

# How to make foley effects in cinematography



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Foley effects are sound effects added to the film during post production (after the shooting stops). They include sounds such as footsteps, clothes rustling, crockery clinking, paper folding, doors opening and slamming, punches hitting, glass breaking, etc. etc. In other words, many of the sounds that the sound recordists on set did their best to avoid recording during the shoot. The boom operator's Job is to clearly record the dialogue, and only the dialogue. At first glance it may seem odd that we add back to the soundtrack the very sounds the sound recordists tried to exclude.

But the key word here is control. By excluding these sounds during filming and adding them in post, we have complete control over the timing, quality, and relative volume of the sound effects. For example, an introductory shot of a biker wearing a leather Jacket might be enhanced if we hear his Jacket creak as he enters the shot - but do we really want to hear it every time he moves? By adding the foley sound fx in post, we can control its intensity, and fade it down once the dialogue begins.

Even something as simple as boots on gravel can interfere with our comprehension of the dialogue if it s recorded too loudly. Far better for the actor to wear sneakers or socks (assuming their feet are off screen! ) and for the boot-crunching to be added during Foley. How is Foley Done? Foley is usually performed by Foley artists. Ideally they stand on a Foley stage (an area with a variety of possible surfaces and props) in a Foley studio (a specialized sound studio), though any post production sound studio will do with a little modification.

The Foley artists can clearly see a screen which displays the footage they are to add sound fx to, and they perform their sound effects while watching this screen for timing. The actions they perform can include walking, running, Jostling each other, rubbing their clothing, handling props, and breaking objects, all while closely observing the screen to ensure their sound fx are appropriate to the vision. Increasingly, many simple Foley sound fx are done without Foley artists - the sound effects are stored electronically and performed by the post production sound engineer on a keyboard while watching the visual.

Done poorly this type of " Foley" sounds bland and repetitive, and it is nowhere near as flexible as the real thing, but t is much cheaper than renting a Foley stage and paying Foley artists to create the foley sound effects. Why do we Bother with Foley? Without Foley, a film sounds empty and hollow - the actors seem to be talking in a vacuum. The sound recordist, if they did a good Job, has given us the dialogue and excluded everything else, but our films needs more than this for the picture to come alive.

We need to hear the little sounds of clothes, furniture, etc - but we need to control those sound effects so they don't obscure any of the dialogue.

Another historical film seems lifeless when it is screened without sound, and adding foley to it elps bring those long dead images to life. Next time you watch a history documentary that uses silent archival footage, listen closely and you should hear at least minimal Foley sound fx, mostly footsteps, behind the narration. Foley can also be used to enhance comedy or action scenes.

Watch most comedy films and you'll notice that many of the sounds are enhanced for comic effect, and sometimes the Foley sound is the Joke. As for action, most fist fights do not involve the actors really hitting each other, and even if they did we would not be able to record a satisfying punch sound. By punching and variously molesting such objects as cabbages, celery and sides of beef, Foley artists can record unique and much more 'realistic' action sounds. What is Foley and Why Should You Care? What is Foley and Why Should You Care?

Here's everything you need to know about Foley. Foley effects are sound effects that are easier and more efficient to perform to picture. You project the movie in a studio and one or two people actually perform the sound effects to the picture. The sound effects are recorded live and are used in the final movie. The most common Foley sound effects are foot steps and clothing rustle. Some specific effects are actually much easier to do in Foley than cutting them individually. In Finding Forrester, there were lots of scenes with basketballs.

The main character was a high school basketball player. It was much easier for us to have the Foley artists do the basketball dribbling for the movie then to sync each basketball hit by itself. Foley is used mostly when you have to deliver a foreign mix of your movie. You use Foley footsteps when you can't use the footsteps on the production recordings because you have to remove the dialog so that it can be dubbed into whatever language a particular country uses. We had the basketball effects on the dialog (or production) tracks and they were in sync.

If there was any conversation going on during any of the dribbling, then when it came time to deliver the foreign version of the sound mix, we couldn't use any of the production basketball effects. There was dialog on it. In the case of Far From Heaven, the Todd Haynes film, Todd wanted us to do all of the Foley footsteps so they sounded like they came from a sound library that was put together in the 1950s. In fact, he wanted all of his sound to sound like it was from the 1950s and this was a studio picture. That was a challenge. Any time you do a period film it's a challenge.

I had to find telephone effects with bell ringers, typewriters, and real V8 automobile engines. Most sound libraries don't have these effects anymore. And finding the real thing can be tough. As a sound designer, you learn to be resourceful trying to find some of these effects. We went out and recorded some old automobiles to get some realistic sounds of heavy old car doors closing. I mean, let's face it, a 55 Buick door certainly sounds a lot different from a Honda door. But back to Foley. If you're doing a small independent movie, the odds are you're not going to use much Foley.

With Kicking Bird, I did all of the Foley myself with two of the effects editors, and we recorded it effects right in the editing room. I knew exactly what I needed, so I just did the effects that were absolutely necessary. I had decided all of the running sequences would be done to music so I didn't even worry about doing footsteps for the runners. That would have driven me crazy if I had to do all of that. I just figured out what I needed to get the job done and did exactly what I needed. Since I was going to be doing some of the mixing myself, and after 20 years of doing this, I knew what I needed and what I didn't.

