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Aesthetics of Early Sound Film: Media Change around 1930

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Abstracts and Biographies

Expressive Visual Effects from Silent to Sound Film

Katharina Loew (University of Massachusetts Boston)

It is often assumed that with the introduction of synchronized sound, “silent-style” visual effects such as multiple exposure composites largely disappeared as an expressive device. As this paper shows, however, sound films continued to render abstract ideas by means of superimpositions, split screen mattes and prolonged lap dissolves. The resulting composites, which I call “montage shots,” do not seek to represent physical realities within the diegesis. Instead, they are clearly recognizable as formal devices that encourage viewers to forge conceptual connections between simultaneously presented images. Like photomontages, but in contrast to Soviet-style sequential montage, montage shots rupture the illusion of the photograph as a view of reality and call attention to the constructability of the cinematic image. In early film, montage shots depicted characters’ mental pictures or auxiliary spaces. Later, the device became one of silent cinema’s key expressive tools, allowing filmmakers to communicate concepts that are difficult to verbalize. In sound film, montage shots most commonly appear in highly evocative episodes known as montage sequences, which became increasingly common around 1930. Scholars following David Bordwell have largely focused on the narrative functions of this device, while aesthetic considerations have received much less scrutiny. The case of montage shots attests to a far greater consistency between silent and sound aesthetics than is usually acknowledged. It reveals how early sound films cultivated and expanded silent cinema’s modes of expressivity, but also relegated them to discrete episodes that do not adhere to the dominant narrative approach. My examination not only establishes the montage shot as a distinct aesthetic phenomenon that spans from early cinema into the sound film era, it also suggests the montage sequence as an instance in which early sound aesthetics shaped the look of Hollywood cinema for decades to come.

Katharina Loew is Assistant Professor of German and Cinema Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her writing on silent cinema and film technology has been published in *New German Critique*, *Film Criticism*, and several edited collections. Her book manuscript, *Special Effects and German Silent Film: Techno-Romantic Cinema*, is under contract with Amsterdam University Press.

Staging and Cinematography in the Period of Multiple-Camera Shooting: the Example of ARROWSMITH (John Ford, USA 1931)

Lea Jacobs (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Hollywood filmmakers resorted to multiple camera shooting in the early sound period due to their preference for recording conversations in a single take—obviating the difficulties of editing early sound—and their preference for minimizing camera set ups—due to the time and expense involved in moving blimped or booth-encased cameras and rearranging mics to get multiple angles on a scene. Multiple camera shooting was a relatively inexpensive way to generate a single sound track in synchronization with shots ranging from close ups to long shots. A host of technical improvements led to the abandonment of multiple camera shooting for conversation scenes by the 1931-1932 season.

John Ford's *Arrowsmith* made for Goldwyn in September-October 1931 provides a late example of the use of multiple camera shooting in the early sound period. Because the Daily Production Reports, maintained by assistant director Herbert Sutch, and the stage logs, maintained by sound mixer Jack Noyes, have survived, it is possible to document when multiple camera shooting was employed as well as the alternatives to this system essayed by Ford and his cinematographer Ray June.

The paper demonstrates three strategies Ford and June utilized to alleviate the flat compositions and static stagings engendered by the constraints of multiple camera shooting:

1. Introduce individual shots staged separately (either wild or with sound) to provide depth and compositional variety to conversations shot with the multiple camera technique.
2. Move the camera or cameras on perambulators, allowing the actors to move.
3. Embrace the alternative of a static long take, with or without inserts, enlivened by figure movement and/or by striking compositional interest.

The paper will allude to the use of similar strategies by Howard Hawks, William Wyler and John Stahl in this period and speculate on how they may have influenced the development of long-take aesthetics in 1930s Hollywood.

Lea Jacobs teaches film history and aesthetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is the author of *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film*, *Theatre to Cinema* (written with Ben Brewster), *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s* and *Film Rhythm After Sound: Technology, Music and Performance*. Recent essays include "John Stahl: Melodrama, Modernism and the Problem of Naïve Taste," in *Modernism/Modernity* and "Making John Ford's *How Green Was My Valley*," in *Film History*. She is currently at work on a monograph *John Ford at Work: The Films in their Production Context, 1930-1945*.

