Audio Branding – all new?

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25 Basics of Sound and Branding

Georg Spehr, Audio Branding – all new? Karsten Kilian From Brand Identity to Audio Branding 27 35 B.
ab_090218_edited.indd 25 24.04.2009 12:27:33 Uhr 26 ab_090218_edited.indd 26 24.04.2009 12:27:33 Uhr 27 In recent years, the terms audio branding, sound branding, sonic branding, acoustic branding, sound identity, acoustic identity and corporate sound have been increasingly observed in connection with sound design or acoustic design. They describe a process of forming an emotional connection between transmitter and receiver through sound, an associative anchor for recognition, communication of messages, image transfer and image consolidation. While the terminology may be new, the actual process it describes has existed since man started to generate sound and it is continuously developing. Obviously, we all know the acoustic logo of a car manufacturer which has been booming through the media for more than ten years and for several decades now, we have been hearing the signature tune of a Western movie in connection with a cigarette brand. Specific sounds are created for electronic devices which, due to their properties and conditions, are silent. However, acoustic identities have been around for more than fifty years. 1. Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping Brother John, Brother John? Morning bells are ringing! Morning bells are ringing! Ding, dong, ding, ding, dong, ding. Canon for four voices, French traditional, ca. 1860 Bells have probably existed for over 4000 years. The sound of bells has always signified a religious-spiritual as well as a secular context. Mythologically, bells are associated with communication within transcendental realms, and in many religions the sound of bells serves as a link between heaven and earth. Audio Branding – all new? Georg Spehr Freelance multimedia designer, lecturer at the University of Fine Arts Berlin, study course “Sound Studies” 1 The acoustic logo of the car manufacturer “Audi” was designed in 1996 and got a soft redesign in 2006. 2 The Magnificent Seven, Elmar Bernstein, 1960. ab_090218_edited.indd 27 24.04.2009 12:27:33 Uhr 28 The many uses of bells include their use as musical instruments, alarm clocks, timers, warning signals and calls for prayer. Their sound was thought to pacify gods, placate demons and confuse enemies and prey. In many cultures, bells play an important role, e.g. in the Alps, they ring in/ring out the new/old year and chase away bad spirits during carnival. Bells also specify a form of phonetic space as the area reached by the sound of church bells encompasses its congregation. In more densely populated areas or cities, the so-called chime order determines the sound of bells to ensure a harmonic sound pattern when bells from several churches ring simultaneously. In addition, the chime order specifies the ringing of bells before, during and after church services, christenings, weddings, funerals etc. Many different motifs and melodies may be created by the number of chimes and the specific tunings, chime techniques and ways to strike a bell. During funeral mass, for example, social status, age and gender of the deceased can be communicated with a specific chime pattern. In the past, church bells were often rung for particular, non-religious events, such as victory celebrations or a sovereign’s birthday as well as catastrophes or fires (storm bells). Today, the ringing of bells is mostly linked to churches, with the exception of New Year’s bells or regular hourly and quarterly chimes to announce the time. For this purpose, two different bells are generally rung: the higher pitched one chimes the quarter hour and the bell with the lower pitch the full hour. In a 12-hour cycle, 3 pm (15:00 hrs) could sound thus: DING - DING - DING - DING --- DONG - DONG - DONG Bell-ringing can also become a synonym or landmark for an entire city. The great bell of the Palace of Westminster clock tower, Big Ben, is one of the most famous landmarks of London. In probably every second TV film or movie, the melody or the low-pitched bells every full hour are used as a London cliché. BBC Radio has been using this chime as its signature tune until today. Not only large bells are of acoustic significance. Smaller bells also play a resonating role in every day life. School bells announce the beginning and end of lessons, theatre bells jangle a code to send audience and actors back to their places. Hotel staff are called to attention by the short loud “pling” of reception bells. Cow bells with their unhurried peening remind us of kitschy alpine panoramas and jingle bells are omnipresent at Christmas time, especially in the media. 2. TA TAAH TA-TAAH TA TAAAH TA TA ... Beginning of the prelude to the “Te Deum” by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Eurovision signature tune in spoken language A fanfare is a piece of music with signifying character written for trumpets and horns or the French term for brass- or military music. Many sound transcriptions for a single word, its use and association with fanfare sounds exist. They denote power, major events, important news and certain activities. In many ancient European and Asian cultures, simple Audio Branding – all new? ab_090218_edited.indd 28 24.04.2009 12:27:33 Uhr 29 Georg Spehr natural trumpets were used on religious and military occasions. In the early middle ages, an elongated trumpet was used for military and courtly events. Commanders and kings were announced with fanfares. For centuries, hunters have been using specific horn calls. The start of the hunt is announced by a quick ascending melody, the end of the hunt with a slower descending one. In addition, the traditional “hallali” provides the acoustic branding of the hunters’ guild. The announcement “Here comes the king!” is often equated with clarion and trumpet calls, despite the...
