

# SOUND IN THE MACHINE

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Introduction

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## SUMMARY

Introduces the listener to the format and style of the podcast and to the voice and personality of the presenter.

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## Introduction



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By Brian Snead

## TRANSCRIPT

Sound in the Machine is an audio podcast about sound, particularly the sounds of technology.

I'm Brian Snead, the host of Sound in the Machine.

As I said, this is a podcast about sound. Let's get a pesky little conundrum out of the way right off: I take sound to mean perceived acoustic energy. In other words, if nobody can hear it and make meaning out of it, I'm not touching it in this podcast. You got it, we're in the woods as the ill-fated falling tree hits the ground. Well, maybe not just a plain old tree, but, say, an aluminum Christmas tree, because by 'the Machine' I mean to represent technology holistically. I take technology as anything of technical means interrelating with life, society, and the environment.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that just about everything we hear is a direct result of something humans have made. Maybe even for that reason, we very easily miss the wonder inherent in this. To take a line from Morpheus in the Matrix, you don't think that's actually my voice you are hearing right now, do you?

Sound pervades every facet of our lives, telling us much about the world. Though we hear many sounds all at once, we are often only aware of just a few. That so much of what we hear goes unnoticed also leads us to be unaware of what we assume about the world. We hear people speak and assume their level of education and where they come from by the way in which they use their voices. We also make judgments about their personality, their values, and how they think and feel about us. The sounds created by all manners of technology, from street traffic and construction to the hum created by the wires in the walls and air conditioning systems likewise tell us as much about our environments as the values of our communities. Of course we all listen to music, but seldom realize what it is supposed to

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<sup>1</sup> adapted from dictionary.com

do or that it *is actually intended* to do something specific, such as increase sales at malls or imbue the scenery in movies with ‘realism.’ And have you ever thought about how incredibly complex a piano or a saxophone or an organ is?

Because of the sheer volume of sounds in the world, we shut out most, becoming conscious of them only when they irritate us or alert us to a problem. So we hardly notice when sound is engineered to persuade us. Did you know, for instance, that the sound made by a closing car door is considered *so important* in giving the impression of a well-built automobile that United States Patents exist to protect innovations in car door sound design? Funny thing is, engineering the sound of a car door is entirely a marketing decision.

In *Sound in the Machine*, I’ll talk about all of this kind of stuff. I’m sure to get into the basics of acoustics and theories of perception, but will always focus on the ecological and rhetorical implications embedded in any sound.

My interest in this topic stems from my near-obsessive awareness of the sounds of the world since I was a little kid. I even managed to write my English Master’s thesis about sound on the Web. I gave it a long, convoluted title for kicks. Check it out under the research link at [briansnead.com](http://briansnead.com), my personal website. Though I ended my college career an English major, I started out and even graduated the first time as a pianist. I also spent my free time for a while as an amateur recording engineer. What I’m trying to do with this podcast is to keep myself involved in thinking about sound on many different levels. I figure doing it in a format that uses sound is the way to do it. Forcing myself to make something useful out of the stuff I find is the only way I’ll stay motivated. Just know that I’m not claiming that any of this is going to be definitive or ground-breaking. I have a good idea of what I am talking about, but I am still putting together the pieces too.

You can expect episodes to be between 10 and 20 minutes and to be released every few weeks. It could be two weeks between episodes and it could be six. Along with each episode, I will post a more-or-less verbatim transcript, references, and other related info at [Sound in the Machine.org](http://Sound in the Machine.org).