

Review of Sound in Horror Movie

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ABSTRACT

Since 1896, George Méliès has produced the world's first horror short film, "The House of the Devil" [1]. Today, horror movies have gone through a century of history. With the advancement of technology, horror movies have gradually developed into a mature type of movie. The horror film is an art and sensory art. As one of the expression carriers of this sensory art, sound has an indispensable position. In the book "Postmodern elements of the contemporary horror film" written by Isabel Pinedo, psychoanalysis often uses sound to frighten the audience [2]. The use of sound in horror movies not only participates in the development of the story, promotes the story, portrays the image of people and things, emphasizes the environment and other functions, but also responds to the audience's psychology, and cooperates with the visual effect to make the audience build expectations and fear, to achieve the audience's natural identification and immersion in the content of the movie. All these can reflect that sound plays a critical role in horror movies. This article will use some classic film cases in the history of horror movies to explore the connection between sound design in horror movies and audience psychology and how to use sound creation to maximize the atmosphere and immersion of horror movies.

Keywords: *horror movie, movie sound, psychology, immersion*

1. INTRODUCTION

From German expressionism to Hollywood in the United States, to the supernatural and non-supernatural creative methods of the 1950s and 1960s, horror movies have different themes and Directions of development every decade until the millennium. With the development of the times and the constant changes in the audience's aesthetics of films, sound has also travelled a long journey in film production. Through the continuous study of the past works and the control of the audience's psychology, horror films' sound designers have gradually designed a series of voice skills and methods. This design adds authenticity and flexibility to the horror film itself. It consciously stimulates the audience's psychological perception so that the audience can stimulate deeper psychological interaction and intensify the horror film's horror. Nowadays, sound has become the highlight of horror movies, playing the role of the screen, sometimes even more important than the screen.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUND CREATION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF HORROR MOVIES

The sounds in horror movies are created based on the human psychology of fear and anxiety. As Whittington proposed [3], both horror and sound design aim to create a new scene filled with anxiety, terror, and dread in this environment. Uncertainty is necessary for accessing the unconscious and primitive terrors. Human beings have a subconscious fear of death, strange things, and unknown spaces. Most of the scenes and things in horror movies are non-existent or undiscovered. They are beyond the normal cognition of human beings, making themselves have intense Mystery; likewise, sound also possesses strangeness. When the audience sees these scenes and things beyond the normal range of human life in horror movies and hears these unconventional sounds, their perceptions are broken. They begin to question their environment so that they will instinctively show fear.

The subjectivization of sound is an important feature of movie sound creation in horror movies. This creative method can quickly bring the audience into the protagonist's emotional state, and any sudden small

sound will attract the audience's strong attention. This is inseparable from human instinct. As early as the barbaric period, they made noise to strengthen their courage, believing that new noise can avoid evil. Chinese firecrackers are the best example. Therefore, the sudden appearance of text or silence in a typical environment often produces a desolate or dangerous sound psychologically; for example, in "The Other" [4], the villa where the child and mother live are enveloped by an intense atmosphere of terror. The creaking sound of the floor can be heard in the room, accompanied by the ethereal and clear piano sound. Although there is no specific picture on the screen, the voice of this kind of speech is decisive for the audience. This is the inner fear. The sound in this whole process brings the audience into the environment invisibly, and the subjectivization of the sound makes the audience forget their actual environment.

In addition, the illustrative actions in movies usually have illustrative sounds. These movie symbols give the audience enough psychological hints. In horror movies often express a strong sense of crisis and horror. Take "Ring" as an example [5]; the bizarre videotape allows Sadako to kill and revenge through it. In audio, it is just a very simple snowflake screen TV noise, which can arouse the audience's anxiety and increase Sadako's sense of oppression. The demonstrative sound in the movie "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" [6] is the sound of chainsaws. The sound of birds and the beat of wings in the film "The Birds" [7]. Malcolm and Cole in the "The Sixth Sense" [8] of the reverse playback of the tape. These sounds fully show. The significance of the psychological hints brought to the audience by the illustrative sounds in horror movies: they promote the development of the story and give the audience psychological hints, give the audience endless imagination, and maximize the horror atmosphere of horror movies.

At the same time, human perception of sound is commonality. Horror movies are popular all over the world. There are diversified cultural backgrounds and religious beliefs in this type of movie. If audiences with different cultural backgrounds turn off the sound elements in the movie and only choose to watch the horror movie screens, they will be difficult to establish a sense of fear. At this time, special sounds are the best way to create a similar sense of fear for audiences with different cultures. Taking "Poltergeist" as an example [9], Joanne Cantor spent three years (1997-2000) reviewing 530 student papers [10]. He found that most of the students would respond in real life after watching "Poltergeist". When they see clowns, TV, or trees in real life, they will generate anxiety. In Western culture, the image of clowns is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Clowns frequently appear in shopping malls and playgrounds. In "Poltergeist", When this supposedly humorous and funny character image is rendered evil,

cruel, and violent, the usual perception of Westerners will be broken, which creates a sense of fear. For Asians without clown culture, if they turn off the sound and watch the ugly clown image in the film, it is difficult for the Asian audience to connect this terrible character with their real life. It is also challenging to integrate into the scene of the film. Nevertheless, if they turn on the sound of the movie, the clown's evil laughter and all kinds of sharp metal sound in the movie, it is easy to put the audience into the dark and terrible scene of the movie. This shows that sound can bring similar fears to audiences of different religions, cultures, and ages.

