

# FIELD RECORDING

FROM

RESEARCH<sup>TO</sup> WRAP

AN INTRODUCTION TO GATHERING SOUND EFFECTS

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**FIELD RECORDING:  
FROM RESEARCH  
TO WRAP**

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By  
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# Introduction

# The Appeal of Field Recording

It began on July 18, 1877.

On that day, Thomas Edison scrawled grooves into a wax cylinder and our perception of audio changed forever. Previously, sound was something that could only be experienced. Now, with the help of a horn, cylinder, and a phonograph, sound could be captured.

Millions of hours of audio have been recorded since then. Entire forests of microphones have been assembled for the elusive task of snatching the sound that floats about us. Thousands of tapes, CDs, and sound files share this audio with others. Dozens of professions have evolved to create and record jazz, blues, and rock. Guilds and unions have gathered together editors, mixers, and engineers. The world of pro audio has become vast.

But there's one discipline that floats just beyond mainstream audio work. It's not well known, or understood. It is different from any other sound profession. It is called field recording.

Field recording mingles with film, radio, gaming, and theatre, but it doesn't fit easily with any of them. It's not quite the same as recording speech, music, or even studio Foley. It's different. And these differences lure recordists.

Field recording has a visceral appeal. It's active work that pursues sound across the globe. It attempts to stalk, ensnare, and manipulate an elemental aspect of the human experience: our sense of sound. It's a sense that's often neglected in favour of vision, or touch. This is one reason why recordists become passionate. Field recording is an opportunity to champion snapshots taken from a drifting world of sound.

It's also compelling. Every sound presents a new challenge. Each subject is recorded differently. Field recording appeals to the intellect. A recordist must know a bit about everything they hunt. They're constantly learning. They must unravel technical and creative challenges.

Field recording uses this creativity to influence not only sound, but emotion. Everyone feels a rush when hearing their favourite song. It's a reaction based on melodies, memory, and imagination. Field recordists seek this. They interpret, then mould audio. The simplest clips are only data. A creative field recordist draws from the raw audio around us, embeds meaning and expression, and shares it in gripping sound effects that shock, sadden, and inspire.

And field recording, like the first wax cylinder, catches these sounds so they can be shared with others. The very nature of field recording is meant to preserve audio, then release it.

Field recording is absorbing and engaging. It's not merely cataloging samples. It beckons with the possibility of using intangible tools to affect people, their projects, and themselves.

## What You Contribute

This is how field recording involves *you*.

Are you a gamer who is curious how rattling machine guns became part of a first-person shooter? Maybe you're a recent film school grad who uncovered a talent for designing soundtracks with unusual props. Or perhaps you're a DJ wondering how far sampling can evolve.

Maybe you are drawn in more general way. Does your head turn when you

hear an intriguing sound? Do you find yourself wondering how sounds combine? Do you hear sounds others miss? Maybe you notice how audio affects others. Perhaps you want to explore the planet through sound.

This is how field recording begins: with curiosity, observation, and reflection. Field recording evolves when you take the precision needed to measure audio and plunge it into unpredictable environments. It explores what happens to sound there. It seizes this expression, manipulates it, and captures that voice. But this isn't produced by instruments. That unique voice emerges from *you*. It is your personal blend of creativity and interpretation that forges powerful sound effects.

These are the only tools you need. It doesn't matter how much experience you have. You don't need to study acoustical theory. Yes, gear plays a role, but it is a deceptively minor one. Instead, the difference between good sound effects and great ones is the amount of curiosity you have, and how you apply it.

So what does *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* do? It takes your curiosity and puts it to work. It blends philosophies, requirements, procedures, and advice, and then explains your role within them. You'll learn what field recording is, and how it is performed. You'll follow the arc of a field recording session, from research to wrap.

The result?

You'll begin a profound journey. Field recording will revitalize your sense of hearing. You will experience a familiar world again, through sound.

## Who Am I?

What business do I have writing about field recording?

That's an excellent question.

Allow me to share how I began recording and writing about sound effects.

I've worked with sound since 1996. I originally began as an assistant sound effects editor in Toronto, Canada. I became enthralled with field recording after plugging holes in the facility library.

Since then I've recorded sound effects in deep caves and in distant deserts. I've scurried across countries capturing the sounds of cities. I've travelled across the planet recording sound effects. I've had the pleasure of contributing recordings to films such as *Ali*, *Batman Begins* and others. I've provided sound effects for commercial DVD libraries and downloadable sound Web shops.

