

OUTLAST



Genre:	Survival Horror
Release:	2013
Platforms:	MS Windows, PS4, Xbox One, Linux, OS X, Nintendo Switch
Developer:	Red Barrels
Publisher:	Red Barrels
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1. Gameplay

Outlast is the story of a journalist who gets a tip by an anonymous informant that something peculiar is going on at a remote psychiatric hospital located in the mountains. The journalist goes there to investigate and see it for himself, but when he arrives, he realizes that hell has broken loose already. He decides to leave but he realizes that it is too late. He is already trapped inside. Hence, he has to find a way out and while doing so, he investigates and finds out what's happening inside the asylum, what's been going on with the patients and who's behind those experiments.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKA-IA4locM>

2. Sound

Outlast is a game of horror and so are its soundtracks. Its sounds play a major role in the game. They conduct a huge load of emotions that go along with the game narrative. The sounds are delivered in a realistic, honest, and unique manner, which convey horror, pain, and helplessness. Background sound and noises are mostly combined together. Noises however are only played depending on the location and/or the player's input. Sound progressions are present in the game that accompany the character's development, location evolvement, and the ambient actions.

2.1 Soundtrack

Environment

The environment's soundtracks build up uneasy atmosphere and tension throughout the game, a slow-paced soundtrack faded in. This is accompanied with blurry, unclear, and grainy noises like that from dry leaves, radio, car engine welcome the player into the game, an outdoor scene. Howling of wolves, calls of owls, and chirping of insects from afar expand the environment's size. These combined together gives overall an ominous sound, which builds up a deep atmosphere of fear.

Game Introduction	soundtrack-environment_outside.wav
Howling of wolves	soundtrack_wolfehoule.wav

The background sound changes and/or gradually builds up the tension when the character comes up closer to specific areas. For example, when entering the asylum building. Several sounds overlap with each other. The sound changes and tends to play with the emotions of the player and tends to tease the player into thinking that something unknown could happen in blink of an eye. Creaking of floors, static noises from television, fuzzy voices of people murmuring in distant rooms deliver the message to the player that the place he is in, is more likely like a huge maze.

Entering the garden (00:06)	soundtrack_enter-the-asylum.wav
Entering the asylum building (00:41)	

Spontaneous Happening

Whenever an unexpected happening in the environment happens (example: closing of door in front of the character), an ominous sound is played that overlaps to the current background sound.

Unexpected closing of door	happenings-plottwist.wav
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2.2 Noise/Tone

Dialogue/Voice Over

Voice overs are not present for the player character but is present for the nonplayable characters (NPCs). When delivering scripted dialogues, the NPCs deliver it with great voice acting depending on what they want to convey to the player. Mysterious hums, suffering murmurs, slow deliverance of statements and angry commands are some examples of it.

There are two types of character and NPC encounters:

- Normal encounter with NPC (The character's actions/player's input aren't limited.)
- In-Game cutscene (The character's actions/player's input are limited.)

Whenever a normal encounter with an NPC occurs, the NPCs deliver the script/voice overs, the background sound stays the same where the character is to be found.

Normal encounter	npc_noncontact1.wav
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Whenever an in-game cutscene occurs, the background sound changes into a louder and cinematic background sound.

In-Game cutscene	npc_incontact1.wav
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Player Character

The main character's actions go along with their corresponding sound effects. They evolve depending on what situation the player is in. For example, footstep sounds change depending on the material of the ground being stepped on by the character. Panting sounds differ and evolve according to the situation of the player. For example, jumping, squeezing into narrow places and climbing up. Whenever the player is hurting or at the peak of a situation, the panting is more evident and louder. The evolution of the character's sound feedback gives the player the same feeling of what the character is currently experiencing.

Footsteps	playercharacter_footsteps1.wav
Panting 01	playercharacter_panting1.wav
Panting 02	playercharacter_panting2.wav
Squeezing in narrow places	playercharacter_squeezingnarrowcorridor.wav

Nonplayable Character

Beside voice overs, NPCs actions like the character's actions, are accompanied by their corresponding sound effects. They change depending on the situation the NPC is in. For example, their footstep sounds change depending on the material of the ground. If they are holding an object, its sound equates to the material of that specific object. For example, metal or wood.

Objects/Assets

The sounds of objects in the game are heard very clearly in contrary to the background. Ringing of phones, flickering of lights, zooming in of camera, etc. are delivered very distinctly, in such a way that the player knows whether that object is far or near him/her. The sounds also give the player an excellent feedback when doing actions with specific objects. First encounters with a specific object like dead bodies are accompanied with a jump scare sound, a very loud scream combined with orchestral sound.

