

**THE ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY OF THE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER**

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submitted in partial fulfillment  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis contributes to the field of Game Studies by presenting the hypothesis that the player(s) and soundscape(s) in the first-person shooter (FPS) game, and the relationships between them, may be construed as an acoustic ecology. It explores the idea that the single-player FPS game acoustic ecology has the basic components of player and soundscape and that the relationships between these two lead to the creation and perception of a variety of spaces within the game world constituting a significant contributing factor to player immersion in that world. Additionally, in a multiplayer FPS game, these individual acoustic ecologies form part of a larger acoustic ecology which may be explained through autopoietic principles.

There has been little written on digital game sound (much less on FPS game sound) and so the research contained within this thesis is an important contribution to the Game Studies field. Furthermore, the elaboration of the hypothesis provides insight into the role of sound in the perception of a variety of spaces in the FPS game, and player immersion in those spaces, and this has significance not only for Game Studies but also for other disciplines such as virtual environment design and the study of real-world acoustic ecologies.

A text-based methodology is employed in which literature from a range of disciplines is researched for concepts relevant to the hypothesis but, where necessary, new concepts will be devised. The aim of the methodology is to construct a conceptual framework which is used to explicate the hypothesis and

which may, with future refinement, be used for the study of sound in digital game genres other than FPS.

## Acknowledgements

Whilst this thesis was researched and written over a period of three years, its gestation began several decades previously and may be dated back to 1978 when my parents were wise or foolish enough (depending on your point of view) to buy me a secondhand Atari VCS console. For the next few months, the acoustic ecology of my life after school was augmented by the *blip.....blip.....blip...blip.blip* of *Pong*. Soon, I was spending to the limits of my pocket money in the dark, seedy dens of gaming arcades or in hotel lobbies in front of the altar of *Space Invaders* where my shoulders and head were bent for many hours in reverential concentration. To my parents, then, this thesis is dedicated: something other than a 'complete waste of time and money' (again, depending on your point of view) may arise out of an apparently misspent youth.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to those pale coders who invented the First-Person Shooter and re-introduced me to the fun and passion of computer gaming after the boredom, frustration and disc-swapping of RPGs on the Atari ST. The latter may have nearly killed my will to play but the former rekindled it to such an extent that it continues to burn bright to this day.

My heartfelt thanks to Mireille Ribière who, while on holiday, and at short notice, inserted so many editorial glyphs that the returned thesis was more a palimpsest than anything the original author might recognize. Syntactical and grammatical

errors remaining in *this* version are due to my negligence alone.

Finally, I must thank my supervisors: Sean Cubitt, Craig Hight, Gareth Schott and Bevin Yeatman. Being presented with often wildly divergent suggestions, opinions, methods and ideas may have been, at one and the same time, frustrating, bewildering, amusing and invigorating but I hope I have been able eventually to chart a successful course through those rocky reefs. Any shipwrecks to be found in this thesis are my fault alone.

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## **CD Tracks**

### **Track**

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