THE ROLE OF AUDIO IN DIGITAL GAMING

- Audio is the primary delivery system used to communicate emotions to the player in digital gaming.
- Audio is a powerful, immediate connection to the player’s subconscious mind.
- Audio is a remarkably powerful tool in creating the “suspension of disbelief”.

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TYPICAL AUDIO ASSETS IN DIGITAL GAMING

- AUDIO
  - SFX
  - MUSIC
  - DIALOG

AUDIO ASSET 1: SOUND DESIGN (SFX)

- AMBIENT SFX create atmosphere (example: bat crack/cheer)
  - usually reflect current player environment
  - usually loop (play continuously)
- REACTIVE SFX create immediacy (example: bat crack/cheer)
  - triggered by player actions (gunshots, footsteps)
  - triggered by environment (birds, machines)
  - usually one-shot (play once)
  - many one-shots can occur at one time
AUDIO ASSET 2: MUSIC

- AMBIENT music works in the background (example: organ)
  - Helps player suspend disbelief
  - Communicates story’s emotional intent
- REACTIVE music gives the player immediate cues
  - Can heighten player’s emotions situationally
  - Can serve as reward/victory celebration
- Other types of in-game music: “source” music, visual vocal, music as SFX, licensed music, rhythm-based gaming, endless creative uses

AUDIO ASSET 3: DIALOG

- CHARACTERS voices can be very powerful (ex: announcer)
  - Immediate human connection
- NARRATION helps tell the story quickly and effectively
  - Provides information off-screen – no clutter
- AMBIENT voices provide realism to the environment
  - Gives player cues to locality, setting, time – can be handled like SFX as well (ex: baseball scene)
“... sound is half of the (movie-going) experience”

- Steven Spielberg

Audio is a powerful tool for all of us to use – why not use it to your best advantage?
FOR MORE INFORMATION

• Books:
  - The Complete Guide To Game Audio, Aaron Marks (CMP) – slightly dated, but a good overview
  - Audio For Games, Alexander Brandon (New Riders) – examples of good audio-directing practice
  - The Fat Man on Game Audio: Tasty Morsels of Sonic Goodness, George Sanger (New Riders)

• Websites:
  - www.gameaudioforum.com - professional forum
  - www.audiogang.org - audio guild
  - www.audioatrocities.com - examples of horrible voice acting