



the official quarterly of the cinema audio society

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FROM THE
60TH ANNUAL
CAS Awards

CAS
QUARTERLY

SUMMER
2024



AI: Is the Rise of the Machines Finally Here? • Been There Done That • The Lighter Side



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CAS New Mexico Mixers Mixer; members check in





THE SYMPATHIZER



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NIKKI GLASER: SOMEDAY YOU'LL DIE



THE GILDED AGE



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THE REGIME



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WITH JOHN OLIVER



WINNING TIME: THE RISE
OF THE LAKERS DYNASTY



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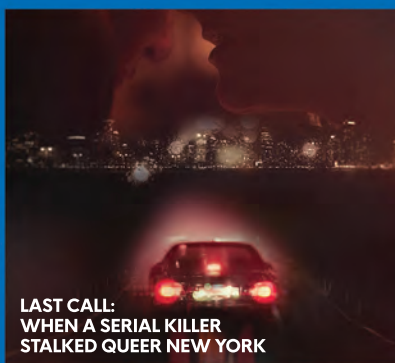


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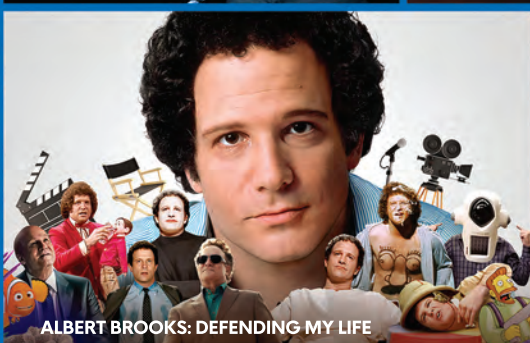
LAST CALL:
WHEN A SERIAL KILLER
STALKED QUEER NEW YORK



CONAN O'BRIEN MUST GO



RAMY YOUSSEF: MORE FEELINGS



ALBERT BROOKS: DEFENDING MY LIFE



GAGA CHROMATICA BALL



THE RIGHTEOUS GEMSTONES

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Welcome to the Summer issue of the CAS Quarterly!

In this issue, you'll find stories and interviews with our Award winners, including our 10th Student Recognition Award recipient. Congratulations to all the winners and nominees. We were very proud of this year's 60th Awards and our return to the Beverly Hilton for the first time since 1997, and we look forward to seeing you there for the 61st Awards on Feb. 22, 2025!

You will also find a thoughtful article by former President Karol Urban CAS MPSE on a very timely topic, artificial intelligence (AI). This article reflects on the good and bad sides of the technology, especially as it applies to our work. The difficult line between AI's use as a tool and its potential to displace industry professionals is a main issue of contract negotiations this cycle, first with the Writers Guild and Directors Guild, but now the IATSE. Sound people are deeply involved in this as the Co-chairs of the AI Negotiating Subcommittee are Jillian Arnold, President of the West Coast Sound and Video Local, and myself. We've also been in touch with other international organizations struggling with the same concerns. By the time you read this, hopefully, great strides will have taken place, protecting those who are important to the industry while allowing them use of these helpful tools.

Back to Student Recognition Award winners, I was very pleased to meet Danny Maurer at the recent New Mexico social gathering held by the CAS. He was our first student winner and is now an accomplished working sound professional. The gathering was a great opportunity for CAS members to meet with each other.

Our Events Committee is working to put together more of these regional social events. We expect to see ones shortly in Atlanta, Vancouver, and other cities, along with the revival of the CAS Picnic in L.A. in June. Look for emails about these events, as well as screenings, panels, and more coming up shortly.

Enjoy this issue of the *Quarterly* and I hope to see many of you at as many events as possible.

Peter F. Kurland CAS



CINEMA AUDIO SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT

To educate and inform the general public and the motion picture and television industry that effective sound is achieved by a creative, artistic, and technical blending of diverse sound elements. To provide the motion picture and television industry with a progressive society of master craftsmen specialized in the art of creative cinematic sound recording. To advance the specialized field of cinematic sound recording by exchange of ideas, methods, and information. To advance the art of auditory appreciation, and to philanthropically support those causes dedicated to the sense of hearing. To institute and maintain high standards of conduct and craftsmanship among our members. To aid the motion picture and television industry in the selection and training of qualified personnel in the unique field of cinematic sound recording. To achieve for our members deserved recognition as major contributors to the field of motion picture and television entertainment.

SUMMER 2024 CAS NEW MEMBERS

Active

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FROM THE EDITOR



It's the Summer *CAS Quarterly*, so it's time to celebrate—and get to know—the 60th Annual CAS Award winners from our seven Outstanding Achievement in Sound Mixing categories, along with our Student Recognition Award winner, Yushu “Doris” Shen. Scheduling, conducting, and

sharing these interviews takes a great amount of effort and I'd like to thank those who volunteered their time so we could learn a little more about the mixers and the processes involved in the creation of their projects. Thanks goes out to Adam Howell CAS, Daniel Vasquez V. CAS, David Bondelevitch CAS MPSE, CAS Associate member Gregory Vilfranc MPSE, Karol Urban CAS MPSE, Kurt Kassulke CAS, Patrick Spain CAS, Peter Kelsey CAS, and CAS Associate member Sam Casas.

Also in this issue, and with her “If you can do more, then do more” mentality, Karol Urban has contributed an excellent article on artificial intelligence and its potential for good and bad in our industry titled “AI: Is the Rise of the Machines Finally Here?” And as always, be sure to read about the happenings of your fellow members in the “Been There Done That” and “The Lighter Side” sections.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to peruse the contents. If an article makes you think of a friend or colleague, send a link to the online version of the *Quarterly*, available on the CAS website. Please remember that our sponsors are professionals like you who understand the business and the needs of our industry; we encourage your commitment to them.

Matt Foglia CAS



COLLABORATORS

David Bondevitch CAS MPSE

is a re-recording mixer and educator who has won two Emmy Awards and two MPSE Golden Reel Awards (and has been nominated 22 times). He is Past President and Board member of the Motion Picture Sound Editors. David was the Secretary of the Cinema Audio Society 2012-2019, Vice President 2007-2011, and has been on the Board of Directors since 2006. He has been writing for the *CAS Quarterly* magazine since 2006 and was co-editor in 2007.

His most recent projects include mixing the documentary *Empty Net*, about the US Paralympics sled hockey team that aired on *NBC Sports*. He also mixed the documentary *Southwest of Salem*, which won a Peabody Award. He also mixed the cult comedy *Jimmy Vestwood: Amerikan Hero*, starring Persian-American comedian Maz Jobrani.

David is an associate professor at CU Denver, where he teaches recording arts. David received his MFA in cinema production from USC and also holds a bachelor of music in jazz composition from the Berklee College of Music in Boston.



CAS Associate

Sam Casas has been working as a re-recording mixer and sound designer at Lime Studios in Santa Monica since 2003. He has found a successful niche mixing TV

commercials for global and national brands such as Adidas, Visa, QuickBooks, and Postmates, to name a few. In addition to his commercial work at Lime Studios, he finds time to mix the occasional independent feature such as *Lupe* for HBO Max, various shorts, and music videos for artists such as H.E.R. and French Montana.

Joining MPEG in 2017, and then MPSE and CAS in 2018 as an Associate member, Sam has a passion for acquiring and sharing knowledge. With a love of film and episodic television, the CAS has been a great inspiration in his goal to bring a cinematic approach to all his work. Connecting with other members while writing articles for the *CAS Quarterly* has been especially educational and rewarding.

Sam has a fully equipped and treated 5.1 studio at his home in Studio City, CA, which he has been able to make his primary workplace since the start of the pandemic in 2020. In his spare time, he enjoys reading books about acoustics, thinking about maybe starting to exercise again, and spending time with his wife Elise and son Sebastian.



Adam Howell CAS

Upon earning a recording engineer degree from Full Sail, Adam relocated to L.A. in 2002. After an internship at Hans Zimmer's studio and working in the music industry, Adam ventured

into post-production audio before finding his passion in the field as a production sound mixer. He has mixed and supervised more than 100 unscripted shows and feels fortunate to have worked on so many diverse projects with creative and talented individuals. When not pressing record, Adam enjoys playing the guitar, Beatles trivia, documentaries, hiking, and spending time with his wife and son.



Kurt Kassulke CAS

is a longtime effects re-recording mixer with an Emmy for *Ally McBeal* and diverse credits ranging back to *The X-Files*, *The Practice*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *NYPD*

Blue, *Castle*, *Under the Dome*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and *Hawaii 5-0*. Kurt's most recent work can be heard on *Grey's Anatomy*, *Project Blue Book*, *Big Sky*, and more!



Peter Kelsey CAS

started his career in sound at the illustrious independent recording studio Trident Studios, where all the early Elton John and David Bowie albums were recorded.

Here, Peter learned from

engineers and producers such as Rupert Hine, Ken Scott, Roy Thomas Baker, Robin Geoffrey Cable, and David Hentschel. He was a second engineer on the Carly Simon album *No Secrets*, and part of the mixing team for Elton John's album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*.

After moving to the USA, he did a lot of work as a scoring mixer before moving into post-production sound. He has worked on many David Kelley shows, including *Ally McBeal* and *Boston Legal*, for both of which he won sound mixing Emmys. He worked for RH Factor for many years and for the last three years, has worked for Smart Post Sound. He is currently working on *Speechless*, *The Chi*, *Arrested Development*, and *Dead to Me*.

Peter has a degree in mathematics, a black belt in tae kwon do and loves to do public speaking.



Karol Urban CAS

MPSE has served directors and producers as a re-recording mixer for television and feature films since 1999. She describes her job as "playing mind games with sound." Karol is

an involved member of her community, serving as part of the Television Academy's Governor's Peer Group for Sound Mixing, co-organized The LA Sound Group, and served as a blue-ribbon panel judge for the Motion Picture Sound Editors Golden Reels.

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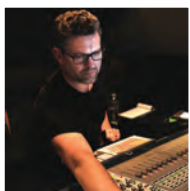


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Karol acted as content editor of the *CAS Quarterly* for seven years and served as a Board member for the Cinema Audio Society before being elected as President of the organization in 2019, where she served until terming out in 2023. She enjoys educational outreach and moderation and is a strong advocate for the art of sound for picture.

Some of Karol's notable credits include *Grey's Anatomy*, *The Stand*, *Made for Love*, *For All Mankind*, *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*, *National Treasure: Edge of History*, and *Tiny Beautiful Things*.



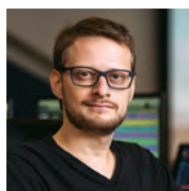
Patrick Spain CAS began his career in the scoring world at Signet Sound in 2001, working on the music for films like *Cars* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. In 2006, he moved on to Ocean

Way Recording, this time working for recording artists like Dr. Dre, Beck, and John Mayer while also continuing his scoring work with *Avatar* and *Lawless*, among others.

In 2011, he was brought on as a mix tech at Todd-AO's Lantana in Santa Monica. In this incredible environment, he learned the ropes of film and television audio post from some of the world's best re-recording mixers, editors, and sound supervisors.

After the closing of Todd-AO and a quick stint at Technicolor Sound Services, Patrick made the jump to freelancing as a full-time

re-recording mixer. In that time, he has mixed shows as varied as Fox's *9-1-1* and *Family Guy* to Max's *Gremlins: Secrets of the Mogwai*.



Daniel Vasquez V. CAS is a re-recording mixer and sound editor, whose career began in the United Kingdom and then established back in his home country, Colombia. He studied

recording arts and earned a master's degree in audio post-production in London. Daniel has more than 15 years of experience working on television and film for more than 15 countries, including the United States, Mexico, Spain, and United Kingdom, among others. He was co-creator of SoundNode in England and co-founder of Clap Studios in Colombia, both sound post-production facilities. Daniel is a 10-time nominee for Best Sound at the Colombian Academy Awards and a winner in 2022. He was also nominated for Best Sound Mix at the Venezuelan Academy in 2020. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Colombian Film Academy and has also worked as a teacher and guest lecturer at universities, academic institutions, and various events. Daniel shares his passion for sound with aviation, as he is also a private pilot.



CAS Associate Gregory Vilfranc MPSE is a re-recording mixer and sound designer originally from New York, who now resides in the Greater Boston area with his wife and kids. Gregory is the co-founder of the

boutique, fully remote audio post facility Franc Village Studios, where he puts into practice the professional skills he's developed over the past 20+ years while maintaining a "relationship first" philosophy for all his clients. In addition to providing audio post support for TV and film on the independent circuit, he's also contributed to the audiobook and podcast space where he's edited, mixed, and mastered over 60 published audiobooks. Recently, Gregory teamed up with Audible Originals on their podcast space, mixing and adding sound design to titles, including *Think Like a Champion* (w/ Russell Wilson), *Soldiers of Science*, *In Love and Struggle Vol. 2*, and most notably, *Mandela: The Lost Tapes*.

In addition to audio post, Gregory is an accomplished composer and vocalist. As a BMI member, his compositions have been featured on networks, including VH1, Oxygen, and MTV, and have received placement in several popular reality TV shows like *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *Love & Hip Hop*, and others. Gregory is a member of The Society of Composers & Lyricists and has most recently been accepted as an Associate member of the Cinema Audio Society and the Television Academy.

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CINEMA AUDIO SOCIETY 60TH ANNUAL CAS AWARDS

by CAS Associate Gregory C. Vilfranc MPSE

March 2nd marked the 60th Annual CAS Awards, which doubled as my very first CAS Awards experience, held at the incredibly swank and iconic Beverly Hilton Hotel. It was an incredible gathering that was a bit overwhelming for me and other newly minted CAS Associates, who were in attendance. Once I gathered myself and met CAS-mates in person that I had known for about a year since joining, I was able to take in the full magnitude of an organization of sound professionals that have literally shaped the landscape of the entertainment industry since well before I was born.

The Dolby-sponsored cocktail reception proved to be the perfect icebreaker where attendees mingled, caught up with colleagues, met new ones, and partook in various drinks and appetizers prior to ushering themselves to their seats for dinner. I found myself chatting with new friends while sipping on a very plain glass of orange juice and discovered that I would be seated at Table 220 where, unbeknownst to me, an “awarding” surprise would ensue later that evening.

After an incredible meal, our master of ceremonies was the illustrious humorist, author, and radio personality, Tom Papa, who truly set the tone with his introductory stand-up routine curated just for the CAS crowd. Admittedly, I didn’t know the people I was seated with, but there’s something about shared laughter that connects complete strangers, fostering genuine conversation and human connection. Throughout the evening, his voice would usher us in and out of segments quite seamlessly, conjuring joy and laughter, crafting new friendships, and never allowing for a single dull moment, proving that Papa did indeed know best.

With the awards ceremony being the main event, seven categories would honor the teams filled with incredibly talented nominees (and winners) who exemplify and define the meaning of sound mixing excellence. These categories were: Motion Pictures – Live Action, Motion Pictures – Animated, Motion Pictures – Documentary, Non-Theatrical Motion Pictures or Limited Series, Television Series – One Hour, Television Series – Half-Hour, and Television Non-Fiction, Variety or Music – Series or Specials. The awards were presented by CAS members who were each paired with some of the most renowned actors and entertainment professionals in their respective industries. Award presenters included Jeremy Piven, Omar Dorsey, Jeff Garlin, Cristo Fernández, Shameik Moore, Steven Weber, Bruce Greenwood, and Diane Warren.



Career Achievement
recipient Joe Earle CAS



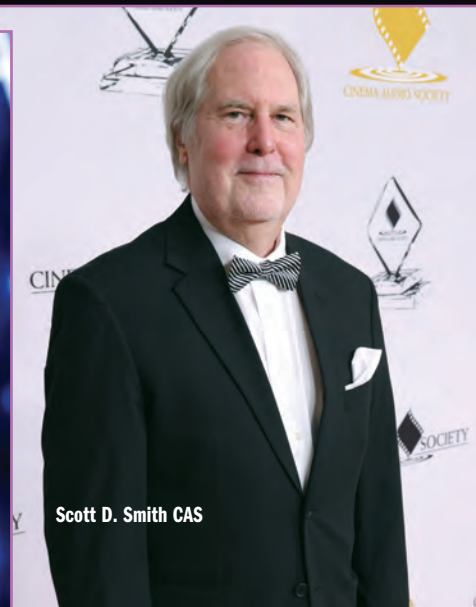
Peter Devlin CAS
and Nina Rice



Tavish Grade



Filmmaker Award recipient
J.J. Abrams



Scott D. Smith CAS



Host Tom Papa

THE 60TH CAS AWARD WINNERS & HONOREES

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND MIXING FOR 2023

MOTION PICTURES – LIVE ACTION OPPENHEIMER

Production Mixer – Willie D. Burton CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Gary A. Rizzo CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Kevin O'Connell CAS
Scoring Mixer – Chris Fogel CAS
Foley Mixer – Tavish Grade
Foley Mixer – Jack Cucci
Foley Mixer – Mikel Parraga-Wills

MOTION PICTURES – ANIMATED SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE

Original Dialogue Mixer – Brian Smith
Original Dialogue Mixer – Aaron Hasson
Original Dialogue Mixer – Howard London CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Michael Semanick CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Juan Peralta
Scoring Mixer – Sam Okell
Foley Mixer – Randy K. Singer CAS

MOTION PICTURES – DOCUMENTARY 32 SOUNDS

Production Mixer – Laura Cunningham
Re-recording Mixer – Mark Mangini MPSE
Scoring Mixer – Ben Greenberg
ADR Mixer – Bobby Johanson CAS
Foley Mixer – Blake Collins CAS

NON-THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES OR LIMITED SERIES

WEIRD: THE AL YANKOVIC STORY

Production Mixer – Richard Bullock CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Tony Solis
Scoring Mixer – Phil McGowan CAS
ADR Mixer – Brian Magrum CAS
Foley Mixer – Erika Koski CAS

TELEVISION SERIES – ONE HOUR THE LAST OF US

S1 EP. 1 “WHEN YOU ARE LOST IN THE DARKNESS”

Production Mixer – Michael Playfair CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Marc Fishman CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Kevin Roache CAS
Foley Mixer – Randy Wilson CAS

TELEVISION SERIES – HALF-HOUR

THE BEAR: S2 EP. 7 “FORKS”

Production Mixer – Scott D. Smith CAS
Re-recording Mixer – Steve “Major” Giammaria CAS
ADR Mixer – Patrick Christensen
Foley Mixer – Ryan Collison
Foley Mixer – Connor Nagy

TELEVISION NON-FICTION, VARIETY OR MUSIC – SERIES OR SPECIALS 100 FOOT WAVE: S2 EP. 5 “LOST AT SEA”

Re-recording Mixer – Keith Hodne

CAS STUDENT RECOGNITION AWARD

YUSHU “DORIS” SHEN

University of Southern California

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD JOE EARLE CAS

FILMMAKER AWARD

J.J. ABRAMS



L-R: Jeff Garlin, Andy Nelson CAS, and Jon Favreau



L-R: David Lascelles CAS, Sean Bryne, Ryan Kennedy, and Jordan McClain



L-R: Jeremy Piven and Willie Burton CAS

I was proud of the Alchemy Post Sound team (seated with me at Table 220) who won the Television Series – Half-Hour CAS Award for their work on *The Bear*: S2 Ep. 7 “Forks.” We had spent the entire night talking and laughing together, so when they won, it was literally akin to watching my friends win. It was an honor to have celebrated with them!

We paused in silence to honor the memory of members of our incredible sound community who have recently passed on. Television Academy Vice Chair and former CAS VP Steve Venezia CAS then recognized the presidents who have led the CAS for the past 60 years, which included the names of those no longer with us and highlighting those present at the ceremony that magical night, all of whom were met with rousing applause. Steve introduced current CAS President Peter Kurland, who honored Board members who’d completed their terms while introducing those who would succeed them for the 2024 term, a handful of whom previously served in terms past. Members of the Awards Committee, including Bob Bronow CAS, Kelly Hernacki, and Carol Thomas, were recognized for their work in producing a great and memorable awards show. To wrap things up, Peter acknowledged and honored the hotel staff at the Beverly Hilton, who reached a contract following their own strike to ensure the 60th CAS Awards show went on without a hitch!