I became involved selling sound effects on the Web during the dot-com boom. In 2010, I built a home for my library of 21,000 sound effects at [airbornesound.com](http://airbornesound.com). And, since early 2011, I've written about field recording, sound effects, creativity, and sharing sound on [creativefieldrecording.com](http://creativefieldrecording.com).

## Whom This Guide is For

Have you asked yourself these questions?

- What is field recording?
- Who are field recordists?
- Why capture sound effects?
- How do I begin recording sound effects?
- What equipment do I need?
- What happens while field recording?
- How should I record sound effects?
- What steps should I take to capture high-quality audio?
- What advice should I keep in mind while recording?

If you are curious about any of these questions, then this guide is for you. I'll answer each of them, and more, inside.

## Why a Book About Field Recording?

Carpenters have it. So do millwrights. Firefighters, welders, tree trimmers, and mechanics have it, too.

Thousands of trades have venerable apprenticeship programs. Film is no exception. There are well-worn paths created to shepherd young directors, set dressers, and gaffers into their careers. Game audio programs graduate hundreds of sound designers and editors every year.

But where can you learn field recording?

In this way, field recording is unique. It's not easily learned. The skills aren't beyond anyone's reach. It's just that it's rarely taught in a comprehensive way.

There aren't college programs that explore atmosphere aesthetics. We're missing seminars that explain vehicle microphone placement. How about stealth recording essentials?

Production sound mixing courses are a close, but not perfect, match. They use similar equipment and techniques. They teach dialogue recording, of course, not sound effects. Recording arts programs explain editing and psychoacoustics. Film schools often give a brief nod toward Foley recording. Studio recording is vastly different from recording in the wider world, however. Sure, there are isolated classes that toss a recorder at a student then turn them out onto the street.

It's not enough. Field recording deserves far more attention than a week or even a month of study. The technical aspects alone are enough to keep a curious student busy for a year. Broader considerations of sound effects recording require even more reflection: how can a recordist best capture a subject's voice,

its place in space, or its context amongst other sounds?

I stumbled across field recording incidentally, as most new recordists do. Starting out in field recording today remains similar to my experience in 1996. Yes, it's true that recording workshops exist. Blogs have sprouted with videos and tutorials. That's helpful, but it lacks a focused approach. Much of the information is scattered and confusing.

New recordists need more. The subject is just too broad. And it's no surprise. Field recording is a study of one of our senses, applied to endless subjects in unpredictable environments. Each recording is influenced, and even enhanced, by personal interpretation and skill.

*Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* attempts to add to this discussion. I wrote it to introduce curious people to field recording in a simple, understandable way. My aim for *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* is to share, in a small way, ideas that will contribute to a goal we share. What goal is this?

It is the hope that an understanding of this craft will have a greater effect. I believe the world benefits when vibrant, inspiring sound surrounds us. Weak audio doesn't enrich anyone. Superior sound expands our appreciation of the voices that drift across the planet: the machines, animals, people, places, and events that mark our lives.

You will capture these sounds. You will use them to skilfully complement your projects, and carry these voices to others.

As your craft sharpens, you will gather and build this expression effortlessly. Your creativity will ripen quickly, and burst with your own insight and personality. Your sound effects will flourish.

But this takes time. It requires focus and diligence. This doesn't come from any single book, blog, or mentor. Instead, field recording is a craft of discovery and expression.

Let's begin.

## How to Use This Book

A caveat before we start: this is not a book about equipment. Yes, an entire chapter is dedicated to introducing and choosing gear. Equipment is a field recordist's essential partner. It's required to document audio. However, settings, switches, and stats are not the focus of this book.

Instead, we'll consider far more important ideas: how and why we record sound effects, and what this means to the craft.

*Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* explores the fundamentals of field recording. Are you someone with little experience? That's good! This book assumes you've not recorded before, or that you've done so only casually. I've written it so anyone can understand the craft. I've avoided science and acoustics. Some sections touch upon sound theory briefly, but it's not required to appreciate the ideas here.

And these ideas are the ones that matter. Are you looking for a detailed guide to record every sound effect you'll encounter? I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. I don't explain how to rig up biplanes, or prepare a minigun recording session. That approach won't be covered here. After all, how can one book document how to record every person, prop, or place?

Instead, *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* shares guidelines. It explores both specific sound effects and atmospheres. It's meant to give you a broad impression of what happens during field recording. If you'd like to know what field recording is about, and how to begin, this is the book for you.