Futurists and 'Homogenizers' in the Early Soviet Sound Film

Oksana Bulgakowa (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz)

The Soviet Aesthetics of Early Sound Film is known mostly through Eisenstein's, Pudovkin's and Alexandrov's manifesto *Statement on Sound* (1928) in which they advocated the asynchronic discord of sound and image in order to recombine the two in new ways. These ideas were partially tested by Dziga Vertov (*Entuziazm*, The Enthusiasm, 1931), Pudovkin (*Dezertir*, The Deserter, 1933) and by Eisenstein in an unrealized plan for the sound version of *Generalnaia liniia* (The General Line/The Old and the New, 1929). However, other concepts and the practice of the first Soviet sound films have rarely been examined. I would like to discuss a concept by Nikolai Anoshchenko who proposed to classify cinematic sound as noises, "the sounds of performing objects" (the train, the automobile etc.), and "differentiated sounds" which included the human voice that should merge with screaming, moaning, and music, "an immediate sensory emotional source and content" and become self-sufficient in expressing meaning and reestablish

cinema's viability as a truly international art form just at a time when the demise of silent films seemed to threaten cinema's ambitious claim to semiotic omnipotence. Anoshchenko attempted to reframe cinematic speech by approaching it not as a verbal but as a sonic phenomenon. In his view, the semantic power of sound can be greater than that of dialogue or monologue. His concept shows a close relation to the sound poetry of Russian Futurists. The ideas of mobilizing the semantics of sound he articulated was only partly put in practice since, at the time, Soviet cinema was beset by technical problems (the USSR sometimes used American and German sound equipment but at the same time tested two original systems by Tager and Shorin). The first few projects of the Leningrad studio—*Odna* (Alone, 1931), *Zlaty gory* (Golden mountains, 1931), and *Vstrechnyi* (Counterplan, 1932)—offer especially interesting case studies of early sound aesthetics. They suggested a homogenization technique that affected both voice and noise. The musical scores for all three films were composed by Dmitry Shostakovich. The musical and sonic styles of the films are very different, but they share the same strategy of manipulating different kinds of acoustic phenomena. Music becomes a medium for translating one sonic dimension into another. Noise and silence turn into music; conversational speech becomes singsongy and affects the use of voice in the Soviet cinema of the 1930s and the change of the vocal 'fashion' on the Soviet stage.

Oksana Bulgakowa, retired Professor of Film Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mayans. She has published several books on Russian and German cinema (*Sergei Eisenstein: Three Utopias. Architectural drafts for a Film Theory*, 1996; *FEKS - The Factory of Eccentric Actors*, 1997; *The Adventures of Doctor Mabuse in the Country of Bolsheviks*, 1995; *Sergej Eisenstein. A Biography*. German Edition 1998; English edition 2003, Russian edition 2017; *Factory of Gestures*, Moscow 2005; *Resonance-Space: The Voice and The Media*, Berlin, 2012; *Voice as the cultural Phenomenon*, Moscow 2015; *SinnFabrik/Fabrik der Sinne*, Berlin 2015), has directed films (*Stalin – a Mosfilmproduction*, 1993; *The Girl who kissed Stalin*, SR, 1995; *The Different Faces of Sergei Eisenstein*, 1998), has curated exhibits (film section of an exhibit *Moscow - Berlin, Berlin - Moscow 1900-1950; Eisenstein's Mexican Drawings*, Antwerp 2009) and has developed multimedia projects (a website *The Visual Universe of Sergei Eisenstein*, Daniel Langlois-Foundation, Montreal, 2005; DVD „*Factory of Gestures. On Body Language in Film*”, Stanford Humanities Lab, 2008; *Sergei Eisenstein; My art in Life* for Google Arts & Culture, 2017). She has taught at the Humboldt University and Free University, Berlin, Stanford, UC Berkeley and the International Film School in Cologne.

***“To Select, To Organize, To Sharpen”:* Rouben Mamoulian, *Sound Film Theory*, and *APPLAUSE* (1929)**

Michael Slowik (Wesleyan University)

For decades, film scholars have praised Rouben Mamoulian's *Applause* as an unusual and innovative work in the early sound era. Sonically, scholars have pointed, in particular, to its two-track recording method, its audio density, and its use of off-screen and expressive sound. Less attention, however, has been paid to two key questions: precisely *how* unusual were such techniques when the film was released, and what *factors* encouraged Mamoulian to offer such an unorthodox sound approach?

