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OVERVIEW

My first step was to "spot" the clips. To do this, I created a document and wrote down in it each component of every spell that I thought would need its own sound source. I then went through each component of the spell and brainstormed ways that I might achieve its sound, or notes about it. This wasn't always the way that I ended up creating each sound, but it was a good starting place.

It was very important to me to create sounds which not only physically fit the animations, but because of the style of the game, there were other considerations: I needed to make sure that each sound was unique enough that they can act as an audio cue to the player, that the sound itself may help the player recognize quickly what is occurring in the fight and respond to it. And because the 5v5 teamfighting nature of the game, the sounds needed to be both present and brief – allowing each sound to do its job as an audio cue for the player, while not overwhelming the sonic space when other important audio cues are playing as well.

My main recording set up for the project was: a Rode NT4, Sennheiser MD421, and Shure SM57 running into a Tascam HD-P2 and a Tascam DR-07mkII.

My spotting document

Of note is that I purposefully left the sounds without stereo localization relative to the camera position. For the job itself, the sounds would handle localization procedurally in the engine, and I didn't want the localization for these specific camera positions to intrinsically limit the listening and understanding of the sounds.

BLITZCRANK

Blitzcrank was a lot of fun to create sounds for. Because his spells had the fewest distinct components, I had to make sure that the sounds of each component was unique enough that the completed spell sound could properly do its job as an audio cue to the player.

ROCKET GRAB

The most important component of the Rocket Grab spell to me was the "shot" of the hand at the beginning of the spell. The shot itself, I believe is the most important indicator to the player that the spell is being cast, so it had to be unique. Rather than create a sound that is more physically "natural" in the real world, I wanted to create something that had a lot of character to stand out. The result is very stylized.

The second most important component of the sound to me was the impact of the hand to the other player. In order to help with the immediate realization that the spell itself had landed, I went with a punchy hit.

Everything else in the spell was more "natural" a sound to accommodate the animations.

Recording the "retracting" sounds for Rocket Grab

STATIC FIELD

Static Field was a much more abstract idea. There are few things in the world that I'm aware of which would create a similar effect as Static Field. Because of this, Static Field was the easiest to make sound unique to the player. Among the layers are some sparks and arc welding, to give the sound the electrical surface feel, covering a bed of automated and pitched hums, to give the player a more "emotional" emphasis for how the spell feels, rather than what it represents.

But this spell contained one of the most difficult decisions that I had to make during this project: the noise that Static Field made when ready, but not yet cast. I wanted to make a sound that would help the player to realize without having to see the champion or its status effects that the spell was ready to cast, without having a constant sound that would become too disruptive for the player in normal gameplay. I believe I was successful in this balance, though I will admit that for the sake of this demonstration I may have erred on the side of "audio cue" instead of "subtlety."

LEONA

Leona had a good mixture of "physical" components and "abstract" components to work with. The result was a mixture of real sounds and creative sounds.

SOLAR FLARE

Solar Flare has two sections – the pre-explosion and the explosion itself. The explosion was straight-forward as far as sounds go, so the bigger consideration was the pre-explosion. Because real explosions don't generally have a magical pillar form before them, there was a lot of creative license that went into the sound for its dramatic effect. Among some of its layers are an airplane taking off, a ship moaning, and a whale call! There's a small gap in sound between the pre-explosion and the explosion to create the effect that the explosion itself is bigger than it is, by means of contrast.

ZENITH BLADE

Zenith Blade was definitely the most "sequenced" of the spell effects that I was to create sound for. There were nine sequential components that I divided to create this sound. However, the most important of the bunch were the "throw" and the "collision" sounds because of their ability to demonstrate to the players the gameplay situation. The entire sequence has an arc to it in the gameplay mechanics – the arc begins rising as the sword is thrown, peaks as the sword hits the enemy, and turns back downward until the end of the spell sequence. To reflect this arc in the audio, I had the pitch of the sword being thrown rise until its collision, peak with a pitched lightning strike as the sword collides, and have downward-falling pitches as Leona teleports and reappears next to the enemy. Though not present in the video, this would also create an emotional lack of cadence if the sword were to miss – the arc would rise and remain unfinished.

SKARNER

On my initial viewing, I thought that Skarner was going to present the most challenges to me. However, in execution Skarner seemed to come the most naturally, being the first sounds that I was satisfied with in my dedication to quality.

FRACTURE
Though the video file itself called the spell "Crystal Slash," Fracture was a fun challenge with a twist at the end. The spell casting was some layering of Skarner cracking the ground beneath him, and the crystal burst from his body. The projectile has an empty, ghost-like sound quality to it, and the impact to the enemy is layered with some hollow wind sounds, all which help to sell the feeling of the crystals feeling "cold" in the spell.

The biggest decision with the spell was how to handle its subsequent debuff. Because of the length of the debuff, paired with the spell's relatively low cooldown, I went for a more minimalist approach. Rather than create a looping debuff sound that would play for six out of every ten seconds in a team fight, hogging the audio channels, I only chose to signify the beginning and end of the debuff. This would give the players a notable audio cue for gameplay purposes, without edging out all of the other possible audio cues in gameplay.

Recording some of the crystal layers

IMPALE
The biggest considerations in this sound were to make the initial cast sound different enough from Fracture that they can both act as unique audio cues, while still keeping consistent with the visuals, which both start out with a somewhat similar crystal burst. After that , the audio mostly speaks for itself here!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I tried to keep this document short without too much unnecessary detail, but these are only a *very* small glimpse into the production. Despite having less than 30 seconds of total footage, the project has 151 used audio tracks. I hope that this log helps to show my attention to detail and my dedication to my work.