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Bridging the gap between developer and contractor: How Capcom and Soundelux DMG collaborated on LOST PLANET 2

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Presented by

Peter Zinda

Supervising Sound Designer

Soundelux Design Music Group

Peter Zinda began at Soundelux in 1995 where he began working on feature films. Peter has divided his time between video game sound design and film sound editorial over the past 14 years. He has received several awards for his work, including winning the 2009 Golden Reel and Gang Award for best cinematic audio for his work on Gears of War 2. He serves on the advisory board of GANG-IESD.

Presented by

Tomoya Kishi

Sound Director (= Audio Director)

CAPCOM Co.,Ltd.

Tomoya Kishi began work at Capcom in 2001. He was involved in the development of the Onimusha series, particularly dealing with its surround technology and gaining a strong understanding of how in-game sound mixing impacts the final product. Tomoya was promoted to Sound Director for Lost Planet and is currently a member of the team creating the sound drivers for Capcom's proprietary engine, MT Framework. His additional responsibilities as Sound Director include developing efficient sound methodologies and production environments.

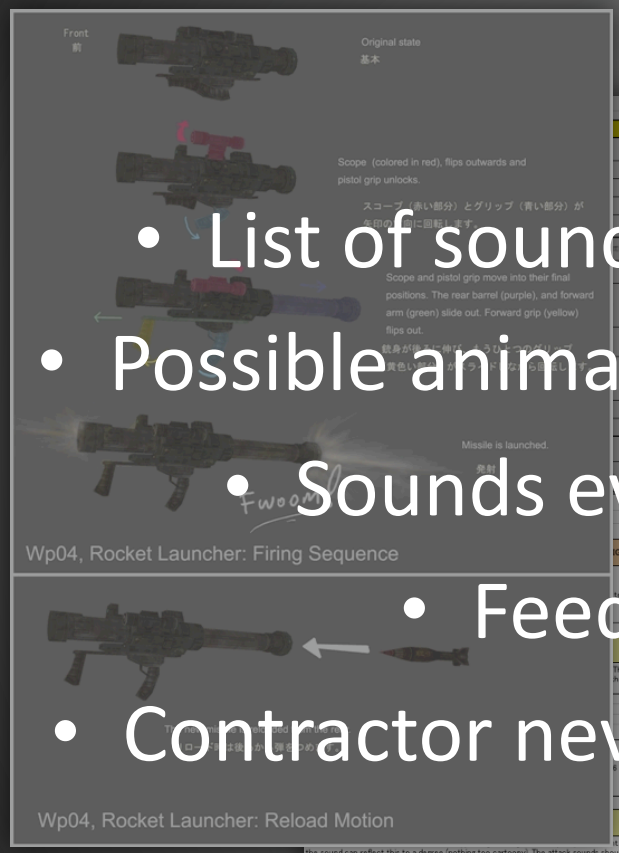
Improving collaboration between developer and contractor

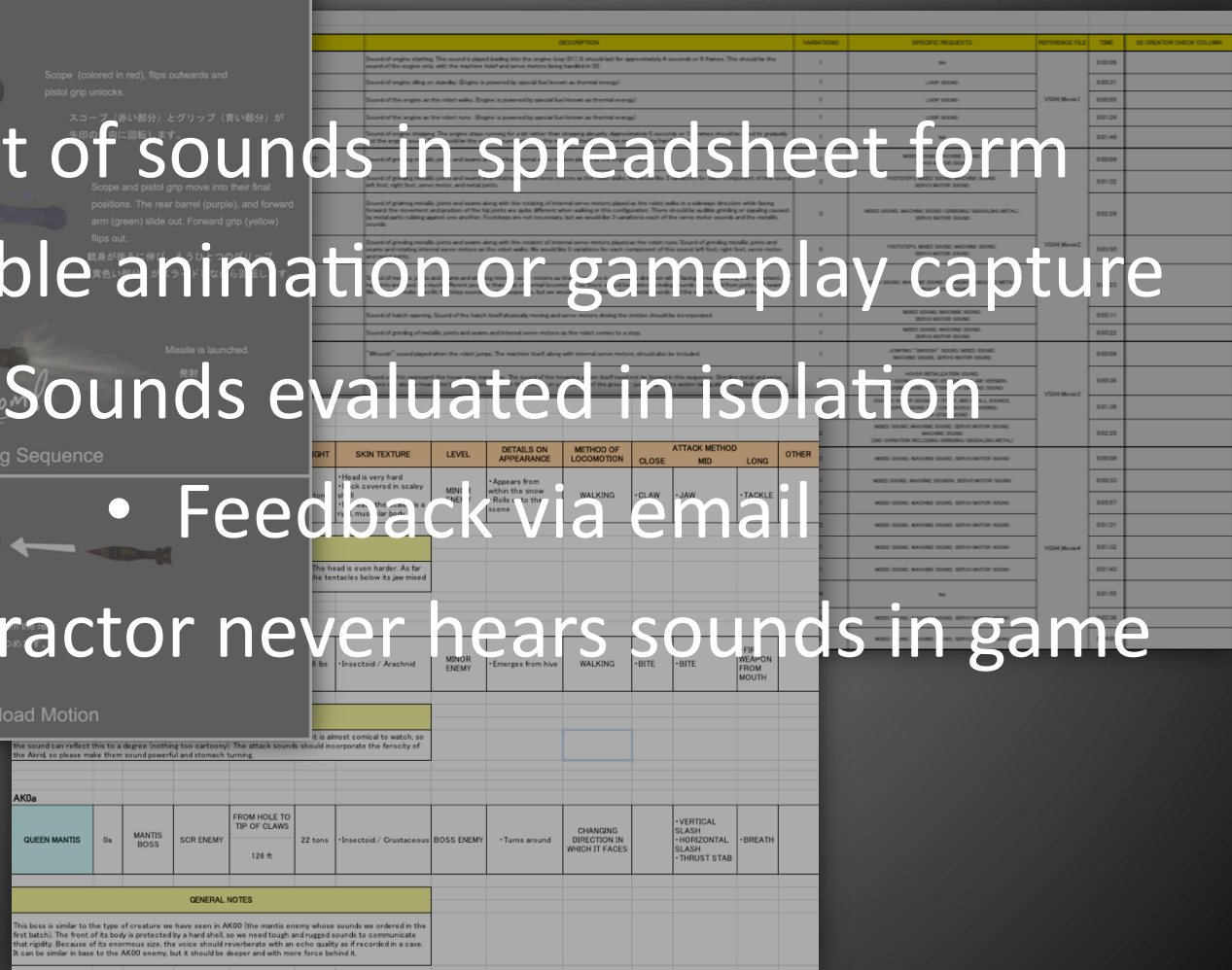
- Work flow
- Technology
- Benefits
- Investment

Agenda

- Current Paradigm
- Improvement of Method
  - Individual sound vs. Game sound
  - Sound Design Tips
  - Benefits of working with contractor
  - Streamlining implementation
  - Long preparation time
- Reference Level
- Cut down travel expenses
- Source-Connect
- Collaborating on in game mix
- Mixing Cinematics
- Security
- Investments – making the transition
- Wrap-up
- Q&A

