



"The best Christmas song? The Sonics, Santa Claus... just because."



Aaron Taffel Reviews the Sounds of 2018

The GCRS London sound designer on the year's best sound design work and why he thinks, too often, sound is merely an afterthought...

In general, do you think 2018 has been a good year for creative advertising?

As a whole I wouldn't necessarily say it's been a standout year. There have been some undoubtedly great individual pieces of work throughout the year. Unfortunately, I think these have bucked a trend in what has been a year where clients are wanting to take less and less risks.

What piece or pieces of work have impressed you most over the last year?

My top three are Nike Londoner, Nike Phantom and Volvo Things. Further afield there has been some fantastic work too, such as WeTransfer Bunt Machine, and Apple Apocalypse.

In terms of music/sound design within commercials, what stood out for you?

Some people are taking risks and they are paying off. Sound design is becoming increasingly bold. Special mention has to go to the Pennzoil series of films; the last of which was released earlier this year (the previous few were released in years prior). They are for me an absolute game changer in terms of sound. Technically among the best sound design I have heard anywhere, including film. They have changed how I approach a number of jobs, they are that good.

With the continued importance of platforms such as Instagram - which priorities image over sound - outside of the cinema/TV screen, can music/sound sometimes be forgotten as a creative force within advertising?

Absolutely. More often than not I have found sound is treated simply as an afterthought. I do not feel people treat sound as a storytelling device, but think of it more as a decoration to their final film, something to be added after all important decisions have already been made. This is an issue that transcends the rise of platforms such as Instagram, as it is applicable to large TV & Cinema campaigns as well.

What's the biggest creative struggle for a music/sound company within the ad industry?

There are very few projects that do not involve sound, but too often it is seen as a necessity rather than a creative tool. This is not helped by the rise of in-house facilities which often set the bar too low. Furthermore, in my opinion this trend also denies the sound designer the autonomy to truly create. I think that it takes some degree of mental gymnastics to agree that moving this work in house is conducive to a better end product. It is about time in our industry that sound is given the respect it deserves. The respect that it is given by top Hollywood directors such as George Lucas, Ridley Scott and James Cameron. It is perfectly possible as the projects I mentioned earlier prove.

What do you think the biggest talking points of 2019 might be?

At a guess how brexit actually affects the industry? Everything seems a little theoretical at the moment.

What do you think advertising's New Year's resolution should be?

More creative sound design led work!

What's the best ever Christmas song and why?

The Sonics - Santa Claus... just because.