I'll point out the obvious: there isn't a single correct way to record all sound effects. Leave automation to robots in factories. Field recordists are quite different. Yes, they must capture pure, precise audio. But the greatest recordings

are the product of the unique imprint a field recordist scrawls upon the sounds they collect.

*Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* shares the background of the profession, and the context of sound effects. It suggests what equipment to use. It explains how to conceive, shape, and execute a field recording session to ensure you capture impressive sound effects.

Use this book to discover the basics. Learn the background of field recording. This will suffuse your sound clips with depth. Follow the arc of a field recording trip from research to wrap. This guarantees you shape smooth shoots that gather clean, vigorous sound effects. Know the hazards. Keep them in mind to avoid pitfalls you may encounter.

Consider the book more of a guide than a checklist. Why? *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* doesn't view sound effects recording as a craft reduced merely to success or failure. Instead, use the ideas here to discover field recording. Consider how they fit with your goals. Delve into the sections that interest you. Discard those that don't. Take the suggestions and reflect. Then record thoughtfully.

Use the ideas in *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* to begin your career, not as a clinical, lifeless approach to audio, but as a way to discover the world through sound.

## What You'll Find Inside

*Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* follows the path a field recordist takes as they capture sound effects.

It's more than a series of bullet points, however. One important aspect the book aims to explore is that field recording has more meaning than just passively operating equipment.

So, "[An Introduction to Field Recording](#)" begins by exploring the craft itself. How is field recording different from other audio professions? What do recordists capture? How do they do it? How is field recording different from studio recording? Do these distinctions affect the craft?

"[About Sound Effects](#)" looks deeply at the creations a field recordist pursues. Each recordist has a goal and an audience (whether they realize it or not), and this affects the sound they capture. This chapter explores why, and helps you find your own goal and audience. It reflects on the purpose of sound effects and how this makes them valuable, and often remarkable.

"[Field Recording: From Research to Wrap](#)" is the core of the book. It follows the entire span of a field recording session. It begins by considering the goal of field recording, then shares practical steps on how to conceptualize, prepare, and ensnare vibrant audio in the field.

"[The Field Recording Toolbox](#)" introduces gear. It explains the role of equipment in field recording in a simple way. It explores microphone types, polar patterns, recorders, and more. You'll learn what you need to get started, from preamps to accessories and gadgets. It suggests how to grow your arsenal of gear over time. It arms you with tips to help you stock up on tools that are right for you.

The "[Research](#)" and "[Scouting](#)" chapters show how to begin a field recording project. "[Before the Shoot](#)" prepares you. It includes suggestions for deciding on technique, choosing gear settings, and organizing every facet of a session before it happens.

"[During the Shoot](#)" steps you through every moment of a field recording trip. It explains how to choose your location, set up, and isolate both specific sound effects and ambiences. There are tips for managing talent, crew, and the public. Unsure how to use positioning, or how to slate? This chapter presents your options and helps you choose.

What's the best way to record a sound effect? If there were only one answer, field recording wouldn't be a craft. It would be a science. "[Recording Sound Effects](#)" explores how to evoke thoughtful and powerful performances from specific sound effects and atmospheres.

*Field Recording: From Research to Wrap* concludes with a list of common troubles. "[What Can Go Wrong During Field Recording... And What You Can Do About It](#)" explains how to spot technical, environmental, and creative challenges, and how to fix them.

And when you're done you can read the mini-book *The 30-Day Quick-Start Guide to Field Recording: From Research to Wrap*. This is a separate step-by-step guide. Want to know the exact steps you must take to become a field recordist? The *Quick-Start Guide* breaks the ideas from this book into small daily tasks you can complete in a month. It takes you through the specific steps needed to begin recording, develop your skills, and build a confident sound effects library.

But for now, let's learn about the craft. We'll begin with "An Introduction to

Field Recording."

# **An Introduction to Field Recording**

# About Field Recording

## What Is the Craft of Field Recording?

Are you a field recordist, a sound designer or Foley artist? An expert capturing controlled specifics? Perhaps you draw from an armoury of hundreds of microphones. Maybe you slip through locations capturing stealth atmospheres.

Confused? Don't worry. If you don't recognize those terms, this chapter is for you.

Perhaps you're a film student and have heard stories of field recording sessions. Maybe you already work in sound and want to try something new. You could be a musician who is interested exploring sound beyond the realm of songwriting.

"About Field Recording" explains the concepts of field recording. We'll look at who field recordists are, what they capture, and the techniques they use.

Are you a veteran field recordist? Don't skip ahead just yet. This chapter will give you new ways of thinking about the work you already do. It will help you focus your craft to capture better sound effects.

