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Masking effect

Masking effect occurs when various sounds with different volume **levels** are present simultaneously, causing quieter sounds to be masked or unheard by louder ones. It is a phenomenon often utilized by lossy compression codecs like **MP3**, where the compression algorithm analyzes and identifies sounds that are masked, resulting in the removal of inaudible sounds.

The masking effect is a crucial concept in audio signal processing and acoustics, describing situations where one sound is hidden or made less perceptible by another sound, typically when a louder and stronger sound overwhelms or makes it difficult to hear a softer one.

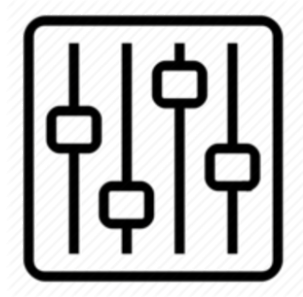
The masking effect can be broadly categorized into two types:

1. Time-domain masking: This type of masking occurs when two sounds happen concurrently. The strong sound with a larger amplitude masks the weaker sound with a smaller amplitude, making it harder to perceive. For instance, if a loud **noise** occurs in the background while singing, it can mask parts of the song and make them less audible.

2. Frequency-domain masking: This type of masking occurs when two sounds occupy different frequency ranges. When a strong sound occupies a particular frequency band, weaker sounds within that frequency band become less audible. This can happen in music when one instrument's sound is masked by another instrument's sound, making it challenging to distinguish.

Understanding the masking effect plays a significant role in audio processing. For example, audio compression algorithms leverage the masking effect to reduce the size of music files while preserving sound quality as much as possible. By considering and comprehending the masking effect, desired outcomes can be achieved in audio signal processing and acoustic design.

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Last update: **2023/09/18**

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