

Experimental Music Studios
University of Illinois
Music 499 - Terms / Distinctions / Differentiations

Monophonic (mono) – (Greek: monos = one, single, alone / phone = sound), a single channel of audio information

2-channel audio – referring to an audio reproduction system or recording having two channels (may or may not be stereo)

2-channel mono – a single channel of audio information recorded or delivered over two channels

Mono (point) source – monophonic audio information – can be panned within two or more audio channels

Stereophonic (stereo) – (Greek: stereos = solid / phone = sound),

- Relating to or constituting a three-dimensional effect of auditory perspective; in audio, a recording involving two or more microphones designed to capture a sound image from two (or more) locations relative to the sound source, thus recording not only frequencies and amplitudes but also time differences (phase differences) of the direct sound, as well as, time difference of reflected sound, based upon the location of the individual microphones. The information from each microphone is separately channeled (panned/positioned) within the 2-channel audio system in an effort to recreate the three-dimensional image of that original sound – in which the timing information, emanating from the two loudspeakers of the two-channel sound reproduction system, is different.

Stereo is different from “binaural.” Binaural properly applies to a two-channel audio system designed for headphone reproduction in which the two microphones used to record the sound source are spaced at a distance of about seven inches (normal ear separation). Stereo employs microphone positioning at wider distances than seven inches to account for the positions of loudspeaker delivery.

Pseudo stereo – a monophonic sound source recorded on or delivered over a two-channel audio system with the audio information of one of the channels delayed.

The audible difference between true stereo and pseudo stereo is quite different.