This paper aims to answer these questions by comparing *Applause* to a corpus of 35 sound films released prior to *Applause's* premiere, and by examining Mamoulian's beliefs about artistry in general, and film sound in particular. Drawing upon Mamoulian's articles on art, film, and sound theory along with other artifacts amongst his personal papers, I argue that *Applause* is best understood as the product of an unabashed intellectual who had done considerable thinking and writing about the optimal function of art and artist even before he began making films. Many films prior to *Applause* seemed focused on imitating theatrical sound and/or showcasing the new technology's sheer ability to capture and reproduce an array of sounds. Mamoulian's devotion to medium specificity and stylization instead led him to conceptualize sound in terms of narratively expressive selection, manipulation, and even distortion.

Consequently, Mamoulian's *Applause* announced an unorthodox set of possibilities for film sound: that recorded voices might be overtly manipulated, that background music might be distorted to the point of grotesquerie, that a filmmaker might compose a “symphony” of noises to express a character's

psychological state, and that even on-location sounds might be selected and manipulated for narrative purposes. Though *Applause*'s precise impact on later filmmaking remains unclear, Mamoulian's theoretical framework and its manifestation in *Applause* is a vital—and still largely untold—story in the history of sound film aesthetics.

Michael Slowik is an associate professor of film studies at Wesleyan University. He is the author of *After the Silents: Hollywood Film in the Early Sound Era, 1926-1934* and numerous articles, many of which pertain to Hollywood's early sound era. His next book, *Defining Cinema: The Films of Rouben Mamoulian*, is under contract with Oxford University Press.

The Mimetic Attempt of Multiple Versions (1929-32)

Maria Adorno (University of Cologne)

Qui osera dire que l'image seule était internationale et que la parole donnée au cinéma limite son expression ? (Pour Vous, 1930)

During the highly innovative phase of the generalization of sound many *talkies* were internationally coproduced in accordance with the first systematic audiovisual translation strategy in the history of cinema: my paper focuses on these multiple versions (MVs).

MVs aim to create the “same” film for each country interested in its production, following slightly or even highly different praxes depending on the case. Drawing on the post-structuralist interpretation of *mimesis*, I argue that MVs should be understood as a “mimetic technique” that complicates the relationship between an assumed “original” and its “copies”. In order to make the movie successful, accepted and familiar in each national context, the versions were adapted to take account of the audiences targeted, national mentalities and cultural features considered *foreign* (e.g. unacceptable or unintelligible). The influence of such aesthetical and, mostly, intentional choices go beyond technical aspects for they strongly influence the production, distribution and reception of the films. Therefore, MVs are also significant for cultural transfers and can truly be seen as a collectively built transnational phenomenon. This still has not been investigated exhaustively.

Through the French, German and Italian trade press I analyze how MVs emerge in the debate about sound film, voices, languages and national cinema(s) in the European context. Specific case studies such as *L'Étrangère* (1930), *Berge in Flammen* (1931) *Der Kongreß tanzt* (1931) and *F.P.1 antwortet nicht* (1932) will be approached comparatively to illustrate several strategies employed during the golden years of MVs from 1929 until the end of 1932, together with their implications.

Combining MVs theory and practice, I aim to map the MVs polyhedric praxis, which is an essential step towards a systematic understanding of this ideal translation strategy.

Maria Adorno has a background in philosophy of cinema and a trinational Master degree in European Film Studies. Since 2018 she is a PhD candidate in history of cinema at the University of Köln. Her project is structured as a *Doctor Europaeus* in cooperation with the Universities of Udine and Lyon, under the cosupervision of Joseph Garncarz, Leonardo Quresima and Martin Barnier. Her research focuses on the transcultural dimension of the MVs of the early sound film history in Europe (see *Trajectoires* | 12, 2019). She has given several talks in the fields of film and cultural studies, she is also an event assistant at the *Karlsruhe Silent-Film Festival* and contributor for the website *Sinn und Cinema*.

DIE NACHT GEHÖRT UNS (Carl Froelich, Germany 1929) and Multilingual Reception in Switzerland

Jessica Berry (University of Zurich)

This article examines how two versions of one film - the German version, *DIE NACHT GEHÖRT UNS* (Carl Froelich, D 1929), and the French version, *LA NUIT EST À NOUS* (Carl Froelich, Henry Roussel, D 1929), were shown and how they were received in Switzerland. Generally speaking, multiple language versions were produced to allow film production companies to market their films in different countries. In this context, Switzerland, with its multilingual tradition, is of particular interest. Here, both the German and French versions were often shown, depending on the region where they were released and this applies to this particular film.

