

THE AUDIO SOURCE MAGAZINE



GAMESOUNDCON

TEAMS UP WITH
EDUCATION THROUGH MUSIC-LA

Gold Sponsor GameSoundCon goes virtual, teaming up to donate profits to ETM-LA. Learn more while we catch up with Booker, Brian, and Austin.

CONNECTION IN AN ISOLATED WORLD

MUSIC INDUSTRY LOOKS TO GAMING

Interactive media and gaming hold the future of the entertainment industry. Dive into the musical worlds of *Fortnite* and *Death Stranding*.

SABRINA HUTCHINSON & FIRST ARTISTS MANAGEMENT

Read how Sabrina Hutchinson takes composer representation to the next level with her new role as an agent at First Artists Management.

JASON GRAVES MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Composer, percussionist and game music icon, Jason Graves, chats about his recent projects and involvement in the community.

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through **MUSIC**
los angeles

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Oct 5-7, 2020
Online



GameSoundCon 2020 goes virtual! Brian Schmidt has teamed up with Booker White and Austin Wintory of Education Through Music-LA to donate proceeds from the event. Read more on page 44.

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MORTAL KOMBAT 11
AFTERMATH
ORIGINAL GAME SOUNDTRACK
MUSIC BY WILBERT ROGET, II
STAGE MUSIC COMPOSERS
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CONNECTION IN AN ISOLATED WORLD

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Composer, percussionist and game music icon, Jason Graves, chats about his recent projects and involvement in the community.



NOTE FROM OUR LEAD

BY BRIAN SCHMIDT,
PRESIDENT, GAME AUDIO NETWORK GUILD



Hello and welcome to the inaugural edition of **The Audio Source Magazine!** Our rock-star communications team has been hard at work creating our new, longer, and more in-depth format. We expect you will enjoy the **expert advice on branding, landing an industry gig out of school, interviews with some of our industry's leading composers and more.** And speaking of branding, be sure to head to audiogang.org, where we have refreshed our website, with a sleek, modern look.

It truly is the best of times and the worst of times. Our industry has undergone unprecedented growth and made the transition to 'work from home' with ease.

For freelance composers or sound designers, 'work from home' has been the norm for some time and dialogue artists have ratcheted up their home-recording systems. Microsoft and Sony are both releasing new generations of consoles this fall and Nintendo had what seemed like everyone on the planet playing *Animal Crossing*. It's an exciting time to be in games, and video games have never looked brighter.

At the same time, the impact of Covid-19 has been terrible, with millions of people furloughed, out of work, or unable to start their new careers. Small businesses are hurting. Historic, long-standing injustices have thrust into the limelight, reminding us how far we still must go. It can seem overwhelming.

But we can all do our small part.

If you are fortunate enough to be in a position to be able to help someone out, **go do it.** Get your instrument tuned up at your locally owned music shop, get takeout from a favorite local restaurant or bar (and tip big). Offer some advice to someone starting out or offer to give a guest zoom lecture at your local high school on what you do (your local high school music teacher will love it!). **Giving back is a fundamental piece of the spirit of the Game Audio Network Guild.** Let's give back and pay it forward and each do what we can to make our small part of the world a bit better.

Finally, I would like to personally thank Emmanuel Lagumbay for his work with the organization over the past 2 years handling membership communications. His new gig at Riot Games, it turns out, is taking a lot of his time!

Enjoy this issue of The Audio Source Magazine!

— **BRIAN SCHMIDT**

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“

**THE TIMES
THEY ARE
A-CHANGIN'...**

”



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

OPERATIONS MANAGER, CODY MATTHEW JOHNSON



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I know very well that you, a member of our small community, reading our very first magazine-style newsletter, anticipate what I'm about to say. I am most certainly echoing the words of many when I say the state of our world is rapidly changing. It is time for our organization to rise up and embody values that reflect and champion the contemporary world and discourse: accountability, diversity, and inclusion.

I'm not sure "the times" are ever not "a-changin'", but now more than ever the lyrics of Bob Dylan resonate with us all.

But who am I, a white, cisgender, able-bodied male in game audio, to talk about the need for change when I've led a more than privileged life? I believe that those who have benefitted from privilege are responsible for spreading abundance and giving unconditionally back to their community. It is our onus to encourage and spotlight those voices who have been marginalized. Right now, I'm thrilled and fulfilled to be able to donate a large portion of my time, resources, skills, and knowledge to this organization to facilitate its transformation and growth into the community that game audio needs.

The work won't stop once we get to wherever a hypothetical ideal "destination" might be. The leadership and staff of this organization will have to consistently examine our core values in response to and in anticipation of our dynamic, expanding culture. This isn't possible without your help — the members of our spectacular game audio community.

The game audio community is, without a doubt, the most accepting and nurturing entertainment-audio-community. Every day I'm in awe of the incredible camaraderie online and the overall feeling of acceptance, it is clear



there is such an awesome amount of talent, support, and abundance in our community.

That being said, we are not perfect. We have a long ways to go. The first step is awareness and action. We are working tirelessly to remodel our collective house for people of all walks of life to have a place to call their game audio home. Step by step, this organization is embracing the now and eagerly looking to the future of game audio.

I sincerely hope you are able to take time to explore some of our new endeavors on this journey to rebrand the organization and provide more opportunities of abundance through this shiny new newsletter format and a fresh new "coat of paint"... These are only small steps, but just the first of many. I invite you to get involved and be part of this exciting new chapter.

— CODY MATTHEW JOHNSON

WHATS THE BUZZ



This year has proven to be a learning curve for any organization, especially one that offers value through in-person networking and diversity events! We're excited to have upcoming digital events planned through the remainder of the year and plans to expand digital events in 2021.

GAMESOUNDCON 2020

The Game Audio Network Guild will have a substantial presence this year at the virtual GameSoundCon summit! We'll be participating in a variety of ways this with hope of interacting with current and future members in the medium they're most comfortable with.

Game Audio Network Guild Executive Director Savina Ciaramella, Operations Manager and Membership Liaison Cody Matthew Johnson, Associate Producer Lucas Fehring, Assistant Communications Manager Gabriella Ciaramella, and members of our board will be live at our virtual booth each day during the event. Our "live" schedule will be shared on the conference platform and on social media soon. If you are attending, please come by and say hello!

GAME AUDIO NETWORK GUILD - BREAKOUT SERIES

For the first time we're excited to be hosting an industry panel at a conference as an organization. Guild members **Laryssa Okada, Emmanuel Lagumbay, and Cody Matthew Johnson** will be taking the virtual stage for their talk **Game Audio Network Guild – Breakout Series: Redefining Career Building Stigmas**. Beginning as the first of many in a series giving advice to aspiring game audio professionals and veterans. Topics of discussion include identifying popular stigmas and pitfalls of industry and peer pressure, and redefining these stigmas to have positive connotations to encourage community and altruism over opportunism and individualism.

SCHOLARS PROGRAM - GAMESOUNDCON 2020

After the cancellation of the Game Developers Conference and the change to an online format, we very clearly saw the impact of value for the GDC 2020 Game Audio Network Guild Scholars. We've decided for GameSoundCon 2020 to not only provide passes and mentor pairing for a new group of Scholar Applicants but also for our GDC 2020 Scholars. We've decided, only for GameSoundCon2020, to make the Academic Sponsor requirement and Membership requirement optional. Additionally, each mentor will be rewarded with a 1 year membership or extension of current membership!

Applications for GameSoundCon 2020 Scholars Program are open now! Learn more about the Scholars Program and find more information for application on the website:

<https://www.audiogang.org/scholars-program/>

DEMO DERBY

In the same vein of virtual adaptations of our typical events, we're also hosting a virtual Demo Derby! The Game Audio Network Guild Demo Derby is one the highest rated and longest running annual sessions at the Game Developers Conference. Participants submit examples of their work and a panel of game audio experts review the work and provide constructive feedback. We host two separate categories in the Demo Derby (Sound Design and Music), and GameSoundCon attendants are invited to submit to either or both. All submissions will be considered in the order received. We can not guarantee that all submissions will be able to be heard (so get your submission in early!) See the website for more details:

<https://www.audiogang.org/demo-derby-submission/>

GIVEAWAY

Last but certainly not least, we'll be hosting a **giveaway** at our GameSoundCon booth, sponsored by **Music Marketing**. Thanks to Platinum Sponsor Music Marketing, we'll be giving away \$4700 worth of plugins!

All you have to do to enter for either is to **visit our booth** at GameSoundCon, say hello, and **sign up for our free newsletter** (by enrolling in the giveaway on the Whova App used by GameSoundCon), **now in a new magazine format** delivered to your inbox each quarterly packed full of industry highlights, events, interviews, and more.

UPCOMING EVENTS



**GAME AUDIO
NETWORK GUILD**

WEBINAR SERIES

16 OCTOBER: COMMUNICATION FOR COLLABORATION

An educational zoom webinar, this event will focus tools and techniques to improve effective communication in collaborative settings. Featuring composer and music editor Joseph S. DeBeasi, Operations Manager and Emperia Sound and Music CEO, Cody Matthew Johnson, and industry guests, attendees will walk away equipped to effectively communicate in an increasingly isolated world. Resources, like a communication chart, will be made for members to reference on the Game Audio Network Guild website. During this seminar, the panel will explore real world examples and case studies of situational communication issues and how they can be resolved.

Anyone who pre-registers before the start of the event will be entered to win a giveaway of a plugin or software package (details will be announced closer to the event)! The winner will be announced live at the end of the event. There is no purchase necessary to sign up for this event or to register for the giveaway.



23 SEPTEMBER: TOKYO GAME SHOW

TGS2020 ONLINE will be held for five days. Various companies and organizations in the gaming industry will unveil the latest updates. The online round-table discussions covering the latest topics in games will also be hosted by the organizer. All of these online contents can be viewed for free of charge.



05 - 07 OCTOBER: GAMESOUNDCON 2020

GameSoundCon is the industry's leading conference on game music and sound design, featuring over 100 speakers and panelists representing the top names in the industry.