The Student Recognition Award (SRA) was presented by the Chair of the SRA Committee, Sherry Klein CAS, alongside former CAS President Melissa Hoffman CAS. Yushu “Doris” Shen of USC won the SRA that night, receiving a check for \$5,000. The other four student finalists were also recognized with each of them receiving \$1,000. All nominees received approximately \$10,000 worth of gear to help launch their careers in sound, made possible by the support from the following companies:



Ludwig Göransson (center)



L-R: Anna Behlmer CAS, Keith Hodne, and Shameik Moore



Cristo Fernández



Diane Warren



Diana Bryne and Sean Bryne



L-R: Peter Devlin CAS and J.J. Abrams



Joe Earle CAS



Ryan Kennedy and Lauren Hamamoto



L-R: Juan Peralta, Michael Semanick CAS, and Howard London CAS

Acon Digital, Apple, Avid, Ginger Audio, Halter Technical, iZotope Inc., K-Tek, Krotos Audio, Lectrosonics Inc., McDSP, Sound Particles, ShotDeck, Todd-AO/Absentia DX, and Zaxcom. Sherry took the time to thank this year's panel of SRA judges, which was special seeing as I was a first-time volunteer. I was honored to have played a small part in securing the future of our industry for the youth who would follow in our footsteps.

The immensely gifted and talented J.J. Abrams was honored with the CAS Filmmaker Award for outstanding achievement, highlighting an illustrious career. Jon Favreau presented the award to Abrams, but not before sharing his vantage point watching his friend's career unfold over a span of 20 years. To seal off the night with the main event, Doug Kent—flanked by Phillip W. Palmer CAS, Elmo Ponsdomenech CAS, and Doug Andham CAS—shared a touching tribute to his best friend, the legendary Joe Earle CAS. In true Joe Earle form, upon accepting the award, he chose to address the next generation and encouraged his colleagues and peers to pass on their skills and knowledge to “the youngsters.”

He then shared five prepared lessons for the next generation:

1. “This business is a marathon, not a sprint.”
2. “You are not as good as you think you are.”
3. “Make all your strengths stronger and make all your weaknesses your strengths.”
4. “It is not *your* show!”
5. “This may be *your* last chance.”

But it was Earle's acknowledgments that had every attendant leaning in as he shared the love and support of his family and friends, who he credited for helping him achieve the success he has to date.

The celebration continued in the foyer and terrace rooms as attendants enjoyed music and conversation, reflecting on what truly was and remains a night to remember. You can be sure that the CAS fully recognizes and does not take for granted the support of all its members, sponsors who have given generously to the cause of advancing sound for film and TV, and most importantly, every member of the sound community who takes the time to acknowledge the hard work that goes into the great work that we do.

Videos of the winners' speeches are available on the CAS website by navigating to the “60th Annual Awards Coverage” section under the “Awards” tab.

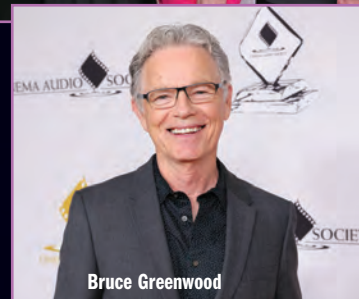
I had an incredible time covering this event and found it exciting but not surprising that plans for the 61st CAS Awards are already underway. It remains an incredible honor to be part of the Cinema Audio Society and I can't wait to celebrate again next year as we honor the best of the best artisans of sound for film and television.



Gary A. Rizzo CAS



L-R: Mark Lanza MPSE, Deby Lanza, Nancy Minkler, and Christian Minkler CAS



Bruce Greenwood



L-R: Marc Fishman CAS and Becky Jackson



Mark Mangini MPSE



MEET THE WINNERS

MOTION PICTURES – LIVE ACTION OPPENHEIMER

by Karol Urban CAS MPSE

Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* is a provocative scientific biopic that delves into the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer and his role in the creation of the atomic bomb. With a compelling and exquisitely performed narrative, stunning visuals, and a bold, compassionate soundtrack, the film stands out as a marvel in all filmmaking disciplines.

The brilliance of this film is the mental struggle and genius of Oppenheimer's character, which is unveiled concurrently with the historical events leading up to the development of the atomic bomb. We feel a continuity of urgency and doom in dramatized interpersonal scenes and historical reenactments. Using a 65-millimeter film format (projected in 70-millimeter), cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema creates images that take on a monumental impression to the viewer. Cast performances caught on chromatically provocative sets are seamed together by Jennifer Lame, film editor, who often intercuts extreme close-ups with a collapsed depth of field frenetically with abstract images and textures that make a comparison between Oppenheimer's neural synapses and the energy released through a nuclear reaction or radioactive decay process. The effect is visceral.

And, as always, the sound is responsible for at least half of the experience. The veteran sound team comprised of production

sound mixer Willie D. Burton CAS; scoring mixer Chris Fogel CAS; Foley mixers Tavish Grade, Jack Cucci, and Mikel Parraga-Wills; and re-recording mixers Gary A. Rizzo CAS and Kevin O'Connell CAS garnered a CAS Award in the Motion Pictures – Live Action category for this achievement.

First on the scene was production sound mixer Willie D. Burton. Willie came on during pre-production, read the script, and began mapping the needs of the sound department, building his production team. Adam Mohundro was the boom on the Los Angeles shoot, Brett Becker's boom/utility was on for the New Mexico shoot, and Christy Illius was the sound utility in New Jersey.

They commenced filming in late February in Los Angeles to embark on approximately 57 days of shooting. First was Santa Fe, New Mexico, to film at Ghost Ranch and the surrounding city. They then moved onto Albuquerque. Filming continued at Princeton University in New Jersey and around the city, and finally, they returned to Los Angeles to complete the film. Burton explains, "There are always challenges filming on location, especially in New Mexico, where you must deal with dust storms, snow, rain, and wind. I



Production sound mixer Willie D. Burton CAS on set in Albuquerque, New Mexico

ordered extra wind covers for the exterior mics to reduce the excessive wind noise. It's also challenging when you are using hard line and hiding the cables. Sometimes it requires running the cables around the set or digging a trench." As the director does not prefer the sound of wireless mics, the booms must be hard-wired.

An IMAX camera was also employed in many dialogue scenes, creating a noise challenge. To avoid copious ADR cues, "All dialogue scenes using the IMAX were recorded wild right after we had a print," Burton explains. "The actors would act out the scene with the same intensity, emotions, and inflections."

Burton understands how well-recorded production effects can add to the naturalism of the final soundtrack, if even just used as a layer to the sound design. Burton recalls, "Multiple mics are used for recording SFX. In the stomping sequence, five or six mics were used to capture the sound from all perspectives."

Pointing out that cross-departmental collaboration is key to any successful film, Willie D. Burton thanks the prop department specifically. "The prop department was incredible, working with us to supply as many practical period mics as possible in order to give post a choice in the quality of sound used in the final mix." Burton shares, "The most rewarding aspect of this film is working with a great director who cares about sound and every aspect of the film."

Multiple Emmy- and Grammy-winning scoring mixer Chris Fogel mixed the impressive score by Ludwig Göransson. Fogel experimented with unusual spaces to attain Nolan's desire for

the score to truly feel inside the film's universe and, in many ways, uniquely present. For example, by playing a synthesizer stem out onto his stage and re-recording it with room mics, he was able to bring it back in and add a little more treatment to give it a unique depth. Fogel explains the brilliance of this approach. "Chris and (composer) Ludwig (Göransson) embrace the character that mistakes often bring. They like things that add to the realism, which in turn often adds to the intimacy. They don't like it so much when we make things super clean. If the performance is just absolutely what Chris wants but there's noise, you've gotta resist the urge to take anything out that he might be responding to. When he likes something, he's not just liking the performance and the sonics, he's liking everything about it, warts and all... So, in that sense, it makes your job easier, but it also makes your job more difficult, because you have to constantly remind yourself that he is listening on another level. When mixing, we tend to not see the forest for the trees, but he's seeing the whole picture and how it applies to his film."

Performed by the Hollywood Studio Orchestra and recorded over five days at the scoring stage at Warner Bros. Studios, the music for *Oppenheimer* is both lush and engrossing, as well as delicate and ominously specific. Fogel expands, "For *Oppenheimer*, we had to record almost three hours of extremely complicated music in a little over five days. That's not normal. Adding to the pressure was the way we had to go about it, recording it antiphonally, instead of recording it in the usual orchestra layout, with soloists and smaller ensembles set up at the same time as the full orchestra. It was an extremely taxing project, but an extremely rewarding project as well."



L-R: Foley mixers Mikel Parraga-Wills and Jack Cucci; re-recording mixers Gary A. Rizzo CAS and Kevin O'Connell CAS; Foley mixer Tavish Grade; and production sound mixer Willie D. Burton CAS with their CAS Awards.

Some of the interesting props used for the film.



Testing the consistency of the dirt before a session

Meanwhile, at the Jane Russell Stage at the Fox Lot, the Foley team of One Step Up was putting its foot down ... sometimes for 16 hours a day. Foley mixers Tavish Grade, Jack Cucci, and Mikel Parraga-Wills had to split mixing duties as it was a very heavy footstep project. But with a few weeks for feet and a couple more weeks for props, the team was ready to deliver to sound editorial.

Special care was taken to give recordings perspective and to find the perfect props. Parraga-Wills recalls dirt for Los Alamos was collected on sight at Fox from a campus pipe repair and excavation. The team captured various substrates to use as detail for the desert visuals. It took experimentation with the performance in Foley to get bleacher foot stomps that could be intensified so they could grow from literal to abstract in the lodge scene.

Foley was a spotlight in many scenes of *Oppenheimer* in the final mix, leaving the viewer to hyper-focus on the sound of goggles or specific movements to create attention-grabbing dynamics that leave the viewer in awe. Parraga-Wills explains, "It is really nice to see Foley played [in the final mix] so prominent in certain scenes. We just love coming in and doing our work every day; when someone chooses to play [the Foley] up like that, it's a cherry on top."

When asked what the team's secret to success is, Parraga-Wills explains, "Every project is somebody's baby. So, you must treat every project like you were given someone's baby to hold ... love, care [for] ... and add a bit of what you think is important to the world of the narrative. [*Oppenheimer*] was our baby for a brief moment."

Later, on the dub stage, sound supervisor Richard King shepherded all sound design, Foley, and dialogue elements to re-recording mixers Kevin O'Connell and Gary Rizzo. O'Connell explains, "Working on *Oppenheimer*, we found ourselves immersed in the delicate balance between historical accuracy and cinematic vision. It was a challenge we embraced wholeheartedly, knowing that each sound contributed to the authenticity and emotional depth of the narrative."

With highly collaborative and open communication, the dub stage's general responsibilities were divided into dialogue for Gary Rizzo and music, sound effects, backgrounds, and Foley for Kevin O'Connell.

Nolan prefers a creative, "progressive" approach to his mix. Rizzo explains, "Temp mix one leads to two, which leads to three, which leads into the final. There is no work that is left behind unless we choose to modify it or leave it behind. So that first temp is very important because it is the foundation of Chris' intentions." *Oppenheimer's* first temp mix was unusually long, albeit the film does run three hours long, taking nine days to complete.

There are no pre-dubs to speak of. Rizzo elaborates, "Everything is in unit form... We never exclusively take time on the dub stage to work on one department of sound exclusively. We are always working on the 'big picture' with everything present."

After the temp process, six working weeks are given to the final mix process. Each Friday morning was dedicated to a full screening. This provides a macro perspective. After discussion with the director, the most immediate next focus is revealed, and further refinement commences.

While slightly unusual, this process is conducive to Nolan's creative process and is favored by Rizzo and O'Connell. "As the film is evolving, it is evolving in different ways; all the departments are evolving in different ways, and the best way to see it [happen] cumulatively in its entirety is to watch it

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every Friday,” explains Rizzo. “The best way to know how your movie is going is to watch it as much as you can, and once a week feels really good, especially when you have a three-hour movie in front of you.

“It feels like you are hustling all the time ... but that encourages you to go with your gut,” reveals Rizzo. “It encourages you to think quickly, think thoroughly, and go with your gut instincts.” Collaboration between King, O’Connell, and Rizzo was continual, with each crew member bouncing ideas off the other and considering their impact on the whole.

“Collaborating with Christopher Nolan on *Oppenheimer* was truly remarkable,” admits O’Connell. “His visionary approach and unwavering attention to detail inspired us to push the boundaries of the sound, ensuring that every sonic element contributed to the film’s grandeur and intimacy in equal measure. Whether meticulously crafting the quieter moments or orchestrating the larger sonic spectacles, we dedicated ourselves to achieving Nolan’s exacting vision. It was an honor to work alongside such a passionate storyteller, whose commitment to cinematic excellence resonates in every frame.”

Oppenheimer is an artful triumph. The film equally dramatizes a man’s inner turmoil while providing a historical and scientific account of an event that has forever changed the world.



Scoring mixer Chris Fogel CAS. Photo: Dan Goldwasser



Production sound mixer Willie D. Burton CAS on set



The Jane Russell Foley Stage



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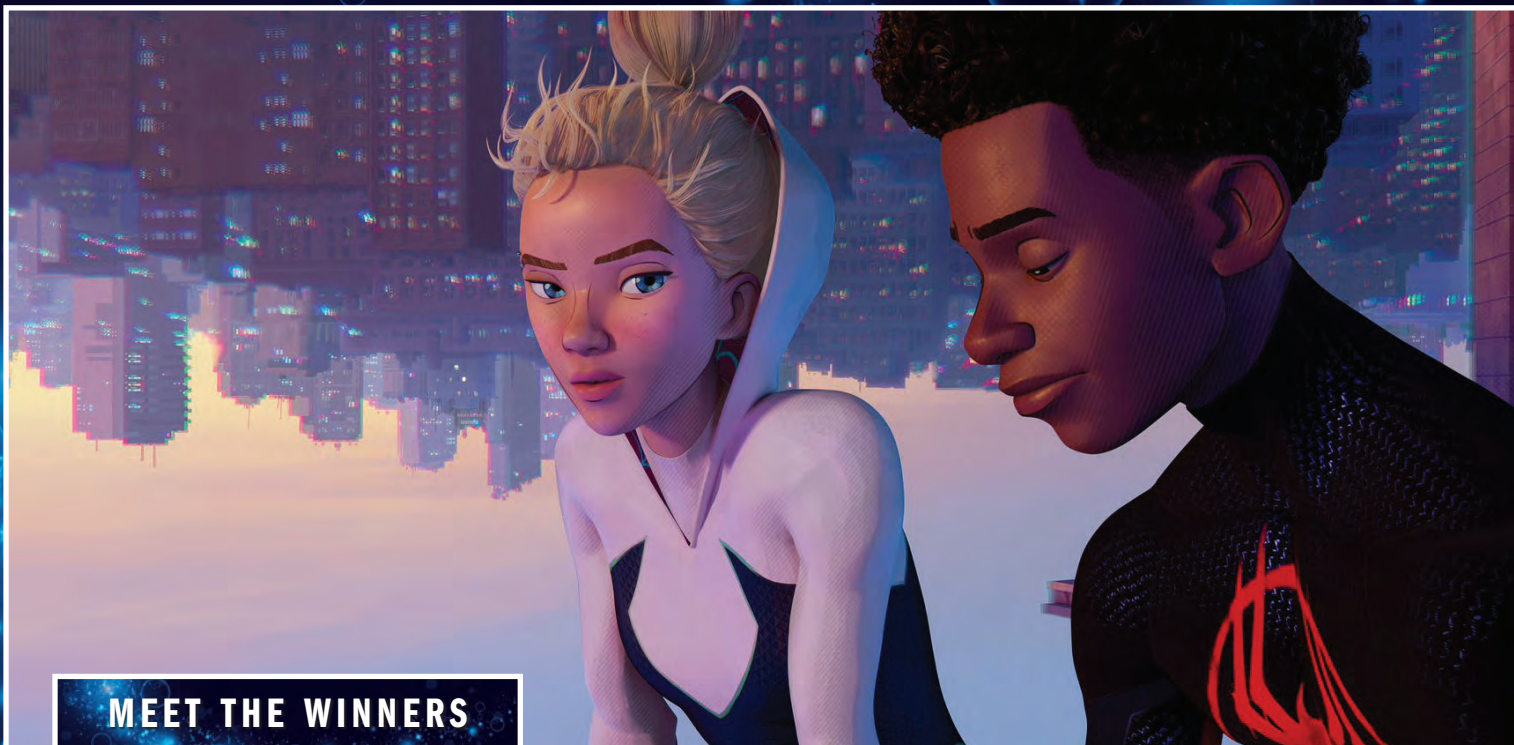


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MEET THE WINNERS

MOTION PICTURES – ANIMATED SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE

by Daniel Vasquez V. CAS

***Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* is the second movie of this successful *Spider-Man* series**, in which Gwen Stacy and Miles Morales embark on an adventure across the multiverse of Spider-People, facing the challenges of protecting their own kind and finding the true meaning and purpose of their life as superheroes. It explores the multiverse of Spider-Man through an exhilarating experience and the excitement of being immersed in a comic book full of captivating images and beautifully crafted sound. This movie was produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, and directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers, and Justin K. Thompson.

The movie has a powerful, energizing, and charming sound that plays a vital role in the storytelling and the experience. Each of these universes is carefully created to be authentic and unique, while still belonging to the *Spider-Man* world, through the use of multi-language dialogues, layered and purposeful Foley, relevant and vibrant backgrounds and SFX, and a musical journey that leads the way throughout the film. Re-recording mixers Michael Semanick CAS and Juan Peralta; original dialogue mixers Brian Smith, Aaron Hasson, and Howard London CAS; Foley mixer Randy K. Singer CAS; and scoring mixer Sam Okell were recognized for their excellent work with the CAS Award.

Michael Semanick CAS and Juan Peralta had worked together on a few projects, so they know each other well, and it was natural working together again on this movie. Michael had worked previously with producers Chris Miller and Phil Lord on the first *Spider-Verse* movie, along with other animated features, so they already had a good working relationship and understanding of their creative objectives. The film was mixed at Sony on the Kim Novak Stage. Michael was in charge of mixing dialogue and music, while Juan mixed SFX, backgrounds, and Foley. Their approach to the scenes in a movie of this scope and size is to make all the frequencies and elements work, while always asking themselves, “What is the scene about and what type of emotion are we trying to get?”



Re-recording mixer Michael Semanick CAS

Michael Semanick went to Berklee College of Music, where he majored in music production and engineering. Once he graduated, he moved back to the San Francisco area and started working at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley. As a recording engineer, he would record everything from spoken word to rock bands, rappers, classical music, Foley, ADR, and music for film, doing the

job that was at hand. He was then offered to learn film mixing at the Saul Zaentz Film Center. Not sure what direction to go, he consulted L.A. film mixer Terry Porter, who suggested he

stay there and learn to film mix, so he did and learned from esteemed mixers David Parker, Lesile Shatz, and Mark Berger. Film mixing seemed to come naturally to Michael, but it was tough to get jobs because nobody wanted “a kid” with such little experience in film mixing. He remembers people like David Lynch, Paul Thomas Anderson, and David Fincher taking a chance by using him as a young film mixer, which allowed him to build experience, putting himself in the right place at the right time.

Juan Peralta studied at Full Sail in Florida and moved to L.A. after graduating from college to start working in the post-production world, where he spent a few years before getting a call from a friend who told him that Skywalker Sound was looking for someone; an opportunity he jumped at. He then moved to the Bay Area and has now been there for more than 25 years. Juan started out as a mix tech, working with established mixers, which allowed him to learn from them as much as possible. “They were all really great at nurturing my progress to become a mixer, and then after about eight years or so, I jumped into mixing and have been mixing ever since.”