fact that for present day monarchs this type of announcement is now only rarely used. Yet, in many movies and radio plays, the king is announced with a booming “tata”. Popular productions for children, such as “Der kleine König (The Little King)”4, where the story begins with a fanfare, help to keep this conditioning alive. Heralds use so-called heralding trumpets. This manner of announcing is still fairly popular, albeit not with an actual herald, but for news broadcasts. Comparison of newscast signature tunes used by different TV networks shows that all use tunes which are based on brass instruments, apart from other characteristics which will be discussed later. To start off with fanfares and horns has always been part and parcel of major events such as parades or tournaments. At the Olympic Games, specifically composed fanfare themes are played, apart from the official hymn, to trigger emotions such as excitement, anticipation and team spirit, and to symbolize friendship, peace and unity5. Often, resonant brass is used at the opening of a major event especially in TV broadcasts. For over 50 years, the European Broadcasting Union, EBU, a conference of European broadcasting organizations, has been using the prelude to the “Te Deum” by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (see article Synesthetic Design - Building Multi-sensory Arrangements). While initially this was used as an opener to avoid payments for rights of use, it has since been registered as the exclusive trademark for EBU TV broadcasts6. The hallali was originally used to vociferously cheer on hunters and dogs. 4 “Der kleine König” by Hedwig Munck, composition Achim Gieseler, Universal Family Entertainment. 5 “The Opening Ceremony is the occasion of lighting the flame that burns during the Games. The delegations of all the nations participate in a formal parade. The music and choreography intensify these unique situations, which are filled with emotion, and symbolize friendship, peace and unity. (...) The Organizing Committee for the Games in Salt Lake (SLOC) have entrusted John Williams with the task of composing the official theme of the Salt Lake City Olympic Winter Games. He previously composed the themes for the Summer Games in 1984, 1988 and 1996. Mark Waters has been appointed conductor.” http://www.olympic.org.uk/games/slcl2002/gallery/index_uk.asp, 1.12. 2008. 6 50 YEARS OF EUROVISION, EBU DOSSIERS (2004), p. 36. 7 ab_090218 Edited.indd 39 24.04.2009 12:27:33 Uhr 32 4. Bond, James Bond. Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan, Daniel Craig as “007”. A movie series with a strong visual and a strong acoustic branding was launched in 1962. In 23 (official) films to date, secret agent 007 James Bond saunters through the movie world. Alongside specific visual and formal elements, the musical elements are part and parcel of each movie, considerably contributing to its recognition value and the emotionalization of the audience. Essentially, this refers to the core motif of the “James Bond Theme” by Monty Norman (1962) and “007” by John Barry (1963). Both are consistently played in every movie, e.g. in the opening sequence view through a gun barrel or during action scenes of Bond. The strong audiovisual appearance during the first 20 – 30 minutes of a Bond movie usually contributes most to the recognition value: - Opening sequence (“Gun Barrel Sequence”) - variation of the “James Bond Theme” - Pre-title sequence (as “opening gambit” or prologue) - background music of sequences with motifs of “James Bond Theme” and “007”. - Title sequence (credits) – specifically composed theme song usually with recurring musical style elements, such as strong dynamic brass sections and integration of the film title in the lyrics. Theoretically, all three aspects are necessary elements of the diesis, the narrated world of the Bond universe where the story unfolds, so that the audience can understand it12. They are also an integrative part of the trademark “James Bond” significantly contributing to the image13. 5. New, and not new at all Many more examples similar to the ones mentioned above exist. In some cases it is obviously debatable whether audio branding was intentional or just developed over time with frequent use. But this is not important. The point is to understand that conceptional and creative use and input of sound is not a fad or a job creation scheme of some agencies, but a process that developed over centuries and which, considering today's ever increasing acoustic inundation and congestion, has become a necessity - not to produce even more noise, but to enable better acoustic differentiation and to reduce noise pollution. On this note, I wish you a sound tomorrow. Audio Branding – all new? 12 A distinction is made between “extra-diegetic” music (coming from “outside” of the narrated world, e.g. as commentary music or to create an atmosphere, not recognized by the movie characters) and “diegetic” or
Audio branding has a part to play in your strategy for success. If you're not already using sound to strengthen your presence, it's time to take note!

Revonic naming. Fabrik has created a new name (and identity) for a leading digital experience agency based in Dubai. Formerly Indivirtual, now Revonic.

Athora naming. Fabrik created the name for this Bermuda-based insurance and reinsurance group, established to be the leading specialist solutions provider for the European insurance market. Revonic branding. A leading digital experience agency with headquarters in Dubai.