GameSoundCon teaches the core concepts, practical skills and game audio training to get a music or sound design job in the video game industry. Don't miss your chance to learn from the top experts in the business.

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MEGAMIGS

PRESENTED BY Red Barrels

25 SEPT. & 12 NOV.: MEGAMIGS

MEGAMIGS, the number one event in the Canadian video game industry will offer an exploded version this year.

Develop:Brighton

02 NOVEMBER: DEVELOP:BRIGHTON

Develop:Brighton will now be held online. The dates for this event are November 2-4. The virtual event will feature a host of outstanding speakers from the development world.



**Develop:Star
Awards**

4 November 2020

04 NOVEMBER: DEVELOP:BRIGHTON

Wednesday 4 November, during Develop:Brighton, the Develop:Star Awards will recognize studios of all sizes and allow them to shine.

XDS | **EXTERNAL
DEVELOPMENT
SUMMIT**

27 OCTOBER: XDS20 ADAPT

XDS is the only annual, international games industry event held in Canada, focused on external development.

PROUD DIAMOND



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0 NETWORK GUILD

BREAKING INTO THE INDUSTRY AS AN AUDIO STUDENT

BY SHAUNY SION JANG

Last year, **Penka Kouneva**, an amazing composer who I had the honor to have as a mentor at GDC 2016, messaged me and asked if I wanted to talk about how I broke into the industry at the Women and Underrepresented Genders in Game Audio Roundtable at GDC 2020. As a somewhat recent graduate who successfully broke into the industry, I can speak from experience and hopefully help others who are starting out. **There is no single solution for how to break into the industry**, but my story might give some ideas about how to improve one's chances. The following are some points I shared at the roundtable about the things you can do to build a game audio career.

BUILDING GENUINE CONNECTIONS

As we all know, building connections and networking is crucial in the industry. I was lucky to have studied at DigiPen, which had a lot of opportunities to collaborate on game projects. Whether or not you go to a school like DigiPen, **you can find other aspiring developers at local or online game jams, meet-ups and computer science programs at colleges and universities**. Every collaboration is an opportunity to leave your impression on others. Be helpful, be kind and be passionate. If you show good skills and work ethic, people are more likely to recommend you to new positions. Conferences are also a great way to meet people. It is not cheap, but I highly recommend taking advantage of opportunities like the Game Audio Network Guild Scholarship program and volunteering at conferences in return for free or discounted entry. When you meet people, don't feel pressured to

promote yourself or to get to know all the famous people. Just be genuine and make friends with those who are in similar situations as yourself or try to reach out to whomever you feel comfortable approaching. **When you are genuine with your connections, they are more likely to recommend opportunities that would be a good fit for**

“

THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION FOR HOW TO BREAK INTO THE INDUSTRY.

– SHAUNY JANG



your personality or style. Finally, networking boosts your passion and creativity. It is very inspiring to see your friends grow and achieve great things, and they can be a great source of companionship and motivation!

BUILDING A PORTFOLIO

Another very important tool for getting a gig is your portfolio. The game industry is a very competitive industry, and having a great portfolio is not only necessary for many job postings, but also one of the best ways you can stand out against so many other talented people. One thing I want to emphasize is that **part of building a good portfolio is learning how to build one.** It is not only about having great work to show, but about **knowing how best to show it.** This, like anything, is a skill you have to develop. **You should start making the best looking and sounding portfolio you can long before you think your work is good enough to get a job.** Building your portfolio can start as soon as you make your first bounce from a DAW. Student projects, game jams, and passion projects are all great material, even if they aren't AAA quality. Make it a habit to update your portfolio as you have newer and better work.

Don't forget to use your connections to get feedback. **Power Up Audio** hosts **Reel Talk** on their Twitch channel where you can get your portfolio reviewed, and it helped me a lot to make sure that my website and my portfolio were showcasing my work well. You can also get feedback on your portfolio from other audio friends, artists, and graphic designers. The same advice applies to audio tests. Whenever you get an audio test from a hiring manager, chances are that you will have a very tight deadline to finish it. Before you ever have to do a real audio test, invest your



PART OF BUILDING A GOOD PORTFOLIO IS LEARNING HOW TO BUILD ONE.

– SHAUNY JANG

time into making redesigns and working on a deadline. This will help you learn how to make solid and quick design decisions and work fast and efficiently. Fail faster. The more redesigns you make, the better and faster you will get. Don't worry about making your first one perfect.

CREATING YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITY

The last point I want to make is about leveraging small opportunities to create more opportunities. Every opportunity, no matter how small, is a stepping stone to the next one. Brian Schmidt once told me that **you should never work for free, but that money isn't the only form of payment.** You should always be working for either your career, your bank account, or your soul.

One great example I have of this is an indie game project that I worked on called *8 Doors*. My friend Grey Davenport found and forwarded to me a video of this indie game that





YOU SHOULD NEVER WORK FOR FREE... BUT MONEY ISN'T THE ONLY FORM OF PAYMENT.

– BRIAN SCHMIDT

a small group of Korean developers were working on. The art style and the storyline -- based on old Korean myths -- really inspired me, and I thought it was a great chance for me to get to know game developers in my home country too. I got in contact with them, and they agreed to let me work on the audio for the game. I really enjoyed making sound effects, composing music, and using FMOD to implement my audio in the game. I spent money out of my own pocket to purchase instruments from Korea to root the music in the culture and tradition. Even though this was not a paying gig, I learned a lot and got a lot of great portfolio material out of it.

When I interviewed for my current position at Microsoft, this was unexpectedly one of the biggest highlights of my portfolio review.

PREPARATION MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Looking back at every opportunity that led me to where I am right now, a lot of them came when I was not expecting it, and a lot of them didn't feel like big opportunities at the time. Some can say that I am just very lucky, and that is true. However, **I also consciously put myself in positions that were likely to afford more opportunities**, and I made sure that I had the skills to take advantage of any that came my way. There are also a lot of missed opportunities in my past. As a student, I failed to get into music school in Korea, but I eventually found my way to DigiPen. There are also plenty of jobs that I applied for but did not get, but I was also able to land several great ones along the way. **Don't let failure discourage you.** There will always be plenty of failures. The important thing is to **keep working on your skills, cultivating your relationships and following your passions in life.** Stay determined, friends!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shauny Sion Jang is an audio designer for games and media and has been working in game audio professionally since 2016. She has shipped games with **Mojang (Microsoft), Nintendo, 8th Shore, and Rootless Studios.** Shauny graduated from DigiPen Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Sound Design. In addition to her work on games she works with Audiokinetic as a freelance technical translator to help grow the Korean Wwise community.

Recent credits include **Minecraft Jurassic World, Minecraft Earth, Snipperclips Plus, Super Mario Maker For Nintendo 3DS, 8 Doors,** and others.



GAME AUDIO NETWORK GUILD

SCHOLARS ALUMNI COMMITTEE POISED FOR APPROVAL



SCHOLAR ALUMNI COMMITTEE POISED FOR APPROVAL

The Game Audio Network Guild “Mixer” is already sending their Scholarship initiatives to a new “Bus”, and the corresponding “Aux Channel” is now being created. Meet the Game Audio Network Guild Scholars Alumni Committee (also known as G.S.A.C.), an organization made up of past-recipients of Game Audio Network Guild Scholarship program, primed to pump new life and energy into the organizations’ already impressive educational outreach programs.

As many will recall, the Game Audio Network Guild has been awarding select Scholarships for promising students to attend the Game Developers Conference (GDC) and GameSoundCon (GSC) since 2015. The program has since expanded to provide scholarships for Develop:Brighton and the NYU Scoring for Video Games Workshop. Selectees were provided personal mentors chosen from the game audio community, and the requisite passes to get the most out of their experiences. Since then, alumni from the program reached out to Game Audio Network Guild officers, expressing gratitude for the opportunities and a desire to “pay it forward.” The result: **the Game Audio Network Guild Officers said “send it,” and had scholar alumni form a committee.**

The Officers selected past-scholar **Andrew Lipian** to head up the committee, who then tapped fellow alum **Rachel Robison** – creator of the Game Audio Network Guild Scholar Alumni Facebook page – to be Vice Chair. While the Game Audio Network Guild operations team will retain final selection of future scholarship recipients, G.S.A.C. will handle much of the logistics. The 9-member committee will assist in the process of awarding scholarships, uniting Game Audio Network Guild Scholars to provide outreach into academia, networking and sharing resources to help each other in pursuing careers in game audio, and tag-teaming additional needs of the Game Audio Network Guild as they arise. The committee’s proposal is on the precipice of approval, and details are

still being finalized, but many of them contain exciting prospects.

For example, G.S.A.C. committee members will serve not only to strengthen the bonds of past Scholars to the Game Audio Network Guild, but also to deepen the organization’s outreach into academia at both the Collegiate and High School levels. Once the committee is fully formed, initiatives will include interfacing with High Schools interested in opening Game Audio Network Guild chapters at their schools, outreach and networking to video game music clubs on college campuses, and working to establish a new award at the annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards for outstanding educators in the field of game audio. The twofold impetus behind these plans would be to more firmly connect the Game Audio Network Guild to the outlying academic community, and also to recognize superlative contributions to the field of game audio education. A happy result would be an increase in Game Audio Network Guild affiliations,



ANDREW LIPIAN, COMMITTEE CHAIR

an amplification of access to resources for prospective scholars, and a proliferation of connectivity between scholars, both past and present.

Such developments, coupled with **creating innovative ways for the organization to stay connected**, pulling together further orbits outside the locus of the industry, and enthusiasm for game audio – as well as new talent – can only grow. This is the promise contained within this new “Auxiliary Channel”, and as members join and meetings adjourn, the Game Audio Network Guild and G.S.A.C. will be ready to turn up the fader and maximize their levels of engagement, revealing what is possible with collaborative effort and “giving back” to the community.

