds and beliefs. Since I intend to source music from scratch, which should mimic the industry standard, the audio-visual elements I source will be a very crucial part of my project. Ideally, I want my audio-visual pieces to mimic the quality of the

commercial film, as I believe society has become very accepting if what they hear is good.

In terms of the story of the film, however, some issues may arise concerning who has the rights to the story itself or certain clips. Recorded videos are protected by copyright from the moment they are recorded, and make sure are assigned to the original creator when they are created. If in case you are adding videos or clips from other copyright owners, always seek their permission before using them.

Many composers struggle with financial instability, especially when starting out. Income can be unpredictable, particularly if they rely on royalties or project-based work. The music industry in India is highly competitive, with numerous composers vying for limited opportunities. Standing out in such a crowded field requires exceptional talent, networking skills and perseverance. While the Indian music industry is vast and diverse, certain genres or styles may receive more attention and opportunities than others. Composers like me working in niche or experimental genres may find it particularly challenging to find recognition and support.

The nature of the entrainment industry means that composers may experience periods of intense work followed by periods of uncertainty or unemployment. Maintaining a stable income and work life can be difficult under such conditions.

Safeguarding original compositions and ensuring fair compensation amidst copyright infringement risks can be challenging, particularly in a jurisdiction with varying enforcement levels. In the UK, sound recordings and films created should have copyright protection since 1st August 1989, provided the work is original and certain criteria are met. Registration with the UK Copyright service is a good way to ensure there is independent evidence of creation and copyright ownership of your music.

With all these in mind, I will seek to gain permission from the copyright owners of the music/clips I intend to source, at the same time, to collaborate with a creative director to establish my own content. It also helps me to understand how my work can be monetized.

5. Findings

Although I had to develop this project myself using the knowledge that I gained from the past three years of my university life. Yes, the university contributed more than I could ask for in this project. The logic Pro and Ableton I worked on was much easier because I already started advance DAW from my second year. Getting to know more about its potential made my workflow easier and more efficient. I have found plenty of articles that helped throughout this project theoretically and practically. Various platforms like LinkedIn and music scores are

found very useful for knowing certain things in detail. There were many artists whom I could approach on LinkedIn to understand their way of working, which helped to shape my way of approach to this project. Most importantly, the tutorials and materials provided by the lecturers were so beneficial for the development of my project. The root of all my research originated from the materials that were provided by my lecturer; the guidance at every stage of my project and the feedback from my fellow members improved my production quality.

6. Discussion

Nowadays, research possibilities are easy, plentiful, and approachable. The availability of materials regarding music production, especially horror music, helped me understand the proper techniques of making it stage by stage. My initial step was to understand the movie script, which required me to sit with the directors several times to understand what they visualised about their own films. My job was to give confidence to the directors in the technical and musical possibilities and convey my best potential. Once the script was locked and the visuals were covered, it took less time for a final cut of the visuals to reach me, which then I initiated my work musically. But before the final visuals were handed over, I did in-depth research on horror music, sound design and foley.

John Carpenter's "Halloween" and Charles Bernstein's "Nightmare on Elm Street" turned out to be very enjoyable exercises from which I learned quite a lot. Horror music is maligned, cudgelled as a genre of clumsy dynamics, dissonant melodies and sinister silence. As a music composer, there is an inevitable challenge to writing horror music. Since so many combinations of minor keys and tritone chords are used in horror music, it will turn the visuals deeply rooted with appropriate emotions. The secret behind every scary music taught me various techniques for building a scary atmosphere using voices and instruments (Wiley, 2015). Combinations of Eerie intervals, disturbing dies irae, Intimidating instrumentation, haunting human voice, and sinister silence create a perfect scary music genre. My project required more instrumental ideas, mainly horror instrument basics, esoteric instruments, innocent instruments, and heavy metal. Horror music composers often use deep, sonorous instruments like the cello, wind, or pipe organ, and so did I. My project required innocent instruments like a music box contrasting against a symphonic pad, which is dissonant music. Yes, I mean Dissonance, the use of clashing notes, is a big part of horror music.

Cohen proves the argument that music is the strongest emotion in film and opens viewers' minds to different states in depth. It helps to connect the visual and the viewer emotionally and mentally. The journal helped to understand the historical relation between the two elements. But Michel Chion explores the relationship between sound and image in film and the aftermath these relationships may

imply. Chion alludes to “added value” as the key to elaborate give and take between the audio and visual components of the film. By added value, chain means that the combination of sound and image creates a total effect that is greater than the sum of its parts. In short, the effect of two elements together is more powerful and expressive than either could be standing on its own. “The house lights go down, and the movie begins. Brutal and enigmatic images appear on the screen: a film projector running, a closeup of the film going through it, terrifying glimpses of animal sacrifices, a nail being driven through a hand.