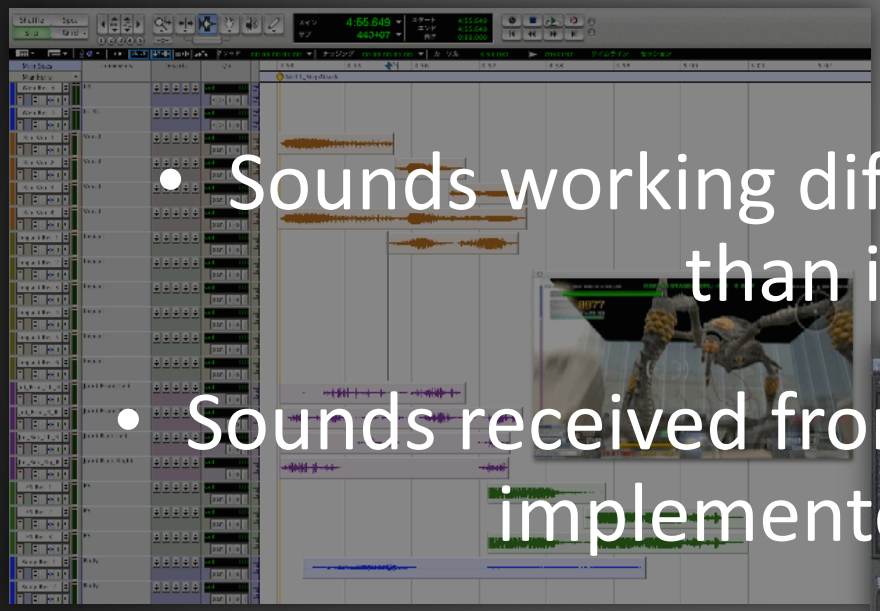
Current paradigm
- Outsourcing Sound Design



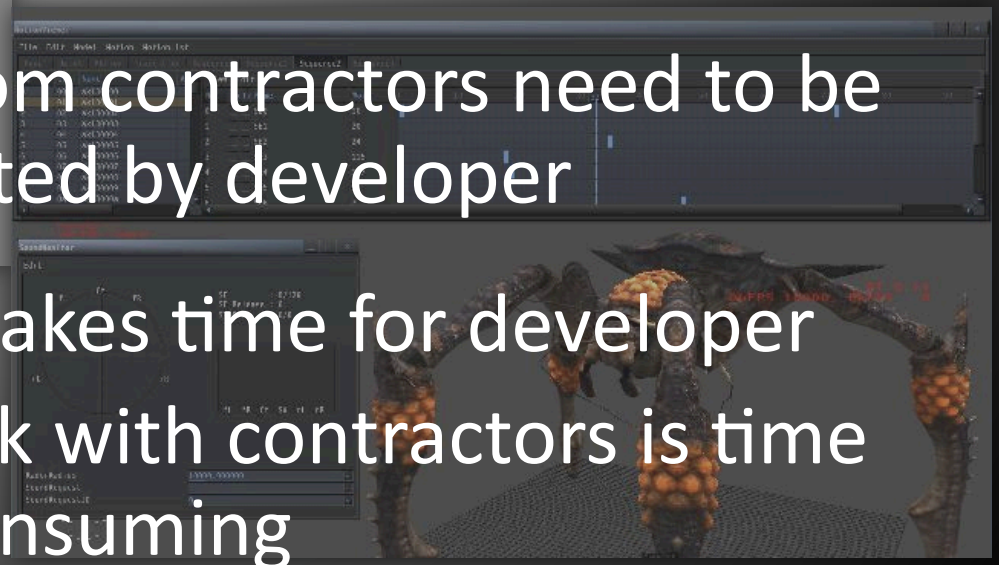


- List of sounds in spreadsheet form
- Possible animation or gameplay capture
- Sounds evaluated in isolation
- Feedback via email
- Contractor never hears sounds in game

Current paradigm
- Problems
(and experienced during first Lost Planet)

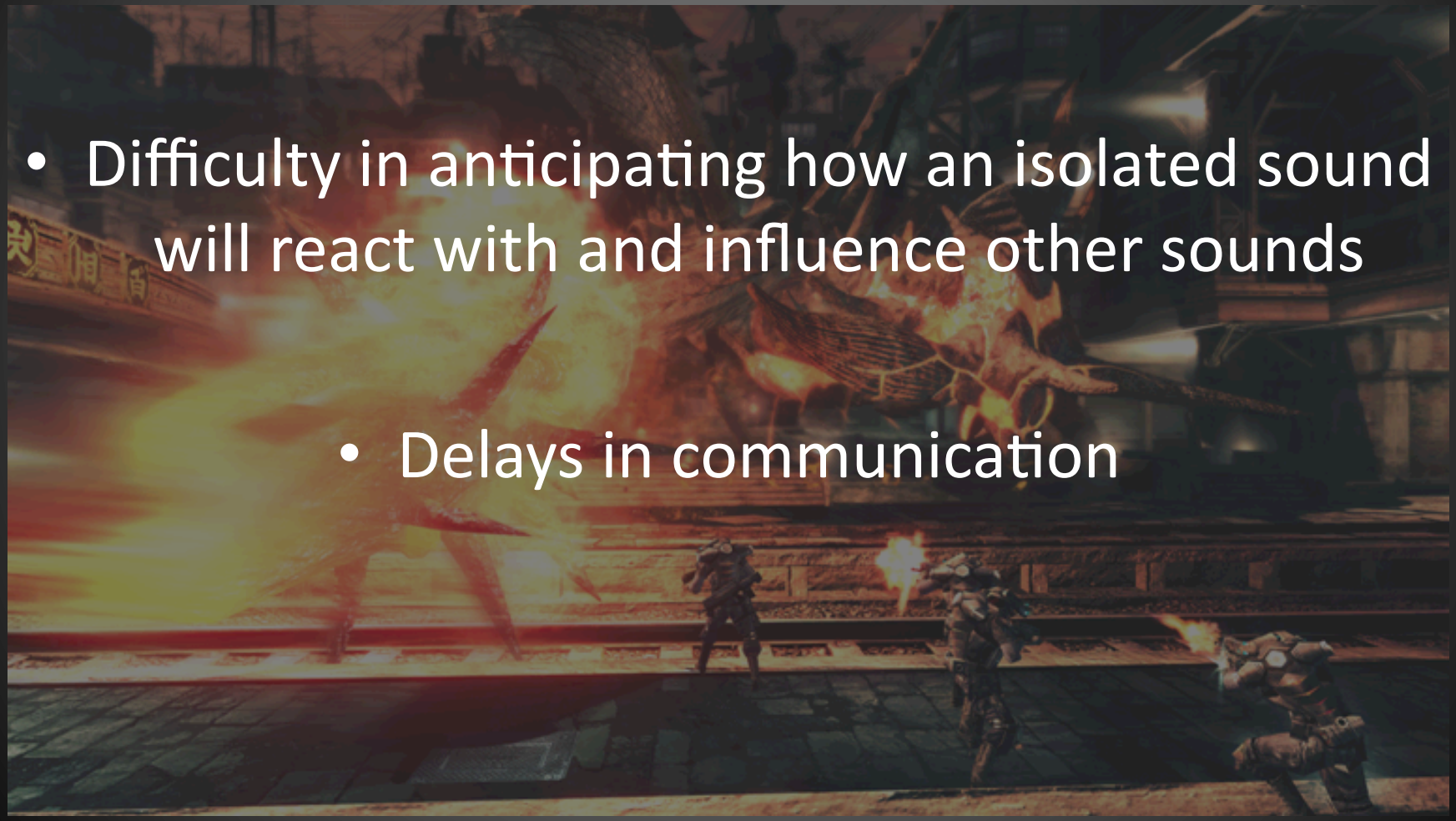


- Sounds working differently in game engine than in isolation
- Sounds received from contractors need to be implemented by developer



