

The sentimental quality of domestic sound recordings

David Frohlich
Digital World Research Centre
University of Surrey
Guildford
Surrey GU2 7XH
d.frohlich@surrey.ac.uk

Extended Abstract

Most work on sound quality evaluation is concerned with the perception and experience of sound in-the-moment. In this presentation I introduce another dimension of sound as an associative memory trigger with sentimental value. According to this view, some sound recordings can come to refer to previous psychological experiences unconnected to the sensory experience they engender, as with a photograph. Examples of this phenomenon and how it works will be played from a series of studies on the role of sound in photography (Frohlich 2004). In these examples, ambient sounds, music and voiceover will be shown to trigger references to a range of places, activities, emotions, people, relationships and stories.

The fact that sounds can have these kinds of associations may be important in sound quality evaluations where listeners are asked to make hedonic or emotional responses to different sound recordings. In fact they may increase the idiosyncratic aspect of these responses in a population of listeners (c.f. Zielinski 2006). Furthermore, such associations will operate freely in naturalistic listening contexts where similar sounds are re-experienced in the environment, in a cinema or other entertainment context, or from personal media recordings such as home video clips, audiophotos or domestic sound recordings. This leads to some new research questions about how to deliberately support and accentuate the sentimental qualities of sound recordings across these situations.

References

Frohlich, D.M. (2004) *Audiophotography: Bringing photos to life with sounds*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Zielinski S. (2006) On some biases encountered in modern listening tests. *Paper presented to the Spatial Audio and Sensory Evaluation Techniques conference*, University of Surrey, 6-7th April 2006.