

Walter Ruttmann, *Weekend* (1930)

Abstract

First broadcast in June 1930, this twelve-minute collage of sounds and noises, spliced together by the artist and filmmaker Walter Ruttmann, depicted the start, flow, and conclusion of a big-city weekend. The piece begins with recordings of various workplaces, during which the listener hears sawing and nailing, the jingle of the bell at a store's entrance, and a frustrated man speaking with a telephone operator. About two-and-a-half minutes into the piece, though, the tone shifts dramatically in the direction of festive noises and peaceful ones—creating the soundscape of a Berlin weekend—before concluding with the sound of alarm clocks, yawning, and then engines and typewriters resuming operation, as a new work week begins. Ruttmann (1887-1941) cobbled together this avantgarde radio play from the recordings that he had made earlier during the production of his famous 1927 silent film *Berlin: Symphonie einer Großstadt* [Symphony of a Metropolis], itself a feature-length visual collage of a day in the life of Germany's capital. The Berliner Rundfunk broadcasting company gave Ruttmann the commission to produce *Weekend*, shortly after the film's release, and this resulting 1930 audio play marked one of the very first experiments in acoustical storytelling—without actors reading lines from a script—to go out on the airwaves. Its rapid juxtaposition of multiple sounds from different locations happening at the same time gave the listener the thrilling and disorienting sense of having ears around the city. Regarding the audio document itself, radio historians had long feared that all recordings of this trailblazing broadcast had been destroyed during the Second World War before two researchers stumbled upon a surviving copy in New York in 1978.

Source

Source: Walter Ruttmann, *Weekend*, sound collage, Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft, 1930. Accessed via ARD Mediathek
<https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/100-aus-100-die-hoerspiel-collection/1930-weekend/ard/13121013/>

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