The ideas outlined in the proposal are just a starting point, but if the progress thus far is any indicator – once this committee gets a “full send” from the Game Audio Network Guild Officers, it is about to improve the future landscape of game audio scholarship for the better.

— ANDREW LIPIAN



RACHEL ROBISON, COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIR



A promotional image for Mortal Kombat 11. It features the character Scorpion in his signature hooded, dark armor with glowing yellow accents. He is shown from the chest up, looking intensely forward with glowing white eyes. His right hand is extended towards the viewer, holding a scorpion-tail. The background is a bright, golden-yellow glow with a large, glowing circular emblem behind him. The word "MORTAL" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image, with a large white number "11" to its right.

MORTAL 11



KOMBAT™

**A BLOODY SYMPHONY
OF CHARACTERS:**

MUSIC AND LEITMOTIF FOR MORTAL KOMBAT 11

BY WILBERT ROGET, II



MORTAL KOMBAT 11

AFTERMATH

ORIGINAL GAME SOUNDTRACK

MUSIC BY WILBERT ROGET, II

STAGE MUSIC COMPOSERS
RICH CARLE NATHAN GRIGG MATTHIAS WOLF

A BLOODY SYMPHONY OF CHARACTERS

MUSIC AND LEITMOTIF FOR MORTAL KOMBAT 11

BY WILBERT ROGET, II - COMPOSER



INTRO AND DEFINITION

Leitmotif is defined as a **“theme, or other coherent musical idea, clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances, whose purpose is to represent or symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force or any other ingredient in a dramatic work”** (Grove Music Online). While this concept has been used in opera for hundreds of years, beginning with baroque opera and most popularly associated with Wagner’s late-romantic operas, it’s found an important place in the world of film and game scoring. And in my score to *Mortal Kombat 11*, I used leitmotif extensively as a means of structuring this game’s epic 4-hour story mode, featuring dozens of characters across several different realms and timelines.

A leitmotif is distinct from a melodic theme in that, while melodic themes are complete ideas presented in full, **leitmotifs are used many times within a score**, retaining their identity even through significant modification and representing some specific meaning each time they’re referenced. While there is some grey area between the two, for example melodic character themes that are reused in a game score, leitmotifs are distinct in their ability to be modified yet remain recognizable.

CHARACTER THEMES AND LEITMOTIF

Game scores have a lengthy history of using both leitmotifs and melodic themes to represent characters in particular. Nobuo Uematsu’s iconic score to *Final Fantasy 6*, for example, used Terra’s theme in several pieces throughout the game – at first it’s heard in the game’s introduction, then recurs later on in the story to reference aspects of her personality, the magic “Esper” race, and the tragedy of her race being exploited by the empire. The first five notes of her theme, the 1-2-3-5-3 leitmotif, are nimbly used in all of these contexts with changes in orchestration and intensity to fit the corresponding scenes.

Characters are the most identifiable aspect of any fighting game, and character themes are often used to give identity to the fighters. The *Street Fighter* franchise, for example, famously has unique stages for every character in the game, each with their own musical themes. And although *Mortal Kombat* has always featured a rich story with iconic characters, the stages themselves are not usually tied to any particular character – as a result, there were no official character themes in this franchise.

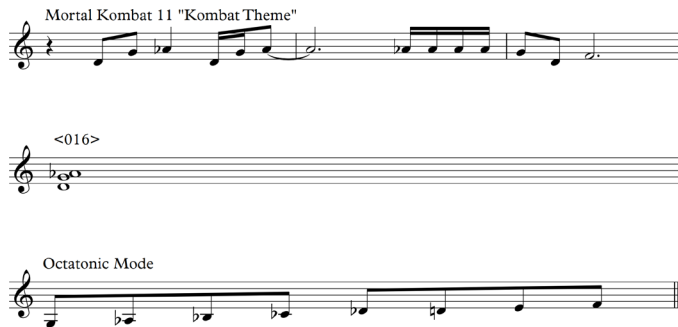
LEITMOTIF IN MORTAL KOMBAT 11

To bring cohesion and depth to the colossal storytelling in *Mortal Kombat 11*’s lengthy campaign, I created individual leitmotifs for every character and faction in the game. And because of the epic breadth and scope of the story, I used a large orchestra and choir as the backbone of the score, but the leitmotifs themselves



are typically performed on world instruments, carefully programmed electronics and sound design, or metal-influenced guitars. **This allowed them to be more easily identifiable within the mix, and allowed me to easily use multiple themes nimbly and even in counterpoint with each other.**

Mortal Kombat 11 "Kombat Theme"



<016>

Octatonic Mode

One of the first leitmotifs I wrote was the “Kombat Theme”, or the concept of how the *Mortal Kombat* universe seems to solve most problems through violence. In addition to being the most commonly referenced leitmotif, it also formed the basis of the entire score’s harmonic language – the three primary notes form an <016> collection, meaning that the intervals include a minor 2nd and a tritone. It’s unusually dissonant for a score’s main theme, but the entire melody fits into the octatonic mode – an 8-note scale consisting of alternating halfsteps and wholesteps. Harmonies within this scale can sound particularly dark, and because the scale is symmetrical, it’s very easy to play multiple melodies in counterpoint on top of each other. This allowed me to use leitmotifs very nimbly throughout the score, and they were easily recognizable due to their non-orchestral nature.

Mortal Kombat 11 "Family Theme"

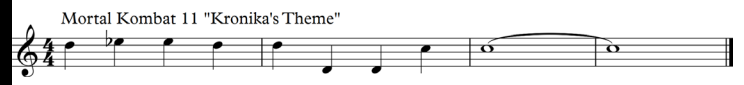


Another important leitmotif was the “Family Theme”, which was shared among several Earthrealm characters in an attempt to make them more relatable. I used this theme in several cutscenes concerning Sonya, Johnny Cage, and Cassie Cage, as well as Jax and Jacqui Briggs, and Scorpion, to show that these characters’ primary motivation was the protection of their families. Its melody is entirely pentatonic, the most universally used scale across all real-world cultures, reinforcing the relatability of this theme and its corresponding concept. And although several characters share the same melody, I used different instrumentation to give each of them individual flavor: Sonya is represented by acoustic guitar, while the electric guitar is used for her more futuristic high-tech daughter Cassie. Jax is always

represented with solo brass, giving a vibe of military heroism and suggesting he comes from a family tradition of military service.

Kronika is the main antagonist of *Mortal Kombat 11*, setting in motion the time-bending events that propel the story and maligning herself with characters from past and present that seek to rewrite history to their own benefit. She always enters a scene by teleporting through the sands of the Great Hourglass, her source of power, and so I used Middle Eastern and North African instruments throughout the score to portray her – her melodic leitmotif is played on the Kemenche fiddle, and she also has a signature sound of a djembe drum head being rubbed, and processed through granular synthesis to sound like the swirling of sand.

Mortal Kombat 11 "Kronika's Theme"




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Kronika Theme (strings, then horn)



Family Theme (horns)



Giving you the life you deserve.

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While Kronika possesses cosmic time manipulation powers, her true power within the story is her ability to manipulate characters, preying on their fears and ambitions to draw them to her side. For example, in the above scene, Kronika’s theme is used in counterpoint with the Family Theme to show that while Jax believes he is serving Kronika to save his daughter, he is actually being manipulated into doing her bidding.

Cetrion and Raiden’s themes are an example of leitmotifs describing relationships between characters. As the protector of Earthrealm, Raiden fights for what he believes to be good, and has deep admiration for Cetrion, the elder goddess of virtue. Raiden frequently seeks her help and counsel throughout the game, and so I wrote Cetrion’s theme to be a celestial, “perfected”

version of Raiden’s: It uses 3/4 time signature, which is a reference to the Renaissance concept of “perfect time” in sacred music. Additionally, her theme stays on the root chord instead of progressing to a major chord on the flat-7th scale degree. This causes the final note of Cetrion’s theme to be a subtonic and gives a floaty, eternal and unresolved vibe to the melody, illustrating her immortal status as an Elder Goddess. Lastly, her theme is performed by Emma Sunbring, a vocalist specializing in the Scandinavian “kulning” style of singing – this is a technique similar to yodelling, and was traditionally used by shepherds to organize and lead cattle throughout the forests, which made for a fitting metaphor to Cetrion’s role in leading mortals onto the path of good!

Mortal Kombat 11 "Cetrion's Theme"



i (root)

Mortal Kombat 11 "Light Raiden Theme"



i (root)

bVII (subtonic)



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Mortal Kombat 11 "Kitana's Theme - Phase 1"

(G-minor) 1 2 3 4 5 1 4 5

"Kitana's Theme - Phase 2, Diplomacy"

(G-minor) 4 5 6 7 8 1 4 5

"Kitana's Theme - Phase 3, Kitana Kahn"

(E-Major) 3 4 5 6 7 8 4 5



Kitana is one of the most dynamic characters in the game, beginning as emperor Shao Khan's rebellious daughter and eventually rising to power, replacing him as the Khan of Outworld. Her melody is always played as a constantly rising stepwise scalar figure, but unlike most leitmotifs where only the arrangement changes in new instances, the melody itself evolves over the course of the story: At first, her melody begins humbly as a quiet minor key statement on violas that starts at the root and never reaches the higher notes in the scale. Later on, it evolves into a full strings minor key statement beginning on the fourth and reaching the highest scale degree. By the end of her story arc, it is now a major key statement, boldly starting on the major 3rd. Texturally, the theme is played on orchestral instruments before she's named Khan, but once she is in power, the leitmotif is performed on electric guitar for the rest of the game.

Ran to write a song based on leitmotifs from *Mortal Kombat 11*. We chose to use my Fire God Liu Kang theme (which was itself an evolution of Raiden's theme) as the basis for the verse, and Kitana's theme as the chorus, in a piece we titled "Rise" as a reference to both characters' epic development and metamorphosis. The production of this track takes strong influence from the rock guitars and drums used in the game's score once Kitana becomes Khan of Outworld, and the song concludes with a subtle reference to the Kombat theme on quiet solo horn - now outlining a sus chord instead of the usual dissonant <016> tonality, and thus symbolizing a new era of peace.