Both Michael and Juan are very sensitive to the overall volume and don’t [push levels] too loud with mixes like this. They went for a dynamic, but comfortable mix that didn’t push people away from the film—even in big action scenes—making it exciting but not exhausting. They shared, “We want the audience to be surrounded, but not assaulted, so we took our time to mix each scene. We must earn the audience’s respect sonically, as well as visually and in the narrative. We go on a fun ride with the audience by caring how the movie is heard. In a movie like this, there’s so much going on visually



Re-recording mixer Juan Peralta

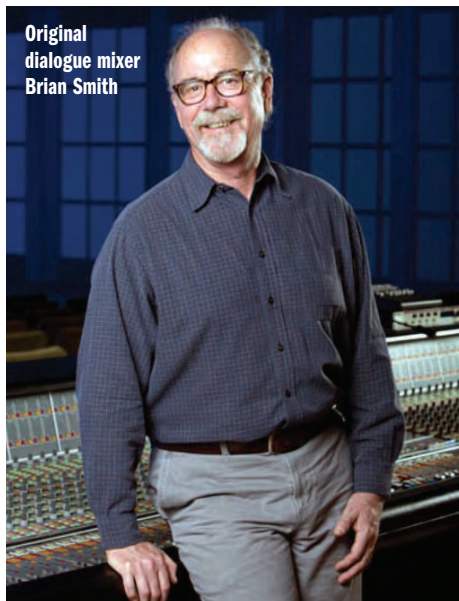
as well that you don’t want to wear the audience out. You just do it enough to support the story and keep the audience energized and ready for the next one.”

The movie has a dialogue style that puts every character in its context. It places them inside a space within the Spider-Verse and establishes the environment where the action is happening by careful selection of reverb, or its absence, like in the scene when Spot is “nowhere,” with the dialogue purposefully being dry. This was also achieved by using a less-upfront style of dialogue mixing which begins in the recording process. It’s a pursuit of natural development of the voice in the story, adding some air and natural feel to it with perspective. If, for example, there is a close-up shot in a scene, the dialogue mixers might put the mic a little closer and, conversely, if it’s a far away shot, they might back off the microphone a little bit. This is creative input that adds to the overall sound style and storytelling that is later fine-tuned during the final mix. “The movie was mixed with such nuance and a great sensibility for pacing and focus



L-R: Original dialogue mixers Aaron Hasson and Howard London CAS with re-recording mixers Michael Semanick CAS and Juan Peralta

that, like the visuals, you are moving through a 3D space of sound where things are revealed to you within the mix at the right moment in the right place as part of the story. Everything finds its place while keeping the whole vibe and energy of the film throughout,” noted the original dialogue mixers, Brian Smith, Aaron Hasson, and Howard London CAS. The dialogue was recorded at Sony with Howard on ADR Stage 1, Aaron on Stage 2, and Brian on Stage 3.



Brian Smith was born in Canada and moved to the US to attend film school in New York. He then relocated to L.A. and found his first job in the industry at Taj Soundworks, which was a Foley stage, where Brian’s job was assisting the sessions, picking up props, and similar tasks.

After meeting different people there, Brian moved to Brasher Sound, where he started in the machine room and then began mixing Foley before moving into ADR, working at different studios, mostly in the L.A. area. Years later, in 1990, he got the chance to record Foley in the evenings at Sony and, a year later, an opening came up on the ADR stage, which Brian took. From that point until his retirement this year after a successful career, he recorded ADR at Sony.

Dialogue and ADR mixer Howard London wanted to be a filmmaker from a young age. Trying to shoot an independent



film of his own, he was searching for work to help offset the overhead of his production, which was quite ambitious, so he took a few available jobs. One of those jobs was in a sound studio in Hollywood, which offered him the opportunity, not only to work there, but also to have everything for post-production at his disposal for free. Although finishing the film was difficult for him, he got into still photography, which allowed him to pay for the project, but then he stayed with sound.

Jumping into sound after studying photography and lighting made perfect sense to him “because it’s all physics. The same physics that are relative for light are relative for sound.” Howard later joined MGM [which is now Sony Pictures Studios] in the sound department, starting as a recordist and doing different tasks like dialogue editorial on two-inch tape and digital, and then moving into mixing and ADR in 1990. He helped redo the ADR stages, making ADR Stage 1 at Sony his workplace until today.

On the other hand, original dialogue and ADR mixer Aaron Hasson became interested in sound as a kid. His family had a little market in downtown L.A. and there was a high-fidelity audio store in the area where his dad bought a good hi-fi system for the family. The system became like a playground for Aaron who, at the age of 5, began experimenting with the signals, frequencies, and distortions, making it his first encounter with sound processing. “The speakers were as big as a washing machine, that’s how I remember it,” Aaron recalls. Years later in high school and college, he was experimenting with music production and was involved in a couple of bands. When choosing a career path, Aaron decided to go to college to study computer information systems, which was a growing and emerging field at the time. During his last semester, he took an internship at Sony in Culver City when analog was starting to crack and digital equipment was being introduced in the professional environment. This was a major change for experienced mixers and editors, so Aaron’s knowledge of computers and audio was helpful to aid in the transition. Thus, his profile was well rounded for what Sony needed at the time. His tasks became very relevant to the point that he was hired after the internship to help keep the routine and workflow going. After acquiring some experience, Aaron got into the union and was hired as an engineer to integrate the Pro Tools systems, leading him to become a mix tech or recordist at the time. Around 2015, he jumped into ADR which, because of his love for music and recording, became a natural environment for him. “The best job I could want in post-production sound would be this. I’m just happy that I got here!”

Brian, Aaron, and Howard recall mixing very evenly in terms of the number of lines of dialogue for this movie, with the mixer selection depending on scheduling and talent availability. It was very important for them at Sony to replicate the same equipment, microphones, and workflow across the three

stages, as the talent would come on different days at different times to either of the three studios.

They began recording the first lines of dialogue for *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* during the pandemic with Hailee Steinfeld, the actress who plays Gwen. At the time, Zoom calls with directors and producers were the norm, leaving out the possibility of in-person interaction in the room; something that fortunately happened later in the process for most of the recordings, which lasted until the early days of mixing.

Besides original dialogue, it is common for this type of movie to include ADR to change a performance or a line after the animation process. Therefore, dialogue recording became ADR when done to picture. The character Spot, for instance, was mostly looped afterward to allow for changes in performance and script. That is not unusual for producers Phil and Chris, as well as directors Joaquim, Kemp, and Justin, who were very involved in the whole sound process. They are very open to improvisation and last-minute inspirations from the actors and “really know how to tease the gold moments and get the best performances out of the talent.” This is exciting for the dialogue mixers as creativity flows in the recording environment and great acting is captured through the mic. The mixers shared, “That’s a point of pride that we all work hard on, including our level of integrity and care, as the three of us really bring a complete presence, are in the moment, have high standards, a lot of caring, and a lot of heart.” These qualities are difficult to measure but can be felt when people watch and listen to the movie.



Original dialogue mixer
Aaron Hasson

Because all three ADR stages had the same gear, the communication between mixers was crucial to make sure that recordings were consistent throughout, regardless of the stage or mixer. The standard recording setup that they used for this movie consisted of two large-diaphragm microphones recorded onto discrete tracks. A Neumann TLM 170 closer to the talent, with a U87 as the more distant microphone, aiming for a natural sound from both signals. The second microphone, which is usually set around 5 dBs or 10 dBs lower than the close mic, is there in case there’s a spontaneous loud passage or to add depth and perspective to a line of dialogue.



One of the Foley stages
at Sony Pictures Studios

They mic differently for animation than they do for live action. Similarly, the sounds are recorded as clean as possible, mixing the signal on the fly instead of relying on compressors to tape, aiming for a more organic feel with as little interference or processing as possible. However, when playing back ADR, they might add some reverb or EQ to check the recorded lines in context, but just for playback, the actual recording is kept clean. Howard explains it: “My philosophy is much like the sweet spot on a tennis racket. If you hit the ball in the sweet spot, you get more control and power, but if you hit it on the rim, the ball can go anywhere. My attitude has always been that all this gear, from the microphone to the input on Pro Tools, every piece of gear has its sweet spot, and if you hit that sweet spot and you control for that, which is possible, you get a



Scoring mixer Sam Okell

measurably better sounding recording that has life. It's more than just recording. It has a sense of life to it, there's nuance. And that, too, is what makes Miles, Gwen, and all the characters in this movie sound the way they do. All the nuance of the voice is there without coloration."

For Brian, Howard, and Aaron, one of the great things about Phil and Chris as producers is that they're incredibly smart with everything they do, and they let the directors and the sound team do their job and contribute to the process. They have been experimenting for quite some time with this frenetic interpretation of actual comic books through their own lifetime experiences and their creative energy. This leads to tons of overlapping in the *Spider-Verse* movies with lots of sounds happening at the same time, while every sound still has its place—making it very exciting. "The producers and directors want everything organic for the *Spider-Verse*. They want it free range and fast and loose," reveals Aaron, who adds that it wasn't uncommon to bring in multiple actors on the stage at once to feed off each other. Even in the previous *Spider-Verse* movie, they had a session with a boom operator following the talent in the ADR stage to capture that organic moment and get a performance that is much more real. In the end, that's what the actual recording of voices is all about—getting the best performances. The room and the team must be prepared for success and every aspect of the session must be covered while being as invisible as possible to avoid interfering with the creative aspect and mood of the session.

Aaron recalls having the directors wear lav mics as they like to walk and move around the room to interact with the talent. So, when they talk,

they also might give notes on the fly or cues to the editors to be played, along with the actor's lines, allowing them to know which take was preferred and why. The lavalier was also recorded as an extra track, along with the talent's signal. "It's about making sure the environment is ideal for the show, for the people involved, for the directors, and the talent."

As for the music, Michael approached it by first identifying what the composer had done and how each cue fits emotionally into each scene. For dialogue, he identifies which lines must be heard. "Then it's filling in around that and capturing the emotion. Sometimes it's pushing more music and sound effects take a back seat. Sometimes the sound effects come up and the music goes down. Because it's such a music-driven story, it's more about finding the right beats. Even the effects must be kind of musical as well, just to complement the actual music itself. Maybe there's a pause where SFX can go through and then we go back to music. Also, it's the way the producers and directors have built this movie; they've been living with it for years."

Scoring mixer Sam Okell did a lot of pre-dubbing and split everything out into many stems in order to have the flexibility to tweak small details later during the mix. It was challenging for Michael to handle so many stems. However, having many tracks or separate elements for the music allowed them to "spread some elements around the room and also keep stuff centered and grounded," creating an immersive experience without distracting from the storyline. Michael shares, "The songs were really fun to mix. I loved mixing them all, especially the song 'Hummingbird.' It's a scene when Miles is laying in his bed with his headphones on. He is lost in the music. I took this opportunity to spin certain elements of the music track around the room and mix other elements of the song to fill the entire cinema. Miles is pulled back into reality with Gwen's

voice and her arrival in his room. The backgrounds come up and things go back to normal. We worked on getting those blends to feel emotional and powerful, to put the audience in the scene and to feel what the characters are going through or experiencing. Fingers crossed, we achieved that!"

When asked about how Juan approached the Foley that Randy mixed, he replied, "The pre-mix process for Foley, for me, is more about making sure I have everything and making sure I take away what I don't need and have it as clean and as neat as possible so that in the final if anybody asks for it, it's there, it's ready to go. The Foley team did a



Foley mixer
Randy K. Singer CAS



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Foley mixer Randy K. Singer CAS
at the controls

great job and covered everything with multiple layers. Then it's just pre-mixing, pre-mixing, pre-mixing!"

The lead Foley mixer in the movie was Randy Singer CAS, who has worked on close to 400 feature films and thousands of hours of television and hundreds of hours of games. He started back in 1982 as a second-generation sound person. When he was going to college, an opportunity came up to work at a sound house, recalling, "I had an interest in sound because my father was a sound editor." Randy got an opportunity to work at a sound facility in Burbank doing mostly TV series and some features. He then began carrying units between dub stages and editing rooms, as well as building units, which is splicing 35mm soundtracks into the reels to get them ready for the mix stage, which got Randy interested in the transfer process. "We would have everything labeled in trim boxes in massive sound libraries so we could find and transfer the sounds requested by the editors. I became a librarian, so I really knew the library. I started transferring 35mm film and then I would do dailies from ¼-inch Nagra to 35mm film. Later, 24-track two-inch tape was available and allowed us to have more flexibility with sound—and it kept evolving. I'm blessed that I was able to make the transition from analog to digital and get a good understanding of it."

After working in transfer for some years, Randy had an interest in mixing and, at the time, the facility he was working for built a mix stage. He had the opportunity to start working on some Saturday-morning cartoons like *Inspector Gadget*, getting some mixing time and building experience while developing good relationships and a good reputation. Then he moved to another facility as a dubbing recordist, where he learned the full spectrum of audio and different facets of it, giving him an edge moving forward. After mixing some ADR and Foley, he really liked the creative environment and collaboration of

Foley. For him, Foley is one of the most exciting things in film sound because of the human element of physically picking up and moving things around to make sounds in sync to picture. It is the collaboration between the Foley artists and the mixer. "The beautiful thing about Foley is that we can be creative with it. We have thousands of different props and objects on the stage that all have a purpose to make sounds."

Randy got involved with this project thanks to his good relationship with sound supervisor Geoffrey G. Rubay, as they had worked together on many projects. Randy's Foley artists on this project were Jeffery Wilhoit and Dylan Wilhoit. "We were able to

collaborate with a synergy to create a beautiful soundtrack for the film. We all have such extensive experience and an understanding of telling a story with sound that it makes coming to work every day a pleasure."

Since this is a music- and FX-intense movie, Randy and his Foley team needed to understand the contribution of Foley and the opportunities in each moment of the timeline to effectively add to the storytelling, keeping in mind the role of other sound elements like FX, dialogue, and music. "The thing with animation is there's no production track. So, it's always a little bit more challenging in my experience because you have nothing to play against. We must be in tight collaboration with the sound supervisor to know what the surfaces are because, oftentimes, we get things that aren't quite rendered yet. So, a good, cohesive relationship with your team is invaluable. Sometimes the creative opinions become like magic, and we might create things that we never thought we could ever come up with. We [also] bring an organic feel to it." However, one of the challenges they had to overcome in this movie was working with temp picture references, as renders are constantly updated.

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse is a very high-energy and visually captivating movie. For Randy and his team, it's an experience like everything in that film, and they tried to always immerse the sounds into the reality of the movie. "For example, when they're in the wood tower and the dad climbs up and they're looking over the city, that's a dialogue scene. We're very sensitive to the wood creaks on the tower and the hands on the wood."

They came up with the sound of the spider web hitting the light post or the metal or the side of the building, by using elements like quarter-inch tape and pom-poms processed



with some pitch-shifting and enhanced it with whooshes, adding well-thought-out layers to create the sound that they were looking for and that would work for the story in harmony with the FX, music, and dialogue. “You have to understand the frequencies. We do a lot of pitching, a lot of harmonizing, a lot of EQ, and even add some light reverb, like Altiverb, to give some depth to the Foley so that it doesn’t sound like it’s right in your face and it fits nicely with the other elements. If it sits in nicely and complements sound effects, then you’ve succeeded to fill in the holes. Sound designers put the sound on the wall, the tiles, and we’re the grout in between the tiles.” Foley helps with the finesse and enhancement of cut FX. For example, for the sequence in the *LEGO Spider-Verse*, they used real plastic things, over-the-top and bigger-than-life elements to match the *Spider-Verse*.

The Foley team were very careful on the selection of the wardrobe and footwear of each character depending on the universe they’re in. They wanted to preserve details like backpacks, suit movements, metal gear, etc. The shoes were very important, and they always tried to stick with the same shoe for specific characters on screen. However, if the characters go from a wood surface to cement and then they’re on metal, from experience, they knew that they might have to adjust for a clickier heel to obtain the right sound. “So, it’s about experience and knowing what’s going to poke through and how it’s going to play. I enjoy what I do, I love my craft, and I get really excited about the projects because they’re all different. And although our contribution sometimes isn’t played or noticed as much, because a lot of times it gets squashed by sound effects and music, we put a lot of effort in the details. And in the areas where it does poke through, it’s gratifying to hear your work and the contribution we bring to each project,” Randy admits.

Back on the dub stage, one particular scene that Juan and Michael highlight is the museum with the Vulture during the first part of the movie. “We thought that particularly worked well. There’s a lot of dialogue happening, a lot of sound effects, and the music is just constantly going. We feel we got a good balance and left the audience wanting more [but] not exhausted.” This is also the scene where they introduce Miguel and Jess. Miguel blasting in trying to take over and then Jess blasting in with her motorcycle. “That was super fun to mix because it just had a lot of good punctuations, good dialogue, and good music. And then at the very end, there’s that rock song when Gwen is saving everyone from the falling helicopter. I thought that was just fantastic. So that was a fun scene, took a while to mix, [but] it feels like you’re on an adventure.”

For them, the key was weaving the sound components around. Just easing the music down slightly to avoid pushing other elements and keeping the overall sound at a reasonable level. “If you’re paying attention, you hear certain things. Sound is helping you through some elements of the story and maybe giving you hints about the future.” One example of this is when you hear the glitches or even the spider web, which are present most of the time but stand out when there’s something specific to them in a scene.

Michael concludes: “I want to thank the CAS for recognizing the sound of *Spider-Verse*. It is an honor to be considered alongside the other nominees in this category. It was a beautiful event. Thank you all for making it such a special evening. I can’t wait to hear next year’s movies!”

Thank you to the team for sharing their experience with us and congratulations for the spectacular job in creating the sound of *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*.

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L-R: ADR mixer Bobby Johanson CAS, supervisor and re-recording mixer Mark Mangini MPSE, production sound mixer Laura Cunningham, and Foley mixer Blake Collins CAS

MEET THE WINNERS

MOTION PICTURES – DOCUMENTARY 32 SOUNDS

by David Bondelevitch CAS MPSE

This year's winner in the Documentary category is a unique movie in many ways. The film is a documentary about sound. It is normally performed with live narration and live music. Much of the film uses binaural sound, and the main mix is for headphones, which were supplied to each audience member at the live show. Later, the sound team did a 7.1 and 5.1 mix for a theatrical presentation without the live aspect.

I was lucky to speak with the winners, supervisor and re-recording mixer Mark Mangini MPSE, production sound mixer Laura Cunningham, Foley mixer Blake Collins CAS, scoring mixer Ben Greenberg, and ADR mixer Bobby Johanson CAS. Blake invited Foley artist Joanna Fang MPSE to join his interview. I also interviewed Lang Elliott, who provided some of the binaural ambiances used in the film, and Sam Green, the director.

Sam, as the director, what prompted you to make a film about sound?

SAM GREEN: The film I made before *32 Sounds* was a documentary about the Chronos Quartet, whom I love and are just great. It made me think a lot about listening. It was a hard project to do because I had to try to get people to really listen.

As opposed to passive listening.

SG: In movies, it's a challenge, I think, getting people to

engage with it. So that got me thinking a lot about sound and reading about sound. There are not that many great books about sound. It's hard to talk about. I was curious about sound. The pandemic happened, so I started reading my huge stack of books about sound and in one of them, I came across a reference to Annea Lockwood, whom I had never heard of before. She recorded the sound of rivers for 50 years. At a certain point, I just wrote her an email and said, "I'm interested in sound. Could I talk to you sometime?" And she said, "Oh, here's my number. Call me this afternoon."

You can tell from the film that she's a delightful person, but also very smart about sound. She's been thinking hard about

Annea Lockwood



sound for 60 years. We just kept sort of talking during the pandemic, and the film came out of that. She inspired me a lot. She was a great muse.

Were you speaking with any other sound professionals at this time?

SG: Early on, I met Mark. I never would have made the film without Mark, who is a true collaborator. We met through a mutual friend who said, "You're making a movie about sound. I know this guy, Mark Mangini. You should talk to him."

I knew who Mark was and was even a little starstruck. Annea and Mark were my two muses. Mark is so smart about sound and so articulate about sound. It's rare to find somebody who takes such deep pleasure from sound, is a real artist, and is so serious about their work.

Mark, had you known of Sam before the project?

MARK MANGINI MPSE: I was recommended to Sam through a mutual friend who had met him in the documentary film community. It was something as simple as that. Sam rang me about three years ago and said, "I'm making a movie about sound, not about sound effects. But would I be able to call you and ask you questions now and again?" He offered a modest fee, and that fee would cover his right to bring me at any time and say, "Hey, what do you know about this? And what do you know about that?"

What was beautiful about that relationship was that Sam was not calling to ask technical questions, per se. I mean, we did have technical discussions, and I would encourage him to put out a binaural mic and put out an Ambisonic mic—"Let's capture the world the way we hear it." But his questions were more about the kind of questions the movie poses. How do I think about sound in my daily life? How do I react to sound? How does sound move me emotionally? And then, once we developed what became a real bond of trust, he started pitching me scenes that he wanted to shoot, along with questions. How can we get across this idea of listening to a deceased relative from the past? What does that evoke? How can sound inform that? And we would ultimately talk in great depth about scenes that would then get put in the movie.