Then, in more “normal” times, a mortuary. Here we see a young boy we take at first to be a corpse like the others, but who turns out to be alive—he moves, he reads a book, he reaches toward the screen surface, and under his hand, there seems to form the face of a beautiful woman.” (Chion 1994, pp. 3-4)

Chion’s exploration of sound in film is indeed profound, particularly in how it affects the perception of time within cinematic narratives. The shift from silent to sound cinema brought about a standardisation of timing, giving filmmakers greater control over the rhythm of their scenes and the overall pacing of their films. Diegetic sound, in particular, serves as a guidepost for audiences, elucidating the linear progression of scenes, especially through the use of language.

Moreover, sound plays a crucial role in shaping the temporality of scenes, imparting a sense of linearity to potentially abstract images. Chion identifies three ways in which sound influences temporality: temporal animation, temporal linearisation and vectorisation. These mechanisms enable sound to alter the viewer’s perception of time, imbuing scenes with coherence and driving them towards narrative resolutions. Chion’s theory underscores the reciprocal relationship between sound and image, wherein each element mutually influences and transforms the other. This reciprocity enhances the overall cinematic experience, as both sound and image derive added value from their interaction. By understanding this symbiotic relationship, filmmakers can harness the full potential of sound to enrich the temporal dimensions of their narratives. Whereas “Studying Sound” by Collins starts by delving into the nuances between hearing and listening, offering exercises to sharpen auditory perception. It then delves into sound as an acoustic phenomenon, touching on recording and perception. Spatial effects like reverberation and echo are explored, alongside common digital sound effects such as tremolo, vibrato and distortion. The theory and practice of mixing are covered in depth; it delves into the surround and spatial audio and also delves into the relationship between sound and meaning, drawing from semiotics and psychology, leaving a thorough examination about the use of sound to enhance storytelling, with examples drawn from radio plays, audio dramas and podcasts.

Keeping these in mind, I started my journey for this project as a music director and sound designer. The director gave the film's FPS rate and relevant details. Initially, I decided on a basic chord to follow throughout the film: the B minor scale. The short film is based on a psycho-killer, which creates curiosity and suspense throughout the film and the mental trauma that the character goes through after a phone call arrives from a housemate who is not home for that particular night. Every sound heard in and around the house created suspense and tension conveyed by expressions. This is where sound design and music create an unmatched bond between the visual and the sound. As a music director, I believed the importance of music and foley should be balanced, giving no more or no less in either of its parts. Sound design is all about detailing the minute gestures. Everything may not be evident, but they are very effective. It creates an emotional and real-time connection between the viewer and the visual without the viewer knowing. Collin describes the principles and concepts of sound design practice, from the technical aspects of sound effects to the creative use of sound in storytelling (Collins, K, 2020). Indeed, discovering various mic techniques to record Foley was challenging as it required various quirky sounds to be developed for the purpose. I literally had to try different mic techniques to record one object, for example, the squeaky sound of the door. The merging of foley/Sound design with music changed the whole mood of the film.

My last step is to lock the timeline, send the stem for the mix, and then Mastering. Here, the final output is delivered to its full potential. I believe every mix we develop determines the overall judgement of visuals. Understanding the placement of each sound and music, panning. In short, every automation the music director guides provides a great mix. I always give a rough mix of mine to the mixing engineer prior to the mix day so that it is easier to convey and understand between the music director and the mix engineer.

7. Conclusion

This non-linear work improved my ability and efficiency as a Music Producer, leaving behind all my vulnerabilities and weaknesses away and creating a new professionalism in me to carry forward my career with confidence and strength. Looking ahead, my inspiration as a composer and sound designer extend far beyond the melodies already written. I envision a future brimming with innovation and collaboration, where I continue to push the boundaries of musical expression. With each new upcoming opportunity, I aim to explore uncharted territories, blending genres and experimenting with unconventional instrumentation to create sounds that are both refreshing and evocative. Moreover, I am committed to fostering connections within the artistic community, collaborating with performers, visual artists, and other creatives to craft interdisciplinary works that captivate audiences and spark meaningful dialogues. As technology advances, I see boundless opportunities to leverage digital tools and platforms to reach wider

audiences and engage with listeners in new and immersive ways. Ultimately, my goal is to leave a lasting legacy, a body of work that not only resonates with audiences today but also inspires future generations of composers to dream boldly and create fearlessly. As I said, I am excited to embark on this journey, embracing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as I continue to pursue my passion for music with creativity, curiosity and conviction.

8. Reference list / Bibliography

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