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-make-foley-effects-in-cinematography/>

It may have passed you by, but the packaging for cornflour is changing - and, in one tiny part of the British film industry, it has created panic. Foley artists are responsible for beefing up a film's background noise - to make it sound as "real" as dialogue. For instance, they recreate the sound of a bird flapping its wings by blowing up a pair of kitchen gloves and then slapping them together in time with the action on screen. And, by squeezing paper cornflour packets tightly together, they recreate the sound of somebody walking on now. But now they're starting to pack cornflour in tins. And tins won't do.

When directors shoot a film, they're worried about capturing the action and the actor's voice. Nothing else. Not the sound of a sword scraping against a tree, or a court shoe tiptoeing across a marble floor. Well, the sword is probably made of plastic - and the "marble" floor is probably painted plywood. So, when it comes to the edit, things don't sound like they're supposed to. Which is where the Foley artist comes in - to make the film sound "real". A few years ago Alex Joseph, one of the country's premier Foley supervisors, was asked to recreate the sound of a head being chopped off for Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*. Some people would have gone with a watermelon," he tells me. "Or a frozen cabbage." Instead, Joseph opted for green coconut: "The outside is fibrous. So it cuts like skin. And the hard shell sounds like bone. Inside is the jelly, which sounds like blood. When you slice into it, it sounds just like a human head. I imagine." When Joseph is using organic material, he will buy or cut it on the day of recording. That's because, in the rarefied world of Foley, a plant that was picked two days ago will sound different from one picked five days ago.

For the scene in Harry Potter and the Goblet Of Fire, where Harry has to negotiate a living maze, Joseph says he went to great lengths to get " the sound of a privet maze and all its nuances - it had to sound alive and dangerous". For Quantum of Solace, Joseph hired in some scaffolding and mocked up a Tuscan roof with tiles that he bought on eBay. And, in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, he actually Jumped into a makeshiftswimmingpool with a sack of Nutrient Agar powder to make sure the chocolate river sounded thick enough. I was swimming about in the stuff all day," he says. But it was very gloopy. I had to take four showers to get it all off. " Related Articles Sound of Hollywood could soon be virtual 030 Jul 2010 over 2 you 013 Jul 2005 The art of sound began in 1927 - when Universal employee Jack Foley helped turn the film studio's " silent" Show Boat into a full-on musical extravaganza. Because microphones could only pick up on dialogue, Foley had to add in the other sounds later. He projected the film onto a screen and recorded the footsteps, the movement, people. He acted out the film, all over again. Digital has made the business of Foley much easier.

In the early days, the " sync" was fundamental - the sound had to match exactly what was going on. Now, it can be manipulated to fit. Technologyhas moved on, but Foley is still all about the " performance". " A Foley artist can be playing a big brute one minute and a cute little girl the next," says Joseph. " A footstep is not just a footstep - it can be angry, happy, sad, confused, clumsy, slick, swaggering, light, heavy, wet, dry, young, old, male, female, slutty, sophisticated... the list goes on. It's the performance that gets across the meaning to the viewers.

And that performance could only ever come from the human mind. " Down a tiny lane, in the Buckinghamshire countryside, is the only studio in Britain to specialise solely in Foley. From the outside, Universal Sound looks like the home of a successful accountant. There's a swimming pool in the basement, where the audio effects for Narnia were recorded, and the sounds for the Harry Potter computer games. In the middle of the house is the heart of the operation - three studios, with bunker-thick walls. The main studio of Universal Sound looks like a student bedsit.

In one corner there's a car door, eat and steering wheel. In another there's a kitchen. There's also a bathroom and a living room with a sofa. " Each Job brings a new prop," says Foley artist Paul Hanks. And, by the looks of it, they never leave. There's a suit of armour that Hanks wore for the fantasy series Game of Thrones, while Simon Trundle, Foley mixer, hit him with a mace. Running along the wall of the studio, a Canadian miniseries is playing out in stop-start chunks. Hanks watches, and listens, picking out the important sounds.

He then starts again, and records the Foley. Right now he's struggling with the sounds of a football. If this was a different project - with a different budget - he would have rented a table. Instead, he's ramming the handle of a broom into the spring mechanism of a toaster. " Too tinny," says Trundle. There's no brief from the director of the Canadian miniseries. So it's up to Hanks and Trundle to decide what needs to be recorded - and how. The best Foley allows for five days to produce a 20-minute film sequence - Hanks needs to have this 50-minute episode finished today.



The action culminates in a car, pulling up at speed, as a protagonist runs away. Hanks reaches for his box of "surfaces", which contains everything from sand to gravel. He runs his suede gloves across Tarmac to recreate the sound of tyres. He then roots around in a box of shoes for "running". He doesn't match what the protagonist is wearing on screen - they wouldn't sound right. "You don't often walk in leather-soled shoes," says Hanks. "They're too click click. Desert boots are better. "Foley is the director's friend. Often more than 80 per cent of film dialogue isn't recorded "clean".