This part will cover:

1. Field recording sound effects.
2. Disciplines of sound effects creation.
3. Specific sound effects and atmospheres.
4. Field recording techniques.

Let's get the basics out of the way first. What do we mean when we mention

field recording? Who does this kind of work? What sounds do these people capture?

Knowing this will help us better understand the role of equipment and of the recordist.

First, let's look at field recordists and sound effects.

## Field Recording and Sound Effects

I travel a lot recording sound effects. I often receive puzzled stares when I explain to customs agents that I am a field recordist.

I'm no longer surprised. Field recording is a specialized trade. It's understandable that there is confusion about what exactly we do. Why?

There are endless careers in audio. Others are usually familiar with sound work through music: bands, recording engineers, or live sound mixers at concerts. If we look harder, peculiar audio jobs appear: academic phonographers, acousticians, or even medical audiologists. Others range from voice actors to session musicians, production sound mixers or boom operators on film sets, editors, and sound engineers. However all these professions are quite different from that of the field recordist. Even those who work in audio may not know the professional nuances of their cousins in sound.

What kind of sound work are we looking at in this book?

Although audio appears in many forms, we'll be looking specifically at one special career that captures **sound effects**.

Even that term may be confusing to novices. The term [sound effects](#) sometimes refers to processing techniques applied to audio, such as reverberation, delay and so on. We'll not be looking at that in this book.

In our case we mean audio captured using microphones and recorders, or created artificially with samplers and software. The sound effects exist as isolated segments. They're typically stored as sound files on computer hard drives. They're used in playback software or in editing workstations.

Does this include that busker you heard on the street? What about processed vocals in animated films? People commonly assume sound effects include music or human dialogue. While sound effects may fuse elements of music or speech, we'll focus on something more specialized.

The sound effects we are interested in are defined by their subject. They are samples of existing sounds in the world, or new sounds created using gear or apps. They may be ferocious dog barks, crackling thunder peals, or gushing streams. They may be scintillating magic-spell invocations, dragon roars, or furious laser-pistol battles.

Typically they are used as tools to express creativity, or to contribute larger ideas in films, television or video games. They are often blended by skilled pros to evoke emotions, or convey narrative. These sound effects pros fuse technical expertise with creative expression. They carefully balance physical skill with articulating ideas. Thousands of sound pros have flourished twisting samples and recording clips. Who are these people? We'll read about them next.

## Disciplines of Sound Effects Creation

While a *saucier*, *garde manger* and pastry chef all prepare food, their jobs are completely different.

Sound effects creation is the same. There are a handful of disciplines that record, warp and create sound effects. Each has its unique way of producing sound effects. They are:

1. Sound design.
2. Studio or Foley recording.
3. Field recording.

### Sound Design

[Sound design](#) is sometimes referred to as a position: creative managers that conceptualize the scope and application of audio in a project.

We're referring to something else. In this sense, sound design is the way in which sound effects are produced. Sound designers create sound clips from synthesized sources, and twist them with processing effects such as distortion, filtering, time stretching and pitch shifting. They may also use a real-world sound, such as a pig snort, and apply inspired processing or editing to conjure a completely new creation.

Sound designed effects include logo whooshes, zaps, blips, lasers, energy forcefields, monster growls and roars, spaceships, and more.

The distinguishing factor is that sound design uses artificial embellishments to create the final sound. A large part of the sound's composition takes place

within samplers or software.

## Studio or Foley Recording

These are sound effects created in a heavily controlled environment. They are usually recorded in a soundproof theatre or studio.

The sound effects are performed by the recordist or their assistant amongst carefully arranged microphones.

These sound effects, when performed live in synchronization with video, are called [Foley](#). This is commonly done to augment sound for post production film, television, radio, and video games. When the performance is not in sync with picture, they are often referred to as **wild effects**.

Examples of studio recordings include footsteps, shattering glass, metal flexing and warping, and more.

Studio recording is different from sound design in that the sound effects are performed live. Also, processing plays less of a role. The live performance is more influential to the sound clip.

## Field Recording

[Field recording](#), which is sometimes called **phonography**, is the craft of recording sound effects outside in the wider world. Field recordists work in cities, swamps, and forests. They may tinker with machines. They may chase rainstorms or thunder. Others patiently gather billowing wind or bustling market crowds.

There is a branch of field recording that captures live music in natural environments. Since we're focusing on sound effects, we won't be discussing that here.

