

THE CONCEPT OF “LESS IS MORE” IN VISUAL DESIGN APPLIED TO SOUND DESIGN IN ANIMATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the feasibility of the concept of minimalistic visual design principles - “Less is More” in sound design for animation films, to augment storytelling and cinematic experience. The idea of enhancing storytelling by improving sound design stems from the significance of sound in human perception and the effect of juxtaposing the sound and visuals coherently for an overall impact on the audience. Accordingly, the paper performs an extensive study on the “Less is More” visual design principles, sound design principles in general and in animation. Following which, two animation films from different genres – *The Polar Express* (2004), directed by Bob Zemeckis and *Coraline* (2009), directed by Henry Selick were analyzed through the combined lenses of visual and sound design principles, which enabled structuring a comparison framework of visual and sound design principles. Since effective sound design relies upon experimentation and practice, the paper is further strengthened using survey responses from five industry professionals with expertise ranging from sound designers to post-production audio specialists. The combination of the above has led to the development of novel approaches to designing sound for animation where “Less is More” approaches like simplicity, neutrality, balance, hierarchy and negative space can correspond to and be integrated with sound design practices to strengthen character development, amplify the effect of leitmotifs/archetypal sounds, create audiovisual and auditory hierarchy, and construct meaning through creative use of silence. Consequently, these approaches and techniques help to augment the storytelling. The paper also concludes that the style of sound design in films rely upon the style of storytelling. Hence, the “Less is More” principles are more feasible for the “poetic authentication” style (resembling live-action films) of animation sound design.