EDITORIAL
Sound Tracks The Place: Australasian Soundtrack Studies

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Abstract
This is the inaugural issue of a new open access journal of screen sound studies. The aim of *Screen Sound: The Australasian Journal of Soundtrack Studies* is to investigate, analyse and document sound as it occurs in relation to screen images, on the large or small screen, in installation or online. Sound elements, functions and production are included in their various forms. The journal is multidisciplinary in its remit, accommodating music, sound, media, cultural, marketing and economic analysis.

Keywords
Soundtrack, screen studies, Australasia, journal

Introduction: Framing *ScreenSound*

Sound provides an essential element of most moving image audiovisual texts. Analysing this component in the context of the whole enables a better understanding and increased knowledge of the audiovisual product’s operation, effects and production. Film music and sound appear to have ‘come of age’ if the recent crop of books, new journals, industry publications, international conferences and tertiary courses is any indication. *Screen Sound* is informed by this activity. However, the journal also builds on scholarly work in other fields of endeavour, such as television, animation, sound art, radio and online studies. The inclusion of – and interest in – sound and music in screen forms such as television, advertising, games, screen art installation and mobile telephonic technology enables the publication to complement and add to film music and sound research. This issue features articles on feature films, television series, documentary films and various scores by a composer who worked across several media forms.

In its interpretation of ‘screen sound’ as encompassing the performance of dialogue, sound effects and atmospheres, sound design, score and source music, *Screen Sound* engages in an holistic approach to the operation of the soundtrack in these audiovisual forms. In addition, the journal emphasises the contextual background to the soundtrack through several mechanisms. Articles are clustered around three types, that is, longer, academically informed (and double blind refereed) contributions, shorter or interview-based (single-refereed) reports, and
edited reviews, debates, brief reports and reprints of significant items. Screen Sound’s Industry Advisory Board includes members of key stakeholder organizations and other experienced individuals from Australia and New Zealand who provide important industry-informed input.

The project of Screen Sound: The Australasian Journal of Soundtrack Studies evolved from research into Australian film sound. Two anthologies edited by the author – Screen Scores (1998) and Reel Tracks (2005) – and an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project have resulted in a body of work on music in post-Revival (late 1960s to the present) feature films. The four-year ARC project (that commenced in 2007) brought together the work of Michael Hannan in the Contemporary Music program at Southern Cross University (SCU) with popular and film music scholar Philip Hayward, formerly from Macquarie University in Sydney (now also at SCU). This work has built upon and supplemented research by scholars who have positioned local screen sound analyses in international fora, for example, the conference and publication activities by Melbourne filmmaker Philip Brophy (see the 3 Cinesonic volumes 1999, 2000, 2001), the semiotic models and analyses of Theo van Leeuwen and Anne Cranny-Francis (both now located at the University of Technology, Sydney), and the Music Genre anthologies published by Equinox under the guidance of Sydney-based series editor Mark Evans. In Canberra, Roger Hillman has introduced several Australian National University students of the field, in part through his own European cinema and musicology studies. This and other work1 simultaneously positions Australian research in international contexts while enabling scrutiny of the homegrown product and how it increasingly operates within trans-national industries.

Screen Sound can be differentiated from other recent screen music/sound journal initiatives (such as UK-based Music, Sound and the Moving Image and The Soundtrack and New York-based Music and the Moving Image) by its particular association with a specific region. Australasia is commonly defined as Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and neighbouring islands in the southern Pacific Ocean. Where a growing body of research now exists in relation to Australian film music, such studies are less established in New Zealand and the Pacific.2 An important and long-term goal of Screen Sound is to provide a focus for research activities related to these countries. We are also interested to engage in screen sound studies as they are developing in the South-east Asian region and therefore the journal’s borders are somewhat porous. In support of such an initiative, our Editorial Board includes scholars from Eastern Asian countries, including screen music scholars Giorgio Biancorosso in Hong Kong and Kyoko Koizumi in Tokyo. The publication will provide a forum for case studies and debates relevant to a broad region outside the limits of North America and the European continent. Given that the screen industries operating in our region interact with but are not the same as those in the Americas and Europe, the journal’s remit is to analyse the region’s texts and practices as alternative yet sustainable models. Noting the relative paucity of screen sound articles related to this region in other international publications, Screen Sound offers the opportunity to focus on, promote and build upon this regionally defined work. We invite all contributions relating to screen sound productions relevant to the region. Ultimately, the journal’s principal objective is to facilitate a critical mass of studies and thereby enable the formulation of models that reflect the texts and practices in the region.