SG: I say this lovingly because I'm a documentary filmmaker, but documentary is very rudimentary in terms of sound. It's sort of embarrassing because, until making this film, I was at that level. "Oh, you want a stereo mic? But that's complicated." I never had any experience with binaural mics or Ambisonic mics.

You can see in the film when we have the shot with the dummy head, there's often an Ambisonic mic on the stand as well. Those were Mark's suggestions, and that came in super handy when we made the 7.1 and 5.1 mixes because we had recorded things both ways, which was huge. I never would have known any of that without Mark.

Mark, at what point did you become more than just the guy who answers the phone?

MM: It's interesting that you ask because Sam never told me the date that it happened, but he said that his intention had always been to just abuse me as a consultant for nine months during the shoot! He never felt that he could afford me for the actual post-production work. I mean, he had anticipated using a go-to in New York, where he lives and works, having benefited from whatever wisdom I could impart. And it dawned on him that I was having such a material effect on the shoot and the feel of the film that I should be that person. He simply just called and said, "I hadn't planned on this, but is there any universe where you can be associated? Can you do the edit design and mix?"

And by that time, Sam and I were good buds, and it was a project I had to see to completion, no matter what happened. So, I went to Formosa Group, where I'm employed, and they made an incredible deal for him in terms of my wages, my room, and the mix room, and I would end up mixing it in my sound design suite, which comes at a real cost savings versus a traditional feature film-based mixing studio. But I'm 7.1.2 in that environment. It's a Dolby-tuned room. It's a beautiful little one-mixer environment. And Sam was much more





Director Sam Green

comfortable with that. That's kind of the environment he was used to in New York. And he felt that that benefited the film. Especially given that our mix was a headphone mix, so we didn't need the real estate. We didn't need the same volume of air we would need for a big movie with speakers because we were mixing and monitoring over headphones and making a binaural mix.

I assume *32 Sounds* was micro-budget.

MM: The lowest budget I've ever had! I'm proud to have had an impact on how Sam made binaural happen, because he had it on his radar. He had seen a live show that used a dummy head as part of the performance aspect of it, but he didn't know how it worked. That was part of our technical discussions. I knew that he is a doc maker who is used to a shotgun mic on a boom pole, and that's the way you see the universe. But documentaries are supposed to have some sense of verisimilitude. They're supposed to reflect the way we see the world. And in *verité*, it's meant to be the filmmaker, completely removed from that process, and we're experiencing the event as if we were there. Well, we hear in 360 degrees. What's a boom? What's a mono boom mic doing in a documentary? He started to get a little bit of my religion there, so we recorded with binaural microphones and with Ambisonic microphones that we could decode not only to binaural but to 7.1.

So, you had to figure out the recording approach so things could translate as effectively—especially given the subject matter.

MM: I was instrumental in helping push that approach forward so that we would have real binaural source audio for the mix. We didn't get that implemented until halfway through the shoot, so we had plenty of good old-fashioned mono recordings that we tried to turn into a binaural mix. So, in the final mix, I also used some binaural up-mixers and down-mixers to take monaural material or traditional X/Y stereo material binaural, give it a greater sense of immersion with left and right and behind and above.

The headphone version was always meant as a live presentation and Sam would do the voiceover live, and JD Samson, our

composer, would do the music live. But there are occasions when we can't get one or both. We've made versions of it for headphones live in a theater but without either one of those components. We can offer a headphone experience in a theater. We can offer a headphone experience with live vocals but canned music and vice versa. And then we have the cinema version, and we have a streaming version, which is the binaural version only. [It will be on Criterion starting in July.]

Sam told me he wanted the end of the film and all the credits, three and a half minutes' worth, to play with nature sounds. We are coming out of the sequence in the backyard with Annea Lockwood. She's listening to the sounds of nature in Upstate New York and we fade to black for 30 seconds before you even see a credit. Sam wanted nature sounds from that location, and I found an Allen Lomax-type FX recordist, Lang Elliott, and I built the final three and a half minutes out of all of his binaural recordings, which are geographically correct.

Lang, how did you become involved in the film?

LANG ELLIOTT: I knew Bob Kellough (sound effects editor on the film) from a previous project, and they were sort of stumbling around the ending of the movie, and Bob suggested to Mark that he contact me because I have all these nature sounds. We worked hand-in-hand. We went through some different scenarios because it was Annea Lockwood at the end of the movie, and the ambiance they had was traffic and not much else.

What did you end up sending to Mark?

LE: I think I first supplied him with some common cicadas, but it was too cacophonous, so I supplied him with a pulsating



Mark Mangini MPSE, supervisor and re-recording mixer, and composer Philip Glass

insect chorus featuring the snowy tree cricket. I supplied them with a robin singing. At one point, the insect chorus comes up, and that was mine. It's sort of a nice relaxing pulsation, which is low-pitched and very musical. I supplied him with some clean barn owl hooting, the Canada geese that flew across the scene, the insect chorus was a binaural ambiance. An Eastern screech owl comes in with a soft melodic trill that sounds very nice. Right before the end, another insect comes in; a slightly higher pitched cricket.

What mics do you use for binaural?

LE: I use a mic housing called the Stereo Ambient Sampling System ("SASS") that was invented by a guy up in Vermont who produced it through Crown. It emulates a human head that holds the omnidirectional mics about seven inches apart and has a baffle in between. It gets rid of the problems associated with the pinnae. If you think about it, using a binaural head where the mics are inside the ear past the pinnae, when you play it back through headphones, it runs it through your pinnae again. I bought the housings and retrofitted them with a Sennheiser MKH 8020, so it's quasi-binaural.

Sam, how did you wind up finding Laura Cunningham as a production mixer?

SG: That's a good story. I was looking for a documentary person who knew their way around those kinds of mics. She went to RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) and studied architectural acoustics and did material with VR and gaming, which is way ahead of documentary sound. This was a funny project because, usually, the soundperson desperately tries to stay out of the shot. We were saying, "Hey, get over here, we want you in the frame."

MM: It's always a bit of an ask to record differently. For the film that I'm on right now, I asked the production sound mixer to add an Ambisonic microphone and four more outboard channels, and there's always a little bit of resistance. All the individuals on *32 Sounds* rose to the occasion and saw it as an opportunity, and usually had to rent or buy a bigger recorder. Some of them were working on four-channel recorders, which was plenty for a doc, but this required a six or eight or 10-channel recorder. Sam was happy to pick up that very minimal additional cost, but to great effect. And he'd tell you how valuable it was to have those additional recordings to create immersion.

LAURA CUNNINGHAM: Sam found my website because he was looking for somebody who not only could do regular



Production sound mixer Laura Cunningham and Don Garcia capturing sound

documentary production sound but also someone who could do spatial sound recordings. It was exciting because, with most projects, I don't even try to convince people to use that kind of recording technique. Sam explained to me what the project was all about and I told him it sounded like an amazing project.

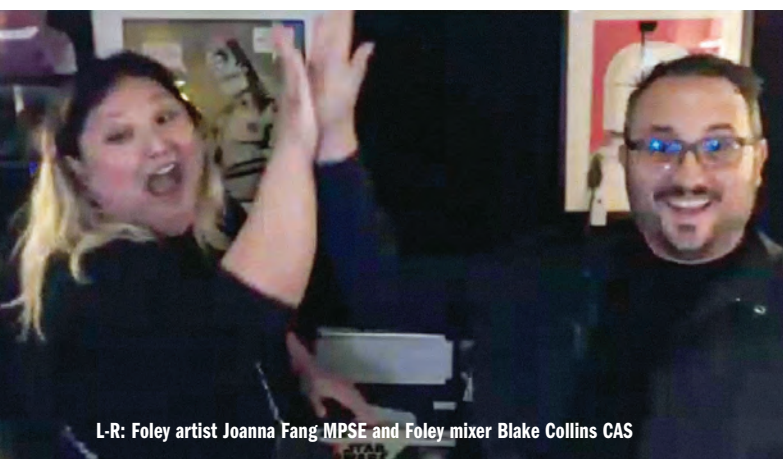
My undergraduate work was in film at NYU, where I earned a bachelor's in film and television production and specialized, unofficially, in sound. When I graduated with my master's, I came back to production sound. VR was just becoming a hot thing where people had the 360 GoPro rigs. That's when I started doing spatial sound for that kind of capture. Most of what I did was for VR, 360 video, and documentary. I've done a lot of recording with Ambisonics and using the Neumann dummy head for binaural. For my master's degree, my specialty was immersive audio.

What kind of gear were you using?

LC: The setups varied a little bit, depending on what we were doing each day. It was as simple as mono mics and lavs for the more strictly documentary-style stuff. For anything a little bit more creative, I had at least an M/S set up on a boom, a Schoeps CMC 6, and the MK 4 capsule and a CMC. 8. I like using that for documentary since you can just put it in a Zeppelin. For some of the stuff, I used my Ambisonic mic. I



Capturing sounds of the beach in binaural and Ambisonic



L-R: Foley artist Joanna Fang MPSE and Foley mixer Blake Collins CAS

have the SoundField SPS 200, just the first-order Ambisonic. A lot of the more atmospheric sound effects type stuff was Ambisonic or binaural.

The other thing that made it a special project for me was the first round of shooting days. When Sam had contacted me, he had several days already lined up. I told Sam that I wanted to do this project and I'm willing, but I need to let you know that I will be nine months' pregnant on your shoot days! And Sam said, "Okay, we'll play it by ear." Because of that, Sam kind of pushed me and made me appear on camera. We managed to finish those first few days and then my water broke three days after that! I took four weeks off and I went back to work.

Wow! Mark, were there difficulties with intelligibility on the binaural material?

MM: No, because there are no sequences in our film that are shot binaural and require the audience to understand the dialogue. I have yet to experience those challenges with binaural, though I believe they exist. When you think about it, it's almost a technical impossibility, because binaural is meant to have two omni's in a dummy that resembles the shape of the head. That means, whatever it's pointing at has nothing on-axis with the speaker. Nothing is directly on-axis, so we use



A very unique ADR setup

it more as an immersive effect than we do capturing dialogue. One of my go-to techniques in cheating was to put the binaural sound effects that had been recorded as wild effects, and I panned the shotgun mic or the lav to the center channel and laid a nice binaural recording around it.

When you got to post-production, were there any issues that you had not thought of when using binaural recordings?

MM: Having not thought of it sooner, I struggled to create a binaural effect out of non-binaural material. It's a pale comparison. The best of the tools come nowhere near actual binaural recording.

We mixed using Sennheiser 600 headphones. After a fair amount of review, that's what I felt was a great quality, but not boutique quality that no one could access or afford. They gave us the flattest, most neutral response that would reproduce the most consistently throughout.

When viewers are watching this live, they're wearing headphones, too, right?

MM: Yes. The live show is broadcast wirelessly over FM. We struck a deal with a British company—they've been very generous with us—and we carry 500 wireless headsets because wired headsets were way too expensive and way too problematic for us. So, we put out these wireless headsets, and they do a pretty good job. FM covers a 300-seat theater pretty nicely.

How did you find your Foley crew?

SG: At some point, Film Forum in New York wanted to show it, so I called Mark and asked if we could ever do a 7.1 mix? He said, "I have to think about this," even though later, he admitted he'd already started work on the 7.1 mix. A lot of the binaural stuff doesn't really translate, for example, the matchsticks around the dummy head. I asked Mark if we were going to have to re-record all this stuff, and he said, "I got a great idea. Let's get Joanna Fang to Foley." It's like this weird extra Meta. She did a great job. She's awesome, and she's super articulate about sound and Foley, and just loves her work and is such an artist. I've always known about Foley and was curious about it. Watching her work, I realized this is a combination of sound, art, music, and performance. I have a huge admiration for what she does.

MM: Joanna is also featured in the film in the Foley segment, and I think she's so beautifully spoken. I mentioned this in my CAS acceptance, for her sequences, we didn't have to do any Foley for her Foley on camera—which I think is pretty funny.

But we did need to Foley the binaural sequences. When I up-rez to immersive audio, a two-channel binary recording doesn't translate to 7.1, and I needed to feel Edgar and his son walk around into the surrounds, so I could cheat the voices. But I needed that little extra bit of detail of them walking on grass,



a little bit of their clothes so you could get this discrete sense of little boys walking this way into the surrounds, and he's walking this way into the surround.

JOANNA FANG MPSE: Sam had gotten in contact with me and wanted to interview me for the movie. He knew me through another sound editor, Arjun Sheth. I think that part of Sam's research was realizing that he could have interviewed a dozen other fantastic Foley artists, but I think the big thing that worked out was the fact that he read some of my writing for Pro Sound Effects. I've been interviewed by PBS. I have some visibility, but anytime anyone asks me about what Foley is, I don't just give them the usual answer, the short answer. Sam thought that I've got something to say that will hopefully augment the film.

Sam and I had a quick interview. We just talked over the phone, and I think there was a moment where we both realized that his take on it, his understanding of it, his body of work, and some of the stuff I saw that Sam had done prior were in alignment artistically with the type of message and philosophical understanding about sound that I relish.

BLAKE COLLINS CAS: I told my bosses at PlayStation that we had this unique opportunity that's a cool documentary. It's maybe a little unusual outside of the video game wheelhouse. Is it possible for us to have the interview and have this thing happen on-site? Originally, we hadn't even talked about doing Foley for the movie yet, or at least about following the film.

JF: Blake and I recorded the sound of the tree falling in the forest; the Foley that's used in the film. We did that scene on our own before the film crews came in.

Do you remember the layers involved in creating that sound, and how you recorded them?

JF: We did several layers. The impact of the tree on the ground. We did the groaning, the cracking, and the breaking. Stressing snow, and the pine, and probably a debris layer. We did leaves.

At one point, Blake and I realized that the leaves on some of the branches hit other trees on the way down. That's the fun thing about working with Blake, he's not just a great Foley mixer, but he's also sound designing. We're trying to pitch ideas to one another. Could we do something more like the sound of snow trickling onto the leaves? The thing I always tell people about Blake is that he doesn't just mix with the tools he has in front of him; the biggest tool he has in front of him is the talkback.

BC: I think everybody can see in a film what you want to see. And you see the tree falling, and you get the boom, and you get the crack. You might want to hear the little things. That's the type of stuff that I look for to help set us apart.

JF: I pride myself on adding a lot of character to the Foley. So even for the tree falling in the woods, I asked Blake if we could use some sort of vocal element to this. Eventually, we settled on dragging a chair across the floor to get this sound and it wasn't good enough on its own. It needed Blake's ear to tune how that pitch was going to work.

Do you remember what you used for the groans and the snow falling on the leaves? Don't feel the need to share any professional secrets if you don't want to!

BC: I don't think either of us are shy about that because you could tell somebody the recipe to a Michelin Star restaurant's signature meal, but they don't have the background and the experience of going through cooking school and chef school. They're not going to be able to repeat it, even though you have the recipe.

I could just look in the Foley stage and probably tell you a lot of the things that we use. We have a cedar block that's in there that we use. We have some old bark that's in there. We have this cool, old shipping palette that gives us a lot of lows.

JF: We have this old wood chair that, when you pull it at a certain angle, makes this incredible sound. We have something



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L-R: Supervisor and re-recording mixer Mark Mangini MPSE, Foley artist Joanna Fang MPSE, and director Sam Green

Blake built for the Foley stage that extends three feet down and is a set of wood rafters and lattices. There's a wood panel. If we were to pull that thing up, there is at least 120 pounds of wood structure underneath that panel, and that just completes the sound and makes it sound real, not just a piece of wood on top of the empty concrete block. We also created the sound of the debris.

BC: We used a mixture of leaves, and some mag, and then we got a pom-pom that gives the high sprinkly end. Drop some sand or small rocks in there to get the plinks of stuff. Snow falling doesn't sound like much in real life, but in a film, you want to hear something, just little things that give it a little character, even though it's not real. Our whole job here is to make real stuff with fake sounds sound real again. There's a certain expectation that when you go see a movie, whether it's a documentary or a Marvel film, things are going to have sound even when they don't in real life. If you go ultra-realistic with it, you're going to be left wanting something.

JF: That's my favorite thing about collaborating with Blake. He's got the eye for detail, and I'm trying to get into the head of the characters, even if it's a tree. Combined, we're able to do anything from helicopter crashes to character work.

What mics do you use? What type of processing do you do? Is any of it in the box, or is it all outboard?

BC: It's a slight mixture of both. It's mostly outside of the box. I have an H9000 harmonizer, and the way I have it coming into Pro Tools, I can blend it all with the mic signal and just add the low bottom end of the groans or pitch it live as it's happening. I have some Distressors and EQ's, mic pre's, and reverb units.

The way I learned Foley was at One Step Up with Dan O'Connell and John Cucci. They brought me on, having never mixed Foley before, so they taught me everything, and they used outboard gear. When I went to Skywalker, they didn't have those things. I had to ask them. They hired me because of the pedigree of my previous work. When I got here at

PlayStation, I made sure that we had all the same types of things, but the biggest one is that the H9000 can have multiple signal chains from one unit and have four insert returns coming into my template where I have a reverb, a sub effect, and a pitch shifter. It's all printed. I don't give options of the dry signal because I feel if I'm giving that separation, why do the effects?

I'd worked at Paramount before where we did restoration-type stuff. So, when we did *32 Sounds*, the archival footage scene with the straps on the piano, I knew how to deal with it from matching new performances.

And what about in the box?

BC: In the box, I have a suite of Eventide gear. Some of the FabFilter Pro stuff for some multi-band compressing.

What do you use for subharmonics?

BC: I used to do the dbx 120 hardware, but now I'm just in the box with Avid Pro Sub and the Lo-Fi plugins, where I mix the two of those together and then also boost the EQ—some of the lows—and then I bring that in just to my main thing.

Your mic choice and preamps?

JF: We were on the Sennheiser MKH800. We typically run between the Millennia HV-3C and John Hardy M-1. We were using the API 3124 for a little bit.

BC: I was using Focusrites, too. My favorite is the Martin Sound, MS-10

JF: The cool thing about the M-1 is you get that VU meter.

And EQ?

BC: The Great River EQ-2NV. I also have the GML 8200.

Where was the voiceover recorded?

SG: Bobby Johanson is a legend and a genius. Mark wanted to use an immersive mic. We wanted that to happen, and Bobby said, "It's a dead room, why would we want that?" It makes a huge difference. It's this thing that nobody on earth except sound people would ever notice, but it was great. Mark was so tickled, he said, "I've been wanting to do that for 40 years." So that's pretty cool.

MM: We did a clever thing at Harbor in New York with Bobby Johansen, who is our ADR mixer. We re-recorded all of Sam's VO for the non-live version in Ambisonics. I convinced Sam that I wanted him to have this sort of omnipresence, and if we just put out a U87, his movie would sound like every other documentary with a voiceover. Bobby will tell you he was skeptical. "I don't think you should do this." Bless him! He broke with tradition, and said, "If that's what you want, we're

going to try.” And he did a great job, and we got some great recordings.

BOBBY JOHANSON CAS: Sam came through and was telling me about this documentary he was making about sound, and how he did the live show. And now he’s making it into a film. Right off the bat, it was about sound, so I was interested. He told me Mark Mangini was going to supervise and mix it, and I was super thrilled, ‘cause he’s an idol and he’s the best, and to be able to support something that he was doing sound design and mixing on—I was thrilled!

We’re sound people. I recorded Sam, the whole narration of him throughout the film. What I found interesting was Mark had suggested using an Ambisonic microphone. At first, I was a little skeptical because I’ve been recording dialogue for 30 years. What are you going to do with it? How can you enhance it? But to my surprise, and to Mark’s credit, we got a great result. I backed it up with a U87 because that’s my comfort zone. But it sounded amazing. I had my assistant on headphones listening to both sides, and I was listening to the main mic. After it was all said and done, I got to listen back, and it sounded amazing. I thought it was a brilliant idea. And again, that’s all to Mark’s credit for using that. It was just a great experience for me to work on something about sound and doing it differently than I would normally do.

The film had a unique approach to using music.

