

# Game Audio Book

## Sound Principles: Creative Game Audio Production & Direction

by Rob Bridgett

*Your new book 'Sound Principles' just released. Congrats! What is this book about and how did it come into being?*

Thank you! This new book is really the closing of a circle for me, and it all revolves around the London-based School of Sound. Earlier this year, back in January, I was invited by Larry Sider and Stephen Deutsch to do a talk at the SoS on the topic of video game audio. This was something I'd wanted to do for a long time with the SoS, and after a bit of thought I proposed that this could be a series of three talks, as the topics within game audio are so huge, I thought the only chance we have of even scratching the surface is going to need more time! So that turned into a bit of a residency there across three weekends in January.

The topics were 'a game development primer', which was an overview of the sound pipeline for games, how sound gets into a game engine, and how that software production process differs from linear media. This was followed by a look into 'ludic sound', and how games foreground and prioritize information and feedback for the player in their design; how sound, music and dialogue needs to push this information forward in both design and mix. Then the final part was a return to the topic of 'leading with sound', where we went into depth on how to migrate from a post-production sound mindset into an *iterative sound* mindset, where audio people are proactively involved and collaborating both earlier and later in game development, kind of a 'sound first, sound last' approach.

Anyway, that was the content of the talks. But there was literally no plan to make this into a book until we were all done, and I was uploading one of the videos of those talks to Vimeo, and noticed that the auto-transcript feature had notated the whole thing! So I became distracted and I started reading that, and it really annoyed me that all the pauses, repeated words and 'uhms' that we naturally make when we speak, had made that text really difficult to read - so I started editing, as you do, to make it more readable... and at that point, I was down the rabbit-hole and there was more than enough new material here to make this into a proper text. So I've spent the last four months just cleaning all that up, expanding some sections, getting the illustrations in, and making it into something that works as a self-contained book.

*For those who are not familiar, what is The School of Sound?*

The School of Sound is incredible. It was started as a conference in 1998 by Larry and Diane Sider, exploring the creative side of sound, music, dialogue and mixing across all media for screen, with an emphasis on film. That evolved into a fairly regular cadence that took place at London's Southbank Centre every two years. The programme was always really eclectic and brought together sound practitioners from all corners of film sound, video game sound, theatre, radio and far beyond. The list of past speakers is truly incredible, just to cherry-pick a few; Walter Murch, David Lynch, Randy Thom, Anne Kroeber, Ren Klyce, Tomlinson Holman, Gabriel Yared, Ken Loach, Simon Fisher Turner, The Brothers Quay, Michel Chion, Martin Stig Andersen... the list goes on and on. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend two of those conferences, the first in 2005 which I attended on my own, and then in 2007 I made sure to bring with me some of the other audio directors I was working alongside at the time from Radical Entertainment in Vancouver. And the feeling and the ideas of those conferences really stuck with me as being unique, I found it insightful for bringing new ideas into my own game audio practice at the time, and I remember thinking that there could be some game audio talks as part of this conference one day. I believe the last one of those in person took place in 2019, and when the pandemic hit, this pressed reset on the format, and since 2023 the School has moved exclusively online - in the process, making it more accessible and affordable, opening it up to a much wider global audience. You can find their current programme on their website - <https://www.schoolofsound.co.uk/> - I also should mention that Larry Sider was kind enough to provide a foreword for this new book. He was so instrumental in organizing, running and presenting all this as part of the SoS, so having his perspective and overview at the beginning is a wonderful primer.

*Another recent book of yours 'Working with Sound', was published last year, does 'Sound Principles' continue on from that in any way?*

It isn't a direct continuation, no. That previous book for Routledge was about some of the new ways of remote and hybrid audio working that we are seeing since the pandemic, and how things are evolving post-pandemic for video game audio work. Though writing both that book, and the previous one, Leading with Sound, had led me to address the main topics covered in this new book.

Basically, once I'd finished 'Working with Sound', I still had a lot of excitement and energy, so I made a lot of notes about some big topics that I hadn't yet fully written about, things like the triangle of needs and principles for game audio, and these notes became the basis for the three SoS talks. I was able to get those notes polished up and presentable for the talks quite quickly, and then from there, this book seemed within reach by using those speech-to-text transcripts. In the end, the SoS talks allowed me to get this material into presentable shape much more quickly than if I'd tried to take them directly into another book, so that's a new process for me, like a reverse process. I guess usually you'd write the book, then do a few talks based on the ideas in that, but doing the presentation first allows you to boil those ideas down into something that needs to make sense to an audience right away in a short amount of time - so the clarity and structure is there already.

*This new book seems to be a return to self-publishing, can you tell us a little about that move?*

Yes, the speed at which this came together as a book seemed to require a different approach, so self-publishing came up as a convenient and fast option for this particular title. In doing it, I realize I've actually missed that process of putting everything together yourself that you have to go through with a self-pub, it is a bit more of an indie mindset.

*Are there any plans for more talks or writing in the near future?*

Yes! I am really excited to be taking part in an upcoming event at the National Film School of Denmark, Copenhagen in October this year called 'Creative Perspectives in Game Audio'. This will be a whole weekend of in-person talks taking time to look at how to lead the craft, and structured around the four food-groups of dialogue, music, sound design and mixing for games. As for writing, it's not something that I plan, I always say I'm happy to give it a rest, but then some new under-explored topics always seem to pop up. We'll see where the work of audio for games is in the next few years I guess.

**'Sound Principles' is available now as paperback or pdf e-book, directly from Blurb**

"The importance of collaboration is often touted as the key to creative success, but it's rare to find such vivid insight into what this actually means and practical strategies for achieving it. In Sound Principles, Rob Bridgett has distilled decades of experience as a leading game audio director into their purest form, brilliantly brought to life through conversation with other audio professionals."

- Kenny Young - Sound Designer, Composer, Audio Director

"This is an excellent overview of the processes involved in creating sound for games, particularly as it goes beyond the technical to focus on the creative 'messier' part of the artistic process. Bridgett writes simply about complex topics, always a mark of quality in any kind of writing, using examples and a dialectic style that makes the book both instructive and enjoyable to read. I certainly learned a lot reading it!"

- Gianluca Sergi - Professor of Film Industries, University of Nottingham, author of The Dolby Era