3. THE APPLICATION OF SOUND IN HORROR MOVIES

3.1. Sound counterpoint design

The transition from silent film to sound film was tortuous and controversial. After the United States introduced sound technology to film for the first time, it has aroused strong responses from critics and filmmakers worldwide. They were worried that once this kind of innovative sound technology is integrated into the film, it will negatively impact on silent film art. However, the early sound films were limited to the characters' dialogue in the sound-synchronized film [11]. Sergei Eisenstein, together with his colleagues, published "A Statement on Sound" (1928), expressing their concern about whether this kind of "talking film" was imitating the art of drama. So they put forward the theory of "contrapuntal auralty" [12]. Until today, the contrapuntal sound evolved according to this theory has become a means of designing the sound of horror films. Sound counterpoint refers to the simultaneous occurrence of the lens picture and the sound. They express different content according to their laws. They are organically combined based on their independent development, thus producing an overall effect that cannot be achieved by picture or sound alone. The structural form of sound and picture counterpoint is a sublimation leap of the combination of sound and picture. It makes the sound and the picture no longer depend on each other and repeating the same thing but can play their respective roles, shape the characters and personality metaphorically, and deepen the atmosphere of the film scene uniquely. Take "Hannibal" as an example [13]. In the film, the survivor Mason told FBI agent Starling about his experience. With Mason's calm narrative voice, pictures of memories appeared. These pictures are chaotic and distorted. Hannibal asked Mason to cut off the meat from his face with broken glass and feed the dog. "Try to peel off your face." Hannibal's calm, low voice was intensely aggressive and chilly. In addition to these specific voices, another voice appeared in this terrifying and bloody memory scene. It was John Strauss II's "Blue Danube", this sound that did not match the picture, which successfully created

another image of Dr Hannibal, a bloody, cruel but elegant gentleman. This contrasting sound design method adds a horrible and strange feeling to the film.

3.2.Three Aspects

Wang Liguang, the Chinese Conservatory of Music, once experimented with his graduate students. If all the sounds of the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean" were erased, it would take less than 20 minutes for someone to watch it. It can be seen that sound plays an important role in movies. Horror movies rely more on sound to promote the plot and give the audience a sense of fright. Generally speaking, the sound of a movie is generally divided into three aspects, namely language, music, and sound effects. Although horror movies can be divided into ghosts, murderers, horror, and suspense, etc., the sound production of horror movies is nothing more than these three categories. Since sound entered the film in 1927, the film has enhanced its psychological impact on people and has since become a true audio-visual art. How to enrich the movie with sound, provide narrative capabilities, and mobilize viewers' emotions has become the main job of sound producers. At this time, the sound of horror movies and the psychology of the audience began to build a bridge.

When people began to discuss the origins of horror movies, apart from George Méliès's "The House of the Devil" [1], the most frequently mentioned was the suspense master Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho" [14]. The shower scene of the heroine in the film is called the most frightening scene in the film industry and even aroused many conjectures and studies in the later period. From the perspective of horror movies, this is undoubtedly very successful. In addition to the director's handling of the actors' state and excellent editing, the film's sound also plays a significant role. In the movie psychopath, when the heroine is killed in the bathroom, composer Bernard Herman covers the whole music with high pitch and even harsh strings. The main advantages of using string music are 1. The sound of string music is naturally delicate and easy to be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. 2. High pitch strings often bring tension and suspense to listeners. High-frequency sound can make the listener alert when they hear it, so the siren of the police car or ambulance is high. In addition to the unique grasp of high-frequency sounds, another reason this scene became a classic was the harmony of music, language, and sound effects. When the female owner suddenly sees the killer, the scream is perfectly integrated with the highest high string sound in the music, making people think that it is just a scream at first and then realize that it is also the music in the scene. The sound sounds like the creepy knife sound in the picture. It can be said that the sound production here has accomplished this segment, making it a classic in

the history of horror movies and even the history of world movies.