SG: I love music and film. I feel like it was important, but with this movie, it’s such a tricky, balancing act, the music and the sound. For example, consider the end credits. Normally with a movie, the last piece of music has people getting up and walking out. And with this, I had to have people still hear the crickets and hear the music at the same time, and have both do their work, but neither overshadow the other. It’s important, the last little decompressing moment. It was a challenge. And JD (Jocelyn Samson), like all composers, I think on the one hand, she would want her music to be louder, but I think she understands it is everything in service to the movie. It was not an easy music movie.

BEN GREENBERG: I’d worked with JD before on her music and I was kind of familiar with her style. I’m just a big fan of her music from over the years. I grew up here in NY and used to be in a band called “The Men,” while she had a band called “Men,” and we got mistaken for each other all the time! That was years before we even met. And the first time we worked together she said, “Wait, you were in ‘The Men?’ I was in ‘The Men.’” When she called me about it, I was immediately excited

just to be working with her again, and when I heard the music and saw what was happening with the film, I knew it was special.

When they took it from kind of a hybrid live show into something where JD wasn’t always going to be at the shows, we got together and mixed the score in stereo and in surround, which was fun. It’s taken many different forms. They’ve done shows where she hasn’t been a part of them, but maybe Sam was still narrating. It’s sort of hybrid.

Where did you mix?

BG: We did most of the work in the NYU studios at the Clive Davis School, where JD teaches. We had great access there. We were able to do the stereo mixing in the API room, and we were able to do the surround mixing in their surround room, which is awesome. Normally, I work here at my studio. It was over winter break, so she had just unfettered access, which was pretty amazing.

Did Mark have you provide specific types of stems?

BG: I knew Mark a little bit, which was exciting. I’m a huge fan of his as well. He was super supportive. The fact that he was suggesting that I do the surround mix was a hugely flattering thing. Normally, when I’m on a score mix, they want the stems so they can remix it. Someone with Mark’s level of experience and pedigree might say, “Just let me handle it, kid.” But he was super open, super supportive, and generous with advice, and he’s a great guy.

In addition to Annea Lockwood and Joanna, another person featured is Edgar Choueiri.

MM: Sam interviewed professor Edgar Choueiri, an old friend of mine who is a physicist from Lebanon now at Princeton. It was through me that Sam met Edgar. I said, “I think there’s this guy you got to talk to who’s doing some pretty revolutionary stuff.” That’s why Edgar’s in the movie. He does the walkaround with the matchsticks. He shows up at the end with that



Professor Edgar Choueiri in an anechoic chamber



beautiful bit about hearing that tape of his younger self speaking to his future self, which is just amazing. Also, Edgar started a company called Bach Audio, and we've been developing through his inventions, binaural over loudspeakers.

Interesting! Well, Mark, since you were along for the whole ride, can you share a scene that maybe sticks out more than the others due to its challenges?

MM: There's a sequence that Sam and I love with Don Garcia, who's the crazy guy in New York City who plays "In the Air Tonight" driving around the city, and he's blasting it out of his windows. Sam and I had talked about that in pre-production before he shot the scene, and we both agreed that part of the joy of that sequence is his experience. Living in the city and hearing it coming from a mile away, just hearing the subwoofer rattling his windows. We even have a shot from his apartment, and you hear it echoing off all the city buildings and alleys. We wanted the audience to feel the sense of place and immersion like you're just surrounded by this. We encouraged our production sound team to capture all of that with an Ambisonic microphone so we could get it as an immersive recording.

But as fate would intervene, and we hadn't sort of thought it through, there are several issues after that. The car itself is very loud and noisy, and it kind of muddled all the recordings that we made. And then there was the issue of intercutting and having varying perspectives from shot-to-shot, and it would end up being a giant failure despite our planning. And yet it created this post-production challenge of taking the original recording itself, the nice clean one, and having me figure out ways to use impulse responses from the locations and clever multitap delays to recreate the slaps off of buildings and alleyways. That was probably the most complex mix challenge I had.

The portion about recordings of those who have passed on touches on the sentimental side of sound.

MM: The recordings of deceased loved ones were important. The joy of this film has been how that has built up its momentum, and how that triggered emotional responses and

audiences in deep, deep ways. Sam and I continue to receive glowing correspondence from viewers who said that I went back into my closet, and I found those old VHS tapes of my mom, dad, sister, uncle, whomever, and I just started listening to them and all the memories that that brought back. It's just beautiful. The effect that the movie has had on audiences. I have been the audio documentarian of my family, and I encourage people in lectures to capture these sounds because they'll disappear. When I hear my grandparents speak, I wish I could hear my great-grandparents, and now I know that because I've captured my grandparents and my parents, that my children will now be able to benefit

from having heard my parents. Their grandparents speak emotionally. I've done oral histories with them, and just open chats just to capture the sound, because it's so evocative.

Any final comments? Anyone you wish to thank?

MM: I'd like to thank Bob Kellough, who was my sound effects editor. He cut most of the movie and I finished what he couldn't complete. And of course, Eliza Paley, who was our ADR editor.

LC: Thanks to Sam for bringing me on. It was an amazing project to work on for a production sound person. He's a great director to work with; he can speak our language, so it's great!

BC: It probably sounds cliché, but I'd thank everyone I've ever worked with because I learned something from them. Also, my family. When we do a project like this, we do it after hours and on weekends. Thanks to Karen Waller, Phil Kovats MPSE, and Richard Lee as well from PlayStation.

BJ: It was my true pleasure to work on this. I thought the results came out great, and I also promoted it with Sam as much as I could on the East Coast, because I believed in it. We had screenings at Harbor in their big room for all the sound community, and we invited everybody in New York. It was a thrill to help Sam.

BG: I've been making records for 20 years, and I started working in film five years ago. I'm excited about doing more, and this feels incredibly validating. Thank you!

SG: I love Mark. He's such a genius and an artist, and I felt lucky. One thing that I think is important; people often think of sound as post-production. You make the movie. And then somebody adds some sound design to it. For a lot of movies, that's the model. We were so far from that with this film. It was woven into the DNA of the film. Mark was integral as a collaborator and an advisor, and somebody that I had a long dialogue with. It's just a far better approach. It was such a pleasure. And the movie would not be what it is without him.

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MEET THE WINNERS

TELEVISION SERIES – ONE HOUR THE LAST OF US

S1 Ep. 1 “When You’re Lost
in the Darkness”

by Patrick Spain CAS

At the 60th Cinema Audio Society Awards, the hit HBO show *The Last of Us* won the Television Series – One Hour Award for Outstanding Sound Mixing. The winners were up against a murderers’ row of industry favorites: *Succession*, *The Crown*, *Ted Lasso*, and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*! An absolute landslide of well-received shows and stellar sound work.

However, this past year, *The Last of Us* struck a palpable post-pandemic nerve with audiences, and the realistic, but unnerving sounds of the apocalyptic offering had a lot to do with its positive reception. It’s not a show that tries to inundate you with sci-fi beeps, whooshes, bass drops, and their associated graphics. It’s a show that leans into a science-based Michael Crichton-like premise where everything is as it should be, except one new frightening twist of nature that affects just about everything and everyone, throwing the world into disarray.

I chatted with the show’s production sound mixer, Michael Playfair CAS, Foley mixer Randy Wilson CAS, dialogue and music re-recording mixer Marc Fishman CAS, and effects re-recording mixer Kevin Roache CAS to hear how they achieved this win.

Michael, I’ll begin with you because you are the one who’s on set. How did you get your start in the business?

MICHAEL PLAYFAIR CAS: Well, that’s a good question! When I was 19 or 20, a friend of mine, my best friend since high school in fact, told me she could see me with a camera on my shoulder recording things. I never forgot that and that led to me taking courses about cinema a year or two later. Eventually, I ended up in film school and got into sound from there.

And how about you guys?

RANDY WILSON CAS: Well, like most everyone, I thought I would be in the music industry, and I stumbled into this! I had a co-op position in 12th grade in high school, and started at a studio and kinda worked my way up the ranks through various different studios. Eventually, the city of Toronto went freelance and that’s when I was able to jump into Foley whole-hog, and now it’s been 20 years!

MARC FISHMAN CAS: I studied for a couple of years at USC, and then left there to go to Full Sail, and graduated in 1990. I started with an internship and then a job at EFX for eight years or so. I started as a sound editor and then supervising sound editor. I was an ADR editor and a mix tech, all those fun things. Then I started mixing full time in 1998. And a few years ago, in the midst of the pandemic, Kevin and I started mixing together.

KEVIN ROACHE CAS: I went to USC and graduated in 2001. I went to film school there and ended up working in the sound department because that’s where everyone was having all the fun: laughing and joking and doing cool work. So, I was just attracted to those people and then I got a job as a runner for a while. That transitioned into being a recordist for several years for Elmo Ponsdomenech CAS and Joe Earle CAS. Then I mixed effects with Elmo, and I’ve been doing that ever since.

Now that we have an overview of your backgrounds, let's get into the show. Michael, how does a gig like this come to you up in the Calgary, Alberta, area?

MP: [Over time], I developed a resume, got some shows under my belt, and won some awards and whatnot. So, when *The Last of Us* came, I got a call. I had an interview and basically, they wanted to hire me. I was actually quite shocked because it was quite a high-budget show—or at least the highest ever shot in Canada! And all I could think was this is quite a privilege.

So, when we were in pre-production, things went well, and I really liked what the producers had to say and their attitude about sound. Craig Mazin, the show runner, really wanted to set the bar high for sound, and made sure that everyone was conscious that they really wanted to get good sound and dialogue on this show.

So, he was telling the other departments not to ride roughshod over the sound crew, they need to get this quality of product...

MP: Yeah, and [while shooting], he was checking in with me saying, "Mike, is that OK, is this going to work," and I would give him my opinion or say, "It's there but we could do it again," and so we would do it again.

I'm not a set guy, but I feel like that is not the norm these days. From what filters down to my level, I frequently hear it is all "GO! GO! GO!" and you record the best that you can in the shooting rush.

MP: It is not the norm for most shows that I'm on. That's how I learned to try and get it on the first take. Even when doing rehearsal, if you even get a rehearsal—a lot of times now you



Production sound mixer Michael Playfair CAS keeping warm(er) while shooting on Fortress Mountain

don't get a rehearsal. You watch a blocking and all of a sudden it's "Roll sound!"

Wow. In these pre-production meetings or on set, was there any sort of sonic mandate from the producers?

MP: Not that I can recall, they just had the general attitude that they wanted to do this "right" and give me what I needed to do that.



L-R: Production sound mixer Michael Playfair CAS, re-recording mixer Kevin Roache CAS, Foley mixer Randy Wilson CAS, and re-recording mixer Marc Fishman CAS



Re-recording mixer Kevin Roache CAS

Meaning what, in a practical sense?

MP: Well, they hired really good people in terms of locations, a good location department.

Meaning, they are not noisy locations?

MP: Yeah, more or less. They chose locations well, and I was there on location scouts, and I would at least have a say. And fortunately, I kinda had horseshoes on that show, because a lot of locations were very good for sound. The more difficult things were [like] the traveling shots, the cars; they were concerned off the top about the driving stuff and how we were going to get the dialogue in the truck.

I was thinking about that specifically after having re-watched this particular episode. They are driving across a field at speed, trying to have a three-way conversation between Joel (the main character), his daughter, and brother. I thought to myself, "That's not easy!"

MP: Ha! No, we got pretty lucky on a lot of that stuff. Because that's a pretty noisy setup, and especially the pod-car where the stunt driver is on the roof of the truck in an apparatus, steering, and the players are inside acting!

You're telling me the brother was not driving the truck!

MP: Ha! No, no!

There are a lot of action sequences in this show, but also a lot of really intimate stuff where the actors are in a tight room or out in the wilderness where there is nothing going on beyond the environment they are in. I'm assuming these all must require a different technique or approach. Do they?

MP: Yeah, in a way. We are always looking at acoustics, especially in the more intimate spaces, like sets where things may look like concrete but are actually plywood. Anything we can do to improve that [like] using materials to dampen echoes and things going on in a space that we don't want to hear.

What sort of tech did you bring to the show to help you with this?

MP: On this show, it was a package I always use, but my boom op also brought a package, and we incorporated the two. For this show, we found that we needed shorter mics with smaller blimps that could fit in tight spaces and still have reach. So, we used a variety of boom mics for most of the show, supported by body mics and plants. We even wire up actors who have no dialogue. They may have no lines, but there might be a breath we want to get. So, we put mics on actors no matter what nowadays.

I assume that's because folks don't want to ADR that breath or what have you later?

MP: That's right. And I've got lots of tracks and lots of mics and the people to install them, and our boom op is a real go-getter; he's always planting mics and watching blocking so that everything doesn't end up being strictly lav mics.

How wide does this track count get?

MP: We get two booms and [maybe] eight lavs on occasion, but that would be huge on this show where dialogue can be sparse.

Well, that's not insignificant, because you are attempting to make sure it is all usable audio.

MP: That's right, I'm trying to create a mix that's good for the people on set to hear. You know, there are probably 20 people on set listening. The script supervisor needs to hear what the



Boom operator Louw Verwoerd, production sound mixer Michael Playfair CAS, and utility Valerie Siu shooting on Fortress Mountain

players are saying. I always edge toward getting the most audible dialogue I can get, [which] seems to be what most people want—the director, the script supervisor, and editorial. And using that as my rule of thumb, I get very few phone calls!

Marc, on the post side, where were you doing this show's mix? Was it all at Formosa?

MF: Yeah, the whole [mix and sound editorial] with Michael Benavente as the supervising sound editor. We mixed the whole thing at 959 Stage 6 for about four months, right Kevin?

KR: It went into February, so longer than that.

And you Randy, you are up in Canada too, right?

RW: Yes! We have a studio in Toronto, and it has two rooms that we use. One does feet and the other does props. It's actually two separate teams working together.

How long did you get to cue, shoot, and mix the Foley for the first episode?

RW: Well, we did the first two episodes together at the start [and] I think we had 10 days.

Was the mix done as two episodes at a time or was that specific to Foley?

KR: It was written as two episodes, but as they were going through it and putting the first cuts together, they realized the first one didn't end in a place that would launch you into the rest of the season; you wouldn't have even met Ellie yet. So, they fused the two together and we got extra time for that mix because it was simply so long.

MF: I think that was the third episode. You have to remember, we mixed the show and it had the old episode numbers on it, so one and two became one. So, we were very confused, and originally, what we mixed ended up being episode three with the Clickers. That became episode two. I think we mixed the whole thing out of order.

KR: I think we did three-four and then one and two...

MF: And we did eight last instead of nine!

KR: Yeah, it was all VFX dependent.

OOOF! Well, to me, that kind of bodes well for your opening episode because you get to figure out the language of the show ahead of time. You know the show is really moody and has a certain soundscape to it...

KR: On a normal show, I would agree, but on this show, the environments changed all the time, and the themes, and the dramatic pacing. Each episode was kinda its own stand-alone [show]. And what became the first episode got a lot of extra attention; it got the most time to be reviewed and had the most adjustments.



Foley mixer Randy Wilson CAS

For post, was there a sonic mandate from the producers when it came to the mix? Or did they say, "Here is the video game the show is based on, look at this."

KR: Well, we had a few early meetings with Craig Mazin and we kind of figured each other out and understood what he wanted. We found that realism was extremely important to him. The audience won't believe it if the execution of the suspension of disbelief wasn't perfect!

So, he wanted everything to sound very real and authentic. For example, when the Clickers are breathing, what makes them make that sound? The idea is the fungus inside of them is causing an asthma attack. That's the level of thought going into every detail. He would be asking us about specific sounds, asking if it should be there, asking why it was there. [That way], when fantastical things did happen, the audience would be primed by the realism to accept it, because so much of the groundwork had been laid.

MF: Following up on that, with Craig, he didn't give us a lot of specific questions from the get-go, and he didn't ask us to play the game, but I had! Of all the people on the crew, I was the only one who had played it. There were a few times where it was clear a shot was referencing the game and I would pass that along to Kevin. Like the opening shot and later when the



Re-recording mixer
Marc Fishman CAS



Utility Valerie Siu and boom operator Louw Verwoerd dealing with the elements on Fortress Mountain

ladder comes down for Ellie, that was very important as was the last five seconds of the last episode, because that piece of music is taken directly from the game.

To Kevin's point, we made the whole thing about being believable. So, anytime we came upon something in the FX build that was too over the top, we removed it, like gore or goosh that went too far.

RW: With most shows, we find that the coverage for the Foley is more than enough, but we were getting notes from the mix stage of next-level stuff. And it was like, "If they are asking for this, then there is a whole bunch of detail going in!" [For example], in the mall scenes, we were being asked for a glass crunch on one foot and something different on the next. Adding those little details to the mix is what makes it fun!

It certainly makes it sound more authentic! Now, back to that pickup truck driving across the field. I was like, "How did they do that?" I couldn't tell if it was ADR or not, it was so good. How did you deal with that scene?

MF: The only ADR in that scene is at the very end where Sarah turns around and the plane is coming. The rest is all production! Michael just did an amazing job and we had great tracks. Speaking of that, there is not a lot of ADR in show overall. That was a shot [the truck interior] that we probably went back to 10 times before the end of the mix just because the visual FX kept changing.

But, in terms of Michael's mics, they're giving us everything now, boom and lavs time-aligned so we can use everything together—and that's always my approach. I'll have a boom and two lavs and I'll do a three-finger thing and lean into it. And for this scene, it was just whatever worked; they wouldn't have given it to me if it were completely unusable anyway. Somehow, I think there was only one exterior in the whole show where there was a plane! We were really lucky!

For you Kevin, was the pickup scene just a festival of PFX? Meaning, how did you guys navigate that together? Because if that is all production, I would imagine there was a ton of sound going on throughout.

KR: You know, I don't know if it was an electric car, but there wasn't a lot of engine noise. And so, one of the mix techs had a truck and they went out and did a multi-channel recording of it, and that's the main part of the engine and muffler! Then for that part in the field, we had to get it really dirty [FX-wise] with cab shakes.

Yeah, it strikes me when I hear it—it's very realistic, but clean. Randy, I assume you shot a bunch for that?

RW: Yeah, we always do some car seat moves, and we have a track we like to call "essence of car" which is like the [mouths] "dugga-dugga-dugga-dugga" where you grab a car door and manipulate it. It kinda gives you that...

Chevy from 20 years ago falling apart vibe?

Yeah! And you can just fit it in around the dialogue; you don't want it to compete with anything else in there. You know, there is so much [going on] with the sound effects there, we just wanted to add a little layer.

I think the show, they way the cut it, has a really good rhythm between those super-busy action moments and complete calm. I would think to myself, "I can actually hear BG's!" That's not the usual. The show has a nice breathing to it, which is super nice and made it spookier!

KR: Yeah, and Craig's thing is dynamics. Not just in terms of level, but in terms of time, EQ, space, color, pacing—just like making changes.

MF: That was a problem, too, for Kevin, Randy, and the team. When the fungus hit and there was no longer a society, there were no more mechanical sounds in the world. Especially in episode three with the two guys in the house, you know, you couldn't have lawnmowers or car-by's.

I can see you editing stuff out of your BG's now!

MF: Right! And so, episode one was more interesting because it's the one time you are in a city with a big population; there are people, there's a lot of walla and all that. You don't really get that in most of the other episodes. This is why we needed Randy's work so much, because that was really the life of it, that's what made it come alive. You know, you couldn't have an outside car-by, and even the birds were very specific. We would have conversations about that. These guys did a lot of work!

It's fortunate to have that level of time to really craft something this well—and it sounds quite amazing! Congrats again on your CAS Award win!

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Re-Recording Mixer

Duncan McRae
Re-Recording Mixer

Tim Fraser
Production Sound Mixer

Score Recorded and Mixed by
Thor Fienberg

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MEET THE WINNERS

TELEVISION SERIES – HALF-HOUR THE BEAR

S2 Ep. 7 “Forks”

by CAS Associate Sam Casas

FX’s half-hour series *The Bear* is a fan and critic favorite, garnering 10 Emmys, a CAS Award, and an MPSE Golden Reel, among many others. The series follows a young, award-winning chef who, after a successful stint working in the fine-dining world, returns home to Chicago to help with his deceased brother’s sandwich shop.