Sometimes they are referred to as location sound recordists, although this term is more common for sound people on film sets. Field recordists are also known just as **recordists**.

Race cars, tiger growls, steam engines, festival crowds, and hockey games are all examples of subjects of sounds field recordists capture.

Field recording is different from sound design and studio recording in that it occurs outside of controlled environments such as software or the studio.

Sound design, studio recording, and field recording are all thriving disciplines of sound effects creation. While some of the ideas that follow are helpful to sound design and studio recording, this book will focus on the last discipline, field recording.

Each field recordist works a little differently. One may hunt diesel locomotive recordings. Others may gather libraries of water lapping and waves crashing. Some may frame carefully constructed sessions with dozens of scurrying workers and stockpiles of microphones. Other recordists wander cities and countrysides alone and incognito to capture atmospheres of places.

What makes these field recordists different? It's *what* they record, and *how* they do it, which we'll discuss next.

## Specific Sound Effects and Atmospheres

There's an entire planet of sound to be gathered. How do field recordists choose their subjects? Often a field recordist's job is defined by *what* they record.

There are two broad types of field recording. The difference between these two types of sound effects that recordists capture is how they are captured, and used. They are:

1. Specifics.
2. Atmospheres.

### Specifics

Specifics, also known as **specs**, are focused sounds. They're recorded carefully. The goal is to isolate them from other sounds around them, also known as recording them **clean**. They're sonic essays of a single subject, whether a dog, car, or airplane.

The recordist tries to capture every voice or action of the sound. They may capture the sound at different **perspectives**: close, distant, behind a door, and so on. They may capture a variety of the sound's voice so that they have a collection of the sound's **expression** or **performance**.

A power ratchet is a specific sound effect. A field recordist will capture every rev, twist, turn, and speed. They'll adapt the ratchet's performance to evoke as much expression from the sound as possible. They may also record the ratchet with a microphone next to it. Perhaps they'll record a version while the microphone is some distance away, for instance if the power ratchet is being used under a car.

This creates a **family**, or **series**, of sounds that contribute to a collection. A broad collection of sounds is helpful to field recordists because it gives the recordings flexibility when used by sound editors or creators.

The best specific sound effects are captured cleanly with many perspectives and performances.

Specifics may be performed by the recordist, but that's not always the case. A jet roaring overhead is also a specific sound, but it is beyond the recordist's direct control.

The chief difficulty when recording specific sound effects is capturing vivid performances. The skill of the field recordist affects how a subject performs, or how they capture it. The best specific sounds convey this vibrancy, and are expressive and unique.

## Atmospheres

Atmospheres, also known as **ambiences**, have a broader theme. They're field recordings of an environment. These can be recordings of crowds, traffic, or jungles.

While specific sound effects may occur within them (e.g., a monkey call in a jungle), atmospheres are captured in a way that doesn't highlight any sound over another. They may develop over time, such as an angering protest crowd, or an approaching storm. Others aim for consistency: barren winds over steppes, or happily chattering patio crowd voices.

The goal of atmospheres is to create a broad sonic scene of a place, time, or

event.

The key difference between specifics and atmospheres is **duration**. Because ambiences develop over time, they have opportunities to convey more than shorter, specific sound effects.

The best atmospheres are immersive: they submerge listeners in a different sonic reality. They transport listeners to another sense of time or place. An ambience of a Buddhist monastery can whisk listeners through their headphones to Tibet.

The most powerful ambiences convey emotion. A rally may inspire. A street riot can incite rage or sympathy.

These things can be conveyed only if the ambience is **authentic** and **clean**. This isn't easy. Every second that passes provides another opportunity for gear to stumble, the atmosphere to shift abruptly, or problem sounds to intrude (i.e., airplanes overhead, music, air conditioning, curious voices).

Most field recordists freely capture both specific sound effects and ambiences. Some specialize. A recordist may only record guns, which is a specific sound effect. Others may record atmospheres of their city. This is the way field recordists are defined: by *what* they record.

The problems remain: how do field recordists pull vivid performances from specific sound effects? How do they capture pristine, authentic atmospheres?

To do this, field recordists turn to one of four techniques they have in their toolbox.

## Field Recording Techniques

Perhaps you want to record a library of specific fight sound effects of kicks, punches, and biting. Maybe you're drawn toward harvesting countryside soundscapes.

The variety of *what* a field recordist collects is vast. *How* they record this is also broad. Not every field recordist captures sound effects in the same way.