Maybe there was noise in the distance "a car, for instance. Foley can cover that up. It can fill in blanks, too. "I remember on *The Darling Buds of May*," says Hanks, "the story required there to be a horse in the stables behind the camera. But they had forgotten to film it. So they created the feeling that there was another horse - with sound. "Foley can also be used to rectify a continuity problem. If an actor is holding a file, but then forgets to bring it back into shot, a Foley artist can insert the sound of the file being put away off camera.

Joseph is in the studio next door, overseeing the Foley on *Outside Bet*, Bob Hoskins's latest offering. Joseph has been responsible for the Foley on a wide range of film and television. But he still finds it a weird world. You do hear some stories about people doing horrible things to vegetables. "Foley artists need imagination. "I go around Chinese supermarkets and select rather odd fruit and vegetables - things with odd textures," says Joseph. He likes to use the scaly skin of a dragon fruit, for instance, as the scaly skin of a dragon. And for the floating books in *Harry Potter*, I went down the Charing Cross Road in London to buy a lot of antique books. A newer book just wouldn't

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-make-foley-effects-in-cinematography/>

have made the same sound. Joseph even reworked classic Abba songs on Mamma Mia! , convincing a sceptical Benny Andersson to allow him to re-record the tunes with Foley artists cavorting in the dancers' clothes. Maybe it's because of his training as a psychologist, but Joseph is interested in subliminal messaging. " Like the way Derren Brown flashes subliminal images to tell you something. But I use sound instead. It's a bit of a dark art. And one that he's convinced will become ever more prevalent in the next few years, in computer games, for example. miou can really play with people's heads," he says. mfou could be implanting things that shouldn't be there. I set up characters before theyVe even appeared in a game. Bad guys make a nasty sound, so that when they run on screen, before you even hear them speak, youVe attached some psychological value to them. But you're given the information in your subconscious. " The work that Joseph is most proud of is the entire opening of Casino Royale.

It's a high-energy sequence, involving Bond and a villain chasing across a mess of girders and construction materials. " Most of what dominates the soundtrack of that sequence is Foley," says Joseph. It was quite a " literal" piece of Foley, and Joseph started by ordering four huge steel girders from a builder's merchant. It then took five Foley artists to get the girders into the studio. The team then stuck microphones onto the girders - one at each end - with microphones on two Foley artists who then " recreated" the chase sequence in the studio. It all went brilliantly," says Joseph. " But I'm afraid the girders are still stuck in the studio. " Foley doesn't begin and end in the studio - artists like to listen out wherever they go. Which is why Joseph

ended up recording his own dental work - " I record anything that I don't have in the library. "

When he was doing the Foley for Cold Mountain, the Anthony Minghella film set at the end of the American Civil War, Joseph hung out at a Wild West village near Gatwick. " As long as it was early in the morning," he says, " before the planes started taking off. Foley is bespoke, which is why Foley artists hate the stock nature of off-the-shelf library sound effects. Take the so-called Wilhelm scream - a sound effect first used in 1951 for the film Distant Drums. It has become Hollywood's go-to shriek. It's a cinematic sound cliché - Joke among sound designers - and has now been used in well over 200 movies, including everything from Star Wars to Transformers. " If you watch 30 films," says Joseph, " I guarantee that you'll hear 100 sounds you've heard before. After a while it's annoying.

It's not just the Wilhelm scream. There's a fox you hear in just about every film - including Gladiator, in the middle of a desert, even though it's a fox from the UK. I suppose there's nothing wrong with it, but that's what I like about Foley. It's absolutely unique in every film. " ball hitting ball ball going into pocket Foley does not cover sounds like car engines, explosions or other mechanical stuff - driving a car around in the studio or blowing up a building is usually not possible although we have tried!

We don't do birds, laser blasts, dog barks or rain storms either! These are the domain of the Sound FX Editor who draws upon a sampled Sound FX library and computer technology. Everything from helicopters to thunder can be layered and mixed in to an SFX track. FX Workstation While a Sound

<https://assignbuster.com/how-to-make-foley-effects-in-cinematography/>

Editor can do very precise and repeatable effects, they have a harder time when it comes to footsteps for example, since every step is different and unique, the pace changes and the mood of the step is always different.

With a good pair of shoes and years of practice, a Foley Artist can perform an actor's walk perfectly on the first take while making it sound natural! In fact, one of the great ironies of Foley is that if you can tell it's Foley, then it isn't very good! My job is to make the sound so real that the audience would never know it wasn't. C'est dommage... An Example... Let's say in a scene the actor grabs his gun, walks to his motorcycle, starts it up and drives away... Foley would recreate the sound of the leather jacket and jeans as the actor walks, footsteps (heavy cowboy boots!), the gun pickup and handling, handlebar grab and bike moves - and maybe some key sounds as he puts them in the lock. The Sound FX Editor would create the roar of the motorcycle engine starting and driving away, a tire squeal and background ambiances (birds, wind etc.) In an ADR studio the actor would rerecord his line, "I'll be back...", which was inaudible on location with the motorcycle engine running. The Dialogue Editor would conform the production and ADR into one. When played together, the tracks produce a seamless tapestry of sound.