I had the great privilege to speak with production sound mixer Scott D. Smith CAS, re-recording mixer Steve “Major” Giammaria CAS, ADR mixer Patrick Christensen, and Foley mixer Ryan Collison about their experiences working on this year’s Television Half-Hour CAS Award winner. Foley mixer Connor Nagy was unavailable due to scheduling challenges. Below are some highlights from our conversations.

Thank you all for joining me. I rewatched the “Forks” episode again last night and, wow, what a good episode! From a sound perspective and from a storytelling perspective, this episode felt like a huge reset and transformation. Chef Terry’s restaurant is such a huge contrast to Richie’s world. I loved the juxtaposition of the chaos of Richie’s old world and what he ultimately becomes. We get a glimpse of it when he’s talking to Carmen on the phone and Fak is electrocuting himself repeatedly. And to me, it felt like

Fak was embodying Richie in the sense that Richie seemed to be metaphorically repeatedly electrocuting himself in life. But by realizing that every detail—down to the forks—contribute to the overall experience of the restaurant, he realizes that, as a member of *The Bear*, his actions either contribute to or hinder their success as well.

STEVE “MAJOR” GIAMMARIA CAS: We’re all rooting for Richie. [It’s] such an interesting arc for that character. Everybody that went on their side quests this season have these interactions calling back to the restaurant. And it’s pure chaos still. It’s kind of a measured monotony of that day. He’s finding his purpose, and I think that routine, because it’s such a difference from his day-to-day, we tried with sound to present the measured intensity-feeling that pressure in a different way with different sounds. The expeditor’s¹ voice leading with a very measured calling it out. Instead of the clock and the chaos clattering driving the scene. It’s more her voice, and the music driving the scene. And then you go out in the dining room and it’s so calm. Everybody’s talking softly. And it’s a neat structure that they gave us, to be able to elevate these two environments, with sound.

This show in general is also metaphorical for how we work as sound mixers. There’s all this potential chaos, and I think we’re most successful when we act like the expo where. She’s able to manage all these moving pieces, almost like a juggler.

¹“A food expeditor, also called ‘expo’ for short, is a food service professional who is responsible for coordinating food orders and making sure they are delivered promptly and prepared accurately. Expeditors also play a vital role in keeping the kitchen organized and running smoothly.” –SquareUp.com

SG: Yeah. I mean, that analogy is not lost on me for sure. I sometimes feel like I'm an expo just plating all this stuff that other people have given me. The showrunners and the picture editors are giving me the recipe, all the editors, and Pat with ADR and the Foley guys, they're giving me the ingredients they're cooking at their stations. Then it comes to me and I gotta plate it all and make sure it's good. That is certainly a very good analogy for what we do!

Major, how do you approach your first pass on the mix?

SG: I want to come in with no preconceived notions, so I'll watch it once before the spotting session, and then we'll talk through it. The series' editors, Joanna Naugle and Adam Epstein, do such a great job of giving us that structure to build good sound on. And, of course, the creators of the show, if they're not thinking about it when they write it and shoot it, you just can't wedge it in after the fact. So, the scaffolding needs to be there for us to build on.

I hate that 58% of Americans use subtitles all the time. That really bothers me. So, less dynamics, more dialogue is my thing. I mix the dialogue first, get that in the pocket, then mix everything around it, deciding at each moment what the most important element is.

The effects department bring it full force and, sometimes I end up muting entire sections that they probably spent a day on, which I know kills them a little bit. But, when you have a pop song scoring a scene, and people yelling, and production noises, you have to make choices, and dialogue always wins. And then, on this show, usually music after that.



Re-recording mixer
Steve "Major" Giammaria CAS

They give us great moments for the sound effects to shine, too. Those flashbacks, quick cuts, crazy zoom pan whooshes, and all that stuff. It's temped well in terms of structure on a zoomed-out level, and then we can go in and elevate the moments as needed.

This show could be an overly dynamic mess if I let it. 70% of people still watch streaming stuff on a television in their living room, so I want it to play well there. I don't want people grabbing for the remote when there's a quiet scene, so that's always in the forefront of almost every decision I make.

Pat, from an ADR standpoint, I didn't hear anything sticking out—which I feel is always a good thing. Tell



L-R: ADR mixer Patrick Christensen, re-recording mixer Steve "Major" Giammaria CAS, award presenters Peter Devlin CAS and Cristo Fernández, Foley mixer Ryan Collison, Sound Lounge EP of Film + TV Rob Browning, production sound mixer Scott D. Smith CAS

me a bit about your experience working on this show, this episode, and what have been your challenges along with things you're proud of?

PAT CHRISTENSEN: As an ADR mixer, the proudest thing is when people aren't talking about the ADR, right? It kind of lurks in the background, is always there but you don't know it's there and that's what makes it work and makes it good. With this show specifically, they're very judicious with their ADR, so there's never a ton of it. They're never trying to extrapolate more dialogue or put in little moments trying to explain something a little bit more, which some episodic network stuff tends to do.

SG: Like trying and wedge in the main character's name a bunch of times?

PC: Yeah. But as it relates to this show, they're very judicious. When the actors come in, they're all pros. They come in, do their lines, and we never have to over-direct or push them this way or that, they're already usually on point. On this episode, for the dinner scene at Chef Terry's restaurant, we did sprinkle in some extra goodies. Especially when Richie serves the pizza dish. Just getting some added wow and a little zhuzh.

SG: Pat's stuff mixed in perfectly with what was already there. Pat's one of the top few people on the planet doing what he does. With *The Bear*, you can get ADR in intimate, quiet scenes, and then you get people screaming in the kitchen, and credit to the actors, obviously, but you can't fix improper intensity and projection—all those things that are not actually a technical thing of where the mic is. Pat is very good at making sure that performance is proper without overstepping, obviously [taking into account] the politics of the room and all of that.

PC: Luckily, even for the loop group, we had the show runners come in and listen to the group and make sure that they're talking proper lingo. If it's kitchen stuff, to have somebody who's got kitchen experience at a high level always helps. At dinner service at Chef Terry's restaurant, you're not likely to have two guys talking about their trucking routes, for example. So, tailoring the group and letting them know this is the type of clientele that you are, that always helps even though it's supposed to be in the background. Not to say truckers don't eat fine dining!

Some people like to process their ADR, some record very dry. When recording ADR, what's your method and philosophy?

PC: I like to see what Scott is doing [on the production side] and adjust from there. If there's any EQ, it's just to roll off the low end. Generally, no compression, but I don't mind recording with compression if it makes sense. ADR stages are kind of like big living rooms. And that's to accommodate directors or ADR editors who are used to being on the stage. But it's also to

neutralize, so it doesn't sound boxy like a booth. Having it be as dry as possible allows it to let the creativity happen, so you're not having to take anything off it.

Scott, in this particular episode, there's movement and sound of the forks being polished, and everything is all happening simultaneously with the dialogue.

SCOTT D. SMITH CAS: In that scene, a lot of it happens with the dialogue. So, in that case, all we can hope is that the forks don't overpower the dialogue. But they shoot a fair amount of insert shots. So, when we can, we get clean tracks, so they don't have to Foley everything for the insert shots. But it's usually catch-as-catch-can what happens a lot of times. There are vent fans running there, people talking, and all sorts of other stuff going on in the background. So, it's almost impossible to get clean effects on those shots.

The Foley in this show is kind of like the forks in this episode, not only literally, but metaphorically. They are the unsung hero. There's so much little tactile stuff and you guys did an excellent job of making everything feel so cohesive and not added in afterward. Tell me a little bit about your approach to that.

SG: A big credit goes to Ryan, Connor Nagy, and the Foley team at Alchemy. They spot it, shoot it, mix it, and send it back edited, so it just plugs in. On this show, there's a lot of PFX



ADR mixer
Patrick Christensen

baked in, and since they don't want to do a lot of ADR, a lot of that fork stuff is in there. They're so good at matching what's in production. I don't know if they went through a bunch of different fork props for this episode, but it matched enough where I didn't have to worry about that. That's what I've come to expect from them.

RYAN COLLISON: Thank you, Major. This episode really did come down to these ASMR kind of moments where it's so hyper-focused and detailed and minute. We can break glass and throw things across the room all day, but there is an element of detail to the series in general and especially to this episode. We really have these moments, big and small to explore. That's what we're trying to do. Make this show as great as the actors are trying to do and as powerful as the writing and the music and all these fantastic little moments. We want to be a part of the life of it.

Can you share some of the moments you're addressing with sound?

RC: Smoking really brings out a lot of the torture that Richie is going through, especially when he's speaking to his ex-wife. He's really dragging on that stupid thing so hard and with so much pain.

When Richie is cleaning his apartment, it's really a variety of sound that we're trying to provide with everything he's taking off the table. It's so meaningful what he's doing. The paper and the dishes, and this and that. I don't want to say it records itself, but really, they give us these opportunities to really deliver these sounds. It's a great way that we get to express ourselves and show ourselves what we can do.

When it comes to picking props, is the gut instinct for your Foley artists to grab true-to-life props, or do you try and use props that are bigger than the actual prop you see on screen?

RC: Sometimes. Before we get too creative with it, we have to do something that's going to make sense and that's going to sound right, because it's easy to pick it out when it doesn't sound right. Sometimes we grab the exact prop that they're using, and even though it's metal, it sounds like plastic, and I tell them it's not going to work. We're going to need something with a little more texture. The fork, as the episode is called, might have a little too much shing, or I want it to shing more. But it's really got to be appropriate for the moment more than anything. Grabbing an inventive and creative prop is good, but



L-R: Production sound mixer Scott D. Smith CAS, Sound Lounge EP of Film + TV Rob Browning, and re-recording mixer Steve "Major" Giammaria CAS

it's really got to be something that's going to make sense and add to the drama or the comedy or whatever it may be.

Scott, tell me about some of the obstacles you encounter working on this show.

SS: On any given day, we have a cast count that can go from a dozen people down to two people. So far, we've been lucky the dozen people have happened on stage, but there have been instances where we have a pretty big cast on location.

We have four different sound carts now. The largest cart, which is 16 channels, has fortunately only lived on stage. Then we have an intermediate cart that is 12 channels, so we can accommodate essentially 10 wireless and two boom channels on that. Then we have a mini-cart that is eight channels that is small enough that we can get it upstairs into the apartments. And we have another mini-cart that is small enough to take on an L train and other really tight locations. So, one of the biggest challenges is just figuring out what can we get away with in a given location without getting into something bigger than what we really need.

Is anything shot on set or is everything practical locations?

SS: It's a mixture of both. The Beef restaurant is down on a very busy street in Chicago. Occasionally, we've been able to get traffic control there, but usually it is what it is. There's a lot of construction going on, along with all the usual city noise. We just hope for the best. If they don't shoot it at rush hour, we consider ourselves lucky.

We were shooting on the L train just yesterday, which is always a fun experience. Fortunately, this time around, no dialogue on the L, but dialogue right at the bottom of a



L-R: Assistant sound editor Craig LoGiudice, ADR mixer Patrick Christensen, re-recording mixer Steve “Major” Giammaria CAS, dialogue editor Evan Benjamin, and Sound Lounge EP of Film + TV Rob Browning.

stairway that comes off to the street. So, L train noise combined with the city background and people walking down a clanging metal stairway, etc.

We do our best to get what we can, the cleanest dialogue. Everything else you can add later. We can control the announcements because we own the train that we’re traveling on. But there’s always stuff going on within the car that we can’t control. We can’t control the other trains that might be passing by at any given moment. I’ve got an endless library of L train effects that we’ve done over the years. So, getting L train FX is pretty simple. Getting the clean dialogue, not so easy.

Scott, is it more difficult recording on location versus on set, or is it just kind of like two different sort of sets of challenges?

SS: They’re separate challenges. The location situations aren’t too much more unusual than other locations that we’ve run into. It’s more a matter of shooting style and things we can’t control. HVAC, things like that, are the biggest factors. The locations, other than being difficult to work in space-wise and sound-wise, haven’t really been too terrible. They duplicated the front of The Bear restaurant on stage—including three beams that run along the ceiling that drive my boom operators crazy because they’re always in the way! So, shooting on stage doesn’t really give us any more latitude than what we were faced with on location, except a little bit quieter.

Do you think there’s anything that only you guys are aware of when this show plays?

RC: We try and figure out the formula for every single sound we make, to capture emotionally where the character is at. So, it’s important for us to know everything they’re trying to achieve in each moment on the show. We try and make sure

that we understand it long before we even throw it in to record.

SG: There’s a lot of rhythmic elements that just ratchet up the tension and you may not even know why. I mean, Season 1, the ticket printer, all the alarms, and egg timers. In this episode, it’s the measured cadence of both the music and the voice of the expeditor. Those rhythmic elements that really ratchet up the tension, I think, are kind of hidden things.

This episode specifically is about tension and release, but then this episode is also a release after the Christmas episode which preceded it. It’s like, “Okay, let’s sit in this.” It’s got its highs and lows and then Richie comes into his own

and becomes the “I wear suits now” version of himself. Everybody’s all there for Richie for sure because everyone can relate in their own way. Finding your people, finding your purpose. He set it up in the first episode in the third scene when he’s in the basement and says, “What am I doing here?” Credit to Chris Storer and the writers and the show runners, they set it up. I wasn’t expecting what that episode was going to be and, man, it hits it. It hits for sure.

Scott, is there anything that you would like to share with younger production sound mixers?

SS: Mostly, it’s just trying to get a handle on exactly what the scenes are going to be. We never know exactly what the shots are going to be. So, we mostly just try to cover as much as we can. We regularly have two boom operators, sometimes three. We’ll put plant mics in various places where we think dialogue may occur, although sometimes it’s just for off-stage dialogue or FX that might play within a scene. We’re just trying to get everything that we can in terms of raw material that we think they might be able to utilize in post. The biggest challenge on a location is finding who the people are that really understand the location you’re going into—like the person who knows where ventilation controls are—and making sure that they’re there on the day when problems arise.

Sounds like communication, flexibility, and planning. Those are the key takeaways there. Well, overall, I think this show is beloved. Personally, I put it up there with iconic shows like *The Sopranos*, where I think this is going to be a show that people will remember and talk about and think about for years. So, for you all to be a part of that, I’m very happy for you. So, congratulations on your well-deserved win.

SG: Thank you. That’s very nice. It’s been great and an honor to be able to work on it with the team. We’re just along for the ride, and it’s been quite special.

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MEET THE WINNERS

L-R: ADR mixer Brian Magrum CAS, Foley mixer Erika Koski CAS, re-recording mixer Tony Solis, scoring mixer Phil McGowan CAS, and production sound mixer Richard Bullock CAS with their CAS Awards.

NON-THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES OR LIMITED SERIES WEIRD: THE AL YANKOVIC STORY

by Adam Howell CAS

Growing up in a small town in Kentucky, I didn't have the advantage of hearing cool music in the morning on an eclectic radio station or at a hipster record shop with the audiophile purists. I had MTV. It introduced me to a whole new world with *Yo! MTV Raps*, *120 Minutes*, and *Headbangers Ball*. I can say with a straight face that it changed my life. Sandwiched between Sunset Strip glam rock and eye-opening gangster rap—for a brief moment of levity in the form of a Michael Jackson parody—was Weird Al who, hilariously, tells my friends and I to “Eat It.”

My journey with MTV came full circle when I got my first real sound gig as a production mixer there in the early 2000's. And now, as a CAS member who occasionally still rocks an MTV T-shirt, I'm happy to present to you the sound winning team in the Non-Theatrical Motion Pictures or Limited Series category for *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story*, production sound mixer Richard Bullock CAS, re-recording mixer Tony Solis, scoring mixer Phil McGowan CAS, ADR mixer Brian Magrum CAS, and Foley mixer Erika Koski CAS. Here's part of my correspondence with Richard, Tony, Brian, and Phil. (Erika was unavailable due to scheduling challenges.)

How'd you get a seat at Weird Al's unconventional table?

TONY SOLIS: It was a very serendipitous connection that got

me on this project. I was mixing the movie *Monsters of California* for Tom DeLonge and the dialogue editor on that movie, Anthony Vanchure, was on the stage most of the days. We became fast friends and on one of the days of the mix, he just casually mentioned that he might do sound supervision for this crazy movie coming soon about Weird Al, starring Daniel Radcliffe. I instantly turned around and said, “I am a huge Weird Al fan! It would be insane if I could eventually work on that movie!” Fast-forward a couple of months and, while on a golf outing with Anthony, he pitched me the gig and I instantly said yes.

RICHARD BULLOCK CAS: I was invited to join the Roku production by UPM Jason Brown, who I had worked with in the past.

BRIAN MAGRUM CAS: I saw on my schedule that I had a hold for *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story* and I kind of freaked out! One of my best friends introduced me to Weird Al in the late '80s and we listened to his music constantly and watched *UHF* over and over. When the schedule confirmed, I couldn't have been more excited.

PHIL MCGOWAN CAS: I mix just about everything for composers Zach Robinson and Leo Birenberg, so this was another gig that year that they hired me on. We also recently have worked together on *Cobra Kai* and *Obliterated*, so it was fun to have a feature to mix for them.

What was your pre-production schedule?

RB: I met director Eric Appel and EP Zac Halley during music and dance rehearsal in prep. I had just finished work in Texas on *1883* for Paramount+ the week before and immediately

went onto *The Color Purple* for WB in Georgia the week after we completed *Weird*, so I just had enough time to do the job.

BM: The whole score mix was only three days, so it was pretty quick. Zach and Leo have their assistants prep pre-lays for me ahead of time and, for this project, they recorded with the Budapest Session Orchestra. So, once those sessions were completed, I received download links for the orchestra Pro Tools sessions from Budapest.

TS: After that initial conversation with Anthony, I was sent a rough cut of the movie so that I could decide if I truly wanted to do it. Within 10 minutes, I knew I had to be part of this film! It was *that* special, even from a very rough cut. I saw the cut a few times and took some notes, mostly about big music moments and big sound effects moments. There were a few emails about music things but, for the most part, the final mix was where everything truly happened for me.

Can you tell us a bit about the production and capturing sound on location?

TS: I could tell that there was a lot of challenges during this shoot. Richard absolutely nailed [the production mixing]. The dialogue was clean no matter how complex the scene. I had so much great stuff to work with during the mix that it made it an absolute dream to come to the stage every day.

RB: I am a huge Weird Al fan, so I was incredibly honored to be a part of the project. Eric Appel and Al had a clear vision for the film, and we had all of 18 days to shoot it, so every day was very busy with a pretty high page count and often lots of music playback. Al had re-recorded all the songs for the film and provided me with the Pro Tools sessions. He was on set every day and it was great to get to know him—as nice a person as you’ll ever meet. My boom operator Tanya Pee and my utility sound technician, Kelly Lewis, both did an amazing job of staying on top of the constantly changing demands and the, often, large cast counts.

How complex were the re-recording and ADR sessions?

TS: I knew from before the final mix that this was going to be a solo mix. This meant all dialogue, music, and effects were going to go through me. It’s the main reason I took such detailed notes from the rough cut. I needed to put myself in the mindset of how to approach such complex scenes and effectively time manage myself to hit our delivery deadline. I had no pre-dubs, so everything would have to be done on the final mix stage. I also only had six days to mix the entire movie, not including a day for final notes and deliverables. Thankfully, my mix tech William Harp was ready with an amazing organization ethic that helped everything run so smooth.

I mixed the movie in Atmos, with my session split up into detailed folders, so I could keep track of all the dense sound effects and music. It was a rather complex mix as well, since it

included a lot of live performances that needed to feel like they were in the space that they were being performed in. That was my main direction from both Eric Appel and Al Yankovic from the very beginning. They didn’t want the performances to feel like a music video. I heavily relied on multiband compression, EQ, and reverbs for the entire mix to balance the crazy amount of music and effects at any given time.

BM: For the space at Formosa on Isabel Street in Burbank, the Schoeps CMC 541 and Sanken COS-11 matched production the best. Unfortunately, Al didn’t have any ADR since he was just in that single scene in the office. I was excited for Daniel Radcliffe to come in and be able to record ADR with him. He came in and was very nice and very professional, willing to give the director whatever he wanted. I would say the most memorable session was when Tom Lennon came in and they wanted some options for when he was beat up by Al’s dad for trying to sell him an accordion. We did a few takes with him writhing and moaning and it wasn’t sounding quite right since there’s more pressure on your throat and neck when you’re laying down, so I re-miked him laying down! We also gave Tom water for him to put in his mouth to simulate choking on his own blood so the editors could grab any bits and pieces they wanted to enhance the scene.