When a field recordist gears up and hits the streets, they approach recording one of four ways. During a field recording **session**, **shoot**, or **recording trip**, they will find themselves using one of these techniques:

1. Controlled field recording.
2. Investigative field recording.
3. Stealth field recording.
4. Guerrilla field recording.

The differences between these techniques can be subtle. I've found that comparing them broadly to genres of journalism and filmmaking is helpful.

### Controlled Field Recording

If you imagine the sound effect equivalent of a journalistic interview, you'll have a good idea what Controlled field recording entails.

This technique is defined by structure. Sound effects are captured in a protected environment. The shoot will be performed in a recording studio or theatre, or cordoned location. This is a huge relief to field recordists. They don't

have to wrestle with problem sounds that may trample on field recordings: intruding traffic passes, disruptive people, fluorescent light buzz, or birdsong.

This technique is exciting because it highlights performances. Since the shoot is planned, both the people (voice actors) and equipment (a car, plane, or machine) are there solely to support the field recordist's creative vision. Field recordists can manipulate performances on demand to conjure the best sounds. Like a journalist interviewing a star, the Controlled technique shapes the session, although the resulting performance may vary.

These field recordists can afford to use elaborate microphone arrangements and multiple recorders. This creates diversity and extensive **coverage**, or breadth of recordings. The session will produce hundreds of clips. This is helpful because if one take fails, it's easy to produce another. Because of this, studio and Foley recording belong in this category.

Controlled field recording sessions are defined by their structure. They are carefully planned and organized. They produce many takes of pure sound effects.

## Investigative Field Recording

[Investigative journalists](#) delve into a single topic such as an exposé or a crime. They research the subject, then present a revealing story of what they've found. The field recording equivalent is similar.

The Investigative technique begins with an idea. The field recordist has a concept for creating or capturing a sound. The challenge for Investigative field recordist is making that idea a reality. If the research, execution, and result are solid, a compelling sound is revealed.

Investigative field recordists begin researching a sound. It may be a gun, a rare animal, or an upcoming event. It may be a locomotive. They may learn what powers the train and what special sounds it creates. Part of this research involves finding the best place to record the sound. Like investigative journalists, they may need to convince gatekeepers to grant access.

Most field recording falls under this technique. Of course not every field recordist painstakingly plans their sessions. They may just grab their kit, sprint out the door, and record sounds. The idea is that this technique involves concentrating on a single type of sound, learning about it and the sounds it makes, then capturing it authentically.

## Stealth Field Recording

This technique is unconventional, risky, and difficult. It involves hopping fences, slipping through side doors, or obscuring one's presence. Stealth field recordists need to sneak into protected places. They must travel inconspicuously. Their gear needs to be light and they must be agile.

Field recordists use the Stealth technique to capture sound effects for two reasons. The first reason is **access**. Recording a sound effect may be restricted in some way. For example, police don't allow the public into their stations. To capture cadet training or interrogation room atmospheres, field recordists must use the Stealth technique to access these places.

Another reason is the need for **authenticity**. Sound equipment is recognizable. People change their behaviour when they notice it. They may become showy, withdrawn, or may sabotage recordings. A field recordist uses the Stealth technique to ensure the atmosphere is pure and real, unaffected by

their presence.

The Stealth technique is mostly used to capture ambience. It can also involve gaining access to capture a specific sound in a restricted location.

Stealth field recording is an exciting technique because it provides a unique opportunity to capture rare and incredibly evocative sound effects.

## Guerrilla Field Recording

[Guerrilla filmmakers](#) shoot films with little preparation, permission, or equipment. They use small crews in raw environments.

Their field recording cousins are similar. They are the ambulance chasers of the audio world. They may skitter from one location to another to capture a transitional, fleeting sound effect. A good example is recording the sound of a protest as it responds, swells, and bursts into a riot.

The Guerrilla technique is similar to Stealth field recording in that there is minimal control over the environment. While Stealth recordings are primarily static, Guerrilla recordings are in flux. Recordists using this technique must be flexible. They need to respond quickly to unpredictable situations and environments. Because of this, they must use simplified, portable gear. They are masters of adapting their equipment to capture clean, representative recordings while on the run.

Guerrilla field recordists need to be able to spot and respond to opportunities. They benefit from a good sense of timing. It is a challenging, thrilling field recording technique.

Why bother to differentiate between techniques? Shouldn't a field recordist simply record anything they please?

Of course. However, knowing these techniques, their costs, benefits, and when to use them strengthens your sound effects.

This is a sample of *Field Recording: From Research to Wrap*. Share it with as many people as you like.

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