Courtney Smyth – Production Exercise #2

INTENTION

I am making a non-diegetic soundscape to back up the visual element of my film. Therefore, it is necessary to find the best sound that I can when editing and piecing sounds together, which will support the visuals of my film.

I intend to use the audio recording techniques I preferred in Production Exercise 1 and edit it these sounds to make a trial non-diegetic soundscape.
I want to initially compare editing Audacity (version 2.0.5) and Garageband (version 10.0.0), both of which I can use on my Mac laptop, and see which I find better to use as I edit the soundscape together. I am expecting that it will be the same program that I prefer to record in, however I will still compare and see if the other is preferable to edit.
After I have trialled both of these programs I will continue with the one I found best (easier and more user friendly) to finish the trial soundscape, which will be the result of the second production exercise. This will be what I submit.

I intend to look at:

• **Technical aspect of editing.**
    • <u>Tracks</u> – I will need to create new tracks and move things around into different places and tracks in order to achieve an aesthetic piece. Sounds will need to be recorded when some are already in, so there will need to be an easy way to mute tracks.

• **Achieving an appealing and complete overall sound -** I want this to be a trial of the arrangement I want for my final product audio.
    • <u>Structure and aesthetics</u> - I want it to start it off fairly quiet and then become more and more intense. To achieve this effect I will need to experiment with things such as layering voices and sounds, repetition, time manipulation, altering of sounds as well as things that I might discover when I actually play with the program. I will need to note how many sounds can be layered before it becomes too overwhelming and messy, how many times a sound can be repeated before it becomes too repetitive and how long I might be able to leave between sounds for the soundscape to still sound complete without huge spaces and jumps.

• <u>**Exporting**</u> - This exercise will also include exporting and I aim to learn how to export the audio in an accessible format with a high quality. The file type will need to be one that Final Cut Pro (version 6.0.6) can use and work with. I will need to open Final Cut and try the audio clip in there to hear the quality and make sure there are no unwanted noises that are from not having an appropriate file type.

EVALUATION

Technical aspect of editing

<u>Tracks</u>

The sounds I recorded were: running water, strings inside piano, phone beeps, piano echo after key was hit and voice.

I found that both programs easily allowed me to add new tracks to a project already with existing tracks. I was also able to move tracks around very easily.
In Audacity, I found that there were several tools which could be accessed easily and used. I needed to ensure I had selected the correct tool in order to execute an action. In the beginning I had tried to manipulate tracks only to realise I was on the wrong tool, but I got the hang of this fairly quickly.

I explored the tools and their functions:
The selection tool (top left) allowed me to select a range of audio to edit or listen to. I found that this was a tool that I used a lot when fiddling around and thought it was similar to the arrow tool in Final Cut.

The envelope tool (top middle) allowed me to select areas of a track to get louder and quieter. It was easily adjustable and a non fiddly way of adjusting audio volume if I only wanted particular sections louder.
*The drawing tool* (top right) was to alter individual samples but I did not use this during my editing as I did not need to as it was for extreme fine tuning of sound and I this was not what I required.
The zoom tool (bottom left) was used to zoom out as I needed to gauge where all my tracks were.
The timeshift tool (bottom middle) allowed me to slide recordings left or right as well as from track to track. This was used lots.
I did not use the *multi tool* (bottom right). It allowed me to access all of the tools but I found that it was easier for me to just click on the tool I wanted to use.

While I could easily move tracks around in GarageBand, it did not have options as advanced as Audacity and the settings were not all in the same place. One setting that I could find easily was the zoom tool, which although looked different to the magnifying glass icon in Audacity, had the same function. I used this regularly.
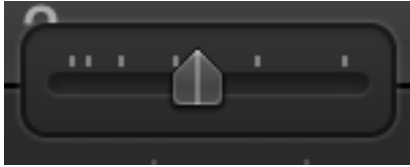
To select only part of a clip in GarageBand I had to click on an 'editor' button, which then opened up a section down the bottom, allowing me to select parts of recordings. This worked and I was able to cut my clips, but I found it more fiddly and more confusing.