TS: Thankfully, since the production audio was so good, we didn’t need much ADR in the movie to fix anything. We recorded to add off-screen lines, some efforts for the fight scenes, and random lines here and there to keep things smooth. Brian Magrum ran an incredibly tight ship and provided me with pristine ADR that was incredibly easy to match to production.





L-R: Scoring mixer Phil McGowan CAS, re-recording mixer Tony Solis, and ADR mixer Brian Magrum CAS at the Emmys.

Can you share some insight on the Foley process?

TS: Erika Koski and the team at Reel Foley Sound are absolute professionals that understand what it is to do good Foley. What they provided for *Weird* was filled with rich textures that really brought so many scenes to a higher level.

Where did you mix and what formats were delivered?

PM: For this project, I mixed the score in 7.1, down to nine stems that were sent to Tony Solis. There was 52 minutes of music to mix across 45 cues, so it was a decent amount to mix in just three days, but fortunately, there was a decent amount of consistency from cue to cue. I do all my mixing at my personal studio that is in a guest house behind the house my wife and I rent in Culver City.

The first day was just organizing assets, combining the pre-lay audio from the composers with the orchestra sessions from Budapest, in addition to some soloist overdubs that were done in each musician's personal studio. I then made what I call a "Cue Triage" list where I make three lists, Small, Medium, and Big, so I know which cues to tackle first. I prefer to get all the biggest, most complicated cues out of the way first for two reasons. Reason #1 is so that I establish a tone and sound for the majority of elements early on, which is usually achieved by mixing all the big cues as they usually feature most of the individual elements that will show up in other parts of the score. Reason #2 is pure stress management! I prefer knowing that once I get most or all of the complicated difficult cues done, the rest of the mix should get easier as I go along. Then, when I'm at the end, I can enjoy mixing the smaller simpler cues knowing the bulk of the task has been completed.

TS: Phil McGowan is probably the best scoring mixer in Los Angeles, if not the entire country—and probably even on the planet. What he was able to do with such an incredibly dense and wide score made my job that much easier once I had to incorporate the score into very dense scenes. Be it action or a complex LSD trip scene, the way he masterfully prepared/mixed the score stems allowed me to balance everything together without losing the power and richness of the amazing

score by Leo Birenberg and Zach Robinson. I also had the pleasure to receive stems from Al Yankovic for the re-records he did of some of his classic hits. Having these stems allowed me to mix his music in full Dolby Atmos, which truly elevated the feel of the movie.

How many times will you admit to having seen the movie?

PM: Given the short mix time, I didn't initially get to watch the film down and I was jumping around from scene to scene and reel to reel, so my first experience of the film was only the scenes with score, totally out of order. This is pretty typical as I often don't have time to screen the films I mix, given that our schedules are only getting shorter and shorter these days. I decided to wait until Tony had finished the final mix of the film before I watched the whole thing down. The first time I saw it was at a screening and Q&A that Zach and Leo put on in Westwood and, man, was this a fun one to watch! I've watched the film several times after, and I always enjoy it. I know I speak for everyone on the team that we are all very proud of this one on so many levels.

TS: Honestly, this was a movie that I knew I had to be a part of. Everyone on the crew took this to be a passion project and it showed during the whole process. We were all incredibly proud of what we helped create with Al. I have seen the movie more times than I would like to mention, be it with audiences all over the place or at home. This one is going to stick with me for life.

What does it mean to you to win the CAS Award?

RB: When it comes to winning the CAS Award, I have to say that I was a little surprised as I thought it would most likely go to *Daisy Jones & the Six*, as they had won the Emmy. But in the weeks leading up to the CAS Awards, I heard from many members who said they had voted for *Weird*, and I remember saying to my wife, "You know, we might win this!" It was an absolute thrill when they called our names for the award. It's funny as we made our way up to the stage, my Apple watch started vibrating, I had a call coming in. I looked around the room as I walked between the tables thinking, "OK, which one of you clowns is calling me!?" I was laughing as I got up on stage and turned around to look at the audience. It was such an amazing feeling to see all the faces of people who I've known for so many years. It really was a huge honor.

TS: I was incredibly surprised that we won. My fellow nominees represented the most talented people in our field, and to be included among them was honor enough. To then actually win communicated to me that the people that I look up to and respect and see as heroes view me as a peer, and I can't think of a greater honor than that. I can't thank CAS, Formosa, Eric, Al, and my whole crew enough for this incredible opportunity and achievement.

BM: I wasn't really surprised by the win since the type of people that get into our portion of the film industry are the same type of people that probably grew up listening to Weird Al's music and would be motivated to vote for this completely accurate documentary. I was nervous that *Daisy Jones & the Six* would win since they took home the Emmy, but when they called our names, we knew we had worked on something special.

PM: We were absolutely shocked that we won the CAS Award! We were up for the Emmy against nearly the same competing projects, and we lost that one, so we were kind of thinking that given the big overlap between the TV Academy Sound Branch voters and CAS voters that it would go the same way, but alas, we won this one!

My wife actually has a video of me at the ceremony mouthing the Emmy-winning project as they were announcing us and, boy, was that a fun surprise!

What's your main take away from working on this film?

RB: Every day on *Weird* was a ton of fun, but my favorite days were probably the two days we filmed all the concert scenes at the Pasadena Civic Center; big productions with dancers and music playback. There was often dialogue at points during the songs, so we would use earwigs or thumpers. Daniel Radcliffe did an amazing job lip syncing the songs and even learned to play the accordion quite well. And such a nice person too, a real friend of the crew.

PM: This was overall a pretty straightforward mix. The music was largely very old school, big, bright, wet, orchestral score, harkening back to the classic '90s dramatic scores that Zach, Leo, and myself grew up loving. So, I can't really think of any lessons, per say, other than perhaps trying to get a bit more



Re-recording mixer Tony Solis (2nd from left) with his sound team and Weird Al (on the screen)

time in the future! The last day was a lot of fun after addressing all of Zach and Leo's notes and knowing that we knocked out a whole feature score mix in three days—which was pretty satisfying. Beyond that, both the Emmy's and CAS Awards were a lot of fun. Zach and Leo won the Emmy for Best Score and the film won Best TV Movie, so even though the mixing team didn't take home a statue, we were all ecstatic it got so much love.

TS: TIME MANAGEMENT! The major takeaway from this mix was the ability for all of us to come together on an incredibly condensed schedule and work to make something we would all be proud of without getting burnt out. I set up hourly goals every day that we would stick to and by the final playback, we had 95% of the soundtrack we wanted to have. All we needed was small tweaks. I was so proud of all of us for actually being able to do this with such a small, but well-oiled crew. I also solidified my understanding of "zooming out" and looking at the big picture. I couldn't hyper-obsess about every single sound or moment as a solo mixer. I had to make choices on the spot and stick with them without looking back. To be able to work directly with Weird Al Yankovic on a movie about his "life" and his music made every single day I worked feel like a dream. Even after the mix was done, and as I got to know Al more away from the work made this one of the most rewarding projects I have ever had the pleasure of doing. I can't thank Al enough for trusting me with his story and music. It's even more insane to me that I can now call him a friend.



Phil McGowan's studio

Weird Al is a genius—an unusual artist amongst a sea of unusually talented characters. But he's one of a kind. When he says in the film, "You're all just a bunch of normals. I am the weird one!" it's not just a humble brag. It's an honest declaration and I, with all the other wannabe "normal," declare Al the King of Weird. Long live the king!



MEET THE WINNERS

TELEVISION NON-FICTION, VARIETY OR MUSIC – SERIES OR SPECIALS

100 FOOT WAVE

S2 EP. 5 “Lost at Sea”

by Kurt Kassulke CAS

This year’s winner in the Television Non-Fiction, Variety or Music - Series or Specials category is Season 2, Episode 5 of *100 Foot Wave* for Max. IMDb describes the series as following “the decade-long odyssey of big-wave pioneer Garrett McNamara who, after visiting a small fishing village in Portugal, helped push the sport beyond the realm of his imagination.” Re-recording mixer Keith Hodne, who took home the award for his work, has been having a great run in New York mixing a series of fantastic non-fiction shows ranging from *The Last Dance* and *OJ: Made in America* to *Sr., High Score*, and *Wham!* It was a pleasure to sit down with him and discuss his process working with *Wave*’s director/EP, Chris Smith, and how Keith and his hardworking team put together such a compelling track for *100 Foot Wave*.

I was looking at your list of recent shows, and I’ve got to say, great stuff!

We’ve had a really nice run, we’ve been cranking. I say “we” because it takes a team. I’ve been more of a one-man band in New York than some projects in California, or some of the bigger New York productions where you’ll have a little bit of a team. But for *100 Foot Wave*, I had more of a team behind me, because I tried to do Season 1, Episode 1, totally by myself and I realize that, while I did it, it was going to be a nightmare to try that approach moving forward. I created the whole bed, the

soundscape, and what I felt was correct. The sound editors have tweaked it and we’ve come a long way since Episode 1, but the core of our sound was established then. As we went from Season 1 to Season 2, we needed more people, more hands on deck.

Now you have Eric Di Stefano as sound designer, Max Holland as sound editor/dialogue editor, Eli Akselrod as sound effects editor, and Mika Anami and Kevin Senzaki as sound designers, right?

We have a few people, everybody working super hard to get to where we’re at. And I still think we could use more time to polish even more!

I’m familiar with that situation! I’ll get to the end of a two-day mix, and there are usually a few scenes where you look back and realize you could have had even more fun with them if you just had more time! How many days do you get to mix?

It’s very quick. We try to do five days of sound edit. And we have such passion for it, sometimes we’ll put in some extra work. You feel like you did something so amazing that it deserves something. So, after Season 1 when we were not lucky enough to get nominated for anything, it made us all work harder for Season 2. With five days of unsupervised mix, clients’ notes, and outputs and deliverables, it takes a lot of people working a little bit harder than that, but that’s what we aim for every episode.

Your final dialogue track is, for the most part, very clean, and I’m sure the source material is often not.

That is Max Holland. I’ll give Max all the credit for the dialogue edit. We’ve been working together, along with Eric, on and off

for quite a while. Max and I have an untold thing. He knows what he's doing, I know what I'm getting, we know what we like, and we know what we like for the client.

I will say, Chris Smith is a genius. I like working with him a lot, and we're extremely lucky to be working with him. Chris does many different things, he's director, EP, show runner, even some editorial. You can't get anything past him, he knows what he likes, he knows what he wants. But with that, he gives you the ability to spread your wings within those boundaries. A bunch of the projects I've worked have been with him, *Sr.*, *100 Foot Wave*, *Bad Vegan*, *Branson*, and many more. He's a super talented, creative storyteller.

But there are a ton of people on *100 Foot Wave* who are super passionate. People in Nazaré, Portugal, who are so passionate, they think they own the show! It's wild and amazing to meet the cinematographer, everybody on the team has that passion, and that's why I think the show is so successful. It's because there are so many passionate people who are giving their heart and soul to this project.

It's been shooting for a long time. Some have even been on it for decades, right?

Totally. Season 1, most, if not all, of it was filmed before Chris Smith and the *100 Foot Wave* production was involved. So, each season has a little bit different way of telling the story, which I think is pretty interesting. I'm curious to see what Season 3 is going to be. I know it will evolve even more.

Going back to the crew, Max Holland is amazing, he cleans up the dialogue, and did an amazing job. And the rest of our team, our sound designers and sound editors each have their own little sound directive, but everyone is going by their gut. Mika Anami and Kevin Sensaki, who work together, they're designing some more esoteric, boomy, and animal elements to add to the waves, not organic elements. I also put both teams in charge of the wave runners because that's such a hard part of it.

To make sure they're lively and varied, and not just a steady engine sound?

Totally. For example, on Season 1, we worked mainly with sound effects libraries. You find a core of that sound that you like, and you have maybe six effects that are the core for something like the wave runner. For Season 2, we started using more Krotos and Krotos plugins. When I talk about *100 Foot Wave* as the mixer and supervising sound editor, I talk about both the creation of the sounds and the mixing of the sounds. To me, when I'm on a show like *P-Valley* in a two-man mix, I'm focusing on the mix. For something like *100 Foot Wave*, I'm focusing on what I want the sound to be. As a designer, I know what I want the sound to be in my head, and as a mixer, I try to EQ or shape it to be the way that I want it. If it's not that, then we have to pull more sounds, but it's all one and the same

to me to craft the sound. It's funny, I just stopped myself from talking about editing, because we're focusing on mixing. But it's an interesting fine blend on my documentary work between my mixing and editorial roles.

The job of a mixer now is a dance between working with what you have in front of you and what you think you might need to be put in front of you to tell the story most effectively. I feel lucky to be working on shows where you can turnaround and say to your supervising sound editor, "In this scene, we could use a few more of these cars or alarms or design elements." Clearly, you're wearing both of those hats during the day. So, let's highlight both of those activities because you can't craft a great mix without a great edit, and you don't realize the best of a great edit without some great mixing to bring it forward.

I just want to hear colors in a scene. The color of that one is light and bright, the color of this one is dark and moody. How do we create that? Is it with EQ, is it with plugins that are going to process and mangle the sounds, or do we need to find a different sound and then process and mangle that sound?

I appreciate that you have a lot of sonic material for your story that could just be a wall of white noise, but you edited and mixed the impacts and washes and engines to trade off with the Philip Glass music and



Re-recording mixer
Keith Hodne

dialogue to give the story impact while keeping the soundtrack interesting, but not exhausting.

When I first saw this project, I was equally excited and scared. Because when it came to us, it was really just talking head interviews, and not many of the other sound they picked up were useable. I know why the waves were distorted, I mean, those waves were really intense and just loud. But then I heard Philip Glass, and I saw these waves and I saw the imagery, the cinematography, and I thought this is going to be an epic project, and I'm going to be very busy with the team because it's not like you can type in "Super Large Wave" and get something that sonically matches a 100-foot wave! But not only that, you have so many waves hitting you at so many times, it becomes about the color of the waves, not necessarily just finding one perfect wave sound.

I'm really glad you noticed that because Chris is really big on perspective changes, so there would be a ton of work on that in the mix. Like EQ'ing things a certain way to get those perspective changes and really, I have to say, just mangling the audio that we had there. I really like to use clip EQ and gain in Pro Tools, it's really quick. I process the clips themselves so when we're copying and pasting elements the EQ gets carried along and I don't have to worry about the automation on plugins not following. I can just grab a Pultec, turn a knob, and get that sound I like. Sometimes, it will even distort/clip the audio, but it will be the right sound for the moment. It's purposeful. It matches our dialogue. It fits the scene.

If it tells the story, it's right.

It's been a ton of work, but it's been really fun. That's what I wish for everyone who's doing this in this industry. I'm not necessarily a surfer, but now I've tried to surf—it's not easy! I'm a listener. My wife and I would travel, and once I knew this job was coming, every time I was at a beach, I would just listen. Even before, I would always listen at beaches, but now I would listen harder. I listened to how big a wave was, and how it would sound when it hit certain surfaces, so we tried to recreate that at some level, with more sonic character in it as well.

Did you do any original recording for it or pull from libraries and apply processing?

We all did a fair amount of recording, for sure. I spent a couple nights before Season 1 out at Rockaway Beach, which is Queens, NY, depending on where you're standing on the beach. It's probably the biggest waves you can find around here. I went during the middle of the day and set up my little Zoom Ambisonics H3 recorder. However, it wasn't exactly giving me the character that I wanted. So, then I went out again at night, thinking at night, I might get the character I wanted. Brought home the recordings, fell short again. I went out a third time before a storm, and that was

when I got some heavier, thicker sounds that were really nice. Ironically, that night there was a casino that was by the beach. I went to the casino, played slots, and even won \$5,000! In some weird way, the world was telling me this was the night to be here recording these waves! With the storm, it was moody, it was hard, it was heavy. Throw that ambience recorder in between and behind certain things. Threw it in a garbage can. Just to get different sounds.

You were doing your whole Ben Burtt thing—I like it!

I love doing what I do, and the studios that I work at have been able to give me the ability to spread my wings a little bit, spend a little extra time on things. I've worked on a lot of different things, and I love documentary work. I like to see the world around me.

I'm 43. I used to mix *A&E Biography*. They were cutting edge, and I was honored as hell to work on them at the time, but they were very bare bones. I'm really proud to say I've worked on documentaries for years. Now, documentary is a crazy medium of its own that has bells and whistles, and we tried to add all those bells and whistles throughout the years, but of course, the story is the most important thing. *100 Foot Wave* is that really lucky blend of being able to add a ton of sounds and make it stylized and super-interesting but also staying within the realm of doc work by making it as real as possible. So, it's

Keith's room at Formosa Group New York



fun, and I've been lucky enough to work on some really cool ones.

How did you work your way up to this spot?

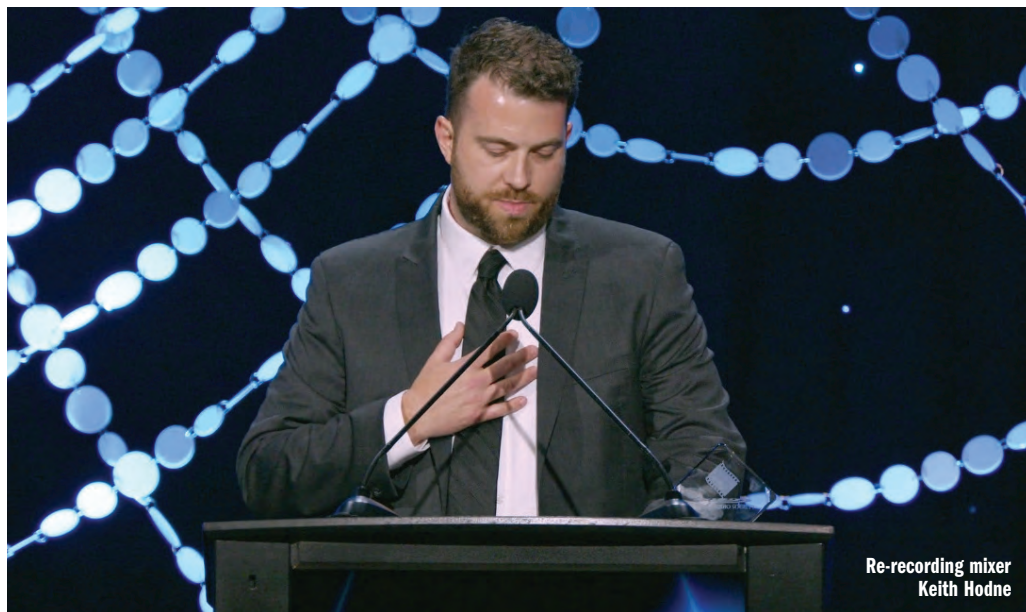
Well, I DJ'd throughout high school and college—even when it was probably illegal for me to be DJ'ing as a student in bars, my parents were not happy about it! Then, I worked at some of the big classic clubs in New York like Tunnel, Sound Factory, Limelight. They've all since closed, but I learned that I loved music and loved mixing, even just those two records. I interned at Capitol Records. It was an interesting situation, but I realized I didn't

really want to be sitting around all day for 12, 15 hours waiting for an artist to come in and record them at 3 a.m., then work another 12 hours. Ironically enough, I'm still putting in the hours, but just on my own.

So, I shifted from music to sound for picture. I started doing a lot of commercials. I started recording on a lot of Disney projects. I worked at a studio in New York that had the Disney account. So, every actor in New York, I was recording them, doing a lot of ADR. I learned a lot about doing that. I learned a lot about how to be with people in the room, or how not to be with people in the room. I've gotten into a lot of interesting conversations with cool people. I've gotten into a lot of heated conversations with a lot of cool people. Then I started mixing. I started mixing a show called *The First 48*, which is a show that's still on A&E. I started doing a lot of reality TV and learned a lot from reality TV such as how to do things quickly, how to get it somewhat right, how to not second-guess yourself, how to pick and choose what sounds good in the moment, and how to not be hung up on anything and just keep moving forward. How to hit the goal that you need to hit in 2½ days for a 45-minute show when you are sound designing and mixing it, which is crazy.

I love that you've been through that "mill." Some people could look at that and assume you're going to get used to doing it fast and, maybe, choosing places where you can "cut corners." But *100 Foot Wave* is not cutting corners. You still are always about telling the story. You always work to find the sounds that will make the story better.