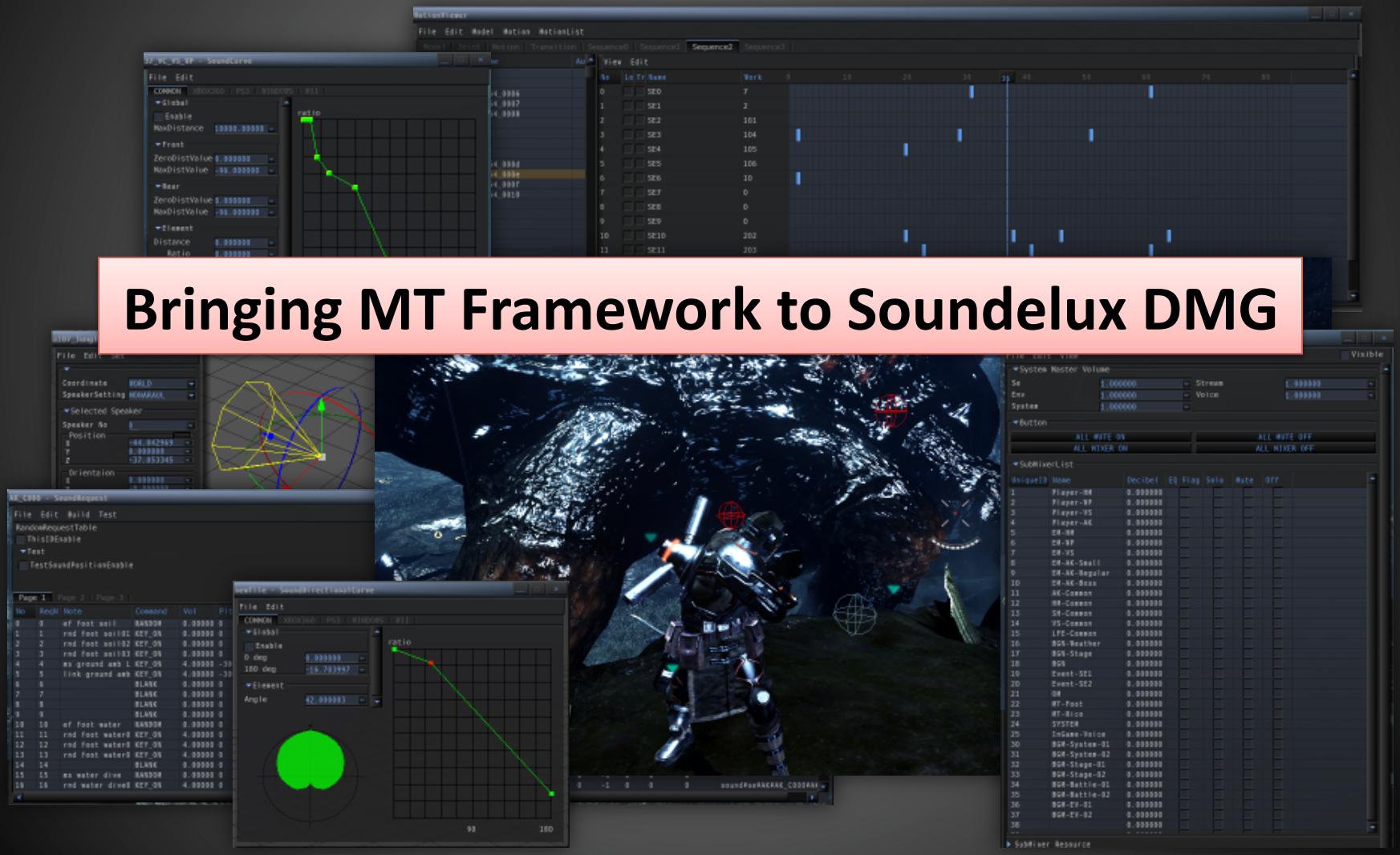
- Implementation takes time for developer
- Preparation to work with contractors is time consuming

Current paradigm - Disadvantages to focusing on individual sounds



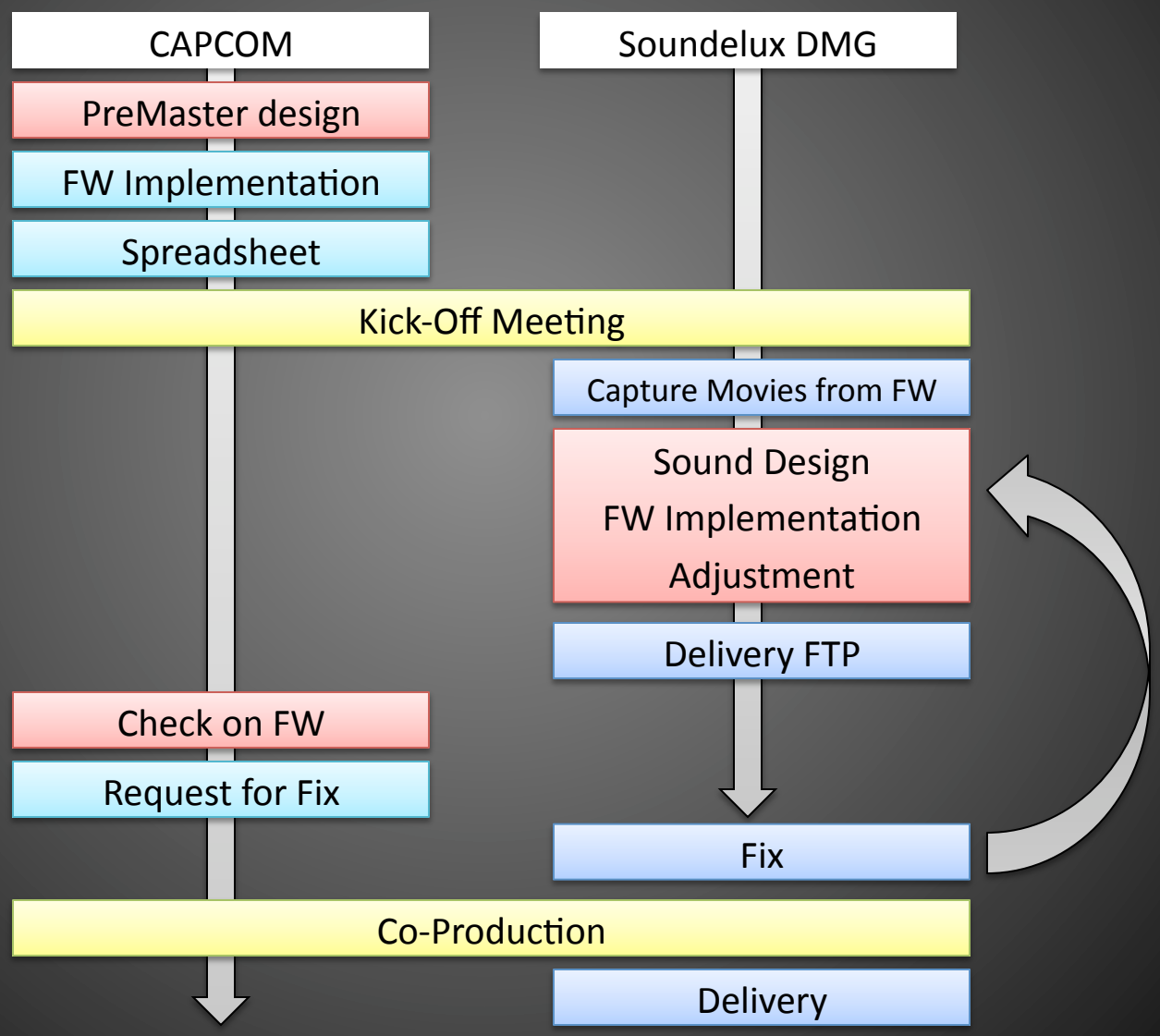
- Difficulty in anticipating how an isolated sound will react with and influence other sounds
- Delays in communication

