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Investigation on Phantom Image Elevation

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Contents

• Research background

• Experiment

• Summary
The higher the frequency of a pure tone is, the higher the perceived image position is, regardless of the physical height of the loudspeaker. (Pratt 1930).

Confirmed by Trimble (1934), Roffler and Butler (1968), etc.
Pitch-Height Effect for “Real” Source

- For **band-passed noise** signals, high frequency components (above 7kHz) are essential for accurate vertical localisation. (Roffler and Butler 1968b)

![Diagram showing judged image height vs actual loudspeaker height with different noise and tone conditions.](image-url)
Pitch-Height Effect for “Real” Source

- Pitch height effect for **octave band pink noise**
  - Simplified from Cabrera and Tiley (2003); median plane results
Pitch-Height Effect for “Phantom” Source

- Pitch-height effect for horizontal **phantom** images from main and height layers (Lee 2015)

![Diagram showing pitch-height effect for horizontal phantom images from main and height layers.](image-url)
• Pitch-height effect for horizontal **phantom** image (Lee 2015)

- Overall, the pitch-height effect operates in two separate regions.
- Reset at 1kHz → Back localisation (Blauert’s Directional bands)
Directional bands

- Blauert (1968): physical mapping between frequency bands and their perceived positions in the median plane.
• **Horizontal plane phantom images are elevated**, not only for high frequencies but also for low frequencies (125Hz, 250Hz, 500Hz) → different from “real” source situations.
• Pitch height effect for octave bands
  – Simplified from Cabrera and Tiley (2003); median plane results
Horizontal Phantom Image Elevation
Vs.
Loudspeaker Base Angle & Sound Source
Previous studies

• de Boer (1947): Phantom centre image is perceived to be elevated, and the elevation angle increases as the loudspeaker base angle increases. (180° → overhead region)

Previous studies reporting the elevation effect are limited in terms of sound sources or loudspeaker base angles tested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Base angles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de Boer (1947)</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0° to 180°</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.65 – 4.5kHz</td>
<td>0° to 360°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo et al. (2010)</td>
<td>White noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 16kHz</td>
<td>60°, 220°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank (2014)</td>
<td>Pink noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband</td>
<td>40°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee (2015)</td>
<td>Pink noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband, octave bands</td>
<td>60°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aim of the Current Experiment

• To investigate the phantom image elevation effect for a wide range of sound sources, with base angles covering from 0° to 360°.

• Sound sources
  – Speech, Helicopter, Aeroplane, Thunder, Rain, Bird, Church Bell
  – Broadband pink noises (continuous and transient)
  – Broadband white noises (continuous and transient)
Test Method

- **Loudspeaker arrangement**
  - At the ear height in the horizontal plane, 0° to 360° at 30° interval.
Test Method

Critical listening room at the University of Huddersfield (ITU-R BS.1116-Compliant)
Test Method

- GUI written in Max
  - Response method similar to Blauert (1968) but in a finer resolution
Test Method

• Subjects
  – 10 people comprising researchers and post-graduate students from the University of Huddersfield’s music technology courses.
  
  – All were much experienced in spatial quality evaluation but not trained for the particular task of the experiment.
Results

• Responses for all sources
  – The general trend agrees with the suggestions from the past research.

![Graph showing perceived image region and loudspeaker base angle](image)
• Sound source dependency
  – Responses are most linear and consistent for source with a broad and flat spectrum.
Phantom Image Elevation

- Sound source dependency
  - Responses are most linear and consistent for source with a broad and flat spectrum.

\[
\text{Perceived elevation angle} = \frac{\text{Loudspeaker base angle}}{2}
\]
Phantom Image Elevation

- Sound source dependency
  - The elevation effect is weaker for sources with more low frequency energy. (no strong “above-ness”)

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**Pink noise**

**Speech**
Phantom Image Elevation

- **Sound source dependency**
  - The elevation effect is weaker for sources with more low frequency energy. (no strong “aboveness”)

![Diagram showing perceived image region for continuous pink noise and speech](image)
Phantom Image Elevation

- Sound source dependency
  - The elevation effect is weaker for sources with more low frequency energy. (no strong “aboveness”)

![Airplane graph](image1)
![Thunder graph](image2)
• **Sound source dependency**
  – The elevation effect is weaker for sources with more low frequency energy. (no strong “aboveness”)

![Graphs showing perceived image regions for different sound sources](image/png)
Phantom Image Elevation

- Sound source dependency
  - Responses are most inconsistent for sources with narrow spectrum or steady-state nature.
• Sound source dependency
  – Responses are most inconsistent for sources with narrow spectrum or steady-state nature.
• Expectancy bias
  – Subjective responses affected by the likely auditory or visual positions of the sound sources in real life.

No “directly above” for speech
Perceived lower than rain
Theoretical explanations

• Spectral energy distribution of ear signal

- As the base angle increases up to 240°, 8kHz energy increases while 4kHz energy decreases. → Increasing “aboveness” & decreasing “frontness”.

Delta HRTF (60°–0°)
Theoretical explanations

• However, spectral energy distribution does not explain the phantom image elevation for **low frequencies**.
  – Phantom image elevation is also perceived for low-frequency dominant sources and for octave-bands such 250Hz and 500Hz bands.
Theoretical explanations

• A new hypothesis from a **cognitive** perspective
  – The brain interprets the acoustic crosstalk delay as a shoulder reflection delay for a real elevated source.
  – Shoulder reflection delay is the main cue for elevation perception for low frequencies in the median plane (Algazi et al. 2001)
Theoretical explanations

- A new hypothesis from a **cognitive** perspective
  - As the loudspeaker base angle increases, acoustic crosstalk delay increases (max. around 0.7ms for 180°)
  - As the real source elevation angle increases, should reflection delay increases (max. around 0.7ms for right above).
• A new hypothesis from a cognitive perspective
  – As the loudspeaker base angle increases, acoustic crosstalk delay increases (max. around 0.7ms for 180°)
  – As the real source elevation angle increases, should reflection delay increases (max. around 0.7ms for a source right above).
Theoretical explanations

- A new hypothesis from a **cognitive** perspective
  - Low frequencies: Cognitive effect (crosstalk – shoulder delay)
  - High frequencies: Hard-wired effect (HRTF, directional bands, etc.)
Applications for 3D music production

- Simply routing overhead sources to the side or rear speaker pair in the conventional 5.1 or 7.1 format can create a virtual overhead image.
  - 3D mix without overhead speakers
  - 3D to 2D downmixing
  - 2D to 3D upmixing
  - Etc.
Conclusions

• Phantom image elevation effect depends on the loudspeaker base angle and sound source characteristics.

• Base angles around 180° produces a virtual overhead image.
   → This is most effective for sound sources with a broad and flat frequency spectrum. (e.g. rain, white noise like sources)
   → Phantom image elevation is weaker for sources with low frequency dominance, narrow bandwidth or steady-state characteristics.

• Phantom image elevation can be explained by spectral energy distribution at HF, whereas it is more of a cognitive effect at LF.
Ongoing work

• Relative weighting between different frequency bands in terms of phantom image elevation

• Verification of the cognitive hypothesis

• Virtual overhead panning method
References


Free download links for useful tools

• **HULTI-GEN**  http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/24809

• **HAART**  http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/24579

• **IAR**  http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/25547

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