

Wiener Linien Sound Branding Concept



Point of Departure

Following an in-depth survey among more than 500 passengers and 1,500 employees, Wiener Linien started a sound project to improve the quality of Vienna public transportation service. The aim was to inform the passengers in a more pleasant and clear way as well as to find a distinct audio identity, so a strong focus was placed on the announcements and its speaker voice as well as the gong architecture.

The project started with a sound marketing workshop. Aside from professionals in classical marketing (project manager: Sabine Ludwig), the team of Wiener Linien included technicians and members of the corporate management. The persons responsible on the agency side were Herwig Kusatz (*Sound Strategy, Wien*) and his strategic partner Alexander Wodrich (*why do birds – previously Wodrich Audio Branding, Berlin*).



The Sound Concept

The sound concept evolves around Vienna's defining audio motif: The Vienna waltz. The "Donauwalzer" and its 6/8 rhythm were the main musical inspiration for the 4-tone sound logo and the brand music.



The Sound Logo

The sound logo starts with a soft drive-off sound and closing doors, after which the catchy motif with a closing vibrato sound reminiscent of a driving train is presented.

It ends with the hissing sound of air escaping from the brakes that a Wiener Linien bus makes when it arrives. Natural tones underline the ecological responsibility of Wiener Linien and the brand value "for a Vienna worth living in".

In the logo animation, the picture mark is built up in parallel to the first two tones of the motif, like a picture of opposing traffic. The star in the rhomb-like shape of the Wiener Linien logo is emphasized acoustically by a bright, but discreet chime sound.



The Brand Music

The brand music takes the listener on a journey. Acceleration and stopping are translated into music by sounds that gradually get louder or softer. This is melodically supported by ascending or descending tone sequences. An acoustic deceleration and acceleration of the tempo for arrival and departure can be heard. A leisurely chord finish at the end of a phrase represents the unhurried, relaxed arrival at a station.

The contact of Wiener Linien with its customers is expressed through dialogue. This dialogue-type "question-and-answer principle" has been integrated into the musical level of the Wiener Linien sound. The musical, motif-focussed phrase is answered by a Waltz-type phrase with a constant rhythm and melody, but varying timbre to add variety.

Calm and "round" low-frequency sounds stand for the safety that Wiener Linien provides. The bass creates a foundation of reliability, is "direct" and not very playful. It embodies the feeling of security that the passengers experience when travelling with Wiener Linien.

The trips with Wiener Linien proceed seamlessly, without friction and without jerking. This is reflected in the music. The straightforward rhythm and long-held tones acoustically describe the journey.

The Gong-Architecture

The new gong timbre is softer than before: pleasant, bell-like, direct and clear. The gong architecture is simple and informative: a single meditative gong for station announcements, a single meditative gong, one octave higher for station announcements in English, a subsequent rising

double gong for information announcements and an ascending triple gong for service disruption announcements. The musical notes of the gongs are extracted from the sound logo and brand music leitmotif.



The Brand Voice

The voice of Franz Kaida had accompanied the Vienna public in station and information announcements throughout all Wiener Linien platforms for over 40 years. His characteristic voice had become a strong part of the Wiener Linien identity that the Vienna public identified with strongly. After he had retired, a replacement had to be found. As this was a very delicate task, the agency organised a casting based on brand-tonality criteria.

The two favourite voices chosen by the Wiener Linien sound branding team were then presented in a public online voting, accompanied by wide press coverage. The clear winner was Angela Schneider, an actress from Vienna.



Implementation

What is special about the Wiener Linien Sound Branding case is the broad implementation and wide variety of sounds used. Besides the use of the sound in telephone-on-hold-messages, in films, at events and as part of the gong systems, the music has been arranged for the Wiener Linien employee brass orchestra and for a children's tune. Even functional sounds in ticket machine interfaces and the ticket validator have been branded with the distinct Wiener Linien sound timbre.



Results

The new Wiener Linien sound was rated in passenger surveys. The results suggest that customer satisfaction with the Wiener Linien sound has significantly improved.

Director Eduard Winter, CEO of Wiener Linien: "With this project, we have set new innovative standards worldwide, which have given Wiener Linien its own acoustic identity and audibly improve the quality of life of men and women living in Vienna!"



SOUND STRATEGY

Herwig Kusatz
Fanny-Mintz-Gasse 4/13
1020 Vienna
Austria
contact@sound-strategy.com

why do birds

Alexander Wodrich
Milastraße 2
10437 Berlin
Germany
wodrich@whydobirds.de