Totally. I was in a room filled with mixers at the CAS Awards and they are people I have only seen on social media or in print, and they are working on things I can only dream of working on. And these people are talented as all hell, and I think everybody has their own path. My path was harder,



faster, quicker, but I think it got me to an end goal where I can work on a scripted union show, and I can work through it pretty quick with the time that I have, and all the material is pretty clean. Compare that to documentary and reality where I'm used to processing everything once, twice, even three times.

Even on scripted, it's not always clean.

The grass is not always greener, I hear you. When I was doing reality TV, I said to myself that I would love to work on a cooking channel show, that seems awesome. And then I finally started working on a cooking channel show, and there were no sounds, and you had no time. So yeah, the grass is not always greener, I agree.

My path taught me a lot, so when I do get these shows where I have to go quick, I know where to focus my attention, I know what needs to be touched and what doesn't. Now, I'm lucky enough to be able to pick and choose who works on what. I get a job in, and I try to hire the best people for the job, because I think if you're passionate about something, then you'll do a better job on it.

I have a group of amazingly talented workers who I like to work with, and if, for instance, there's someone in that group who likes surfing more than the others, I'll try to get that person. Or for a video game documentary like *High Score*, I'll try to get someone who's as passionate about video games as I am.

That extra insight can help elevate the realism of a project. Having those relationships—whether with colleagues or clients—can also result in better outcomes and elevated opportunities.

In New York, where I've been living and working my whole life, there are a lot of commercials, a lot of promo work, a lot of



ads. We certainly have some big films and some Hollywood-style studio films, but a large percentage of it is indie films, documentary, nonfiction, reality TV. So, I've worked at a bunch of studios where they're going to keep taking these little springboard projects, and keep trying to get bigger and better work, and not go back. So, from *The First 48*, we landed *OJ: Made in America* with ESPN. I had been doing other ESPN documentaries, but this one was just "the one." Ezra Edelman,

the director, was incredibly talented, and wove that story together so well, and that led to a bunch of other projects. Which then led to *High Score*, and *The Last Dance*, the Michael Jordan documentary which we did during the pandemic. These were the bigger springboards that kept us going. And *The Last Dance* led to *100 Foot Wave*, and that led to working with Chris Smith, which led to working on a bunch of the great projects that you mentioned earlier.



One time, we were mixing an episode of *100 Foot Wave*, and Chris Smith passed on an observation I will never forget. I was busy scrolling furiously through effect after effect, paging up and paging down through my Pro Tools session searching for a wave sound effect—not too heavy, not too light. And this mix is the biggest session, most sound effects, most mixing of any job I'd ever done. It was then that Chris said to me, "I've got to say, this is amazing. I'm so proud of the audio that we've done, I'm proud of the sounds, I'm proud of what we've created, what we've sculpted, what we've given moments for, but you're not going to be recognized for anything. People are just going to think that this is real. Like this is what we picked up." Because the *reality* was our focus. How do we saturate things, how do we EQ things, how do we give it some bit-depth reduction to make it sound like it was actually recorded on location and settled in there.

Well, I think you succeeded at that fundamental truth of sound—when it's really working, the soundtrack should feel like it was always a natural part of the scene and story. It's been a pleasure chatting, and I'm so happy that your excellent work has been recognized and rewarded by the CAS. Congratulations!

Thanks so much, Kurt!

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MEET THE WINNERS

CAS STUDENT RECOGNITION AWARD WINNER

YUSHU “DORIS” SHEN

by Peter Kelsey CAS

It was another stellar year for the CAS Student Recognition Award (SRA). This is the tenth year it has been presented and I cannot help but marvel at the quality of the submissions—which leads me to believe that sound for picture is in good hands for the future. We had applications from a diverse group of students, and it is encouraging to see that many were from women who seem to be embracing this profession more and more. This year’s recipient was Yushu “Doris” Shen from the University of Southern California.

Aura Sound & Color sponsored the award, and prizes were given in the amounts of \$5,000 to the winner and \$1,000 to each of the other finalists. New this year was the presentation of a physical CAS Award to the winner, similar to those given out in the other categories. Additionally, all finalists received a valuable collection of software and other gifts from our very generous sponsors, including Acon Digital, Apple, Avid, Ginger Audio, Halter Technical, iZotope Inc., K-Tek, Krotos Audio, Lectrosonics Inc., McDSP, Sound Particles, ShotDeck, Todd-AO/Absentia DX, and Zaxcom. As a member of the SRA Committee and on behalf of the CAS, I would like to thank all the CAS members who gave up their time to judge the applications and the finalists’ videos.

So that our membership can get to know our most recent SRA winner, I sent some questions to Doris.

What brought you into sound and specifically sound for film?

My early childhood experience singing and performing for the Beijing Philharmonic Choir and around the world is what first sparked and ignited my interest in capturing sound and creating sounds of various types, whether in the studio or on location recording production. My curiosity with the technical craft behind the art of storytelling is what ultimately pushed me to pursue an education in sound design and sound recording. Sound design and recording then became my primary motivators for continuing to the next stage of my education as an audio engineer. This ability to create new sounds and relate them to stories and emotions connects with my early background experience as a musician and young artist. Ultimately, the power to affect an audience, whether through music or sound design, is where I seek to explore and expand my skill set and craftsmanship.

What’s your favorite part of the sound for film process?

The beginning. When the image has no emotion to it yet, and the vacuum of sound acts as a blank canvas for me to create and fill with color. The beginning is where the artists collaborate on the idea, the intended effect, and the end result. It can go anywhere at that junction point, and the focus being shifted back to the artistry excites the technical side of my creative process as a sound designer. I then get to exercise my technical skill set as it then becomes the translation tool that I use to give these ideas life on the screen. When the first sounds begin to blend and stick, watching the image begin to

speaking fills me with the spirit of the story's magic and the power behind its creation.

What does the CAS Award mean to you and what will you do with the money?

The CAS Award has given me an incredible feeling of support for the development of my skills as an artist. Being recognized by such an accomplished panel has further inspired me to continue with my adventures into the film sound arena. I will use the money to finance some of the beginnings of the studio production services that I hope to offer, and to further help me reach the next stage of my audio career. Purchasing hardware equipment like a professional mixing controller and working toward establishing my studio are where I see the aid from the CAS being applied. I aspire to mix films and sound design for games as well, so the equipment provided as part of the award is greatly appreciated and will serve me in also furthering these aspirations that I believe my education and experience has prepared me for.

Having won this award, do you have any advice for someone who would like to apply for the Student Recognition Award?

Focus on an interest and then pursue it every day. Filling your day with the thing that excited you enough to begin down this artistic and technical journey is what will lead you to success in your education and career. Everyday practicing and learning how to effectively execute your artistic ideas and to develop some technical problem-solving techniques will make us all invaluable craftsmen in our fields. I have been fortunate to learn from some of the very best in the industry and have been given some invaluable knowledge from their experiences navigating through the industry. Their mentorship has made me believe that staying interested in your passion and remaining always a student will make someone a very competitive visionary.

Do you have any advice for someone starting out in the sound for picture business?

Learning the technical language will help immensely in the long run, both with problem-solving and with communicating ideas. Being able to develop the ability to problem solve technical issues during production and in the studio is invaluable. Sound is often misunderstood and misrepresented, but it is crucial to the quality of your film. It is an element of the film and story that helps the audience

connect with the visual. Often, the manipulation of emotions by a story is led by the significance and impact of the overall sound. I believe that building on fundamentals and practicing good technique will lead to finer results.

Who have been the people that have influenced you the most and what did you receive from them?

My mentors and professors at the USC School of Cinematic Arts have really helped me to zoom in on my passion for sound design, sound recording, and visual storytelling. My early childhood experience singing across Beijing is what ultimately blossomed into this deep interest in audio engineering and sound mixing. The support from my family has allowed me to explore these creative interests and I have been fortunate to now know which of these paths I would like to explore with my education and for my career. I am thankful to be able to develop my career path around my creative interest.

What's your next step?

I will be completing my graduate studies with the USC School of Cinematic Arts soon. I then hope to apply my education and pursue studio employment experiences in the field of sound design and audio mixing while I strategically develop plans for the establishment of my own studio service and beyond. I hope to become an audio professional working on films and sound.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Winning the CAS Student Recognition Award is a big honor! Being nominated was already a recognition that I was not expecting; but winning was well beyond anything I could have imagined. The acknowledgment by this panel of accomplished professionals highly encourages me to continue working diligently and striving past challenges on toward my creative goals.



This year's SRA nominees (L-R) Allison Blum, Eunseo "Bella" So, SRA chair Sherry Klein CAS, Yushu "Dorris" Shen, Shubhi Sahni, and William Tate.

AI: Is the Rise of the Machines Finally Here?

by Karol Urban CAS MPSE

Not long ago, a friend shared a thought-provoking post. It told of how he had optimistically envisioned a future where technology liberated us from mundane manual labor, allowing us to focus on uniquely human creative functions and complex philosophical problem-solving. However, if the news was to be believed, reality was steering in another direction due to AI.

AI is simply technology that emulates human decision-making with machines and computers. Combining tech such as sensors, geolocation, robotics, etcetera, AI performs tasks that would otherwise require human intervention. Digital assistants and schedulers, GPS guidance, and self-driving modes in newer vehicles are examples of AI in our daily lives.

AI is made possible by combining machine learning and deep learning, which allow “decisions” after “learning” from available data. The search data, decision-making skills, and success of those decisions ultimately allow these tools to make more accurate and useful decisions over time. AI, like humans, has the potential to improve itself over time with repetitive use.

To explain it even further, UC Berkley defines machine learning, a type of computing science focused on data and algorithms that imitate how humans learn, into three main parts: decision process, error function, and model optimization. Machine learning views data with weighted preferences, compares its generated answer to an example determined as satisfactory, and then modifies its answer or ‘model’ until a threshold of satisfaction parameters is achieved.

Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, uses neural networks to refine this process, elevating the complexity of the result. Similar to the human brain, neural networks contain nodes. Nodes contain an input layer, several secondary or hidden layers, and an output layer. If the output of an individual node is found to be acceptable, it is passed to the next layer of the network. If the output is not deemed acceptable, it goes no further, allowing for the classification of results in high velocity. This is what gives AI its impressive speed. This is what is currently used to make high-speed speech and image-recognition determinations in Google’s famous search algorithm.

But quick and accurate search results and GPS tools are not what put our creative, warm-blooded hearts aflutter. What is of specific concern to our work as mixers is generative AI.

As a re-recording mixer, we are not generally annoyed to find there are better noise-reduction tools or even a quality background generator with the ability to add natural noise fluctuations to help patch some ADR. Our work is the craft of filmmaking. Ideally, we are principally tasked to carry out the unique voice and timbre of the director’s vision. Spending more time tweaking the balance of elements and their subjective treatments and placement during sessions would be a wonderful service to this goal. No love is lost in gaining time back otherwise spent on removing hash and distortion if we still get to keep the time to experiment with the best timing for a jump scare or the entrance of a romantic music swell under the protagonist’s kiss.

The real issue is whether generative AI or derivative amalgamated art will be good enough for the consumer. Tools that claim to search and creatively modify sounds, create AI-generated music, create scripts, generate vocal performances, and/or rebalance mixes are alarming.

More than once in every mixer’s career, we are forced to leave something we know we could ostensibly correct or make more effective and impactful simply because time and funds are up and the powers that be have deemed the work done and satisfactory. Herein lies the danger, and its impact could be quite insidious.

Generative AI does *not just* give us “answers” and “decisions”; it is a content generator or, more specifically, a derivative content generator. Arguably, so is humanity in many ways, but our data set, i.e., our life, is continually changing in infinite

“

...quick and accurate search results and GPS tools are not what put our creative, warm-blooded hearts aflutter. What is of specific concern to our work as mixers is generative AI.”

iterations, offering us new information from which we are compelled to create, innovate, and problem-solve. This factor and that of our variable biology are what give rise to true originality.

Groundbreaking innovations like OpenAI's ChatGPT, despite offering impressively quick and mostly acceptable quality work, are still prone to errors, abuse, and bias and cannot creatively innovate an entirely new approach or solution. They are seeded by a gathered data set, which is often limited. For instance, ChatGPT cannot access data or current events after September 2021. This is at the core of the issue of generative AI and why we as a people (producers, directors, editors, sound mixers, teachers, engineers, and anyone with a pulse) should protect the navigation of the creative arts by humans.

As a child of the 1970's, I remember writing reports from a series of encyclopedias that my mother bought to help us kids with school reports. As an excellent student, I paraphrased and found a way to present the pertinent information in a way that offered no independent thought, deduction, or new perspective. However, I achieved the assignment

of escaping plagiarism and practicing my grammar skills. For the declarative assignment, my work was an A+. I would have bombed for a thesis, analytical paper, novel, or poem.

ChatGPT is like this in many ways. It can only take concepts and information from a database and turn them into a derivative-based product. Even if uniquely prompted to combine elements in new ways, this is still strictly a collage of work already explored by the collective gathered human experience into a subset of data run through a synthetic neural network. This could be a great time-saver for repetitive functions, drafts, and mock-ups, but it should not color the lens of the artist's message.

If AI did replace a significant portion of creative jobs, we would create an echo chamber in our global human cultural lexicon. We would see only what we have seen, re-scrambled, and re-integrated at low cost and high speeds, creating a reductive catalog of stunted expression.

When I asked ChatGPT how it would change filmmaking, it responded:

AI has several implications on filmmaking, as it can be used to streamline and enhance the filmmaking process in various ways:

- 1. Pre-production: AI can be used to analyze scripts and provide insights on potential audience reception, market trends, and box office potential. This can help production companies in making more informed decisions about which projects to greenlight.*
- 2. Production: AI can be used to assist in tasks such as location scouting, set design, and even directing. For example, AI can analyze scene compositions and suggest camera angles and shot sequences based on established filmmaking principles.*
- 3. Post-production: AI can automate time-consuming tasks such as video editing, color grading, and visual effects. This can help filmmakers save time and resources, allowing them to focus more on the creative aspects of filmmaking.*
- 4. Personalization: AI can also be used to analyze viewer preferences and behavior, allowing filmmakers to create more personalized content tailored to specific audiences. This can help in increasing viewer engagement and satisfaction.*

Overall, AI technology has the potential to revolutionize the filmmaking industry by streamlining production processes, enhancing creativity, and creating more engaging experiences for audiences. However, it is important to consider the ethical implications and potential biases that may arise from using AI in filmmaking.

At the risk of appearing a Luddite, humans have unique experiences and interactions that create diverse perspectives, yielding artistic and creative innovation. This happens whether it be how a person delivers a line to express an emotion or how a mix communicates an internal thought within a film's narrative. While we can closely emulate stereotypical human patterned behavior, when we define "sad" as having one stylized characteristic and "happy" as another, we limit our exploration of our human experience and our capacity to progress and empathize with various human perspectives.

AI innately has a severe perceptual bias based on the data it samples. There will be moments and instances when AI reduces or eliminates jobs just as previous technology has for decades, as it will be a superior solution. For example, human transcription services will be eliminated if not severely reduced to proofing. The process of performing noise reduction, creating temp mixes, and re-versioning processes will change drastically.

In the best-case scenario, generative AI could save us time, solve many technical issues, and help further democratize filmmaking. It could liberate voices currently not heard by making drafts and pitches more effective and free up time and resources to innovate and customize further with artists in the final stages.

However, if used irresponsibly, it could be like letting a biased chatbot run all media, telling us what our world looks and sounds like, stifling human innovation, and reducing human contribution to human culture. Psychologically, this would offer the populace an even more homogenized perspective of one another, reducing our empathy for one another, and narrowing our view of one another. After a decade of expanding diversity in media creation and a public hungry for more representative and unique content, we must be careful not to shoot ourselves in the foot in the name of cheaper labor and faster output.

As per the many generations before us who stood at the precipice of technological innovation, and as ChatGPT foretells, "While AI can augment and enhance the creative process by providing tools and technologies to streamline tasks, improve efficiency, and generate insights, the human element of creativity, imagination, intuition, and emotional depth cannot be easily replicated by AI. Creative jobs are likely to continue to require human creativity, ingenuity, and artistic sensibility, making them less susceptible to complete automation by AI."

We must embrace the tools at hand, allowing them to serve and uplift humanity rather than sever and disconnect humanity. We must embrace AI's brilliant innovations but recognize our responsibility as an industry to protect the human condition as uniquely human.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

61st CAS AWARDS TIMELINE

The Cinema Audio Society has set its timeline for the 61st Annual CAS Awards, which will take place on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

- The entry submission form will be available online on Thursday, October 17, 2024, on the CAS website at www.cinemaaudiosociety.org.
- Entry Submissions Due Online – 5 p.m. PT, Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2024
- Nomination Ballot Voting Begins Online – Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024
- Nomination Ballot Voting Ends Online – 5 p.m. PT, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025



BEEN THERE DONE THAT & THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mark Ulano CAS just returned from Prague, CZ, teaching a two-week workshop, “Telling the Story with Sound,” to graduate cinema students at FAMU University.

Karol Urban CAS MPSE just completed the horror feature *Not Another Deaf Story* and feature documentary *In a Wintry Season* and is busy starting on a new dramatic thriller.

Marc Fishman CAS and **Danielle Dupre CAS** wrapped mixing *The Sympathizer* for HBO/Team Downey and director Park Chan-wook at Formosa Hollywood on Stage 6.

Bob Bronow CAS recently wrapped *Hitler and the Nazis: Evil on Trial*. In addition to the difficulty of the subject matter, most of the audio was recorded 80 years ago!

Mathew Price CAS is in New York working on his second film with Jennifer Lopez, the US unit of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, directed by Bill Condon. With him is boom op Ken Strain and utility Spyros Poulos. This summer, they move onto the NY unit of Dan and Amy Sherman-Palladino’s *Étoile*, their first project since *Mrs. Maisel*, a contemporary ballet-themed drama for Prime.

Jon Taylor CAS and Frank Montano have been busy mixing on back-to-back projects *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*, *Monkey Man*, and new sports biopic *Unstoppable* at the Hitchcock Theater with sound supervisor Andrew DeCristofaro and crew.

Peter F. Kurland CAS just completed work on Ethan Coen’s *Honey, Don’t!*, along with Randy Johnson and Rie Nasu.

Amanda Beggs CAS is beyond grateful to be back at work. The new year started with Season 2 of *Shrinking*, reuniting the incredible crew of boom op Ben Wienert, and utilities Saif Parkar and Yisel Pupo Calles. Schedules changed and shifted massively due to the strikes, and she had to leave *Shrinking* early to head to Albuquerque, NM, for a movie that had been postponed for almost a year. Currently enjoying spring in NM, with her crew of boom op Eva Rismanforoush and utility Steve Willer.

Rick Santizo CAS and mix partner Alex Gruzdev have been mixing *Walker* Season 4 on Dub 12 at WB. They also wrapped the final season of *Sweet Tooth*, the Emmy-winning series from Netflix.

Devendra Cleary CAS finished some pickups at Santa Clarita Studios and additional photography for a new Lucasfilm show under the codename ‘Grammar Rodeo’ with Chris “Catfish” Walmer and Alexis Schafer. He is back in L.A. prepping for a new Hulu show, *Untitled Orphan Project* with Chris Walmer on boom, Milton Kingsley Cheng on as utility, and Naola Greaves (photo below). After this show, it’s wedding time in July!!



On April 13, CAS hosted a **Mixers Mixer** in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Members and industry professionals gathered at the Sawmill Market for a lively evening of networking and discussions, along with dinner and drinks.



(Center, L-R) Re-recording mixers **Jon Taylor CAS** and Frank Montano at *The Fall Guy* premiere in Los Angeles.



Greetings from the *Ballerina* additional photography crew of (L-R) Farkas Zsombor, Magyar Viktoria, Mate Gabor, and **Tamas Csaba CAS**



Eclipsing on *The Electric State* are (L-R) PSM **David Husby CAS**, utility Alana Knutson, and boom Knox White.



Grey's Anatomy Season 20 in the ... can? Hard drive?? (L-R) Brandon Pert, **Beau Baker CAS**, Maddie Phelps-Jaworski, and Mike “Fuzzy” Anderson are waiting for Season 21, coming fall 2024!

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