



The Sound of James Bond's Fury

There is something singularly recognizable and almost comforting about the soundtrack of a James Bond film. Maybe it's the familiar "ta-da, ta-dah" musical motif, or the red-hot squeal of an Aston Martin on the run, or the slowly lapping waters of an impossibly azure sea.

Quantum of Solace may be breaking that mold.

While the crisp sounds of the action sequences are as complex and realistic as ever, there is also an interior soundscape that takes audiences into the mind of Agent 007 in an unexpected way. "There is still plenty of whiz-bang action and enough of the Bond theme to satisfy audiences, but this film is also a lot more thoughtful and personal," says supervising sound editor Eddy Joseph. "Instead of being loud and brutal, we sort of went the opposite way at times, looking for how [a violent event] may appear to the character himself."



Credit is due in large part to director Marc Forster, who had never directed an action film before and found the longer action sequences to be too uniform at first. "If there was a car chase that went on for three or four minutes, all the sounds would start to feel the same to Marc after the first minute or so. He would start to get bored," explains Joseph. "So we decided to see if we could find something different, a specific sound to take us down a slightly different path—a car skidding, someone firing a gun—and use it as a stepping-off point to go in another direction."

Sound designer James Boyle was instrumental in finding new ways to interpret those sequences, bringing Bond's internal world to the forefront. "There's one scene where we transitioned from these big explosions into working with music and sound design, picking up pieces of memory [through treated character vocals and sound design]. We slowly drifted from the realistic elements to very cerebral and emotional sounds to tell this story," says Boyle.

"We went out of our way to try to be as true as we could."

Eddy Joseph, Supervising Sound Editor, *Quantum of Solace*

Whiz-Bang Perfection

Still, an enormous amount of attention was paid to using the most lifelike sounds throughout the film. “We went out of our way to try to be as true as we could,” says Joseph, whose team went on set to record all of the big action pieces, capturing the precise sounds of cars, airplanes, and boats, among other elements.

All aspects of the sound design, sound editing, dialogue, Foley, music editing, and mixing were handled using Pro Tools|HD systems, with most of the work based out of Soundelux in London. Multiple ICON consoles were also used for the final mix and for sound effects and dialogue pre-mixing. “ICON is really the only console that talks to the Pro Tools system in detail,” says Boyle about the hands-on control and efficiencies offered by the Avid console. “Other consoles try to [have the same level of integration], but they just don’t do it as well.”



Practically speaking, Pro Tools|HD systems were a requirement for various members of the sound team, many of whom were freelance. The consistent digital audio platform enabled the entire team to easily share files over long distances, sometimes via the DigiDelivery file exchange system, which helped streamline the workflow and keep the 14-week audio post schedule on track.

For example, re-recording mixer Mike Prestwood Smith, who was based at Real World Studios approximately 100 miles from London, developed a pre-dubbing technique that incorporated specific plug-ins, such as Reverb. The same setup and plug-ins were used by the audio staff at Soundelux. “Working this way [using the identical setup] makes our work so much more efficient. It really gives us more time for creativity,” says Joseph.

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James Boyle, Sound Designer, Quantum of Solace

Joseph, who is the creative director at Soundelux London, also makes it a habit to use the latest release of Pro Tools software to take advantage of the newest plug-ins and workflow improvements. The team standardized on Pro Tools v.7.4 software throughout the project.

Boyle concurs that Pro Tools|HD systems, particularly when paired with ICON consoles, have become essential for his sound design work on feature films. “Pro Tools is the standard for us. It’s the only system I’ve used in a very long time. The automation, the pre-mixing, the way you use plug-ins. It’s become an institution for us. It is how we work. We take all of our sessions to the [mixing] stage with our pre-mix layouts, pans, and balances already in place,” he says.

As Bond knows, sophisticated gadgetry is sometimes essential, but it is no substitute for creative problem solving skills, and the complex and inventive soundtrack surely stems from the considerable storytelling skills of the nine-person sound team. “The director didn’t want it to sound like a typical Bond film,” says Joseph, who believes his team rose to meet that challenge. Sounds like another mission accomplished for the enigmatic Mr. Bond.

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