3.2.1. Language

Language is the most direct way of rational expression in movie sound. The sound of language is often an essential part of promoting the development of the plot, revealing the inner feelings of the characters, and enhancing the sense of reality. In horror movies, the internal content of language accounts for a smaller proportion than music and sound effects. However, it plays an important role in explaining the story background and expressing emotional changes. When the opposite character appears in the picture of a horror film, the contrast effect of voice will cause a noticeable horror effect. Generally speaking, the voice of the positive person is accurate, and the frequency distribution of each frequency band is standard. In contrast, the language of the negative person (or terrorist) is more polarized. The voice is low, hoarse, or sharp, which is different from that of the ordinary person. For example, in "Resident Evil" [15], the infected human voice is always accompanied by sharp, high frequencies or muddy low frequencies to highlight the horror and tension of the movie's mood; In "saw" [16], the tone of Jigsaw is designed to be very low. This way of sound design brings a strong sense of depression to the audience.

3.2.2. Music

As one of the important components of film production, film music can express the emotion of horror movies, different soundtrack styles can express different emotions. In horror movies, music is more important and unique than other types of movies. It can expand the audience's perception of space, express time, and space, and realize the psychological space of the character. When language and sound effects sometimes cannot express a particular emotion of horror, the role of music is significant at this time [17]. The musical language in a horror movie contains many elements: melody, timbre, tonality, orchestration, rhythm, harmony, etc. can affect the development of a horror movie.

For example, in the movie "Jaws" [18], John Williams made almost perfect music. When the shark appears, the main melody of playing two notes with the cello was repeated and sped up. The low and depressed tone was a potent threat. The faster the playing speed, the closer the shark seems to the audience, which makes the movie's tension to its extreme.

Musical language in horror movies, choosing instruments and timbre are also crucial. For example, the movie "Alien" [19], this horror movie of an unknown alien monster, uses a very famous musical

instrument, the water phone, as the leading musical instrument. The American Richard Waters invented the water phone. This instrument has no tonality, the pitch is high, and the sound is ethereal. It can make those creepy metallic sounds and give the audience solid auditory stimulation. The music in the movie "Dead Silence" is also very classical [20]. Charlie Clouser used the sound of the music box very cleverly. It echoed the image of the puppet in the movie, full of mystery and fear, and combined with the use of vocals and electronic drums and other musical instruments, it brought strong, dark, evil feelings for audiences.

3.2.3. Sound Effect

In addition to music and language, sound is also an essential part of the movie. The sound effects can set off the horror atmosphere and enhance the authenticity and credibility of the picture environment. In horror movies, sound effects are often amplified. Increasing the volume and frequency is a common method to highlight natural sound effects and environmental sound effects easily overlooked. For example, in the movie "The Shining" [21], a child rides a bicycle upstairs to play. In this scene, the sound of a bicycle riding on the floor and carpet is quietly amplified. With the little boy's first angle of view, the audience invisibly brought them into the children's environment. It even began to worry about whether everything would be OK after every turn. In the film "A Quiet Place" [22], children are too scared to make a sound when they hear the monster's voice. At this time, the sound processing enhances all kinds of sounds in the environment: trembling breathing sound, the gasping sound of the monster looking for prey, and the surrounding environment sound, which significantly arouses the tense atmosphere. The audience cannot predict what will happen in the next second, and they can only focus on the sound and picture and hold their breath with the protagonist.

In addition to the sound in the natural environment and the social environment, there is a special sound category in horror movies, namely virtual sound, or surreal sound. This type of sound effect is different from the previous two types. It cannot be obtained by simultaneous recording but requires a lot of Foley and then mixing through sound effect plug-in production to realize. This type of sound is often to express strange things. Because the horror elements in most horror movies are unknown and cannot be seen in real life. Therefore, real natural and social environmental sounds cannot express these horror elements. Sound designers can only design specific sound effects by relying on horror elements of external form or inner meaning so that the audience can perceive the authenticity of these strange things. For example, in the movie "Jurassic Park" [23], the voice of Tyrannosaurus rex is impressive. However, no one has seen Tyrannosaurus

rex, so we will not know the actual voice of Tyrannosaurus rex. At this time, the sound designer can only rely on the aggressive appearance and massive body of the Tyrannosaurus to design its roar. This virtual growl is composed of more than 20 sound effects, including the sounds of elephants, lions, hippos, and other large animals. Finally, a brand-new sound can be obtained by mixing with various sound effect plugins. It perfectly fits the shape of Tyrannosaurus Rex, making the movie screen more authentic.

4. CONCLUSION

With the continuous progress and development of the film industry, the sound production methods of horror movies will continue to update and change. The audiences will pay more and more attention to the film's sound. The status of sound as a part of film craftsmanship is also improving year by year. Music, language, and sound will continue to maintain the current momentum and strive to improve the means and methods of technical processing. In the direction of sound and psychology, we must continue to persist in the exploration and research on the sound and psychological influence of terror. With its unique and most artistic techniques, horror movies fully stimulate the psychological feelings of the audience, making it a unique existence in the world film industry.

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