This paper explores the success of the versions in the German and French speaking regions, respectively.

Jessica Berry is a doctoral student at the department of film studies of the University of Zurich. Her project focuses on how the changeover from silent to sound film took shape in the multilingual space that is Switzerland with the specific challenges posed by multilingualism for sound film in the period 1929 to 1934. Her edited master thesis has been published as *Kino der Sprachversionen. Mediale Praxis und Diskurse zu Beginn des Tonfilms, 1929-1933* (ibidem, 2018).

From the Lexigraphic to the Melomaniac: The Accommodations to Sound in Studio Animation

Donald Crafton (University of Notre Dame)

While it is true that studio cinema primarily has been considered to be a pictorial medium, that is, a visual-narrative performance, increasingly it has become axiomatic for scholars to emphasize the acoustic dimension, especially regarding the importance of music and sound effects in the pre-Talkies era. “Silent movies were never silent,” goes the mantra. While laudable, this focus on the image-sound relationship in film studies ignores the obscure, but nonetheless important, function of written words, that is, onscreen writing and glyphs. As Tom Conley pointed out,¹ the practice has flowered throughout the history of narrative film. The focus of this paper, however, is narrow: I will examine how the coming of sound in the animation industry necessitated an abrupt transition away from the convention of including words, symbols, and signs that now we would call *emoji*. These onscreen inscriptions are in addition to the standard texts that were part of the cinema form: titles and intertitles. Filmmakers instead began to rely on synchronous music, sound effects, and—after a while—recorded speech to establish rhythm, tell stories, and embody characters.

The revisionist view that the coming of sound caused a disturbance in the classical mode of production that “corrected” itself in a few years still is applicable to the historiography of mainstream production. It seems, though, that in studio animation, the older “standard story” of the talking pictures’ disruption is a viable explanation: in animated cartoons, sound did cause an irrevocable change in spatialization and performance.

Donald Crafton has received two of the top awards in his field: The Distinguished Career Award from The Society for Cinema and Media Studies, and the Jean Mitry prize for individuals or institutions distinguished for their contribution to the reclamation and appreciation of silent cinema. His achievements in animation history and theory have also been recognized by the Jean Vigo Institute (France) and the International Animation Festival in Zagreb (Croatia). In 2001, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences named him an inaugural Academy Film Scholar. Recently he was a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellow. From 2007 through 2016, Crafton held the first endowed professorship in film studies at the University of Notre Dame.

¹ Tom Conley, *Film Hieroglyphs: Ruptures in Classical Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Crafton is the author of *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film* (Princeton 1990) and *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (Scribner's 1997, California 1999), *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (MIT 1982, Chicago 1993), and *Shadow of a Mouse: Performance, Belief, and World-Making in Animation* (California 2013). Since retiring, he has written a play, *Winsor and Gertie*, that has been produced in Europe and the U.S. It is the personal story behind the making of Winsor McCay's classic animated cartoon, *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914). Recently he has adapted it as a feature-length film screenplay.

Metropolitan Noise: Urban Representations in the Early Italian Sound Film GLI UOMINI CHE MASCALZONI (Mario Camerini, IT 1932)

Nadine Soraya Vafi (University of Zurich)

The presentation will focus on the auditive dimension of urban noise in connection with the visual cinematic language by the example of Mario Camerini's *Gli uomini che mascalzoni* (Italy, 1932). I argue that not only technological advancements within the film industry but also scientific as well as political and social changes, affected by the underlying rise of fascism in Italy, shaped the multisensorial narrative of the Early Italian Sound Film. This was at a time when Italy's film industry was defined by a coexistence of contradictory ideologies – or as Gian Piero Brunetta describes it, in *The History of Italian Cinema*, a “trade zone” between fascists and antifascists that, at once, allowed for a certain artistic freedom and experimentation as well as a mode of censorship and nationalism fuelled by fascist ideologies and production norms. Camerini's film is an example of such, reflecting an inventive use of sound technique which built the bridge between silent film aesthetics and a new sonic language of metropolitan noise, portraying Milan during the Interwar Period.

Nadine Soraya Vafi is a PhD student and a research and teaching assistant at the Department for Film Studies, University of Zurich. Her dissertation focuses on metropolitan noise in early sound film during the Interwar Period, within a transnational context.