Improvement of Method



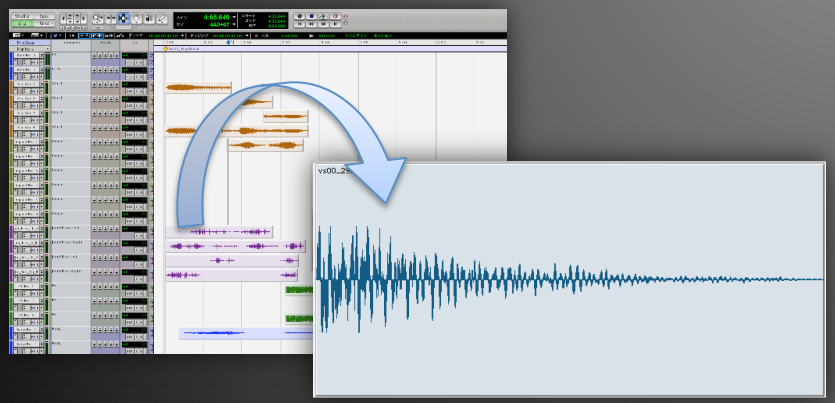
Bringing MT Framework to Soundelux DMG

Improvement of Method

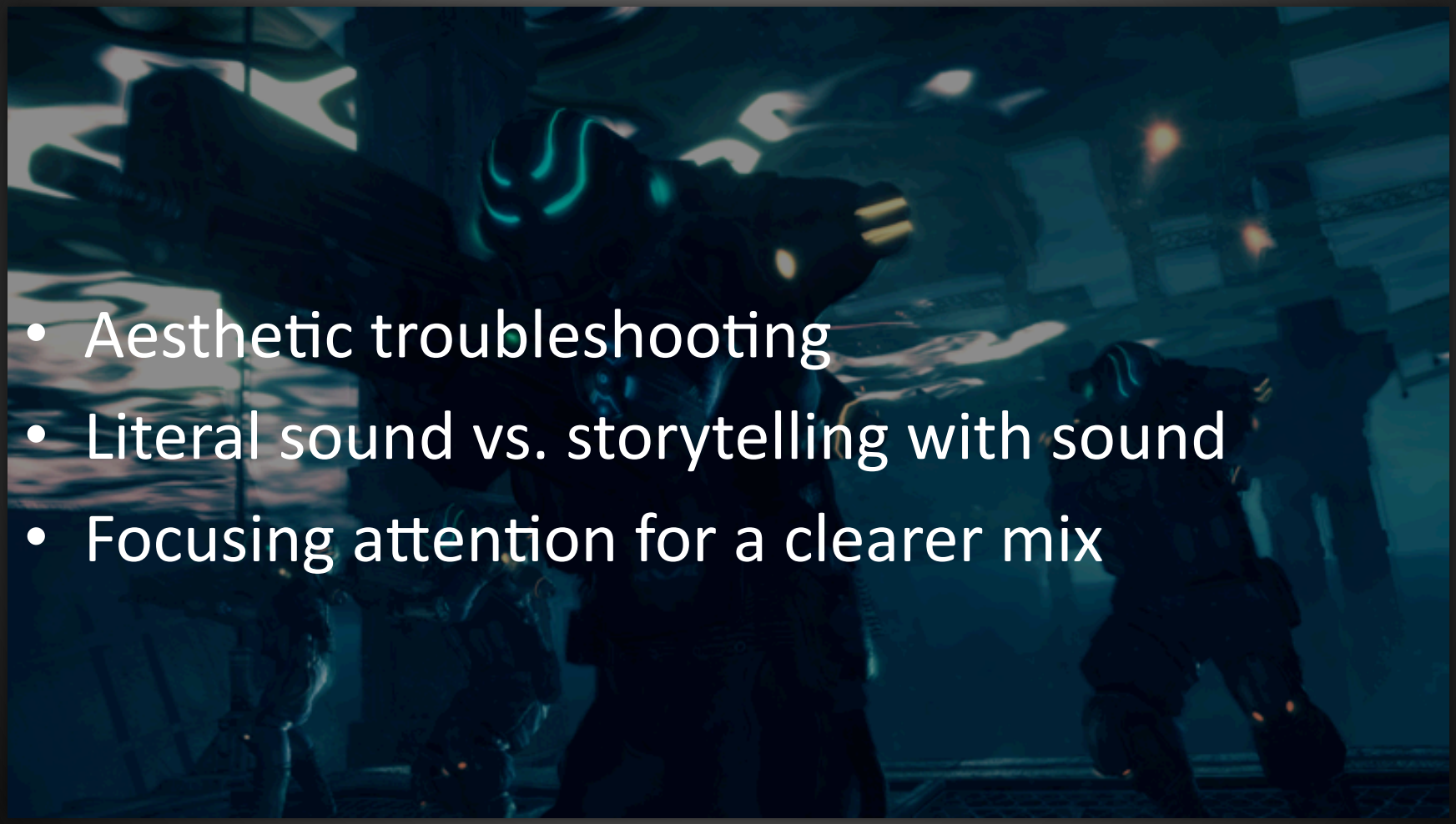


Individual Sound vs. Game Sound

- Sound designers can check their sounds in the game engine.
- Sound designers can make the sounds work effectively in the game before delivering.



Sound Design Tips & Examples



- Aesthetic troubleshooting
- Literal sound vs. storytelling with sound
- Focusing attention for a clearer mix