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1 Comprehensive literature reviews are available in those volumes listed and on the ARC Discovery Project site titled Australian Cinema Soundtrack Research at http://acsr.smss-online.org/.
2 See the work of Henry Johnson and Dan Bendrups in Dunedin, and Nabeel Zuberi in Auckland.
Notions of Place/Space

The title of this issue – ‘Sound Tracks the Place’ – suggests its central theme, namely, the concept of place. Several articles explore how sound and music refer to place and locale. At the close of the first decade of this millennium, it is relevant to re-state how culture and communication have been affected by the technological enablement of the internet. Moving beyond technological determinism, the internet has also challenged the notion of place. While the network has enabled people to communicate more freely, this has assisted the desire for more physical travel. At the same time as online networks have challenged locational boundaries, they have also assisted the designation of niches and targeted audiences. The debut issue of an online, open access journal addresses both the global network and the specific interest group of ‘soundies’ situated in a variety of disciplines and locations.

Place also operates in relation to the screen industries, where location is suggested in narrative and onscreen (however much the storyline speaks to general themes beyond such boundaries). Sound can trigger images of specific locations for the hearer/viewer, and images on screen can be associated with locationally-specific sounds to assist in the rendition of place. Yet sound and music personnel contributing to a production may be physically dispersed and bring a diverse range of sounds to the mix. Ultimately, too, sound as a phenomenon is difficult to ‘contain’, so mapping place via sound offers an intriguing future prospect.

Relating to the concept of geographical designation, our first issue features several analyses of ‘place’ in screen soundtracks. James Wierzbicki discusses the music in an Australian zombie film, Undead (Peter Spierig, Michael Spierig, 2003), by referring to contemporary cinematic explorations of the zombie. Like other Australian films exploring inexplicable forces, Undead may well be about the search for settler and indigenous identity more broadly, as well as contemporary conservative attempts to keep migrants/refugees (‘aliens’) out. Philip Hayward’s analysis of Peter Weir’s The Last Wave (1977) furthers this interest with a discussion of music and spirituality in relation to Australian Aboriginality. The film positions indigenous issues in the urban Sydney setting using musical elements including the iconic Aboriginal instrument, the didjeridu. While the didjeridu was originally devised in a specific northern Australia location, in Australian cinema it has come to ‘speak’ for the continent, various peoples and indigeneity. Nick Hadland investigates the way that the sound design in Matthew Saville’s arthouse thriller Noise (2007) locates suburban dysfunction in Melbourne. Sonic elements represent both the claustrophobic location inside a caravan and the central protagonist’s battle with tinnitus. In her discussion of the Australian television series East Of Everything (first broadcast 2008), Liz Giuffre uncovers the ways in which location (in and around the north-eastern New South Wales backpacker mecca of Byron Bay) informed the original music compositions and selection of source songs.

In the second section of this issue of Screen Sound, Michael Hannan reports on the collection of scores by Australian film composer Brian May, who (locally) is primarily known for his work on cult-Australian Mad Max films although he also successfully composed for USA productions. Henry Johnson’s interview with New Zealand composer, Trevor Coleman, indicates how geographical location need not be a constraint in documentary music productions screened to broadly

**Conclusion: Future ‘Spaces’**

Place and space will continue to inform future articles in *Screen Sound*. Each issue will have a collection of articles clustered around a theme. The next issue will focus on improvisation and practices using comprovisation (in which composed scores accommodate elements of improvisation) and we invite contributions. We also welcome feedback and comments on the *Screen Sound* initiative and this issue, as any new endeavour can only benefit from such input. Feedback may take the form of response articles to the published work presented here. We look forward to an active engagement with Australasian soundtrack studies now and in the future.

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**Bibliography**


