Reflection paper

During the creation of final project, I gradually realized the indispensable role of the sound design in the film industry. When the sound blends into the visual story, it brings a new meaning. In the book “*Audio in Media*”, Alten(1994) discussed that sound design is apioneering exploration of the ways that how sound effects enhance our visual experience. He pointed out that vision is essentially passive, while hearing is an active experience.Like the film “No country for old man”, the increasing volume of footsteps, breathing, and small noises hold every audience attention, and gives the audience the sense of the environment. Without the sound design, theexperience will be greatly compromised.

In the final project, the clip I chose is from Ang Lee’s film “Eat DrinkMen and Women”, which mainly presents the process of making Chinese cuisine. The reason why I chose this clip is based on my own experience. I love cooking Chinese food a lot, so I am more sensitive to the sounds in the kitchen than other people, such as the sounds made when cutting different ingredients, or the sounds of different foods under different oil temperatures. As Alten(1994) claims that “educated ears” is a fundamental requirement in sound design, it helps us associate sound to specific moment or situation. With educated ears, sound designers could have more awareness and sensitivity to sound. From this point of view, my life experience in cooking provides me a pair of educated ears, which helps me grab more details in sound.

After selected a good clip, the actual operation is more complicated than expected. At the beginning of the video, there is a scene of killing a fish. However, in reality, killing a fish is hard to put into operation. Scraping fish scales and recording is almost impossible to operate at the same time. So, I applied Foley, which is the performance of a sound effect (Alten,324) I used the sound of fingernails scraping the nylon material to replace the sound of scraping fish scales, the sound of scissors cutting paper to replace the sound of dissecting fish belly, and the sound of pouring rice to simulate the sound of frying. While these sounds blend into the visual story, the sound I create will blend perfectly with the pictures. As Alten mentioned that, the sound and picture will define an effect, and they are complementary. (Alten 312) In the process of creating the sound effect, I listed all the sounds that might sound similar, and then try them one by one on the soundtrack until the audio and video fit together perfectly.Sometimes two completely unrelated sounds can also be replaced by each other, such as the sound of pouring cerealcould replace the sound ofpouring fried fish. At the same time, I also found that even the same soundcould make different effects when placed in different scenes at different volumes. In my project, I placed a deep fry sound effect and in a long segment, it goes from frying the pork to washing the vegetables to the pork floating on the oil. In this long clip, I only applied one sound effect, but I used the pin tool to adjust its volume.The effect is best achieved when a gradual change in volume occurs at the same time as the transitionof the image, and the sound create images in the “theater of mind” during this process. (Alten 318)

In addition, ambiance sound also plays a crucial role in sound design, which establishing the space. (Alten 321) During my creation, I placed the ambient sound of kitchen in the video, which provides audience a sense of environment. When the man caught the fish and entered the kitchen, I added the ambient sound of the kitchenwhich aims to show the changes in space.However, I didn’t add the clatter of pots and pans to the ambient sound, because I wanted to ensure that the ambient sound did not disturb the sound of cooking and chopping.

Also,background music is also an important part of my project, as it guides the rhythm of the whole video. Choosing and adding background music was also a big challenge for me because the rhythm of the music needs to match other sounds, and some of the music is limited in length and cannot run through the whole video, I had to choose two music and put them indirectly in the appropriate position. I used the image of the meat on the ice as a transition to bring the two pieces of music together perfectly. In addition, the combination of music rhythm and meat cutting rhythm is also a highlight of my project, because it sets the lively pace and gives the whole video vitality.

Spotting sheet is an important tool for planning voice placement. It can tell me what sounds I need to prepareand the auditory requirements step by step. Although in the actual production process, it is much more complicated than writing down the sounds in spotting sheet.Alten also claims that there is no set procedure for sound design. At the beginning, the most important thing is to study the script, analyze the auditory needs line by line, and determine the overall sound processing of each scene or the whole work, or both.

Ensuring sound quality is the most tough challenge I had, since the video presents the process of making Chinese cuisine, all the sound need to be very specific and there is no noise is allowed. So, when I record the sound in the Tes-cam, I need to make sure no noise is created. Also the dynamics and timing, chopping need to be very specific

In addition, a lot of off-screen sounds require the imagination of the editor, who must be able to hear sounds that most people cannot hear and then add them to the video, thus adding more story to the video. Especially in the food clips, the sound is very diverse, which also requires the editor to have a pair of very sharp ears and rich imagination. It is hard to choose sound from titles. When I am searching for sound of fish swimming in the water it’s impossible to find in the sound library. Instead, I search for water flow to shows the dynamics of fish.

The visual ear

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Work cited

Alten, S 1994, Audio in Media, Belmont, Wadsworth, pp 5-12, pp 266-286.