

1- How did start working with sound design? And what is your academic background for sound design, or anything else related?

I received my first sound design assignment in 2010, when I was hired by Strategic Music for a sound designer position. Our company provides game developers with music, sound effects, voice-overs and everything else related to audio. Prior to this, I've been working as a freelance music composer for six years, but I never tried to create sound effects.

I don't have an academic background. I graduated a music school in my childhood, where I trained my aural skills, learned to play balalaika (a traditional russian musical instrument) and piano. I am a self-taught person.

2- In your music, what artists or type of music influences your creative process, and for sound design, what or who influences you the most? (games, movie, sound designer)

I listen to artists of various genres, so I could name many names... for example, Enya, Aphex Twin, Nine Inch Nails, Animals as Leaders, Orbital, Solar Fields. As for game music, I learned a lot from various movie and games composers: Yasunori Mitsuda, Joe Hisaishi, Jesper Kyd, Jeremy Soule, Danny Elfman, Thomas Newman, Yann Tiersen.

In sound design, I can't name someone who is special to me. We all know about "stars" like Ben Burtt or Gary Rydstrom, but there are many other people whose work deserve a special attention. So, when I need to boost my creative process, I look for movies, games or soundtracks which could be used as a reference, and study them carefully. This gives me the basic ideas how to start. After that, I'm ought to do my best using my own skills.

3- What tools did you like to use to craft the sounds for a sound design project (software, processing, outboard gear?)

I record almost everything with my Zoom H4n recorder, it's a very reliable tool for its price. In special cases, I use an Oktava MK-102 condenser microphone with Roland Quad-Capture audio interface and a notebook. The quality is good enough for my needs, but I plan to upgrade to something like Marantz or Sound Devices in the future.

As for software, I've been working with Steinberg Cubase for 9 years, and I don't feel like migrating to any other DAW. In addition to its own plugins, I use several products from Waves, Fabfilter and a bunch of freeware VSTs (some of those are quite useful – for example, Jeremy Evers' Atlantis or DFX Skidder).

These questions below are about the Boom Audio contest.

1- For something like that, did you have any sort of workflow?

When I watched the video the first time, I noted that for the most part it shows close-ups of the elements of the interface, and you get the full picture only in the end. So, I decided that I want to concentrate on those elements and create a palette of small and precise sounds to blend in a nice mix later. I find sound design very similar to music: to be pleasing, the sounds should be used in the right way and should not interfere with each other, so you could enjoy every detail you can hear.

The first thing I did was to create a list of the sounds I would need: beeps, microscopic movements, clicks, energy-like drones, low end drones, static noise etc. I wanted to create at least 3-4 sounds for

each category. For a start, I processed the white noise with bandpass filter at various frequencies, then I took several microscopic snippets of the file and looped them – this provided me with basic material to play with. Then, various plugins went into the work. I tried various effects chains until I got what I needed, and in the end the total sound library for the video comprised 83 files. After that, I could start applying them to the video and working on the whole mix.

2- Describe how you achieved some of the more difficult sounds (maybe 2) that you did for the contest? the more detail the better so I can try to demonstrate to the guys at the presentation.

This is somewhat difficult question for me, since I often re-process sounds which were already done with other effects chains – just to see if I get something interesting. But I recorded a video for you, where I reconstructed some of the sounds which were used in the final mix. As you can see in it, my main tools were mostly automated filters with high resonance and amplitude/frequency modulation plugins.

3- On the mixing, did you do put all the sounds first and then mixed, or did you mix as you added sounds?

As I mentioned, first I decided to create a small library for the mix and only then work on the whole sound design. When I finished the first version, I wasn't very happy with what I did: sounds were too simple and flat. On the next day, I reworked them: I tortured my effects chains again to get additional material, then I layered some specific sounds with others to make them more appealing, and in the end I added a slight background low rumble to create an illusion of a machinery room. This helped to solve the problem.

4- How long did it take you to do the whole project?

I remember that I spent about 10 hours creating the sounds for the video, and the actual work took another 3 to 4 hours. The whole process was done in 4 days approximately (I worked on the contest video in my free time).

These questions below are are in general.

1- What is your top project that you've worked on so far? and what are you working on currently?

It may sound strange, but I consider the Boom Library contest my top project in sound design so far, since it was the first time I did the everything just from the one file, and somehow I got the 1st place... still can't believe this. :)

As for my work, recently our company finished working on “Warhammer 40000: Space Wolf” and “Evolution: Battle for Utopia” games. I did a lot of sounds for these projects: futuristic weapons, creatures and droids, special events, story cinematics. I like to work with sci-fi sound effects, so it was very interesting and challenging experience. Regarding the current projects, I can't tell anything due to the company policy.

2- What would you recommend for us sound design students to know more of. Maybe learn a new software you think is the best, or follow a blog, or play more video games, what should we start doing to become better sound designers..

I receive a lot of useful information from Social Sound Design forum (<http://sound.stackexchange.com/>) - there are many professionals who can give you a valuable advice or discuss an interesting topic with you. They even taught me how to create my own

commercial sound effects library (I need to mention Paul Virostek from Airborne Sound and his books).

I could also name some books to read, but the most useful advice from me would be to practice as much as you can. There are many great movies, animations and video games. They use various styles and techniques of sound design. Study them carefully, ask yourself “How sound made this or that to be so impressive?” Try to recreate the sound and achieve that effect by yourself. This way, you will complement your skills with something new. Every trick I know came out of my curiosity.

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