Phone	object_telephone.wav
Hanging corpse encounter	object-asset_deadbody.wav
Camera	objects_camera.wav

Barks

Sound barks are very present in the game. Out of nowhere, sounds pop out either near or far. They give the player the feeling of uneasiness and anxiety that something is going to come up, either in a short or long distance. The barks in the game evolves from popping out one at a time to coming more and more either overlapping or simultaneously.

Bark 01	bark_1.wav
Bark 02	bark_2.wav
Bark 03	bark_3.wav

2.3 User Interface

In the game, there are three major UI elements:

- Showing the game objective
- Reading storytelling items when picked up
- Writing on the character's journal

When an objective is shown, the background sound doesn't change but it is accompanied by a sound bark, a hitting-metal sound, to get the player's attention to see what his/her next goal is.

Objective [ui_objective.wav](#)

When picking up a storytelling item, the background sound changes into a slow-paced one, muting all the noises in the current environment, where the player is. This allows the player to focus on the storytelling item. The UI transition is always accompanied by a sound of the specific item. For example, grabbing a paper. Going out of the UI is also accompanied by a loud scary sound, reminding the player that he/she is back into the game.

Storytelling Item [ui_letter.wav](#)

When the character is writing on his journal, the background sound changes (same sound with the storytelling item) and is accompanied by a scribbling sound on paper. The transitions into and out of the UI are also accompanied with sounds.

Journal [ui_diarynotes.wav](#)

3. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the soundtracks of Outlast play an enormous role to achieve what the game wants to convey to their players, horror.

Overall, we find its soundtracks very complex. The gameplay together with its soundtracks play with the player's emotions and state of mentality. The combination of the background sound and noises, especially the barks, is a great result of attaining fluctuating emotions: from being in an environment completely in silence (being at ease) to hearing spontaneous noises from somewhere (being alert) to the point that it gets really loud (being anxious).

In our opinion, the sound designers achieved to build up a fearful ambiance in the game. The implementation of jump scares adds to their playfulness. They achieved players to suffer because of fear and by playing with the player's overflowing senses.

All things considered, we think that analysing the sound design of Outlast broadens our perspective on how we can better our future games, on how to build the right game ambiance and combine it with the gameplay and on how to give our players a full user game experience.

4. Comparison with Five Nights at Freddy's

4. Comparison with Outlast

4.1 General Comparison

1. Space. In FNAF the player has limited space, he only sees his room and a static view of other rooms through the camera. In Outlast, the player has access to multiple rooms, also at the beginning you can fully see the psych hospital and landscape.
2. Movement. In FNAF the player can only sit, turn his head and watch the cameras. In Outlast, the player has the ability to move around quite freely, crawling through vents and sewers.
3. Screamers. FNAF has a much lower variety of screamers than Outlast. In FNAF you will be scared with different variety of sounds, but the screamer of animatronic is always the same, it can be different characters, but they just jump on the player and that's all. In Outlast except for the sounds you are scared by different things, dead bodies, crazy people jumping on you, etc.
4. Death. In FNAF the player dies once and you have no way to escape and also no death animation, only the Game Over screen appears. In Outlast before the player dies he has to be hit several times and he can run away and when you are dying there is an animation of the player falling down, spitting blood and closing his eyes.
5. Cruelty. Outlast looks more violent than FNAF, there is blood, dead bodies, damaged bodies. It is more realistic in terms of the game visuals than FNAF.

4.2 Sound Comparison

Ambiance/Atmosphere

In FNAF, the atmosphere is based on an acute, monotonous noise that is coming from the fan, which is played throughout the game. This tends to the point that the player blends it out while playing through the game leaving him/her in a nervous state. In Outlast, the player's emotions are played by the overlapping and/or over saturated sounds. It gives the player the emotion of being anxious most of the time.

Both games use the opposite techniques to keep the player nervous and on the edge. FNAF is relying on the silence of the situation while Outlast is overloading one with multiple noises.

User Interface

The transitions into and out of the UIs in both games are accompanied by sound effects. The background sound changes when the player is in the UI mode.

Player Character

The characters in both games don't talk. The only difference with Outlast is that the player pants, screams, and react to a situation he is currently in.

Nonplayable Characters

In Outlast, the NPCs interacts and/or communicate with the character while in FNAF, they don't.

Voice Over

Voice overs in both games are present. In FNAF, it is portrayed by an invisible boss who calls the player through the phone. In Outlast, voice overs are portrayed by the NPCs in the game.

Jump scare

In Outlast, the jump scares usually happen very spontaneously and can only be expected when it is obviously shown in a particular setting. The jump scares are accompanied by loud screams in combination with high pitched noises and/or sounds. In FNAF, it's usually declared with either running footsteps or a laughter the player hears from afar. So the player knows that something is coming. However, both games use loud screams and noises.

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