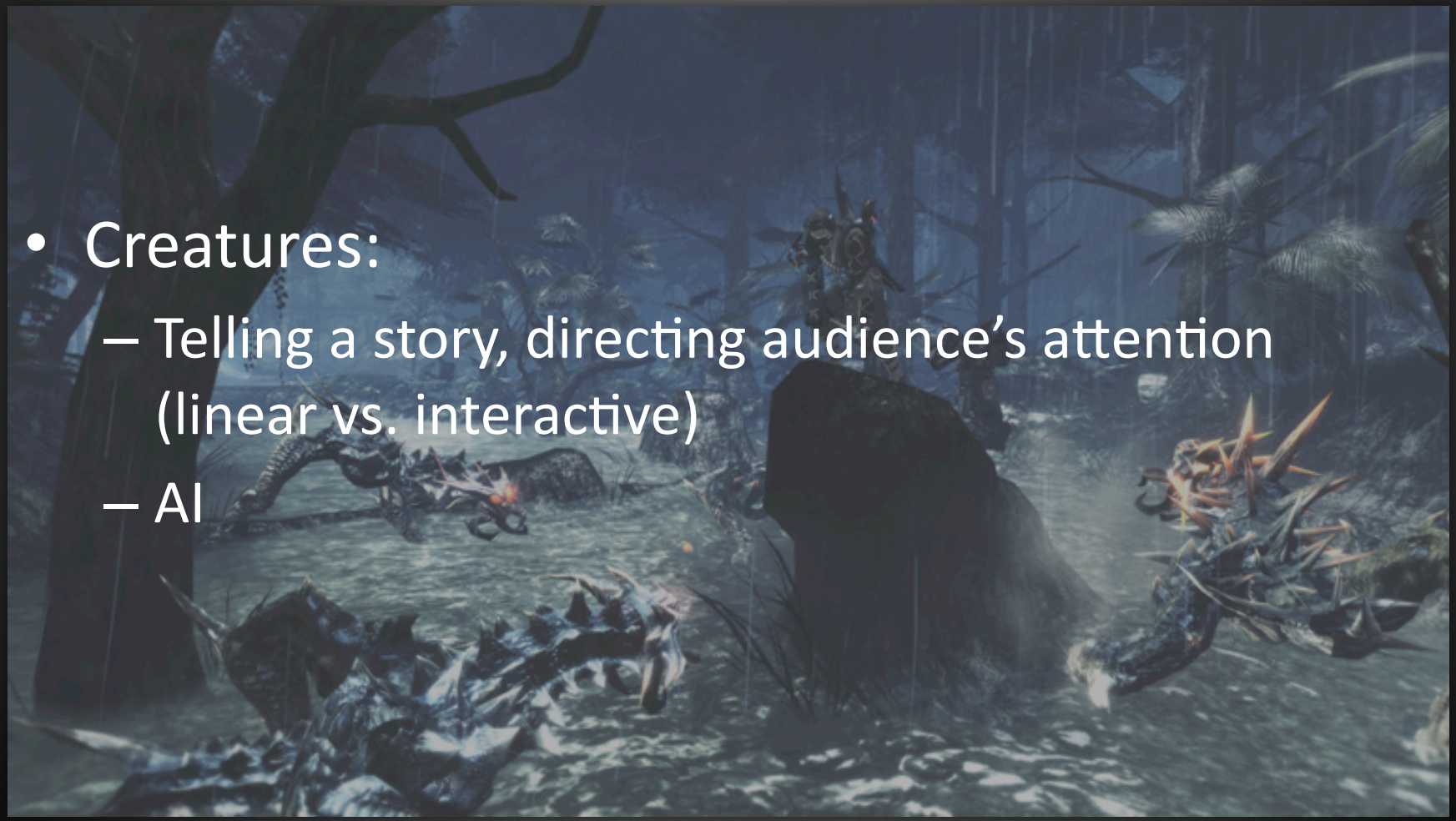
Sound Design Tips & Examples

- Creatures:
  - Frequency Range

Sound Design Tips & Examples

- Creatures:
  - Balance of elements

Sound Design Tips & Examples



- Creatures:
  - Telling a story, directing audience's attention (linear vs. interactive)
  - AI

Sound Design Tips & Examples

- Foley:
  - Effect of repetition
  - Evaluation of sounds in game / test levels
  - Establishing character without being distracting

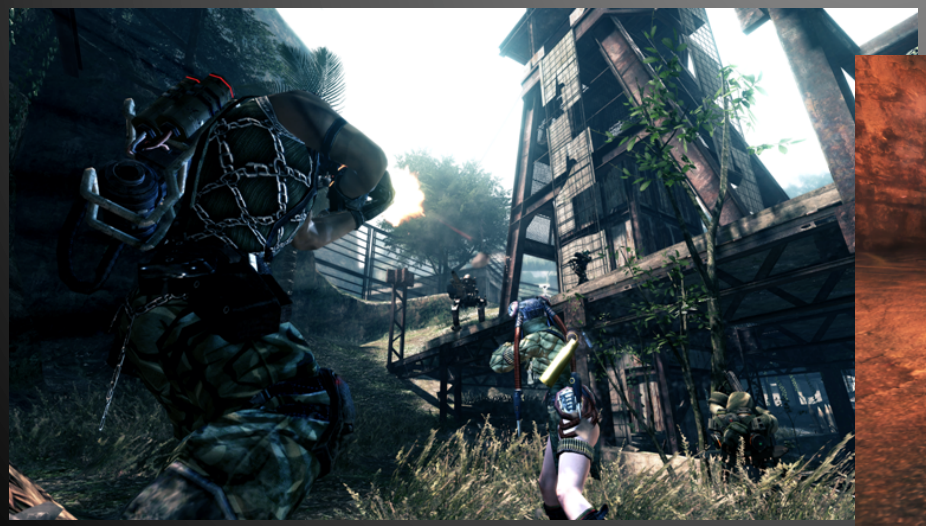
Foley Recording

Sound Design Tips & Examples

- Weapons:
  - Balancing weapons against each other
  - Extra variation in common weapons

Sound Design Tips & Examples

- Weapons:
  - Sounds triggered based on distance / testing crossfades in game
  - Tailoring weapon sound and implementation based on dynamics of encounters & number of enemies



Gun Recording

Sound Design Tips & Examples
Test Level

Sound Design Tips & Examples

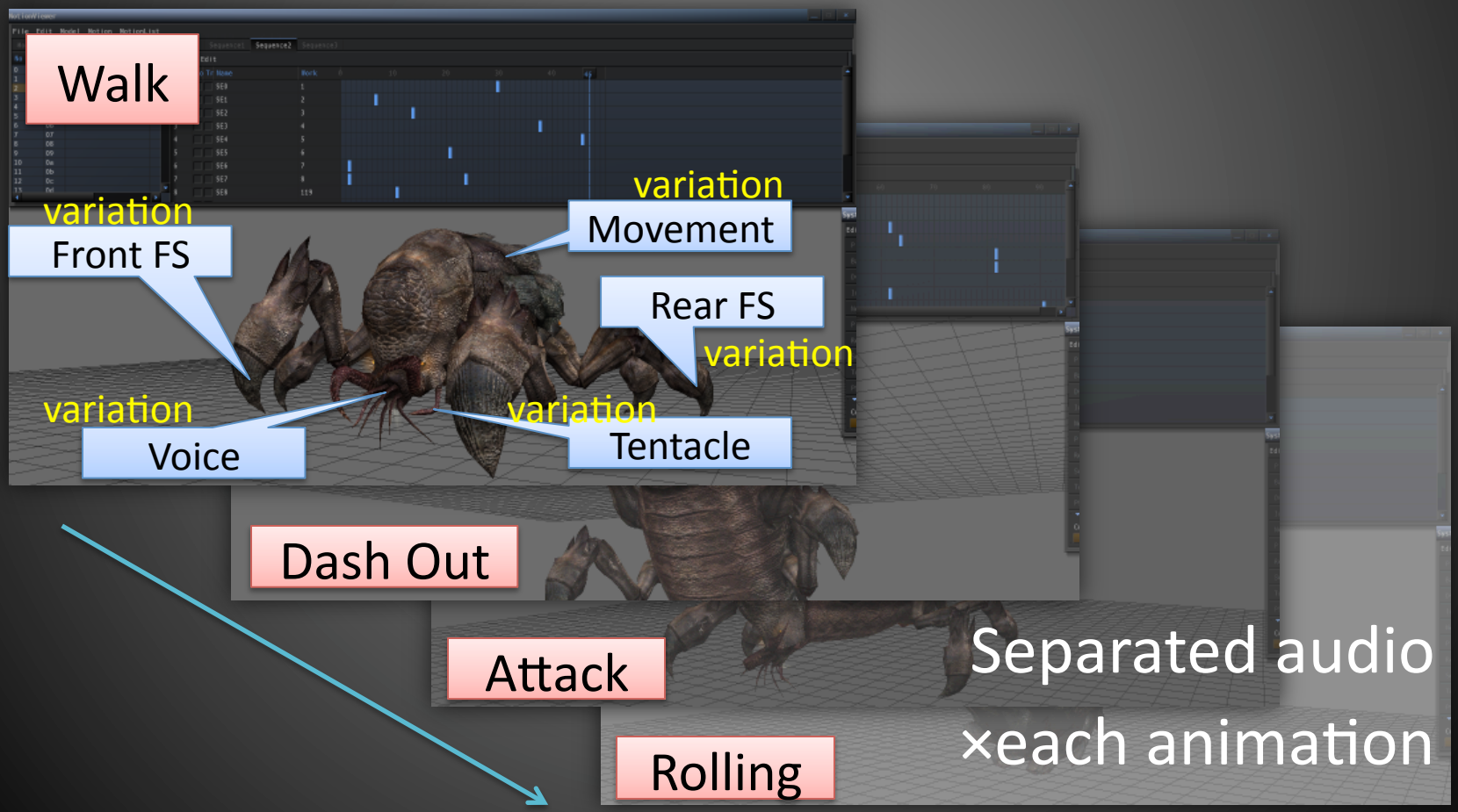
- Overall benefit
  - the game sounds good, not just individual assets.

