

Lessons Learned in Music Development

Brütal Legend
BIOSHOCK
Destroy All Humans



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Reasons for doing this talk

What I'd like to say:

I recorded all my own
soundskidoodles!



- Methodical
- Pleasant
- Good overview of the basics

My Reality:

Magic
Voiceover
Spear

game audio
professional

SFX
Sabertooth

Music
Sabertooth



- Epic Battles
- Tales of Triumph and Defeat over impossible odds.
- Hot Babes
- Video Game Music

**DESTROY ALL
HUMANS!®**

**DESTROY ALL
HUMANS!**

Studio overview:

- Pandemic Studios Australia/THQ
- Mid size independent with AAA experience
- Free Coffee Maker
- Hired as Jr Sound Designer by composing music
- Varying internal perceptions of the importance of audio.

Destroy All Marketing

- Designers nailed it.
- THQ had a different idea
- KIDS LOVE PHAT BEATS YO!
- FREE PHAT BEATS!
- THINK OF THE MARKETING LEVERAGE!
- FREE BEATS! KIDS LOVE THEM!
- no.
- Oh but we already did it.
- Credits.

DAH Music Integration

- So keen, so green.
- Music for games was all about stem based layering and start, loop and end cues with alternate options
- Cues based off game play states: Disguised, Undisguised, Hunted
- Edited Bernard Hermann music to fit the mood of each state

Hiring A Bernard Hermann

- Auditions from big names
- 1 minute of music based on concept art and a short description
- Auditions vs Bernard Hermann... awkward.
- Real instruments won
- Ready for success!

Hmmm....

- Where has all the impact gone?
- Expensive Wallpaper
- Tying music to game play states makes the experience predictable
- Music compositions themselves were great
- New priority: keep the music emotional above all else.



BIOSHOCK

- Gorgeous underwater art deco utopia gone wrong
- Released in 2007, XBOX360, PS3
- Irrational Games & 2K Games
- Mid sized independent
- 30 – 60 people
- Hired as Audio Director with team of 0

A Musical Aesthetic (and all that jazz)

- Originally heavily influenced by System Shock 2. Very electronic with orchestral elements.
- Created [an in-game demo](#) of an entire sound aesthetic, sfx, music, voice.
- Heavy immersion in story and art
- [Bing Crosby “Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams”](#)
- Using lyrics and juxtaposition to tell the story
- Literal approach needed as well: Bela Bartok, Jerry Goldsmith, Holst, John Cage, Eyes Wide Shut ST
- Is iTunes magic?
- Important musical moments randomly lining up to my actions in the game.

Integration

- No looping music, no player control
- Scored like a movie: power to the composer and the director
- Project lead wanted no music at all
- Designers wanted music all the time
- WoW proved everything
- [Welcome To The Fisheries](#)

Music Production

- Re-hired DAH composer
- Great at taking feedback
- Personal taste for early 20th century classical
- Looks after entire creation process
- Hired early
- An evolution of ideas

BIOSHOCKING DISCOVERIES

- Bioshock relied on chance to create the illusion of dynamic audio
- Players create meaning even when there is none
- Hiring a composer early pays off
- Don't be afraid to challenge but have concrete examples to help back up your case
- New goal: remove chance



BRÜTAL
LEGEND™

The logo for the video game "Brütal Legend" is centered on a black background. It features the words "BRÜTAL" and "LEGEND" in a stylized, gothic font. The letters are primarily silver with a metallic, weathered texture. The word "BRÜTAL" has a small crown-like symbol above the 'U'. The word "LEGEND" has a red, splattered texture on its right side, suggesting blood. A small trademark symbol (TM) is located to the right of the word "LEGEND".

The Obvious Approach

- 2009 XBOX360, PS3
- Double Fine/EA
- An game based on a genre of music
- Comedy + Metal = Spinal Tap = Wrong
- Quests + Warriors + Metal = Power Metal = Wong.
- Other directions? Metal + Orchestra?

Placeholder Music = Final Music

- Edited music for a vertical slice
- Tim loved the “placeholder” music
- Vertical slice became the main approach for the music in Brutal Legend.
- No formula. No rules.
- Just moment to moment scoring.
- Wouldn't it sound cool if...

Wouldn't it be cool if...

- Bass vamp triggered in cutscene
- Loops till player picks up the axe
- Downbeat of the main riff kicks in when the axe is picked up.
- Perfectly in time
- Perfectly in synch
- PICK UP THE AXE

Wouldn't it be cool if...

- Original music referenced licensed music
- Cutscene reveal > seamless transition to loop
> seamless transition to licensed music >
licensed music loop.
- [HEADBANGER MINES](#)

One Song In A Million

- Music choices based on many factors
- Mission pacing = structure of song
- Mission story = lyrics
- Intensity of game play = tempo of the song
- Style of game play = instrumental or with words
- Only two or 3 songs out of an entire genre that worked

Brutal Music Production

- Hired the awesome Peter McConnell
- Relationships and reliability
- 70 minutes of original music
- 7 hours of licensed music
- 1 million \$ + music budget

Brutal Lessons

- Metal Is Awesome
- There is real metal and there is fake metal
- Tying licensed music to the gameplay is risky
- Had to find multiple song options
- Scene by scene integration rules
- Scene by scene works for broad story based linear game play
- Scene by scene integration takes a long time

DAH BRUTALLY SHOCKING CONCLUSIONS

- Good music integration = loud music
- Players DO notice
- Music should not just be a flag for gameplay
- Just because we can, doesn't always mean we should.
- Let experience and emotion guide music integration
- Keep music meaningful