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What Sound Means “Sonos”? Philip Glass Had the Answer.

While sound is integral to everything we do at Sonos, there has never been a specific sound associated with our brand. Until today. Coinciding with the launch of Sonos Radio, we are thrilled to reveal our new sonic branding. Composed by Philip Glass, iconic master of contemporary classical music, listeners can hear his original composition when tuning in to Sonos Radio. Here’s the story behind the sound.

In the months leading up to the launch of Sonos Radio, Devin Gaspar, Sonos VP of Global Brand, discovered that a major piece of the sonic branding puzzle was missing. Gaspar, who has been with Sonos since the beginning, knew that he was obsessed with sound—it’s what we think about all day—and yet we didn’t have a sound that moved Sonos. What we needed, he dream had of who might compose that sound for us, Philip Glass was always at the top.

Glass's decades-long exploration of repetition and evolutionary loops has a natural choice to build upon the Sonos name and visual identity, which are rooted in symmetry and simplicity. Luckily, he was known to have Sonos in his home and even owns a S1 Sonos Play:5 and a Sonos Connect. Gaspar and Sonos Chief Marketing Officer Tim Mitchell reached out to Glass, who was the perfect fit for Sonos because of the combination of formal structure and exuberance, humanity and technical rigor in his music.”

Photo Credit: Danny Clinch, @dannyclinchedit

Composing

Once Glass agreed to the project, Gaspar’s brief to him was simple:

Dear Philip Glass:

Sonos is a made-up word that means sound
Now we need to make up a sound that means Sonos

Please help

Sincerely
Sonos

And, as one of the most influential American composers of the last century, he delivered. Describing the result, Glass noted: “The composition reflects two opposing ends of a spectrum: the organic and the electronic. The organic, represented by the instrumentation, is a reflection of the human side of the company, the people who make the product and who listen to it. The electronic, on the synthesized elements, is a nod to Sonos products as breakthrough technology both in sound reproduction and connectivity.”

To learn about the sound profile of Sonos speakers, Glass worked with Glass Macro, award-winning composer, producer, and Sound Experience Leader at Sonos. “We wanted to be sure that the tone and range of the composition demonstrated the capabilities of our speakers and that the composition addressed those moments in the user experience where sound is used explicitly,” said Martin.

Recording

To bring the composition to life, it was recorded with 21 musicians at the Stillman Center for Classical Music in New York City. The recording includes a 17-piece string section, flute, trumpet, French horn, piano, and electronic synths.

Mixing

Once recorded, Martin mixed and mastered the sonic branding in collaboration with Grammy- and Emmy-winning recording engineer Ken Ozuna. When they were finished, Gaspar finally had the sound that makes Sonos.

The Final Product

In all, Glass created a complete set of branding elements, ranging in length and purpose, which will serve as a “sonic toolbox” for the Sonos sound experience. Martin and the Sound Experience Team will draw from this toolbox as they start and define the brand's sonic identity going forward.

We're now proud to share the final product, brought to life in the animation below. It's listed experienced on your Sonos system because as Glass notes, it was composed “using the full frequency spectrum in order to demonstrate the range and depth of Sonos speakers.”

Join us on Sonos Radio where you can hear the new sonic branding in brilliant sound, along with curated genre stations, original programming, and thousands of radio stations from around the world.

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