

SOUND ADVICE: THE AESTHETIC APPROACH TO BLENDING IDEAS WITH EMOTION

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Planetarium visitors experience sky shows as holistic experiences. The left brain responds to the new discoveries, ideas and concepts. At the same time, the right brain is being stimulated by the beautiful vistas and gorgeous music. The words, too, can be poetic. Their timing can be written to have the most impact. The narration can be dramatic when read by a professional actor. When the blend of the audio and the visual is done with a flair, it both communicates and emotes in a way that makes the whole experience more than the sum of each part. Neither the left brain nor the right brain should be overpowered. As with stereo sound, the universe comes together in the head.

For years we Planetarians have knocked ourselves out with home-built, colorful, whirling, swirling, dazzling, orbiting, zooming, flickering, exploding images. More recently taped shows have allowed perfection of the words, cross-fading of the music, and even synching of the visuals. Now we are knocking ourselves out to get the most out of the taped aspect of the show. These are the considerations I incorporate when creating the audio part of the show:

Writing

- Style of writing is the way we speak and hear words, not read them
- Sentences that conclude scenes
- Introductory words to introduce visuals
- Last words to allow effects to happen
- Words that evoke other senses, especially smell and feel (temperature, wind)
- Words that enhance the visual
- Words that relate to what is being seen

Recordings

- Choose voice that complements experience (not lecturer)
- Underline contrasting words and words that need emphasis
- Let narrator experience sky theatre first
- Writer should direct recording session

Editing

- Time to add or subtract visual
- Time to enjoy a scene
- Time to comprehend an idea
- Time to match music

Music

- Blended in under words
- Specific beginning of piece as introduction to scene
- Specific ending of piece as conclusion to scene
- Special effects sounds to enhance visuals
- Light ethereal music for tenuous images
- Rich full music for big, dramatic, dense visuals

Cues

- Match visual to come on and go off with correct words or music
- Ear Test
- Does the tape flow and have nothing technically jolting?
- Premiere
- Is the show informative in a clear, exciting, and beautiful way?

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