Lastly, for the End Credits, I collaborated with Seattle-based producer Super Square and nerdcore rapper Mega

VERSE

CHORUS

FINAL THOUGHTS X

“FINISH THIS”

Leitmotiv is a centuries old dramatic technique that has found a special place in the field of game music. And although modern titles have become increasingly cinematic in recent years, the practice of using melody to describe the development, interrelationships and motivations of characters has been a mainstay of the genre for decades. My *Mortal Kombat 11* score relied almost entirely on leitmotiv to humanize the game’s roster, making each character into a dynamic, relatable figure that has been placed in an otherwise impossibly epic, apocalyptic universe. Additionally, because I made sure that my leitmotifs were as simple and identifiable as possible, I could use them very nimbly throughout the score and often in conjunction with each other to provide additional depth and meaning to the scenes they accompany.

Thanks for reading, and if you’d like to hear more about this subject, please check out my 2020 Summer GDC lecture “**A Bloody Symphony of Characters: Music and Leitmotif in *Mortal Kombat 11***”, complete with video footage and more examples from *Mortal Kombat 11* and other game scores. Additionally, the ***Mortal Kombat 11 Original Soundtrack*** is available on Spotify, iTunes and all streaming services, courtesy of Warner Bros. Watertower Music; the score to our DLC expansion, *Mortal Kombat 11: Aftermath*, can be found exclusively on YouTube.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wilbert Roget, II is a veteran composer in the video game industry. He joined LucasArts as a staff composer in 2008, where he scored several games in the Star Wars universe, including *Star Wars: The Old Republic* and *Star Wars: First Assault*. He later became a freelance writer, scoring *Mortal Kombat 11*, *Call of Duty: WWII*, the Emmy Award-winning *Star Wars: Vader Immortal*, *Guild Wars 2: Path of Fire*, *Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris*, *Destiny 2: Forsaken*, *Anew: The Distant Light* and other indie and AAA titles. His scores have earned him several awards and nominations from ASCAP, the Game Audio Network Guild, the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences (D.I.C.E. Awards), and others.



A promotional image for Mortal Kombat 11 Aftermath. It features three characters: on the left, a man with long black hair and a green aura; in the center, a character in a large, ornate, dark armor with a wide, flat, conical hat; on the right, a muscular man with long grey hair, a headband, and a white dragon tattoo on his chest. The background is a fiery orange and red with a large, stylized dragon head silhouette. The title 'MORTAL KOMBAT' is written in a large, white, stylized font with a double vertical bar between the words, and 'AFTERMATH' is written below it in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Blue lightning bolts are visible on the characters' arms.

MORTAL KOMBAT

AFTERMATH

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SABRINA HUTCHINSON

FROM PR CEO TO MUSIC
TALENT AGENT

**TAKING COMPOSER
REPRESENTATION
TO THE NEXT LEVEL**



IN THE LIMELIGHT: SABRINA HUTCHINSON

TAKING COMPOSER REPRESENTATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Our very own Game Audio Network Guild publicist, Sabrina Hutchinson of Defiant Public Relations, recently joined First Artists Management as an **agent representing composers and music talent**. First Artists Management is a Los Angeles-based talent agency founded in 2003, which has now expanded to London, specializing in representing composers and music supervisors for visual media. Hutchinson joins agents Vasi Vangelos and Alexander Vangelos and will be working with the First Artists Management team in the Los Angeles office. **Joining her at First Artists Management will be composers Gordy Haab and Joshua Mosley.**

Representation and advocacy for creative talent are a part of Hutchinson's DNA – a through-line of her entire life, beginning as a child, as a sought-after celebrity publicist and now as talent agent. The genesis for Sabrina's knack for public relations and wrangling people behind a cause occurred as a seven-year-old when she convinced her mother to throw a carnival to raise funds for a muscular dystrophy. It was a success – the first of a fruitful career – raising a total of \$40.00 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. **“Let's do good things, let's raise money, and let's have a party!”** is her motto, says Hutchinson. Early in life, Hutchinson was surrounded by a family fully immersed in all types of music, from country stars Hank Snow and Johnny Cash

to classic rock legends such as KISS and Queen. Her family supported her musical talents as well; she began playing piano at age seven, later taking up the cello and flute. Growing up in Seattle in the '90s allowed her to attend shows and concerts frequently, immersing herself deeply into the music scene.

She grew up with a love of all genres of music, but specifically felt drawn to rock and roll. Hutchinson got her start in the industry by promoting

and managing bands, working with **Candlebox** and **Lloyd's Rocket**, to name a few. Her career then migrated into the world of audio and video post-production, serving as the studio director at Pure Audio, one of the Puget Sound's leading commercial studios.

Before moving to Los Angeles in 2011, Hutchinson founded **Defiant Public Relations**, an award-winning entertainment public relations

firm focusing on representing sound and music-related clients and events. Defiant Public Relations is a proud sponsor of the Game Audio Network Guild.

Sabrina's initial PR clientele were celebrities, working with people like **Orlando Jones** (*Sleepy Hollow*, *American Gods*, *Evolution*), **Nicole Behaire** (*Sleepy Hollow*, *42*, *Black Mirror*), **“Boston Rob” Mariano** (*The Amazing Race*, *Survivor*), and **Brian Tee** (*Jurassic World*, *The Fast and the Furious*). After being approached by several composers and musicians about public relations representation, she decided to pivot the agency from celebrities to sound and music clients. She realized that at this crucial

**“LET'S DO GOOD THINGS,
LET'S RAISE MONEY, AND
LET'S HAVE A PARTY”**

– SABRINA HUTCHINSON

moment in her career she had an opportunity to create impact doing what she enjoyed the most - **working with musical talent**. She later grew the agency to include composers such as **Bear McCreary**, **Rolfe Kent**, **Christopher Young**, **Gordy Haab**, and **Joshua Mosley**, to name a few.



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A standout achievement was taking home a **Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Prism Award** (for those who are unfamiliar, the “Oscars of PR” comes to mind) for a very special, unique, and interestingly-timed PR campaign. It’s a well-known Los Angeles fact that the city shuts down during the holidays – not many folks who work in Southern California are actually from Southern California and head back to their stomping grounds for the holidays – which is made evidently clear by deserted

highways and empty lots. Hours before Christmas 2018, Sabrina was asked to run an effective immediately PR campaign for a last-minute benefit, “Eat, Drink and Support.” The all-star food and music event featured **Foo Fighters’ Dave Grohl and Taylor Hawkins, celebrity Chefs Duff Goldman, Antonia Lofaso, Bruce Kalman**, and others for an event benefitting the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. Sabrina and her team kicked into overdrive, picking up the phone to every publication in town



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only to discover, not to her surprise given the time of year, that everyone was on holiday. After pulling her often seemingly magical PR strings, she managed to land coverage in The Hollywood Reporter, Billboard, and a



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PROMOTING OTHER ARTISTS CAME VERY NATURALLY TO ME, AND I JUST STARTED DOING IT WITH FRIENDS AND LATER DID IT MORE FORMALLY WITH ROCK BANDS AND METAL BANDS.”

– SABRINA HUTCHINSON

wealth of other outlets. The result not only benefited the LA Regional Food Bank, but also delivered one of PR’s top prizes to Defiant Public Relations.

Through her PR work for composers, Hutchinson began to form a relationship with **First Artists Management** due to the nature of proximity between agencies and publicists that share clients. Working together over the last few years, Defiant PR and First Artists Management shared a few clients, including **Kent, Young, Carl Thiel,**

Kyle Newmaster, and Justin Melland. Hutchinson describes her experience collaborating with First Artists Management as a strong connection, and described how the whole team really clicked.

Hutchinson has represented composer Gordy Haab for three years. He is well known for his award winning work on AAA games such as *Star Wars: Battlefront*, *Halo Wars 2*, and *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order*, among others. Their most recent collaboration is the campaign for Haab’s soundtrack release of the award-winning score to *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order*, released by Walt Disney Records on August 21.

Co-composed by Gordy Haab and Stephen Barton, the music of *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* won Music of The Year and Best Choral Composition at the 18th Annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards held earlier this year, and also garnered Haab one of ASCAP’s top prizes for 2020, the “Composers’ Choice” award for Video Game Score of the Year. Hutchinson said, **“A release of a Star Wars video game-related soundtrack has been a long time coming for fans.”** This release sets a hopeful precedent for the release of future releases, as well as past Star Wars video game soundtracks. Haab’s additional Star Wars game credits include *Star Wars: The Old Republic* and the upcoming *Star Wars: Squadrons*.



As Hutchinson embarks on this new exciting endeavor as an agent for composers, it’s clear her skills in publicity and management will serve her well. Said Hutchinson,

“I have been in sales and marketing for over 20 years, and representing creative talent has been a throughline of my career. Stepping from PR into an agent role feels very natural, and I look forward to the opportunity to assist composers in new and different ways.”



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Defiant Public Relations has represented The Game Audio Network Guild for three years and Hutchinson was a co-producer for the 18th Annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards earlier this year. She is extraordinarily proud to be a part of the team that pulled the event together. Before the unfortunate yet appropriate cancellation of the Game Developers Conference, plans were full steam ahead on producing an in-person live awards show as usual, and Hutchinson was working with the team on publicity. The team, including Hutchinson, acted with agility to create a highly successful show with both live and pre-recorded components, which was streamed live on Twitch.



Hutchinson co-produced the pre-show and post-show, wrangling talent interviews including Michael Shapiro, voice of the infamous G-Man in Valve’s Half-Life franchise. She adds, **“We missed seeing the game audio community in person this year at the show, but the ‘COVID silver lining’ was that twice as many people got to experience the Game Audio Network Guild Awards because it was streamed live for the first time.”**

Above all else, Hutchinson’s objective is **taking composer representation to the next level**. By taking a holistically-oriented approach, she aims to **“directly influence composers lives**

“One of my superpowers is recognizing star potential in people, and I take a lot of pleasure in helping the people I work with achieve their goals.”