The ease of all the buttons in Audacity meant that I could edit multiple tracks one after the other without needing to re-navigate like I did in GarageBand. The editor in GarageBand took up the bottom half of the screen meaning I could not see all of my tracks. This is seen in the image below.
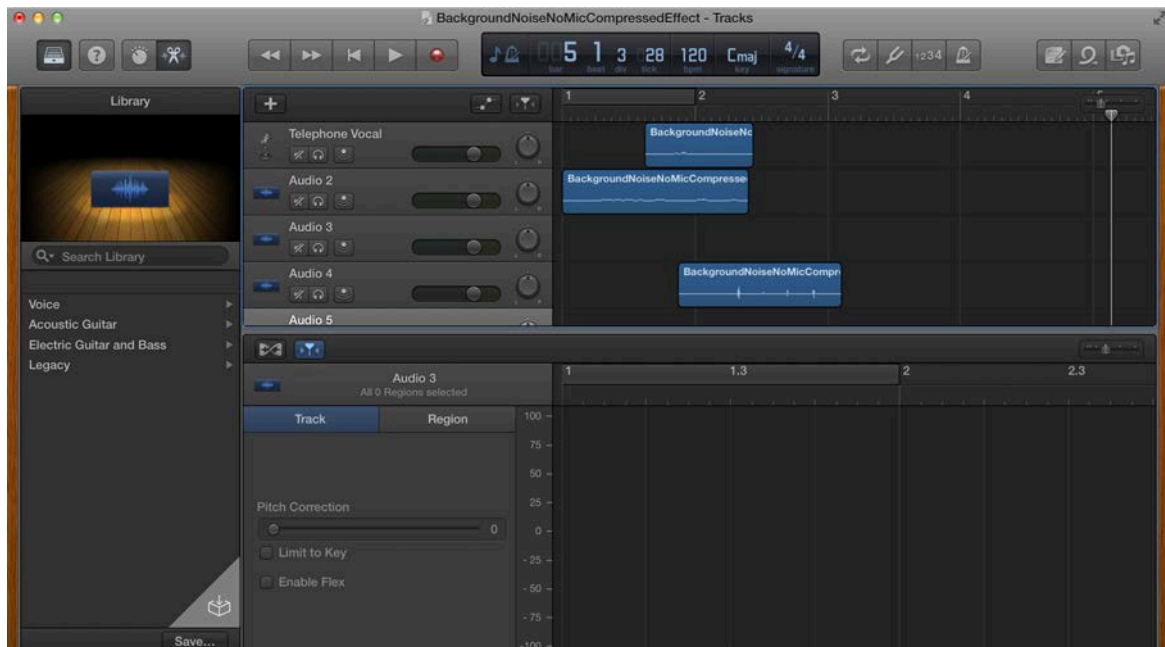
In both programs there was an option to mute selected tracks so I could listen to individual tracks or record a new sound. I used this regularly.

In Audacity, there was also an option to 'snap' to a certain time in the audio as well as seeing how many seconds had elapsed. GarageBand did not have this option and the elapsed time was shown in musical bars and counts rather than in seconds.
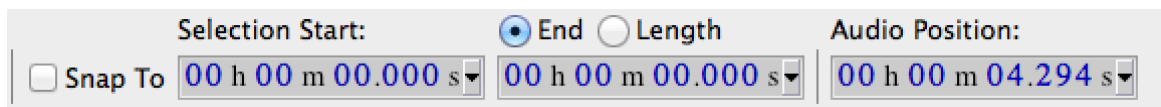
The Audacity function is seen above.

The GarageBand function is seen above.

After playing with both of the programs, I found that due to the multitude of tools, funtions and the ease of Audacity, I wanted to use this to construct my final soundscape for submission.

Technical aspect of editing

Structure and aesthetics

I feel that I achieved my goal of starting my track off quietly and then becoming more intense. I started off with one track and then, to begin increasing the intensity, I duplicated the track and layered it on itself. I
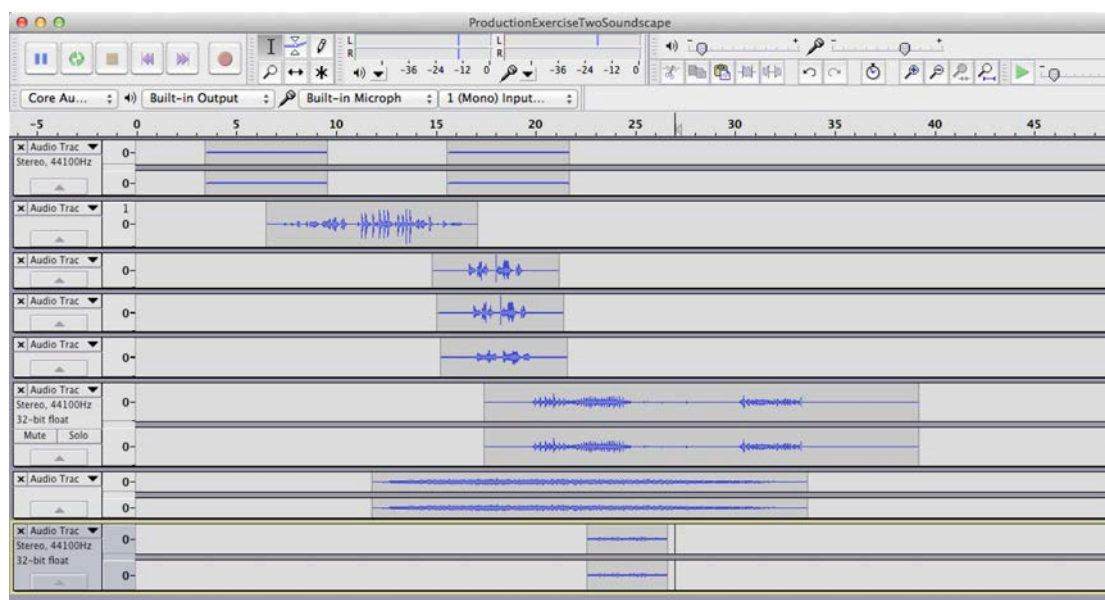
then layered these with a different recording. At the most intense part of my piece, I had five different noises layered on each other. One of these noises was voice, which consisted of three duplicates each with a slightly different effect and played at a slightly different time. The effects included 'Paulstretch' which stretched out the sound and made it deeper' as well as the other two which were slightly 'compressed'. To ease up on the intensity, I used the fade out effect to make the sounds end less abruptly. Throughout the piece, I also used the reverse effect, which created a warp on one of the sounds. I took a selection from my piano sound and reversed it, layering it during the intense section of the scape.

