74. **wil masisak** - 2008-01-01 15:57:11

thanks for this great resource.

I'm one of those crazy writer/directors... but clearly I am one of the nice meglomaniacs. so I am told.

anyway, as an experienced sound mixer who went on a long detour from film through the music business (which needs its own page like this), I have developed some theories on why sound mixers are so grumpy and, er, eccentric.

you hit on some of it; it's quite odd to funnel your world through headphones, especially because on set we use headphones which are, by design, extremely isolating from noises not coming via the microphones.

and, as mentioned, they continuous disrespect, ignorance, and/or antagonism from others on set (particularly bad ADs!) frequently make the work experience a little isolationist, as well.

however, my working theory is that the thing that makes us crazy over there at the sound cart is the same thing that drives truly crazy people mad; we're hearing voices in our head ALL DAY LONG. I mean, actors in particular NEVER stop talking, except for the rare occasions when a whole bunch of other people in close proximity to on set microphones are feverishly talking. add to all of that the fact that a large portion of of job is noticing random background noise which interferes with dialogue and which can be very expensive to fix or impossible to intercut with other scenes which lack identical background noise and you've got... FREAKS WITH HEADPHONES.

coming from the music business, I equate the fascination with camera to the fascination with guitar playing. there's a million guitar players and they're dime a dozen, with notable exceptions. if you want to work, however, I highly recommend non camera jobs... you'll stay busier.

one more thing; I'd like to put in a word for possibly the best job on set for someone who wants to learn production/filmmaking from a global perspective. look at it this way; the boom op is in the middle of set, nearest to the actors (often the only person on set looking directly at actors), working in concert with the DPs frame and lighting (since he has to figure out a position or dance that enables capturing of dialogue without creating shadows or being visible in frame), etc.

I found, as a director, boom op was a terrific job (with the exception of working on a digitally filmed shoot with an unprepared director/cast/DP, where (since running out of film isn't really an issue) they can sometimes continue takes over and over (always seems to be when you've got a huge shotgun mic on a fully extended 25 foot boom pole). those people we avoid.

75. **wil masisak** - 2008-01-01 16:16:48

oh, and behalf of all the sound mixers out there, I wanted to share my (quasi) famous list of things I hate;

I HATE;

airplanes
barking dogs
crying babies
crickets, cicadas, bees, & flies
helicopters
crew members just off set who are talking because they think I can't hear them but actually I can very well, thank you
rustling leaves
black foil wrap
wind
actors who are low talkers (actually worked on a set where the other actors sitting at a kitchen table

couldn't do the scene properly because they couldn't hear the guy... chances area; if THEY can't hear you, I can't either)

actors who rehearse as low talkers but then scream like al pacino getting his fingers chopped off the first time camera is rolling

trains

quiet rural locations for a nighttime period piece shoot... 100 yards from a busy Interstate Highway

1st ADs who don't block and rehearse scenes for camera/sound

DPs/operators who rehearse the scene without using the exact frame they're going to use, then complain when the boom is in the shot on the first take

generators

directors who talk the cast through every action in every scene

army bombing ranges (actually had to hold shooting for a tank exercise once)

motorcycles

trucks

playgrounds

basically everything that makes a sound while dialogue is happening

and you wonder why we're INSANE???!!!!