– SABRINA HUTCHINSON

to help them reach their goals.”

Generally speaking, the reason talent seeks PR is for broader recognition and appeal. Hutchinson is committed to the **long-term investment of building careers and career sustainability**. Helping her clients

reach their goals is the pinnacle of importance to Hutchinson. Having run multiple companies, founding her own agency, and her strategic goal-oriented approach to business primes her to help First Artists Management clients flourish.

Said Hutchinson,

“First Artists Management is a forward-thinking engaged, and passionate team that’s focused on helping clients achieve their goals. I couldn’t ask for anything better.”

– GABRIELLA CIARAMELLA



FORTNITE

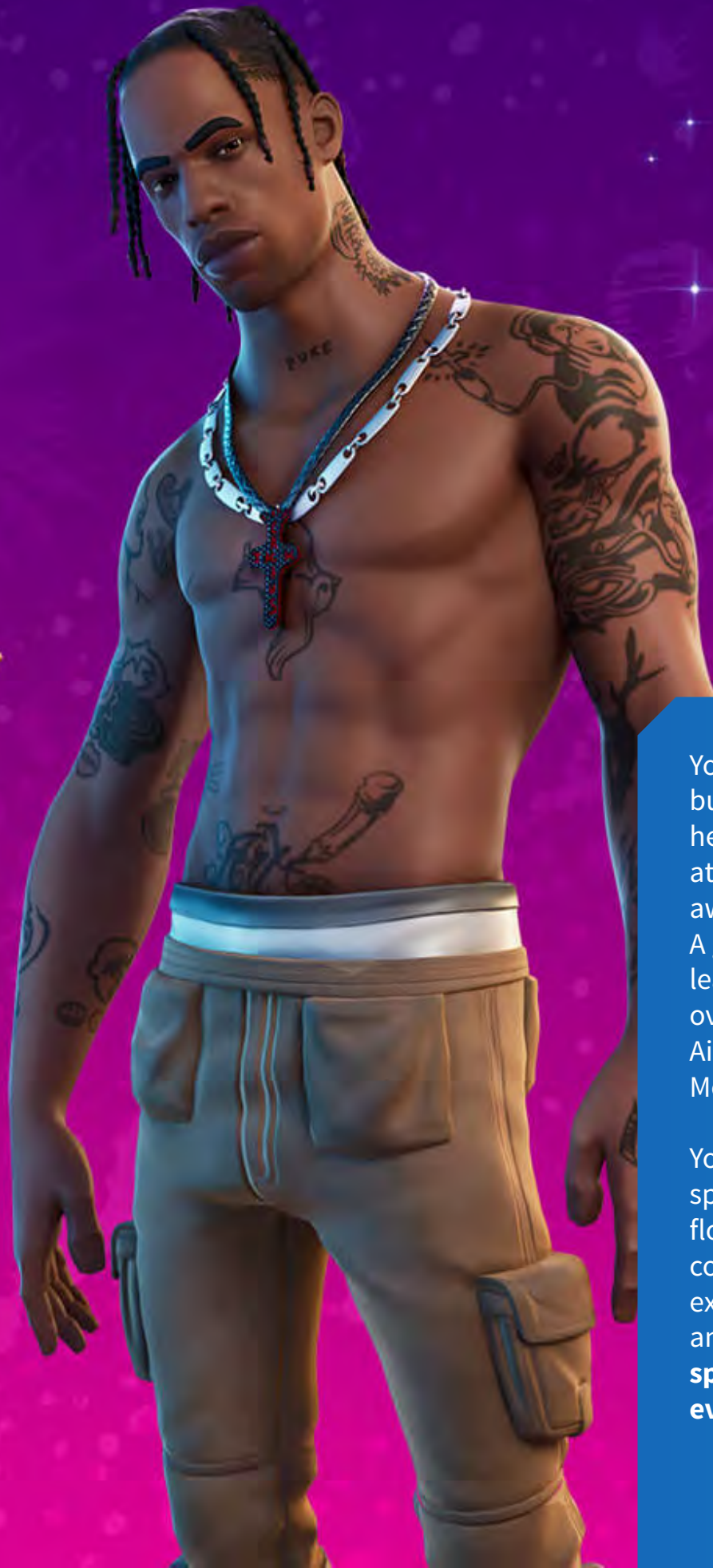
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CONNECTION IN AN ISOLATED WORLD

BY GINA KOUYOUMDJIAN



You parachute from an airborne bus alongside millions of other head-banging players, arriving at a giant stage only to be blown away by an enormous asteroid. A giant Travis Scott emerges, at least 5 times your size, pounding over palm trees in his custom Air Jordans as the iconic “Sicko Mode” intro starts blasting.

You plummet through outer space, swim underwater, and float through Travis Scott’s colorful sonic world. This whole experience is only 10 minutes and **you are, technically speaking, physically not even there.**

CONNECTION IN AN ISOLATED WORLD: MUSIC INDUSTRY LOOKS TO GAMING FOR ITS FUTURE

BY GINA KOUYOUMDJIAN

ASTRO
NOMICAL

You parachute from an airborne bus alongside millions of other head-banging players, arriving at a giant stage only to be blown away by an enormous asteroid. A giant Travis Scott emerges, at least 5 times your size, pounding over palm trees in his custom Air Jordans as the iconic “Sicko Mode” intro starts blasting.

You plummet through outer space, swim underwater, and float through Travis Scott’s colorful sonic world. This whole experience is only 10 minutes and **you are, technically speaking, physically not even there.**

This was an entirely virtual, one-time event, hosted in none other than, *Fortnite*. The concert experience itself drew **27.7 million unique players from around the world.** A gamer himself, Scott was excited to set his imagination running while creating the “Astronomical” experience. A concert beyond the

realm of possibility in reality, **things he fantasized about executing in real life, became a boundless wonderland for experimentation in the virtual world** and a way to connect with fans in a unique and engaging way.

Travis, while hitting record attendance and views, isn’t the only artist to explore this frontier; **DJ Marshmello** played a set in *Fortnite* in 2019, along with **Diplo, Steve Aoki, and deadmau5**, as well as **Charli XCX & Phoebe Bridgers** in *Minecraft*, and **Soccer Mommy** in *Club Penguin*. While these concerts began long before our global crisis, it’s becoming clear the prospect of more virtual concert experiences is looking bright, as artists have little hope of returning to live shows and festivals in the near future.

From a financial standpoint, **in-game concerts have enormous potential.** Not only can you create essentially any venue type

and size, **you have none of the physical barriers, liabilities, and expenditures of physical shows.** “Sold out” becomes an outdated term. Fans from around the world can gather in one place at zero to little cost to them. A symbiotic relationship thrives between the game and artist, as both pull in fans from both sides, making it very easy to cross-pollinate fan bases and create new players and listeners. Virtual merch enters the arena with custom skins, dance moves, weapons, etc., along with the potential to sell physical merch and potential for brand partnerships. Take Travis Scott and his custom Air Jordan’s for example: **his collaboration created a brand exposure value of \$518,000 for Nike with this event alone.**

There is rising excitement for what sci-fi writer Neal Stephenson coined “The Meta-verse”: a collective and shared virtual space in which you interact with others via an avatar.

Grand Theft Auto Online had artists playing live sets in virtual nightclubs long before *Fortnite* concerts, as well as other experiences such as Sony Music's virtual meet-and-greets and listening parties.

We go to concerts and events to relate to the human experience in some way. Artists help us connect with our emotions and others, a feeling every human craves and needs. While these events aren't entirely new, the current global crisis has created an almost urgent need for human connection in an otherwise isolated contemporary world.

This is the crucial reason for the momentum and exciting potential for the intersection of music and games.

successful and noteworthy games in the past decade, responsible for IP's like *Metal Gear Solid*, *The Phantom Pain*, and most recently, *Death Stranding*. Released in 2019, *Death Stranding*, received hype and praise for being the first of its kind, **strand-style game**, in which your objective is to reconnect a fractured society, in a lush futuristically organic sci-fi world. Entirely cinematic and engaging, *Death Stranding*, paints a world not only through visuals, but with **its unique use of a variety of songs in gameplay, thoroughly characteristic of Kojima's brand and style.**

Kojima's use of music in unlikely ways began with the first *Metal Gear Solid* game, with the use of the song, "The Best Is Yet to Come". The twist, however: he wanted it to be



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“SOLD OUT”

BECOMES AN OUTDATED TERM

— GINA KOUYOUMDJIAN

“I try to be connected to the actors, film directors, authors, artists, and musicians I personally like,” *Metal Gear Solid* and *Death Stranding* visionary **Hideo Kojima** tells Eurogamer.

“The way I select the music or artists is based on trust I establish with them. The natural connection (strand) I have with these people makes it possible to work together.”

Hideo Kojima has been the creative brain behind some of the most

sung in Gaeilge (Irish), with vocals by Ni Fhearraigh. He felt as though the song, with the combination of melody, lyrics, sound, tone, and vocals were all imperative to creating a memorable experience for the player to reflect on long after the game was over. Not only was this rewarding for the game, the vocalist on the track was exposed to a whole new group of fans and opportunities.

Hideo Kojima frequently incorporates songs in his trailers, on top of gameplay and end-credit content, almost always a personal

and unpredictable choice. **He allows his intuition and personal interests to guide his musical decisions,** picking whatever he's listening to at the time, whether that's dreamy synth-pop, folk, Celtic ballads, or metal. This is where the musical world of *Death Stranding* was born.

Kojima, while on a trip in Iceland, heard the music of artist **Low Roar** in a store and was immediately captivated. He went straight to the record shop and bought himself a copy, eventually getting in touch with the Icelandic ambient folk artist to use their music for the *Death Stranding* trailer. He felt as though the vision of the game was strongly associated with Iceland and Low Roar would end up being an essential puzzle piece of the game's experience.