Benefits of working with contractor

- Professional knowledge of audio and sound design
- Combining contractor's strengths with developer's strengths
  - Linear audio experience combined with game audio experience

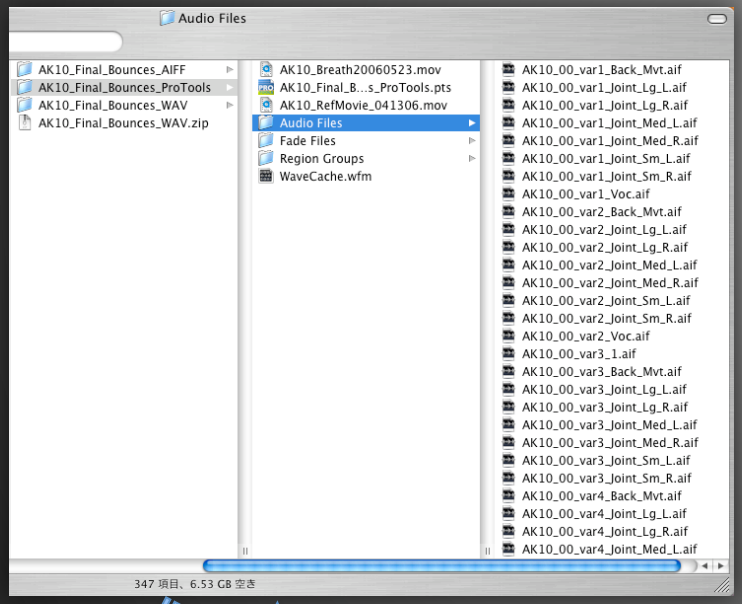
Streamlining implementation

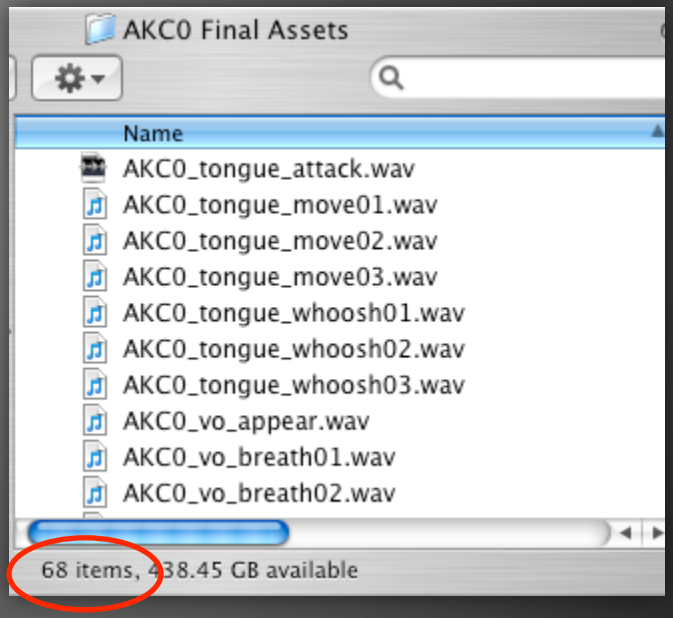
- Memory limits



Streamlining implementation

- LOST PLANET 1
  - GreenEye
- LOST PLANET 2
  - GODIANT





Streamlining implementation

- Order Loss (too many unused files…)
- Not planning ahead which sounds will be reused. (LP1 method)
- Even if I planned for reuse of sounds, designers are not able to hear in game. (LP1 method)

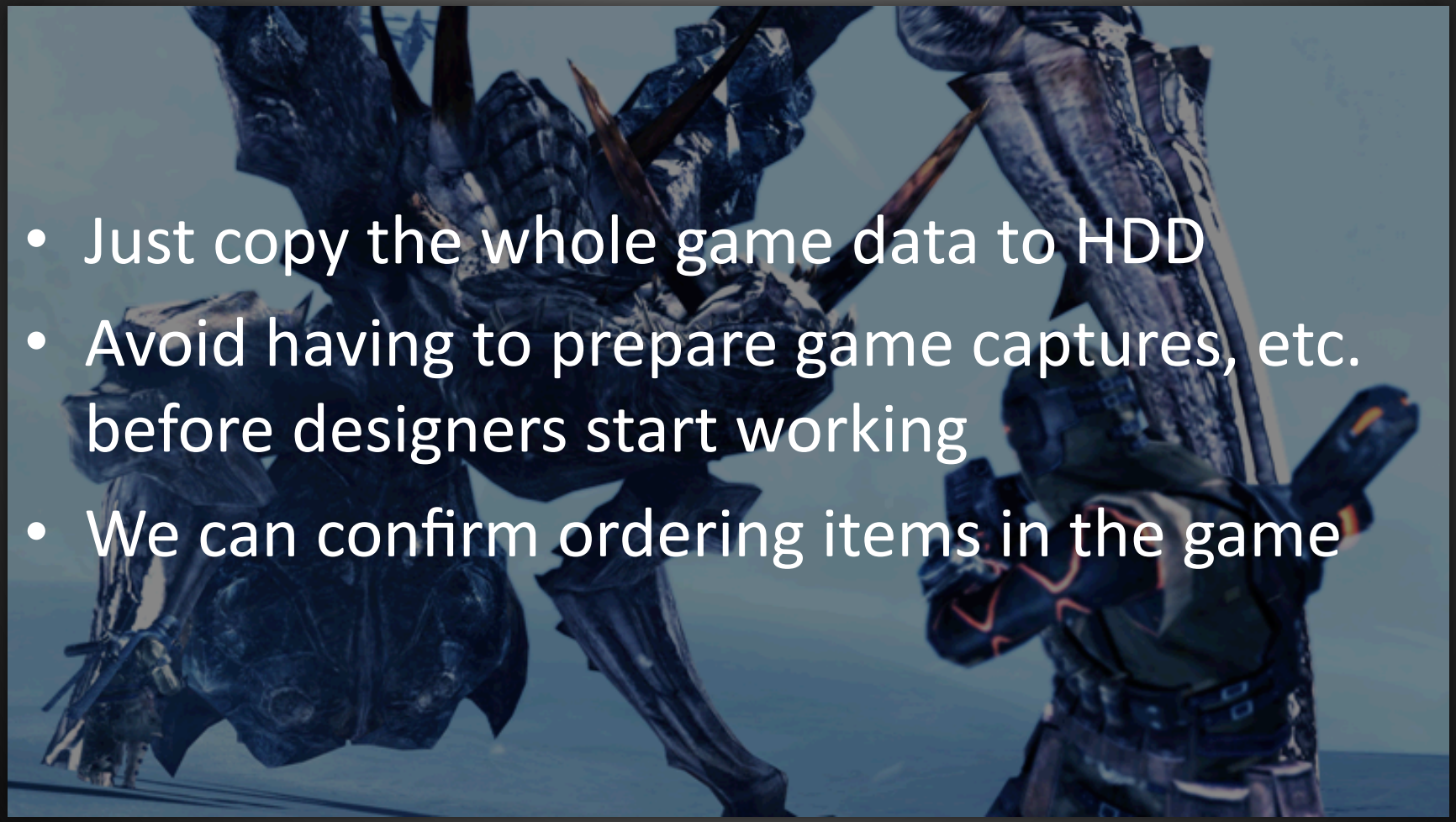
Streamlining implementation

- Premasters:
  - Understanding the Memory usage rate
    - Memory known before design starts
  - Temp sound conveys direction
  - Learning Experience
  - Insurance role for Game data