The Sounds of War: Reflections on 1930's WWI films

Martin Holtz (University of Greifswald)

The introduction of sound proved to be immensely important for the war film. One central concern of the genre is how to convey the sensations of combat and, in this context, sound has an essential role to play. This contribution considers the way five war films released in 1930 adapted sound. All of them are united in their efforts to depict the battle spaces of World War I: the trench warfare dramas *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Westfront 1918*, the air warfare films *The Dawn Patrol* and *Hell's Angels*, and the comedy *Doughboys*. The suggestion of chaos and sensory overload in a battle situation that overwhelms the individual experiencing it is of major importance. The trench warfare films use the sounds of machine guns and grenade explosions to create a tapestry of noise that is designed to transcend the characters' and audience's capacity to fully register and decode its informational content. Furthermore, the sounds used do not necessarily correspond to the visual information we receive, they create an off-screen space of aural engulfment meant to disorient and hence incapacitate characters and viewers alike. In this way, sound is used to transfer a feeling of disabled agency to the viewer, corresponding to the war of attrition that is the essential characteristic of World War I. The aural landscape makes a rational understanding of the environment and hence decisive heroic action impossible. In this way, the films resonate with a contemporary audience in communicating the entropic and fragmented nature of a modern(ist) society reeling from economic collapse amidst technological progress, leaving the individual incapacitated and overwhelmed. At the same time, these films expand the aesthetic possibilities of the medium in ways that anticipate what Thomas Elsaesser has termed “engulfment” in reference to the soundscapes of contemporary blockbuster cinema.

Martin Holtz obtained his M.A. in English and Mathematics at Greifswald University in 2006, his PhD in North American Studies in 2009 and his *Habilitation* in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures in 2017. He teaches at the University of Graz. His dissertation *American Cinema in Transition: The Western in New Hollywood and Hollywood Now* was published in 2011. His post-doctoral thesis (*Habilitation*) *Constructions of Agency in American Literature on the War of Independence: War as Action: 1775-1860* was published in 2019.

Potentials of Expressive Silences in Early Sound Film

Bahar Sarioğlu (independent scholar)

The distinctive interplay between sound and silence will be examined in order to show significant potentials of the use of silence as a new audio element within the new aesthetics of sound in Early Sound Film period (1927-1934). The significant question is to what extent and in which ways silence can be effective in the narrative structure. I suggest that experimental uses of silence open the way for understanding new potentials of expressive silences, rather than considering it only absence of non-diegetic music, scarcity of dialogue or lack of ambient noise as it has been mostly considered. Furthermore, new experiments with the use of expressive silences will be examined with the help of various concepts regarding silence including such as *subjective silence*, *spatial silence*, *narrative silence*, *music silence*, *conversational silence* and *almost absolute silence*. The innovative use of silences in more explicit way contributes much to the formation of a more expressive film language. Especially, examples from European and Soviet cinema will be taken into consideration as a case study with the aim of showing similarities concerning usage of expressive silences in the transition era from silent to sound film. In my proposed presentation, I will discuss how specific movies from European and Soviet cinema such as *Deserter* (Pudovkin, 1933), *Alone* (Trauberg, 1931), *Ivan* (Dovzhenko, 1932), *Blackmail* (Hitchcock, 1929), *M* and *Testament of Dr Mabuse* (Lang, 1931, 1933) differ from the other examples of the transition era with their innovative and deliberate use of silences. In this way, my aim is to show how silence should not be considered with only negative implications, but it's potential should be reconsidered in creating more complex and expressive possibilities in terms of film-making.

Bahar Sarioğlu is currently working as a freelance translator and video editor. She received her MA in cinema-television from Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey and has been a student assistant between 2015-2018 at the same university. Her thesis is about manifestation of loss and mourning through expressive silences in New Cinema in Turkey. Her research focuses on sound studies, aesthetics of silence, the question of memory and trauma in cinematic representation and video essay. She received her BA in sociology from Bogazici University, Istanbul.

