

# Ben Minto

Studio audio director at Electronic Arts DICE

**Ben Minto** is a five times Academy (AIAS & BAFTA) award-winning Sound Designer/Audio Director working out of EA DICE's studios in Stockholm. There, with his 15-person strong audio team, he is responsible for all the studio's audio output (Music, VO, SFX, Implementation & Mix), including the audio for the critically acclaimed *Battlefield* and *Star Wars Battlefront* franchises. He moved to Sweden in 2007, after having spent 7 years working at Criterion Games in Guildford as lead sound designer on both the *Burnout* series and *Black*, and prior to that at Acclaim's London studios.

Here are six things he likes and six things he'd rather not have to put up with (if you don't mind)...

**LIKE** Audio for games NOT being treated as post production. Audio as a craft being included in the design and development process from day one, with an equal place and say at the table. Audio has the ability to drive as well as being driven by the other disciplines, and in doing so contributing to a

more well-designed, fit for purpose and unified experience.

**DISLIKE** Being given your 'sound' solution to your 'sound' problem; but without being told what your problem is — you might be right — but give me the benefit of the doubt! Audio can sometimes be the simple solution to your complex problem — come, bring us your woes!

**LIKE** Sounds that have a life and a story of their own baked into them, that are easy to work with, and work well with how we construct our soundscapes in real-time depending on in-game events and player actions. A house collapsing, for example, we make up from many smaller events at runtime (i.e. as it happens), and if each of those smaller events can each tell a smaller story, that builds upon and meshes with the other stories, then the overall events will be richer and have a more unique, meaningful and hopefully memorable narrative.

**DISLIKE** Sterile and/or crap recordings of amazing things. The description, and how you 'audialise' that in your own mind before you hear the recording, sounds perfect, however the recording itself is lifeless and it's going to take far too much work to make it sound good. Missed opportunity.

**LIKE** Lucid mixing for clarity, consistency and readability; making the right things shine and pop.

**DISLIKE** Messy collages of sounds where there is no hierarchy or order, and you have to work extra hard to listen and filter through the 'noise'. Every sound is fighting for the same space and attention; there is as much bass in the wind buffeting as in the door slam, the VO sounds like it's in a completely different room than the Foley, a car engine is perceivable as loud as a gunshot etc. I grit my teeth and close my ears.

**LIKE** Finding the time and headspace to go far too deep and spend way too much time and love on something that no one, except yourself, will ever really appreciate — for no other justification than just because you can.

**DISLIKE** SCENE021\_V21.3\_TEMP\_FINAL\_TweakediT\_V4\_007Resink\_TEMPO23WITHMARKERS\_4SYNC\_MuzicEedit015\_NOTFINAL.wav (What?)

**LIKE** Sounds that lick my ears; it could equally be some complex, meticulously crafted, huge piece of work or a simple, short snippet of some delicate Foley. Some sounds transcend the expected and are 'exactly perfect' for the need at hand; there couldn't be a better fit! These sound designs raise my internal benchmark for what good sounds like. Faith is restored.

**DISLIKE** A piece of work (never mine!) not having enough variations at hand to cover the use cases. Pet-peeve is where pitch variation is used on predominantly (the same) metal sounds, which suggests that the underlying object making the sound is somehow changing size and shape with each variation ?!£%#\*!!?

**LIKE** When a team works well together. There is a shared vision, a clear direction and the drive to work towards a common goal. Energy is directed towards passion, creativity and results, not towards politics, problems and egos.

**DISLIKE** Poor time hygiene. When time is the master, and you can't do the work justice as those upstream don't hold to their delivery slots, or fail to commit to final (moving target!) and the end wall isn't moving. The knock on slippage travels down the pipeline, gaining momentum as it goes, like a shockwave moving through a whip... **!**

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