"It has an image of a newly born earth," he explains. "I thought Low Roar's music would match this harsh but beautiful and pure environmental setting. I also felt somewhat of a connection to Low Roar and the game, the matching of Low Roar's acoustic but digital futuristic sound and the concept of *Death Stranding*."

Death Stranding is not your average game. You find yourself spending long periods of time journeying alone through the rich landscapes of the game. **The songs transform these ordinary moments into cinematic experiences**, pulling you closer into the world in a deeply personal way. For Kojima, the intersection of songs and *Death Stranding* is vital to the gameplay and has one fundamental motive: **connection**.

Connection, the mission statement of Kojima's world, is a central mechanic of the game as well, creating a space for players to positively interact, such as making deliveries for other players, building bridges, roads, towers, etc. for other players to use, and specifically, being able to add songs to these constructions for player's to hear when they walk by.



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A mini network of mixtapes to share between fellow players.

This is a heartwarmingly positive and poetic way of cutting through a gaming culture full of toxic interactions and experiences. **Kojima, almost prophetically, attempts to recreate the feeling of community and togetherness through the sharing of music in an isolated world.**

The future is promising and timely for the world of music and games. Diving into the next issue of *The Audio Source*, we'll discuss upcoming titles like *Cyberpunk 2077* and its clever incorporation of artists in its marketing and in-game content, as well as Einar Selvik's rise as the go-to Viking vocalist and songwriter, recently collaborating with Neal Acree on *Rend* and with Sarah Schachner and Jesper Kyd for *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gina “Mystique” Kouyoumdjian grew up rigorously studying classical piano as a first generation child in a soviet-Armenian family. Gina’s recent work includes projects under Greg Tripi, Mac Quayle, Christopher Lennertz, and Time Wynn: *The Last of Us Part II*, *Mr. Robot*, *American Horror Story*, *911*, *The Politician*, *Ma*, *The Fix*, and other multi-media titles currently in production.

Gina works from her studio in Pasadena, CA collaborating with music, film, VR, and video game professionals around the globe. She is currently working on a solo record.





MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JASON GRAVES



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©READY AT DAWN



COMPOSER & PERCUSSIONIST & GAME MUSIC ICON

JOHNSON:

Jason, you're an industry veteran and highly regarded throughout the industry. For those members of the Game Audio Network Guild who have joined recently, are interested in working on games, or who are unfamiliar with your work, walk us through your journey to composing for games.

GRAVES:

You are too kind, thank you! I've been writing music for games since 2000 - wow, has it been twenty years? I started in film and TV music when I was in Los Angeles in 1996, plus commercials and movie trailers. I fell into games on a bit of a lark - knowing someone who knew someone that needed music for a CD-ROM game.

After a few years of smaller local games, I landed my first console game, which was based on the King Arthur film. Four or so years after that I scored the first *Dead Space*, which most folks seem to know me for. **I think it's the last name association of GRAVES and horror music!**

The last decade has been a wonderful mashup of genres from more serious titles like *Far Cry: Primal* and *Tomb Raider* to sci-fi/fantasy VR games such as *Farlands*, *Lone Echo* and *Moss*. I have to say, variety is truly the musical spice of life for me and **I feel privileged enough to have scored 100+ games in all kinds of different styles, from indie to AAA.**

All my game work has been done in my studio in North Carolina, even though everyone seems to assume I live in LA. One of the many great things about working in games is

you can really live anywhere since so many employees work remotely.

JOHNSON:

You're quite active in the community - everyone seems to know you or know of you! You've been on many different panels, talks, etc. - can you explain why you value giving back to the community?

GRAVES:

I love learning new things and trying to be a better composer, performer, recording engineer, mixer...we have to wear a lot of hats! And I only assume I'm not alone. I think everyone should have the opportunity to learn about music. They shouldn't have to be in LA, assisting a composer or need to "know someone" in the industry. There is more work out there now than ever before and I think everyone has a fair shot, especially with the current technology at our fingertips. I was actually a Music Education major in college before finally switching to Composition and Percussion Performance. I loved the idea of teaching music, but it turned out I loved the idea of composing it even more! As a result, I enjoy doing anything I can to help other composers, even if it's only illustrating the perils and pitfalls I've navigated through the years.

I host a YouTube channel - **Jason Graves Music** - with plenty of tutorials and music examples from my game scores. I started it mostly out of the desire to share the answers to the same questions I get emailed on a regular basis. I only wish I had more time to upload videos on a more regular basis!

JOHNSON:

From your Game Audio Network Guild Award winning pastoral soundscapes of *MOSS* to aleatoric horror, you've covered a wide creative range. What have been some of your favorite and most creatively liberating projects?

GRAVES:

Thank you for not asking me to pick just one! *Moss* is definitely a favorite. It's just such a beautiful world to be a part of. I got to play a whole bunch of tiny instruments, from ukulele and Celtic harp to hammered dulcimer and a surfeit of percussion instruments.

Farlands is another one that comes to mind, though more obscure than most since it shipped with the Oculus Rift. But I did a lot of experimental recording on that title, using anything from a set of metal mixing bowls to steel drums - anything to get an "otherworldly" vibe for the score. I played live guitars and bass plus drum set on a few tracks. I even got to compose something in a major key!

The Order: 1886 would have to be on the shortlist as well. We did close to a full week at Abbey Road with low woodwind choir of 12 players, 24 low male singers and a string section consisting of 8 basses, 12 cellos and 24 violas. Not a violin in sight! Obviously I was trying to capture a **heavy, low sound**. Mission accomplished!

JOHNSON:

How do you manage juggling a variety of projects within a broad stylistic, emotional, and creative range? What are some of your techniques, tips, and tricks you can share that help find balance and staying on schedule when you're carefully juggling multiple projects?

GRAVES:

I've found that I work best if I can focus on a single project each day. I'm very "9-5" when it comes to my studio schedule and have found over time that I am a lot more productive if I have nights and weekends off to recharge. I know that may sound like a bit of a luxury to many composers! But it really comes down to productivity for me. Quite literally, **I can finish more music with a Monday-Friday, 9-5 schedule than if I pulled a few all nighters that week and worked through the weekend. Quality over quantity!**

JOHNSON:

You've been posting your journey into scoring a project without only analog gear - no software sweetening - "hardware only" OST! What informed your decision to do this; a personal challenge or a creative direction?

GRAVES:

A little bit of both, actually. The hardware synths and instruments I have definitely lend themselves to the sound of the score the game needs, but the limitations I'm imposing



on myself are really more for personal growth and challenge. I know that I compose differently when I'm interacting with actual hardware (keyboards or otherwise) than simply staring at a computer screen and clicking my mouse.

JOHNSON:

With your diverse skill set, there always seems to be something new and exciting cooking up. Can you share anything that is on the horizon for Maestro Graves?

GRAVES:

Haha, again, thank you for the kind words! We all know how secretive this industry is, so of course there are projects I'm currently working on that I can't talk about yet. But I can say that I recently wrapped the score for *Little Hope*, the next installment in **The Dark Pictures Anthology**. I was able to try some fun things for the first time and even talked my teenage daughter into singing on it!



Graves' score to *MOSS* won Best Music for an Indie Game at the 17th Annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards and was nominated for Best Instrumental, Best Original Song, and the coveted award for Music of the Year.

GAMESO

TEAMS U

EDUCATION

MUSIC-LOS

BRIAN SCHMIDT // BOOKER WHITE // AUSTIN WINTORY

UNDCON

UP WITH

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S ANGELES

GAMESOUND CON

THE ART, TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS OF GAME AUDIO



TEAMING UP WITH EDUCATION THROUGH MUSIC-LOS ANGELES

GAMESOUND CON GOES VIRTUAL

Say goodbye to the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles and hello to Whova and Zoom: GameSoundCon, Gold Sponsor of the Game Audio Network Guild, will be held virtually this year in response to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. Executive Director, Brian Schmidt, also a member of the Game Developers Conference (GDC) Advisory Board, knew by April and after the cancellation of GDC that the event would have to be online – by May he had made the decision to host GameSoundCon online for the first time in its over 10 years of annual events.

Schmidt, Executive Director of GameSoundCon and President of the Game Audio Network Guild, notably worked in house at Microsoft from 1998 to 2008. Gamers might recognize his work as the original Xbox start up sound. At Microsoft, Schmidt spent much of his time educating people around the games industry on the new advances in game audio. The Xbox and PS2 were game changers, introducing many new possibilities for game audio. Before the PS2, due to technical limitations, high resolution and recorded audio couldn't happen as seamlessly and with the

fidelity of modern systems. With the introduction to the PS2 and Xbox there was finally enough room on the DVD disc. Once there was enough room on the disc for high resolution audio, the game audio industry exploded. The first Abbey Road recordings of a video game score occurred shortly after – this represented a new expansion of industry for composers, recordists, engineers, orchestrators, and more. Now that media were more accessible, Schmidt saw more and more music and sound design creatives coming to game audio from traditional media. He thought to himself **“wouldn't it be cool to have some place to 'get fed with a game audio firehose'.”** GDC cancelling the Audio Track, forcing audio attendees to buy the pricey full conference pass, was the icing on the cake and Schmidt decided to start a conference to bridge the gap and educate those looking to game audio to start a new career – GameSoundCon.

THE GENESIS OF G.S.C.

The first GameSoundCon was actually two separately held events in 2009; one at the Century City Hyatt in Los Angeles, the other at Pyramid in San Francisco. This first event couldn't differ more than 2019's

GameSoundCon attendees might remember from last year. The first event was hosted in a single building, a single room, with a single track with only about 40 people attending. Brian Schmidt admits to giving half of the talk himself. This first event was representative of an industry on the precipice of blooming.