I was happy with the intensity of the piece and felt that with a few more layers I would have become overly intense to a point where it would be messy.
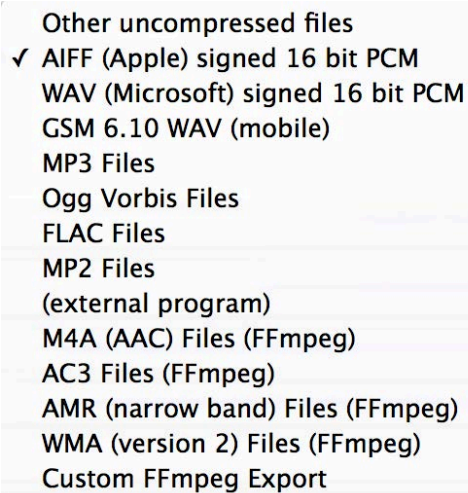
I also experimented with leaving a gap in the scape. The gap had only an ambient noise which was the echo of the piano. I lengthened and shortened this gap until I found a happy medium where it felt right to start the sounds again. This added a degree of tension to the piece.

I also played with repetition. My running water noise was duplicated several times and I did not think this was an issue. However, I realised that depending on the sound, too much repetition could be an issue if the sound was not varied as it could get boring or annoying to listen to. The sound waves in the water noise were quite varied so I feel that repeating it several times was quite interesting.

The screenshot below shows my piece. You can see the repetition and layering which has been used.

Exporting

Other uncompressed files
✓ AIFF (Apple) signed 16 bit PCM
WAV (Microsoft) signed 16 bit PCM
GSM 6.10 WAV (mobile)
MP3 Files
Ogg Vorbis Files
FLAC Files
MP2 Files
(external program)
M4A (AAC) Files (FFmpeg)
AC3 Files (FFmpeg)
AMR (narrow band) Files (FFmpeg)
WMA (version 2) Files (FFmpeg)
Custom FFmpeg Export

To export my soundscape from Audacity (my chosen program), I clicked **File > Export.** There was a list of export options (as seen in the above picture).

I chose to export in the MP3 file type first as I recalled having used this in Final Cut before without any troubles. When I imported this track into Final Cut, it played on the timeline clearly and without any fuzz or unwanted noise. (I did need to render first, but this only took a few seconds.) I also decided to export in the AIFF and WAV file types to try these in Final Cut. These played well also (without rendering).

After further research of file types, I learned that an MP3 file is a more heavily compressed file type known as a 'lossy' file. This means that the audio has been compressed and some frequencies which we may not even notice have been cut out, slightly lowering the quality. These can often hiccup in Final Cut due to this lowered quality and can be more unpredictable. The WAV and AIFF files are both 'lossless' meaning that the original file has not been altered or compressed, maintaining highest quality. WAV and AIFF are essentially the same except that AIFF is made by Apple and WAV is pretty much universal.

The lossy file such as the MP3 has a smaller size than a lossless file such as the AIFF or WAV. When making my product, storage will not be an issue to me as I will ensure I have a large capacity on a hard drive and USB, therefore, I will be using an AIFF or WAV file when exporting for my product to ensure that maximal quality is maintained. However, knowing that *all* of these file types work may come in handy if I face any unforeseen issues later on in production. Both are labelled and on the USB.

IN SUMMARY

I found that Audacity, through its more extensive variety of accessible functions, allowed me to more easily edit an aesthetic piece than GarageBand, which I found harder to navigate. I learned how to use these functions to fiddle with my soundscape and experiment with different structures in terms of where I placed my recordings.

I learned to listen to my piece to evaluate how many tracks could be layered depending on the level of intensity (in this case it was five). I learned to shape the soundscape to build and then become quiet again.

In exporting, I learned about file types. I discovered that they would all play in Final Cut, however I will use an AIFF or WAV file in my final product rather than an MP3 as the quality will be higher and there is less chance of discrepancy with this quality.