

## The Real Art of Sound is Mapping the Emotional Arc of a Film and Being Unobstructive: Martin Hernández

**Doha, Qatar; March 5, 2024:** Qumra Master Martin Hernández, two-time Academy Award nominee for Best Sound Editing for *Birdman* (2014) and *The Revenant* (2015), said the art of sound lies in mapping the emotional arc of a film. “The right sound should not be noticed; it is there but you don’t realise it; if you hear a lot of sound, it is like a bad actor overperforming.”

During his masterclass at the tenth annual edition of Qumra, the annual talent incubator event by the Doha Film Institute, Martin presented audiovisual footage from his films and highlighted how he sources sounds – which could be as simple as recording ambient sounds using his smartphone.

He said it is important for sound designers to look at the emotional map of the film. “There is the geographic location and the emotional location both of which influence the camera’s position. I always tell my team to watch where the camera is – where the scene is coming from and where it is going,” said Martin, adding this is important to capture the nuances of the scene.

Underlining the importance of sound in film, he said: “Much of what you see is also much of what you hear. It is always challenging to find the right sound; you can never take it for granted.

“Sometimes we get it right the first time, but most often, we have to start from scratch. There is no manual to go to – and we discover and learn as we go. Our job is to translate what the writer and director have created - in sound.”

“Imagine sound editing as a platter of flavours. Like cooking, you need to put in the right ingredients and until you put them together you don’t know if the outcome is going to be good or bad,” said Martin.

He said, “there is no right answer when it comes to sound editing. There are so many ways to approach sound because that is the freedom offered by this artform. You can set off in different directions but what matters is that the sound must belong to the scene. If it becomes a part of it, then it is right. But it all depends on the project and the director. You must find the spirit of what they are aiming and that may take time.”

Martin began his career as a radio host and producer at Mexico City’s WFM969. He worked with Alejandro G. Iñárritu, creating radio short stories and debuted as a sound designer in film with Iñárritu’s first feature, *Amores Perros* (2000).

Presenting vignettes from the film and its making, Martin said “nothing is easy in anything you read on a script. You feel it can be [easy] when you first read it but it probably won’t be. Every sound must be placed in specific moments and spaces, and that is when it all comes together.”

His advice for emerging talent is not to “overdo sound”. “That is counterproductive and something you should not do.” He said that silence is an integral part of sound. “Even lack of sound gives a lot of information, and our brains are wired to connect the dots. The moment of perception belongs to lack of sound most of the time.”

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