Subsequent years tackled the changes the industry saw in game audio, quickly expanding with the increased accessibility of the industry. In 2010, the event was dual hosted again, this



Tom Salta, Paul Lipson, and Chance Thomas (2009)

time at Pyramid in San Francisco and Columbia University in New York. Still one building and one room, but with 70 people – a 75% increase. 2011 saw another year of dual events, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and the introduction of the middleware FMOD that changed the pace of the event. FMOD was new on the scene and

sound designer Stephan Schutze was at the conference giving hands-on training for attendees. It wasn't until 2013 that the format was changed to the current GameSoundCon model of hosting a singular massive event, to this time being at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The new format saw the addition of and focus on AudioKinetic's Wwise middleware solution and expanded the tracks beyond the single Game Audio 101, adding Game Audio Pro. The conference really started to bloom after the deliberate attempt to split up the tracks and employ proper advertising for a wider reach.

Each subsequent year grew bigger as interest in game audio expanded exponentially. Attendees who had never worked on a game, or only a small game, dominated the attendee demographics. Majority of attendees were totally green to working in video games. GameSoundCon became the undisputed event to learn the foundation to start a career in game audio. 2017 saw the addition of a VR track as virtual and mixed realities exploded across the industry. 2018 saw the addition of Game Audio Research, emphasis on technology and theoretically approach to game audio, and Game Audio Studies, the expanded study of game music (ludomusicology), bringing the previously separate communities of research and practice together.

Ten years ago, there was virtually no game audio related curriculum at the collegiate level. Today, game audio studies are rapidly expanding across the globe with schools like USC, DigiPen, Berklee, Carnegie, Rochester, Musician's Institute, UCLA, Columbia, and many others adding or emphasizing game audio in their curriculum. Now, GameSoundCon is held each year at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles (with the exception of this year's virtual conference).



Paul Lipson giving the keynote address at GameSoundCon 2018

“

THE GOAL IS TO BE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND FOLLOWING THE EXPANSION OF GAME AUDIO.

– BRIAN SCHMIDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GAMESOUNDCON

“The goal is to be looking to the future and following the expansion of game audio”, says Executive Director Brian Schmidt. As the game audio industry continues to advance, new tracks and sessions will be added, pivoting and adapting the changing landscape of the industry. When GameSoundCon started, said Schmidt, **“if you weren't making a AAA Game, you weren't making a game.”** Now the industry has expanded far beyond AAA games. While AAA titles have the time and budget to push the limits of possibilities, a cross section of all games show that 90% of active game professionals are regularly working on smaller titles (casual core, mobile, mid core, slot machines, independent, etc.)

A SILVER LINING

In response to the global pandemic, moving GameSoundCon online has a silver lining: accessibility and charity. Unlike previous years, attendees from around the globe no longer have the restrictive financial commitment of travel costs, hotels, food, etc. So far, there have been registrants from every continent around the globe, except Antarctica (can someone please start a game audio program in Antarctica?) For the conference itself, there is less overhead; therefore, the conference ticket price is significantly reduced. By attending several online conferences, including an auto parts supply conference, Schmidt conducted research before finding exactly the right needs for an online





GameSoundCon conference and came to the conclusion to use Whova and Zoom to host the event hybrid pre-recorded and live streamed event. The move to online and reduction of overhead costs allows GameSoundCon to add a third day to the event, allowing for less overlapping events. The first day of the event is dedicated to Game Audio Essentials, a day of game audio staples, such as the annual Tom Salta's "Composing Interactive Music I" and "Composing Interactive Music II". The second and third days' talks dive deeper, like a traditional GDC talk, into the depths of game audio. This allows attendees who are green to the game audio to scale up their education throughout the event.

This year has been without a doubt a year for reflection and change. The Black Lives Matter movement was in full force while Schmidt was considering contingency plans for GameSoundCon 2020. By moving the conference digital, expenses for attendees are greatly reduced and increases the accessibility of the conference, and the knowledge shared there, to a global audience – no longer would there be a high friction bar of entry. It hit Schmidt that GameSoundCon could be a tool for making game audio education accessible and a tool for charity.

“WOULDN'T IT BE COOL TO HAVE SOME PLACE TO 'GET FED WITH A GAME AUDIO FIREHOSE'..”

– BRIAN SCHMIDT



EDUCATION THROUGH MUSIC-LOS ANGELES

LA CHAPTER

Education Through Music-Los Angeles (ETM-LA), a non-profit founded in 2006, partners with primarily low income and under privileged Title 1 schools to provide music as a core subject for all children and utilizes music education as a catalyst to improve academic achievement, motivation for school, and self-confidence. ETM-LA’s vision statement states, **“Education Through Music-Los Angeles believes that every child deserves access to high-quality music education, taught by qualified and well-trained music teachers. Music can support learning in other key subjects, including math, science and language arts. Engaged parents and school communities are key to the success of students.”** ETM-LA makes opportunities available to schools that have no funding, tools or curriculum to integrate music education into the classroom. Early music education provides lessons, skills, and serves individuals throughout an entire life. Migrated from Education Through Music – New York chapter, the ETM program is by far the best program and model for

sustainable music education. Contrary to expectation, in a city that boasts the largest sector of the entertainment industry in the world, and prior to ETM-LA, Los Angeles’ music education was sub-par. Thus, ETM-LA, the first independent 501©3 nonprofit to bring the ETM® model and its benefits to Los Angeles youth, was created by founding Executive Director Victoria Lanier.

FINDING A CHARITY

In 1957, Brian Schmidt’s father, also a musician, was finishing a PhD while teaching at a well-known university as a Marching Band Director. During the first week of school, two black girls approached Schmidt’s father wanting to audition for the marching band, which Schmidt enthusiastically encouraged. Word had spread quickly and the next morning the President of this intentionally unnamed prominent collegiate school came knocking on Schmidt Sr.’s office door, scolding the band director and instituting a policy preventing people of color from joining the band. In Brian’s exploration of charities Brian kept

coming back to this pre-civil rights movement story of the two women who auditioned. **“What happened to those two girls? How might their lives have been different if they were allowed and encouraged to participate in the music program?”**, says Brian Schmidt. Through GameSoundCon, Schmidt wants to donate proceeds to give opportunity to people from underprivileged communities and to people who stand to gain a tremendous life-long benefit from exposure to the arts, specifically music.

Enter Education Through Music-Los Angeles and ETM-LA Board of Director Members, **Chairman Booker White and Game Audio Network Guild**





Advisory Board Member Austin Wintory. This year, in collaboration with ETM-LA, Brian Schmidt elected to donate 80% of registration fees from the online conference to ETM-LA.

BOOKER WHITE, CHAIRMAN

Booker White has been the Chairman of ETM-LA for the past 11 years. Said White, **“I was able to find my way when I was young because I had the chance to study and enjoy music in elementary school. Giving every child that opportunity has been a longtime goal of mine, and I’ve been given a chance to accomplish that with ETM-LA.”**



White has been instrumental in growing the organization from five schools to 50, with an enrollment of approximately 17,500 students today. **“Our very basic goal is to show the value of music as part of basic education. We’ve seen how this program changes the arc of schools and kids’ overall ability to discover that they can succeed in all their classes.”**

When asked what White’s current objectives and goals are for the organization, he responded, **“The goal is to get school systems to understand how valuable music is as a learning tool and for school districts to take it on themselves to introduce it into the curriculum. We are successful when a school takes our program and implements it as part of their school.”** One of ETM-LA’s partner schools in Compton, McKinley Elementary School, scored at the bottom of all schools in the state. Now after three years of having ETM-LA in their curriculum, they are one of the top art schools in the state and education-wise, they went from the bottom to close to the top.

ETM-LA has been an enriching experience for White, a man who

has accomplished a lot in the entertainment industry since the 1980s. He has been the Head of Music Preparation for many award shows and video games, including **Fortnite, League of Legends, Magic: The Gathering, and Honor of Kings.** White has also worked on around 400 movies over a span of 30 years, such as **Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, The Lion King, Pirates of the Caribbean, Dark Knight, Star Wars: Rogue One,** and many more. He has held the position as the Head of Music Preparation at Walt Disney Pictures and BTW Productions since 1996.

AUSTIN WINTORY, ADVISOR

Game Audio Network Guild Advisory Board Member, Austin Wintory, has been with ETM-LA since its foundation in 2006 and was one of the first board members to join. As Wintory’s career was taking root, he became the Chairman of the Board of Development for ETM-LA and as Chairman he helped in the effort to involve more composer colleagues, including Christopher Young, Lola and John Debney, Christopher Lennertz, Blake Neely, Michael Giacchino, and more. Part of his responsibilities as Chairman of the Board of Development was coordinating



charitable events and this is where Wintory thrived. An example of an exciting event Wintory put together was bringing a class of students to Michael Giacchino’s scoring session of Ratatouille. For Austin, the goal of the organization is simple - **“Music is amazing, and we’re going to equip kids, K through 9, with basic skills and treat music as a subject on equal level of importance and integrity as the other core subjects.”**

Austin elaborates saying that the burden of music programs should not fall on families. The life-long benefits of early childhood music education are wide-spread. As a byproduct, music education improves academic achievement in every category. It engages the brain in a host of ways including stimulating social behavior and offering a source of position connection to school for the children. When the brain is developing, exposure to music stimulates learning across the board, increasing the broad potential of the brain. It makes you

a more active learner and thinker, increases retention and remembrance, and draws strong correlations between college and high school graduation rates, regardless if the student wants to pursue music as a full-time occupation.

“Our goal is to not exist. If we do our job right the schools will graduate into funding the program themselves, make music a part of the school’s core annual budget, will not need ETM-LA’s assistance, and music will become a part of the culture of the school.”

“OUR GOAL IS TO NOT EXIST. IF WE DO OUR JOB RIGHT THE SCHOOLS WILL GRADUATE INTO FUNDING IT THEMSELVES,”
 – AUSTIN WINTORY



The principles of partner schools are the key ally for ETM-LA – they ultimately have the responsibilities to get music programs approved, but also see and live the positive results of the program every day.

