

- An Overview of the Foley Process-

Foley: The process of recording sound in-sync with the picture as it's being projected on a screen.

Why do we call it Foley?

The process is named for the sound pioneer Jack Foley, at Universal Studios. It evolved from his process of recording synchronized sound effects to the action in the film. Universal developed its use in the late 50's. Most of this early work was devoted to recording footsteps. Foley is the only motion picture process named after a person.

How did they do this before Foley?

Before Foley, footsteps (which included scrapes, turns, and movement) were all hand-cut from a *Footsteps Library* (they can still be found on some CD-Sound Libraries). Rolls of various footstep materials, representing different moves on a variety of surfaces were mounted on a *film horse* and the editor would choose the appropriate footsteps, that matched the image on the film, and hand cut it synchronizing each step.

From the pioneering efforts of Jack Foley, the process has evolved into a recording art form. It has been mistakenly said that foley is the process of recording *incidental* sounds. Foley now includes the recording of not only footsteps, but any person, creature, thing or object that can be seen on the movie screen, whether it moves or not. The importance of foley is paramount in the creation of an M&E (Music & Effects) Track. This completely filled sound track consists of all the music and sound effects mixed and balanced as in the final sound track of a released film. It does not contain any English Dialogue and is supplied to foreign countries for over-dubbing in their native languages. All sounds that were heard in the production track, under the English dialogue, become unavailable and are replaced with foley.

The design of Foley Recording Stages is an acoustic science. The basic Foley Stage consists of a number of surfaces that may be found in live filming such as wood, cement, vinyl tile, asphalt and *pits* containing dirt, sand, rocks, and water. A well equipped foley stage has hundreds of props that are utilized for making sounds and the inventory grows with each film.

Acoustically, the foley stages are designed so subtle to loud sounds can be recorded in a perfectly neutral environment, where the recorded sounds do not contain an interior or exterior quality.

Technically, the foley stages must be able to project all media in every format. The recording systems are and usually record direct to a hard disk such as ProTools.

The key to successful Foley Recording and its final product is the crew.

The Foley Artist who is able to walk / run / fall and recreate all the movements of a person he or she is emulating on the screen. The foley artist who adapts and improvises with props to create sounds for objects seen on the screen, from a single footstep, finger snap to the crashing of a car or an airplane. Subtle sounds to create ambiences such as a wisp of wind or the rustle of a leaf falls within the domain of the foley artist. Timing, innovation, improvisation, and inventiveness are all qualities found in the foley artist.

The Foley Mixer who is able to record the sounds created by the Foley Artist in a natural tone or an exaggerated tone. The use of Signal processing, during recording, is a tool of the Foley Mixer when the recording requires an altered sound. The Foley Mixer is ultimately responsible for the correct level, perspective, and texture of the sound whether it be naturally or artificially (using props to make sounds) created.

The Recordist who is responsible for the recording layout and organization of multiple track recordings. A layout consisting of the separation or isolation of each character being foleyed by perspective and surface. The Recordist is also responsible for the organization of “sound alike materials” being recorded on the same channels. The final recording logs and subsequent transfers (copies of materials) fall in the realm of the recordist.

The Foley Editor who is responsible for determining what has to be foleyed. The editor then does the preliminary layout as to which channels (tracks) the foley will be recorded. The foley recording session is supervised by the editor who approves the synchronization and quality of the sound. The recorded foley tracks are then edited to ensure sync and laid out in their final form for the mix by the foley editor.

In the early days of live radio, John Dennis discovered a way to create the sound of thunder. He rattled a large piece of thin copper sheeting suspended by wires. The technique became so popular, with others in his field, that an irate Dennis accused another producer of “**stealing my thunder**”.

Foley artist have continued the technique of fooling our ears with sounds created by objects that have no relation to what we see on the screen. Thereby, the sounds created by the foley artist have rewarded us with rich, full, and often dramatic sound tracks.

What you see is not what you hear

Sound	Props or methods used	Fx/Foley Artist
Bats shrieks	Pitched up chickens	David Fiskov
Boulder Rolling	Car rolling downhill (motor off)	Ben Burt
Blow to the head	Water melon with cream crackers pasted on then whack with hammer or axe	Nick Arundel
Body and Face Hits	Hitting slab of meat, use baseball bat to hit leather jacket wrapped around baseball gloves	Ben Burt
Bones Breaking	Chicken bones in polystyrene cup break and snap them together Crushing plastic drink cups	Patrick Phelan Paul Arnold
Car Crashes	Car door, hood or fender - Sledge Hammer	Mark Estdale
Dog shaking self dry	Shake or quickly twist back and forth, a wet mop (mop head mounted directly on pole)	Martin Severn
Driving on snow	Plastic bags	Mark Estdale
Driving on snow	Flour - Great for walking, too	Mark Estdale
Fire crackle	For burning wood pops and snaps break matches or pop air bubbles in plastic wrap For crackle use crisp packets of potato chips, very slowly compress them by hand	David Fiskov Tim Wright
Snake Movement	Mushy/oily food movement of wet sponge (on rubber)	Ben Burt
Walking, snow	Lay a strip of carpet over gravel and walk on it	Martin Severn

The list goes on and on - let your imagination be your guide.