Streamlining implementation

- Replace Premaster with new designed SFX
- Delivery with in Frameworks format
- Copy data to CAPCOM FW machine to evaluate

Long preparation time



- Just copy the whole game data to HDD
- Avoid having to prepare game captures, etc. before designers start working
- We can confirm ordering items in the game

Reference Level

- Established reference level before starting sound design.
- ProTools Level = Framework Level
  - 75dBSPL / Booth, 85dBSPL / Studio
- CAPCOM Standard Dynamics
  - Cinematic, Cutscene: -20dB=0VU
  - In-Game: -18dB=0VU

Reference Level

- Identical playback systems at DMG and Capcom
- Commercially available system
  - YAMAHA Amplifier
  - ONKYO Speakers

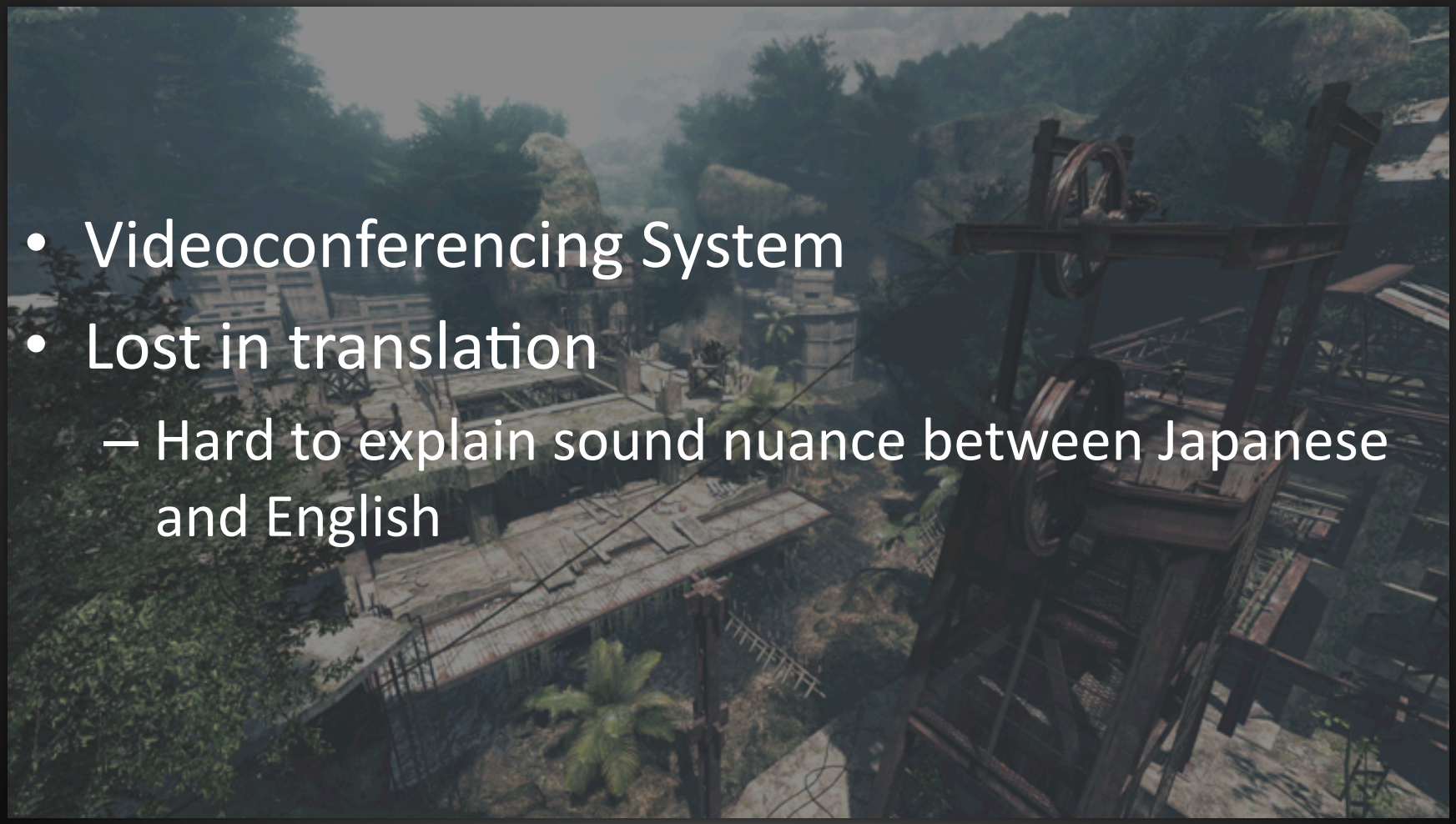
Mirrored Listening Environments

CAPCOM editing room 1

CAPCOM Tomoyo's booth

Soundelux DMG disigner's room

Cut down travel expenses



- Videoconferencing System
- Lost in translation
  - Hard to explain sound nuance between Japanese and English

Source-Connect for remote monitoring of score recording session

- Travel restrictions due to H1N1 flu virus
- Orchestra Recording
- Source-Connect
- Voice Over Recording

Collaborating on in game mix

- PartnerNet
- Identical Playback System
- Co-op mode
- Party Chat / Secure videoconference

Mixing Cinematics

- Todd-AO Burbank
- Not online – In Person
- Premix
- Mix Stage
- Stage editor (Sweetner)
- Playback system (Yamaha + Onkyo)

