

Eastern Illinois University

From the Selected Works of Steve Brantley

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Review of Encyclopedia of Motion Picture Sound

John Stephen Brantley, *Eastern Illinois University*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/steve_brantley/9/

Brantley, John S. (2002). **Encyclopedia of Motion Picture Sound**. *E-STREAMS*, NH. V. 5, No. 5, May 2002. <http://www.e-streams.com/> (Book Review #1875).

Engineering – Sound

1875. **Encyclopedia of Motion Picture Sound**, by Marty McGee. Jefferson, NC, McFarland, 2001. 292p., illus., bibliog., index. [ISBN 078641023X](#). \$55.00. LC Call no.: TK7881.4.M47 2001.

Subjects: Sound-Recording and Reproducing-Encyclopedias; Sound Motion Pictures-Encyclopedias.

Reviewer: H. Steve Brantley, Resident Librarian, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, jbrant1@uic.edu

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This short (290 page) encyclopedia is intended for the consumer whose interests intersect at a love of home high fidelity audio and a love of Hollywood movies as a pastime. These dual loves are necessary for the proper use of this book because the consumer interested in Hollywood History will get more than he is interested in this book and the technician will find it too shallow in technical information to be of much use. There are exhaustive entries on the films, which won academy awards for sound or which introduced important sound technological innovations. These entries also include sound summaries, plot summaries, sound specifications, and cast and crew lists that are quite detailed if not comprehensive. The sound summaries are brief descriptions of particularly interesting effects or dialog with accompanying time markers. These are necessarily short, subjective and therefore incomplete.

While a listing of the academy award winning films for sound effects and sound editing is useful, the amount of information provided in this volume seems unnecessary. Given the scope of the encyclopedia, it might have been better and more concise to limit the amount of information to relevant sound engineers and technicians involved, as well as possibly some of the pertinent plot and effect information. As it is, the long lists of cast and crew are cumbersome since this information is extraneous to the encyclopedia's scope and easily found elsewhere. The addition of an "other awards" section is welcome as a comparative element, as one can see whether a film swept the awards for that year or if a film was a stand-out in the sound category.

Other types of entries include technical processes and equipment types, important sound engineers and innovators and inventors of said processes and equipment. The technical entries are interesting but provide little information beyond the name of the item and when it was introduced. Sometimes the span of years that the item was use is included. It seems

that the best entries in the encyclopedia are those that refer to the personnel of the Hollywood film industry for their contributions, awards and their filmographies.

The encyclopedia includes many still photographs, predominantly publicity photos or film posters for the film entries. But missing from this abundant illustration are photographs of particularly interesting technology from the past, graphs, or diagrams of any kind of sound recording process. The author mentions his conscious exclusion of psychoacoustics or the physics of motion picture sound, but in consideration of the historical scope of the work, it would seem appropriate that, where available, he would include illustrations of interesting equipment. Only one instance of this type of illustration was found.

The encyclopedia includes a very helpful appendix of films winning the academy award for Sound and Sound Effects up to 1999. The index is sufficient and there is a very helpful guide to the abbreviations used. Additional readings in motion picture sound from journals, trade publications, books and websites are also included. This book is not recommended for public libraries. College and University Libraries which have curriculum in film studies and Hollywood history might find it somewhat useful as an aggregation of names and short biographies for particular film crew personnel.

To order this title, click here [ISBN 078641023X](#)