Irony and Reflexivity in Mainstream Cinema: The Case of Early German Sound Films

Selina Hangartner (University of Zurich)

Hanns Schwarz' *EINBRECHER* (*BURGLARS*, 1930) does not limit itself to the clichéd story of a love triangle: Taking place in the apartment of a puppeteer, the musical comedy draws heavy parallels between its dancing and singing cast and the set of automated dolls, who themselves move and sing mechanically. Especially, actress Lilian Harvey's gestures often seem mechanical and animated. In this way, *EINBRECHER* overlays multiple levels of performance: The movie contains its own meta-commentary, framing itself as a work of fiction and thus preventing the media- and culture-savvy audience from taking the otherwise stereotypical storyline too seriously. And due to the disjunction and connection between body and voice being performed throughout the film in various ways, *EINBRECHER* presents a metaphor of its own technological constitution. This paper seeks to analyze a «mainstream» mode of reflexivity in early German sound film, that, as in *EINBRECHER*, often intersects with an ironic tone, creating contradictory connections between the plot and its meta-narrative. Revealing the illusory nature of the film, irony and reflexivity allow for a reception on different intellectual and/or sensual levels. They serve both to demystify and mystify popular entertainment, paving the way for sound film's new technology within a capitalist market.

Selina Hangartner is a doctoral candidate in the Film Studies Department at the University of Zurich, as well as a film critic, and co-editor-in-chief of the Swiss film magazine «Filmbulletin». In her dissertation, for which she's also visited UC Berkeley as a «guest researcher» in 2017, she examines reflexivity and irony in early German sound films from 1929–1931.

Reporters, Radio Waves and the Dispersed Audience. Visual Formulas and Narratives on the Radio in Early Sound Cinema

Jörg Schweinitz (University of Zurich)

Based on technological similarities, early sound cinema was economically linked to the broadcasting and recording industries. This alliance produced a variety of interactions between the three media, which were regarded as attractions of modernity around 1930. One aspect of the interaction is that the widespread fascination with radio not only combined the theories on film and radio, but also became the subject of numerous feature films. Against the backdrop of the circulating contemporary discourses on radio and the ideas that emerged from them, cinema soon developed conventional narratives about radio and related visual formulas and iconographic forms. These, in turn, helped shape the media fantasies of the time. Based on the analysis of selected cinematic imaginations about radio (mainly in German films), the paper will explore how the attraction of this medium was formulated, disseminated, appropriated and transferred to early talkies. The focus is on the (film) character of the radio reporter, the novel transnational experience, and the new dispersed audience united by the 'radio waves'.

Jörg Schweinitz, Professor emeritus of film studies at the University of Zurich, Dept. of Film Studies. His research interests and projects focusses on film history in intermedial context and on the history of film theory and criticism. His publications include: *Film and Stereotype: A Challenge for Cinema and Theory* (New York: Columbia UP 2011), *Film Bild Kunst. Visuelle Ästhetik des vorklassischen Stummfilms*, ed. with D. Wiegand (Marburg: Schüren 2016), *Die Zeit des Bildes ist angebrochen. Französische Intellektuelle, Künstler und Filmkritiker über das Kino, 1906-1929*, ed. with M. Tröhler (Berlin: Alexander 2016). For more see:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joerg_Schweinitz

Sound in the Early Talkies of Studio P.C.L - A Comparative Approach

Johan Nordström (Tsuru University)

Compared to many other national cinemas, Japan's transition was protracted, starting around 1927 and continuing until the mid 1930s, with sound film becoming the dominant mode of production first in 1935, if one also includes the so-called sound-version films. This extended transition phase meant that that producers, directors and studio executives, while negotiating the demands of new sound technologies and changing screening practises, could also explore various artistic strategies for utilising and marketing the new sound cinema.

This paper examines and contrasts the various strategies for sound utilisation that occurred in the Japanese film industry in the first half of the 1930s by focusing on the examples of P.C.L. and Shochiku. Founded in 1933 and restructured into Toho in 1938, P.C.L. became known for its film's bright and upbeat audio-visual aesthetics and became Japan's first successful all-talkie film production company, spearheading various strategies for the utilisation of sound, music and special effects. Shochiku, one of the major film studios, released Japan's first successful full-talkie sound film in 1931 with *Madamu to nyobo*, directed by Goshō Heinosuke, after which they continued to release full sound films while also releasing silent films and sound version films until their move to new studio facilities allowed their transition to full sound film production. Taken together, P.C.L. and Shochiku exemplify two different approaches to the utilisation of sound.

Johan Nordström is Lecturer at the Department of Global Education, Tsuru University. He has written on various aspects of the Japanese cinemas transition to sound and is currently working on a book on the Tokyo based early sound film studio P.C.L., later Toho.

