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Diegetic Soundscapes: The Ultimate Guide to *Nope*

In *Nope*, the diegetic sounds, with the exception of dialogue, are vital in the audiences' understanding of the film, its plot, and their emotions throughout. These sounds are what guide the audience through the story. To have a more simplified understanding of what these sounds are, they have been grouped and named "the primary ambiance." A secondary ambiance that remains throughout most of the film consists of sounds of nature, such as bird noises and crickets chirping; these sounds are mainly used to subside the silence without the primary ambiance. The primary ambiance consists of machine sounds, engine sounds, electronic sounds, animal noises, and metal rattling. The film strategically uses diegetic soundscapes to create tension and suspense in its audience but also provides a means of communication between Jean Jacket and the characters. The lack of primary ambiance, the interruption of silence, and the building of JJ's sounds emphasize the antagonist's presence and create fearful anticipation in both the characters and the audience.

The introduction of the Ranch begins with the secondary ambiance as the central sound and then is interrupted by the primary ambiance when OJ is seen loudly baling hay with the radio on in the running tractor. This scene is not only an introduction to the environment but also an introduction to the soundscapes the audience will hear for the entire film. The next scene follows OJ walking through the property as he works, the central sounds initially heard are the secondary ambiance, which is present in every scene on the property, but they are overshadowed by the sounds of the primary ambiance, which in this scene consist of saddling up the horse and the

machine whirring of the horse walker. The primary ambient dies down, conveying for the first time that JJ is encroaching. There is a traditional UFO sweeping sound and then a total absence of the primary ambient when the machine powers down. The absence of those sounds elicits a sense of suspense in the audience, as they were apparent before and quickly disappeared. As OJ continues to walk, the secondary ambient continues, and a loud screech in the distance becomes louder and louder. There are also loud wind sounds, which serve as a method of communication for Jean Jacket, telling both the audience and the characters that he is still present. Silence is interrupted as metal comes flying down from the sky. The scene introduces the sounds Jean Jacket makes but also provides a foundation for them to be built upon as the movie progresses.

The absence of the primary ambient emphasizes the presence of Jean Jacket and the uncertainty of what is taking place.

Commented [1]: the relationship between the primary ambient and JJ's noises, they work together

In the part of the movie entitled "Ghost" the secondary ambient is at the forefront, with low sounds of the primary ambient accompanying, as was heard before JJ's initial arrival. However, both sounds are slowly disrupted by the sounds of whistling wind and screams, which are then followed by silence. Silence drives the tension as it is abruptly disrupted by music blaring in the distance, which is also used to build tension as it startles the audience. After the disruption from silence, the primary ambient is at the forefront of the soundscape, indicating that the real action is about to take place. As OJ rides off to retrieve Ghost, there are subtle sounds of screams and low wind sounds in the background that indicate something in the soundscape is off; this is done to maintain the tension that has been present throughout the scene. As the engine turns off, OJ listens to Jupe performing his show in the background, which is then abruptly interrupted by silence. The silence here is used like before to create suspense and build

Commented [2]: mention the wind in this part, it is loud but still subtle

the tension created by the prominence of the primary ambiance. Screams and loud claps of wind are at the forefront of the **soundscape** and build in volume **significantly**. While tension builds up through these sounds, it is abruptly interrupted by the distortion of the music turning off. When the electronics distort and turn off, it is the final warning Jean Jacket gives to **forewarn** the characters of his presence.

The same patterns of diegetic sound usage heard in “Ghost” are found in the part titled “Clover.” When OJ is initially scared by Juke’s kids, JJ’s presence is foreshadowed like before. OJ walks around the barn, and the primary ambiance is set through his actions with the lights and sprinkler sound as they build up. JJ is heard as he makes low **rumbling** sounds that slowly build the tension. The tension created through the **focus** on the sprinklers builds up even more when the lights go out, and it falls silent. As it did before, the silence creates suspense that is then interrupted by the lights powering on again, but the tension is still present as JJ’s rumbling builds up. The tension in the scene is built not only by JJ’s sounds but also by the absence of the sounds, as the scene jumps around to different people in differing situations. However, it is not only the absence of JJ’s sounds that drive the tension in the scene; it is also the sudden absence of the primary ambiance and dialogue that provide **multiple** moments where action could occur. Using silence in these moments creates a feeling of fearful anticipation in both the characters and the audience that guide the story **onwards**.

In the next attack, titled “Lucky,” the use of abrupt changes in sound through silence is **exemplified** again. There are a lot of different sounds used for the primary ambiance in this part, such as music, engines, doors, machines, computers, and microphones, so their absence is even more noticeable and **abrupt than earlier**. As JJ becomes more recognizable, his sounds are **amplified** and more **consistent, building** the tension even **further** and even faster. The primary

ambiance, which usually guides the audience to the action in these scenarios, now enhances the chaos **transpiring** and creates **confusion** on when the action will occur, so the audience is on the edge of their seats. Silence is used in these **instances** to **interrupt** the tension in a moment of suspense, building it even more before the **action** occurs.

In the last action scene titled “Jean Jacket,” the patterns **depicted** through the other attacks carry on, the scene begins with the wind picking up and builds on, and there continues to be an emphasis on the primary ambiance, which **consists** of diegetic music, a camera whirring, walkie talkies, and engine sounds. As demonstrated in the last attack, there were many instances of abrupt breaking between scenes to **build** suspense. The beginning scene does the same, breaking from the record playing to the wind **building up** outside. As **JJ comes closer**, he communicates his presence in the same way as before by powering down the electronics to cut out the primary ambiance and **create** even more tension and build-up, which is interrupted by his loud rumblings that continue to **elevate in volume** until it is at the forefront of the soundscape. The sounds of JJ throughout the movie come together to **form** utter chaos and build the tension to a new level, and the usage of the primary ambiance in the chaos adds even more. There is another usage of silence to **build** suspense **broken** by the **disarray** of objects falling from the sky, **furthering the idea** that silence will be followed by **action**. As the balloon is destroying JJ, Emerald is attempting to collect coins to take the photo; the clattering of the coins and the wind up of the camera, as well as its shutter, **indicate** the relationship between the primary ambiance and JJ’s sounds to push the limit of the tension. Before JJ is finally destroyed, another instance of silence is used again to build suspense. However, it is relieved through the primary ambiance with the sounds of the pictures printing and the music playing throughout the park.

The use of diegetic sounds in the movie *Nope* plays a crucial role in directing viewers through the narrative, building suspense and tension, and evoking emotions. The movie's soundscape is built on the primary ambiance and Jean Jacket's noises. The absence of the primary ambiance is effectively utilized to bring attention to the presence of Jean Jacket and to instill a sense of discomfort in the audience. Silence at crucial moments elevates the tension and creates a sense of fearful anticipation. The film's soundscapes are deliberately chosen to create a specific tone, heighten tension and suspense, and hint at what is to come.