Mixing Stage

Todd-Ao Burbank Studio E

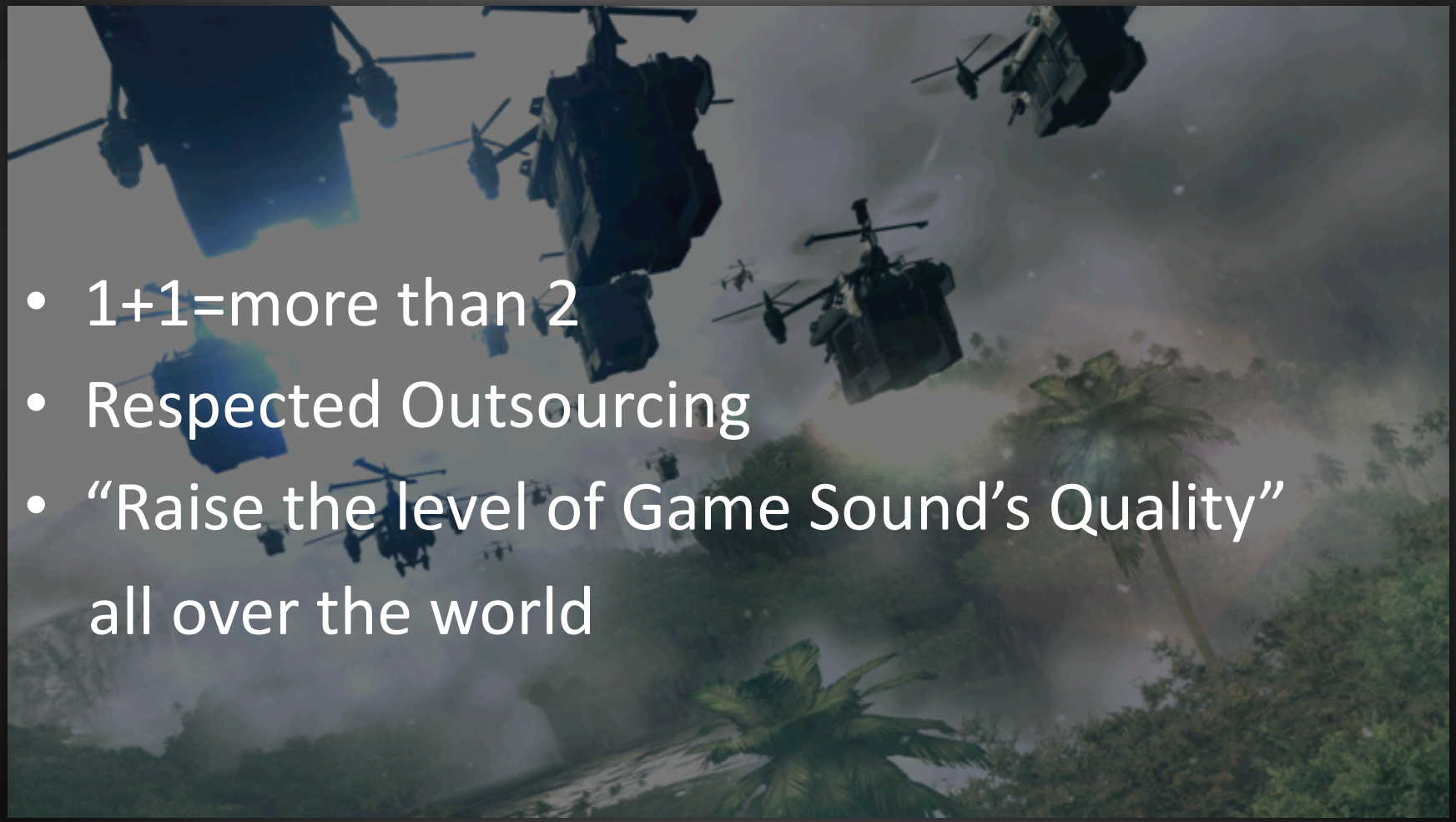
Security – Protecting the Build

- Safe
- Security cameras
- Key cards
- Locks

Investments – making the transition

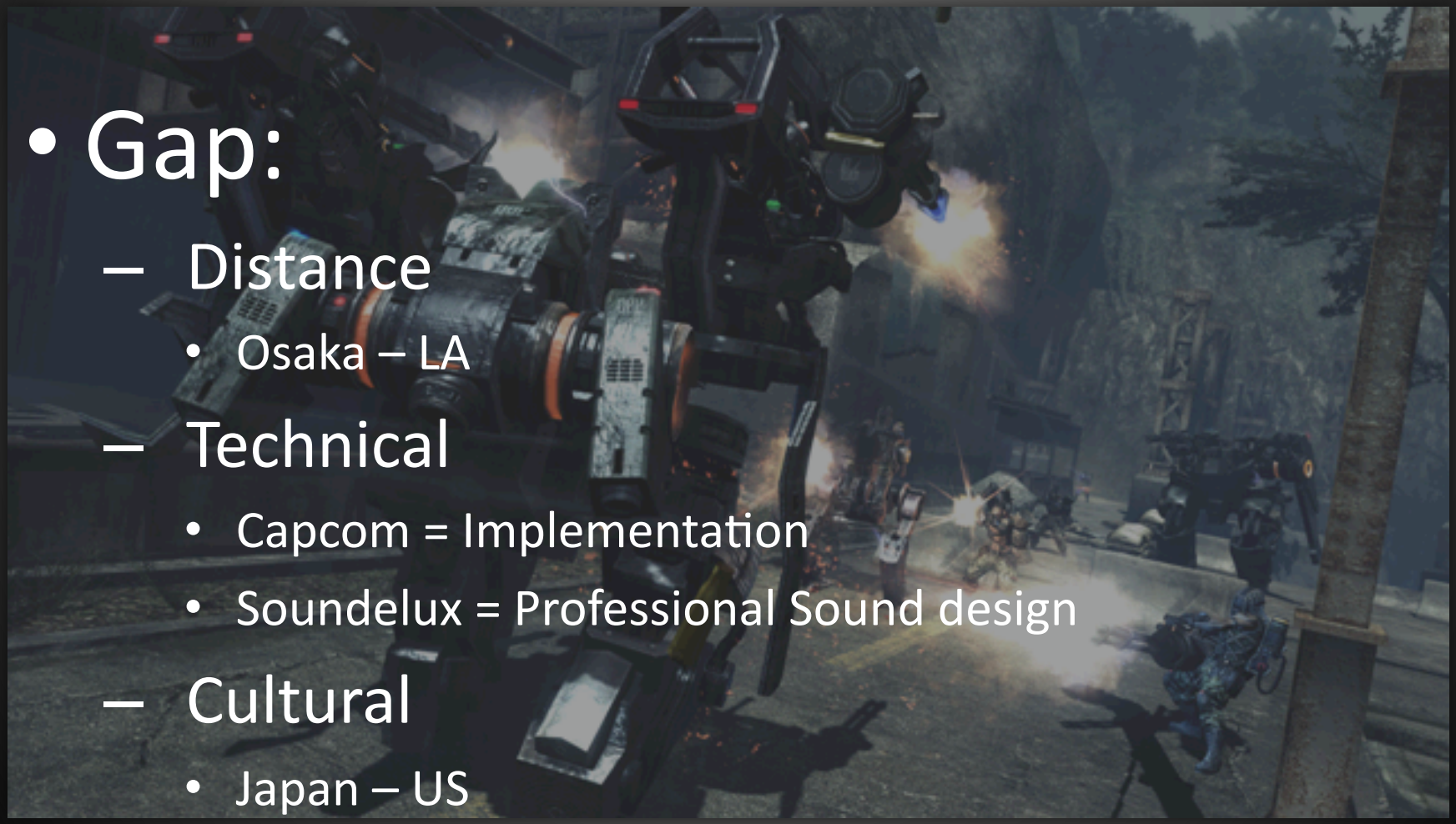
- Teaching Frameworks / Learning Frameworks
- Supervising Sound Designer spends more time approving sounds
  - Listening to the game is IMPORTANT and NECESSARY
- Secure videoconferencing system ($$$, compared to Skype or iChat.)

Bridging the gap between developer and contractor



- 1+1=more than 2
- Respected Outsourcing
- “Raise the level of Game Sound’s Quality” all over the world

Bridging the gap between developer and contractor



- Gap:
  - Distance
    - Osaka – LA
  - Technical
    - Capcom = Implementation
    - Soundelux = Professional Sound design
  - Cultural
    - Japan – US

Q&A

Please feel free to ask questions.

ご自由に質問をしてください。

Thank you for listening!

ご清聴ありがとうございました！