Classroom Film Practices and the Transition to Sound in Switzerland

Audrey Hostettler (University of Lausanne)

At the beginning of the last century, film was quickly considered as a potential teaching tool. The new medium was thought to be a logical evolution from the optical lantern and other so-called “intuitive” or visual tools (geographical maps, wall charts, etc.) that had strongly developed in the 19th century following, amongst others, Pestalozzi’s insistence on visual perception through his concept of “Anschauung”.

On the other hand, film’s almost perfect closeness to life was also feared by some teachers who saw it as a potential danger for their own expertise and agency. As a consequence, as projectors spread in Swiss schools during the 1920s, teachers discussed and developed new practices and film forms in order to adapt the medium to their specific needs.

The transition to sound not only reconfigured the practical organization of these newly established screenings, as silent films became sparse and sound film projectors were costly. It also renewed the debates on the pedagogical usefulness of the film: was this further step towards realism necessarily a benefit for teaching? What effects did the sound film have on the pupils? How would it modify the place of the teacher?

In this paper, I will argue that through these debates, the transition to sound led the Swiss school institution to precise, adapt and reaffirm its vision of the film as a pedagogical tool, and to dissociate itself from “traditional” film forms and theatrical practices. The Swiss schools developed a “dispositif” that was specific to their view of the film (screenings in class of short silent films, enabling the interactions of pupils and teacher), that will soon be known as a “signature genre” of Swiss classroom films: the “Unterrichtsfilm”.

Audrey Hostettler is a PhD student at the University of Lausanne. Her dissertation focuses on the uses of film in Swiss schools during the interwar period.

Early Sound films in France, Context and Experiment (1929-1934)

Martin Barnier (University of Lyon)

What did French talkies sound like? A comparison of some of the films produced during the spread of sound in Paris shows an evolution within a short period of time. During the 1930s, more than 100 films were produced each year in France (or with French producers). Although the French “cinéma du samedi soir” (“Saturday night movies” or mainstream audience films) was also experimented sometimes, the question arises if one can find a “classical sound” around 1934 when the standardization of technology was complete. To check this hypothesis, we will look at and listen to the beginnings of several movies from the period (from the opening credits to the first sequence). We compare the sound in experimental films like Cocteau’s *Le Sang d’un poète* to more commercial productions like René Pujol’s *Chacun sa chance* or Pierre Colombier’s *Chiqué*. Film production in these early years seemed to be centered around the question: how do we use sound? Dudivier’s *La Tête d’un homme*, produced in 1932, plays with songs and direct sound, as does the opening sequence of the almost totally forgotten film *Le Poignard malais* by Roger Goupillère (1931). Experimentation with opening sequences seems to decrease in 1934 (*Tartarin de Tarascon*, *Justin de Marseille*) and from the end of the 1930s a more “classical” way of using sound became common. Music, overlapping the credits, then dialogs and then sound-effects were regularly used, as in later examples like *Les Rois du sport* (1937) Colombier’s comedy with Raimu and Fernandel. Looking at these many examples, we can see the evolution of a sound

aesthetic, based on both experimentation and more classical techniques, so that sound in French cinema played a key role in the transformation of media.

Martin Barnier is Professor in Film Studies, at University Lumière Lyon 2. As a film historian he has published several books: *En Route vers le parlant* (2002) ; *Des films français made in Hollywood. Les versions multiples (1929-1935)* (2004) ; *Bruits, cris, musiques de films* (2010). With Kira Kitsopaniidou he has written: *Le Cinéma 3-D. Histoire, économie, technique, esthétique* (2015), and with Laurent Jullier *Une brève histoire du cinéma* (Pluriel, 2017, 2nd edition 2021). He has also coedited books, such as *Les Biopics du pouvoir politique de l'Antiquité au XIX^e siècle* (2010, with Rémi Fontanel), and with Isabelle Le Corff, the online scholarly journal *Mise au Point*, 2013: *Le Cinéma européen et les langues* (<http://map.revues.org/1277>).

“How Does the Music Get to the Fish Market?”

On the Use of the Musical Score in Early German Sound Films (1929–1931)

Daniel Wiegand (University of Zurich)

When the first talkies were produced and released in Germany in late 1929, one obvious question that emerged was how to handle the musical score which had typically accompanied silent film shows. Should it be maintained, abandoned, or delegated to specific moments? The question of what we now call nondiegetic music was debated widely by filmmakers and writers in the trade press.

