

Sound Setups

<http://www.earthsands.com/holiday/halloween/propssoundsetups.html>

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So how do you use the CDs, tapes, sounds within a Haunt and what equipment is needed? Well there are a lot of different ways to setup an overall sound system and also have several stand-alone or pocket areas with their own sounds. Here are a few ideas...

CD Player



The easiest setup is to use portable CD players. Everyone has one and borrowing a portable CD player from a friend is easier than borrowing their boom box or home stereo unit. The CD player allows to at the very least, looping of one track.

The better ones will allow you to program many tracks in the sequence you desire or even a random sequence. Portables can be powered by AC or DC via batteries, which makes it very portable. A pair of AA batteries will last the night.

Computer Speakers



So how do I get sounds from the CD player? I recommend using self powered computer speakers. This will require the use of AC power to power the DC transformer. If you have a need to place sound effects in remote locations where AC power is not easily accessible, I would suggest finding a pair of battery powered speakers sold for the sole purpose of supplementing portable CD players. In either case, you will need a patch cable to connect the line OUT of the CD player to the line IN to the speakers. Most all computer speakers will have this patch cable with the right size adapter, so no worries. I paid less than \$10 for a pair of computer speakers. You can buy them for \$6 at WinterGreen Systems.

Another setup is basically the same, but instead of using a portable CD player, use a portable tape player. The tape player should have the AutoReverse feature so that you can loop a standard audio tape. In this setup, you will have to record sounds on both sides of the tape, completely covering the entire length of the tape. If you do not, then gaps of silence will be encountered. If you use a 120 minute tape, you have 60 minutes of recording to do on both sides. I suggest buying a 30 minute tape, 15 minutes on both sides. You can find these

at Radio Shack for a reasonable price.

Portable Tape Player



If you don't have access to a portable tape player that has the AutoReverse feature, then I recommend purchasing an endless or Looping tape. These tapes continually loop without ever reaching the end of the tape. Only one side of the tape is used. These tapes are used for older answering machines. The tapes can be found at Radio Shack, but expect to pay \$5-\$7 for each tape. Also, the recording time on the tape ranges from 10-30 seconds. Yes, seconds, so a long music track is out of the question. However, it is perfect for screams, lightning, moans, etc.

Again, the portable tape players can be used in conjunction with computer speakers to provide the audio output needed at any given location.

Boom Boxes

Boom boxes or other CD/tape players can be used in some of the same manners mentioned above. I still recommend using portable audio (speaker) pieces to be hidden and located in multiple areas of your Haunt. This provides the most dramatic and dynamic effects.

Digital Recorders

I have seen some ideas on using digital recorders. The prices of these gadgets are dropping rapidly and might enable some creative uses. I have heard of ways to "hardwire" a patch cable to the inside of the casing of the device to feed it to a pair of self powered speakers. I suppose there is a way to loop the digital player.

MP3 Players

Don't forget the newest form of recorders and players. I'm sure the capabilities are even more wondrous in this media. I have no practical experience here.

Triggering a sound effect

In my experiences, I always have a need to trigger a dynamic sound effect triggered by motion detector, switch mat, etc. One of the easiest ways I have found is to use a Boom box tape player with an endless looping tape. I use a BoomBox because I want to trigger the effect using totally AC power. Boomboxes usually have a corded AC power source. The tape player was chosen because I can press (engage) the play button and keep it in that position whether or not the BoomBox has power or not. When the tape is in the player and is playing, I can cut the AC power and the effect goes dormant. When I restore the power, the play kicks in and I have momentary sound effects. (See the simple example on building a motion detector switch for AC power elsewhere on this site.) The looping tape only has 15 seconds of screams or whatever. The trigger only powers the effect for 20 seconds or so. The Boombox has its own speakers and thus, we have a pretty tightly integrated sound effect setup.

Speakers

Speakers need not be big or of high quality for haunts. See the section on computer speakers for my recommendations. Other ideas I am planning to implement in later years include obtaining a large BASE speaker that would be feed thunder sound effects. The BASE speaker can vibrate and create a more impressive effect than the limiting frequencies of computer or BoomBox speakers.

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