

## Making Waves

Most movie lovers have a general appreciation for the technical skills that enhance a film. Few, however, fully appreciate what the sound track contributes to a film's narrative and emotional impact. Even serious film buffs don't necessarily comprehend what the annual Oscar sound categories really mean ("sound editing" or "sound-effects," or "sound mixing"?). Well, now there is a chance to educate yourself on sound-in-film—and in a most entertaining way. "Making Waves: The Art of Cinematic Sound" is that picture

This cinematic primer introduces the viewer to the variety and intricacies of sound in Hollywood film. It cites some of the best direct current filmmakers as well as interviewing some of the best "sound designers" (perhaps the best term to designate what these creative figures actually do). Among its lessons is an exegesis of the six elements on a sound track, clarifying the individual "sound" elements along with the essential music and dialogue tracks.

The film is the first feature by a long-time stellar sound editor, Midge Costin, who obtains interviews from contemporary masters like Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas, who have both declared that "sound is 50 percent of the movie." Steven Spielberg chimes in by saying "our ears lead our eyes to where the story lives," a fair capsule of how he sees the art.

In "Making Waves," we also see and hear from several key sound designers – including multi-Oscar winners Walter Murch ("Apocalypse Now"), Ben Burt ("Star Wars") and Gary Rydstrom ("Saving Private Ryan") – who, in pursuing their art and craft, should go down in cinema history as developing sound into the immersive element it now is in contemporary moviemaking.

Appropriately, the film is replete with clips of how the complexities of sound can animate a film. These include sequences even when sound is absent, as in the stunning D-Day invasion in "Saving Private Ryan," where the landing chaos is rendered as a deafening silence within the stupefied mind of Captain Miller (Tom Hanks). There is also a lovely section which highlights the ways and means of the Foley artists who render those everyday sound effects we hear by using the most intriguing and surprising materials.

This film was surely a labor of love for Midge Costin, who holds a chair in the Art of Sound Editing at USC's School of Cinematic Arts (a post endowed by Lucas and Spielberg). She has worked as a sound director for more than 25 years, becoming best known for big budget action pictures in the 1990's ("Crimson Tide" and "Armageddon," *inter alia*). Besides working in the business, she has been a passionate advocate for the creative use of sound in the cinematic arts and has traveled the world to lecture on sound design and her experiences as a sound editor in Hollywood. Hers is a stunning debut.

This is a movie that might make you see—uh, **listen**—more attentively at your next cinematic experience.

*(The film runs 94 minutes and is not rated.)*

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