Today, it is often assumed that films in the transitional era made use of the score much less frequently than films from the ‘classical’ period, which seems to be confirmed by productions like *The Blue Angel* (1930, dir. Josef von Sternberg) or *M* (1931, dir. Fritz Lang) and their conspicuous silences. But how and when exactly was nondiegetic music used, if at all? When did things change? And what were the underlying assumptions and considerations for the respective practices?

This paper presents results from an analysis of a larger corpus of German sound films produced between late 1929 and mid-1931 and traces patterns of the use of the musical score. As will become apparent, nondiegetic music did occur but was mostly limited to certain film genres and standard moments. Next to these, more exceptional uses emerged in individual films before becoming more frequent from mid-1931. In its second part, the paper shows that the initial reluctance to scoring was partly supported by the trade press for various reasons. For example, nondiegetic music was often considered to be ‘illogical’, ‘arbitrary’, or to stand in opposition to sound film’s realist (or ‘objective’) aesthetics. However, these disapprovals gradually gave way to habituation and fascination.

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Exploring Voiceover Commentaries in US American Travelogues Set in Siam during the Early Sound Film Era

Alexander J. Klemm (King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang)

Voiceover commentaries in documentaries range from well-crafted, educational and unbiased to banal, entertaining and intentionally manipulative; thus, inherent in them is the potential to influence the viewer’s interpretation of the moving images in various ways. This is apparent in US American travelogues, i.e. documentaries of 8 to 10 minutes’ length, about Siam (later called Thailand) during the early sound film era of the 1930s. In this context, the five most prominent travelogues are *Siam to Korea* (USA 1931) and *Serene Siam* (USA 1937) by James A. Fitzpatrick, aka ‘The Voice of the Globe’ and MGM, *Drums of the Orient* (USA 1932) by RKO Van Beuren, *High Spots of the Far East* (USA 1933) by Edward M. Newman and Vitaphone, as well as *Jewel of Asia* (USA 1937) by J. R. Bray Studios. It is significant that at

the time these travelogues were episodes of competing series and somewhat adhered to studio-made formulas. The objective of this paper is to put forth an in-depth analysis of voiceover commentaries of abovementioned travelogues to arrive at an appreciation of their capacity to narrate 1930s-Siam into being in the western viewer's imagination. The paper tackles questions regarding the influence of voiceover commentaries on the viewer's understanding of the images. It also explores the filmmakers' adopted strategies and narrative patters, such as the endeavor to educate and entertain at once, the use of an authoritative (male) voice, the repetition of certain phrases, the ratio of background information versus colorful commentary versus mundane description, and the shaping of synergies between voiceover and visual aesthetics. In order to deepen our understanding of western representations of Siam before World War II, the voiceover commentaries are further examined with an eye on the filmmakers' colonial lens through which they saw Siam and thus prepared it for western cinema audiences.

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“Talking Photographs” and the Ambivalence towards Speech in Early Anglophone Documentary

Irina Leimbacher (Keene State College)

The introduction of sound had a huge impact on nonfiction filmmaking. On the one hand, it enabled the presence of poetic or didactic commentary to accompany and explain images. But more importantly, it offered the possibility of innovative and eclectic uses of music, sounds, and voices that contributed to the aesthetic power of film. In 1930s documentaries soundscapes of diverse on-and off-screen worlds could expand the communicative power of the images; a panoply of voices could be associated with bodies seen on screen; and a multiplicity of subject positions could be articulated.

While sound in general was welcomed, the introduction of synchronous-sound dialogue was initially very controversial. Similar to the debates in narrative fiction, there was a fear that the process of synch-sound recording required for filming speech would destroy creative cinematography and editing. Yet the payoff was the ability of film to provide access not only to the images of people but also to their embodied voices—from political and literary celebrities to the poor. The “spontaneity” and “honesty” of filmed speech, for filmmakers and documentary theorists like John Grierson and Paul Rotha could “move” and “transform” audiences in ways that previous documentaries did not. This paper examines the ambivalent and varied responses to the innovations in sound and synch-sound recording in early Anglophone documentary. Contrasting late 1920s newsreels with the variety of voices (synch and non-synch, performed and spontaneous) deployed in soundtracks for 1930s films such as *Granton Crawler* (1934) *Housing Problems* (1935), *Dinner Hour* (1935), and *Enough to Eat?* (1936), this paper argues that despite cinematic aesthetics and civic politics being at odds, their tension resulted in interesting debates and strategies.

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