POST-PANDEMIC MUSIC ED.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created obvious hurdles and implications for ETM-LA. The '20-'21 school year is heading towards a complete online learning curriculum. White and Wintory both agree the organization is agile in its responsiveness – adapting to the updates, changes, and complications of online learning. **“We are mirroring the schools. One of the things that is important about music is how it helps the kids with their own self-image, and during a time like this, music can really help lift the kids’ spirits up,”** says White.

ETM-LA’s Annual Gala, the single largest event for budgetary support, typically held in December, will unfortunately have to be cancelled or moved online as well. And although donations might be understandably down for 2020, Wintory reassures that the organization operates conservatively with their resources and has no doubt that it will continue to persist and thrive in a post COVID-19 world. ETM-LA survived the 2008 financial meltdown, during a time where huge amounts of non-profit sponsors, grants, and endowment funds were crushed and decimated. During this time many nonprofits closed, but ETM-LA survived and weathered the storm. Folding an organization like ETM-LA is not an option– folding would mean that tens of thousands of students lose out on life-changing education opportunities. Everyone at the organization recognizes the mission is paramount – it’s bigger than any one individual. The change and benefits of ETM-LA’s program extends far beyond that of a single family, but into the families and communities that see first-hand the

benefits of the program. Wintory reassures a very small amount of money donated to ETM-LA goes to administration – a vast majority of every dollar goes directly into the classrooms, **“Here the dollar goes a long way. It makes a noticeable and visceral difference in the community.”**

Continued expansion is Wintory’s long term goals for the organization. Fortunately, music education and its benefits are not a controversial topic. Music education is universally accepted and encouraged by everyone. Said Wintory, “ETM-LA has been a wonderful excuse to do shenanigans that otherwise would have been impossible. People are willing to donate time, money, and efforts to a good cause.” For instance, Wintory was given permission by John Williams personally to perform a never-premiered choral cue from John William’s score to *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, heavily featuring choir, to be performed by the LA Master Chorale Singers for a charity event. These sorts of one-off and otherwise-impossible events are what Wintory is looking to the future for what can be done next to support the organization.

“HERE THE
DOLLAR GOES
A LONG WAY.
IT MAKES A
**NOTICEABLE
& VISCERAL
DIFFERENCE IN
THE COMMUNITY,**”

– AUSTIN WINTORY



For members interested in helping or joining, they can head to the website to learn more or consider hosting their own fundraiser. **“If you want to pull off a cool event, if you have a cool idea for an album or anything else... I will help,”** Wintory encourages.

“Let your creativity go. If you want to help the organization a lot of folks will show up. The sky’s the limit on the creative ways you could be involved in ETM-LA”

Get involved.
Visit: <https://etmla.org>

education 
through **MUSIC**
los angeles

“GAMESOUNDCON IS
A **REFLECTION OF
THE COMMUNITY** —

AND THE COMMUNITY
IS THE **SUM OF ITS
INDIVIDUAL PEOPLE.**”

– BRIAN SCHMIDT



A BAND OF FRIENDS

The common thread you'll hear from attendees at GameSoundCon: all of the attendees are open, helpful, and want to help you succeed. As you walk (or in the case of this year, virtually transport) from room to room, people from across the wide range of disciplines in game audio are spilling their secrets. With many folks from other industries attending GameSoundCon each year, many interested in jumping into the video game industry, the main noticeable distinction between the Film & TV world is the sense of community. There is much less rampant competition and opportunism – unlike the world of film & television you will absolutely get work from your competitors and friends. Often your closest friends will evolve into your greatest ally, spokesperson, and even an employer. The game industry is a hybrid of full-time employees and independent contractors – a network with a foundation built on a hybrid model of employees and freelancers.

Now pairing up with ETM-LA, GameSoundCon is donating 80% of this year's conference registration fees directly to the organization, coming full circle and vertically integrating the education and opportunity of music and sound, beginning with early child music education through accessible professional level game audio opportunities for networking, learning, and career advancement.

GameSoundCon will be virtually held October 5-7. Conference tickets are on sale now for \$25. If you are attending please come by the Game Audio Network Guild "booth" to learn more about the organization, chat with our staff and representatives, and for a chance to win a giveaway of plugins and other cool prizes.

— GABRIELLA CIARAMELLA
& CODY MATTHEW JOHNSON



Website - <https://www.gamesoundcon.com>

Varantic.

Choice is good.



“LISTEN TO THE BIRDS” BY JOHN BYRD

“If you’re guilty of thinking, you’re out. If your brain is part of the process, you’re missing it. You should play like a drowning man, struggling to reach shore.”
— **Captain Beefheart**

You know that sick, sinking feeling.

You’ve been working on a game project all day long. A solid fifteen or sixteen hours. Your tools have fought you. Your mind has fought you. Even your body has fought you.

You’ve been there. That sticky pit in the bottom of your stomach. That nausea that tells you that your best effort, has been nothing. That your day has vanished into nothingness, with nothing to show for it except the throbbing in your temples.

A total goose-egg of a day.

You arrive at home, dazed with exhaustion, wondering if you should give up making games, so you can get a nice steady career in commercials. Or maybe the food service industry.

Anything but games.

You’ve been there. I’ve been there.

I’m an audio programmer with a computer science degree from Harvard. Under normal circumstances, I love inventing cool new things. I created the very first interactive MIDI demo for a game console. I taught the first professional class in game audio. I created a walkie-talkie for the Silent Hill series that, every now and then, babbled a tiny bit of procedurally generated chatter. Just enough to keep you listening, for words that would never fully form.

Under ordinary and happy circumstances, I do stuff like that.

This was not good circumstances.

There was a pretty good possibility I was going to puke from pure exhaustion.

It was five a.m. and the dawn was threatening to burn the horizon. I had somehow managed to drive home from the office without crashing my car from falling asleep on the road. I had been working non-stop over a customer request. They wanted to be able to change the effects on a bit of dialog,

AFTER the dialog was compressed into MP3 format.

That’s impossible, of course. No one can do that.



The Kauai o’o bird. The last known living specimen was seen in 1987. Varantic synthesized new bird calls from existing recordings of this bird.

They said it’s really important. Would be huge for our workflow, they said.

I pulled the MP3 specification apart at the seams. I beat myself over the head repeatedly with the math in the MP3 polyphase filter bank. Could I add or change effects existing in the MP3 stream, after it had been encoded?

Couldn’t be done. No way.

I built and threw away a dozen procedural models. Too slow. Sounds like garbage. It clips. Sounds like a machine. Throw it away. Redo it. Throw it away. Redo it.

Nothing sounded right. I couldn't get my procedural sound model to generate anything but granulated mush.

I got out of the car and staggered to my feet, and rubbed sleep out of my eyes, fumbling for my keys, when I heard the following, loud as a car siren:

SQUACK SQUACK SQUACK SFIGGY
SFIGGY SFIGGY SFIGGY CHERP CHERP
CHERP YARP YARP YARP BRRRGY
BRRRGY BRRRGY YARP YARP YARP YARP.

That is my technical transcription of the sound.

Actually it was a lot more annoying at five a.m. than that transcription right there, but you get the idea.

Here in California, when springtime sets solidly in, the very tree right outside your window has a small chance of being chosen, by a male blackbird. He may install himself onto your tree, and announce that that specific tree is legally and rightfully his; and no other blackbird should approach.

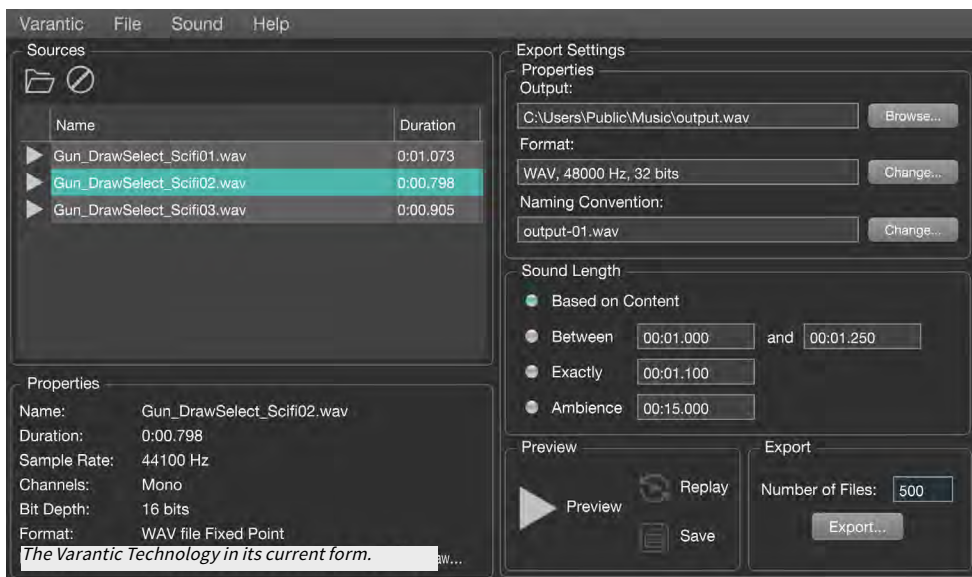
So, if you were to translate that blackbird song to English, it might go something like: HEY FRANK GET OFFA MY LAWN OR I AM GOING TO PECK YOUR EYES OUT, GOT THAT FRANK DO YA DO YA?

Blackbird songs are not shy, delicate things. They are five a.m. Wagnerian opera played through bullhorns.

My head was killing me.

So I raised my face in the direction of the tree and yelled: "HEEEEEYYYYY! BIRD! SHUUUT! UUUUUUP!"

And the blackbird shut up.



For about twenty seconds.

Then the blackbird went SFIGGY SFIGGY SFIGGY YARK YARK YARK YARK YARK GIGGITY GIGGITY GIGGITY.

I closed my eyes and massaged my temples. No way I was going to sleep with this bird sitting out here, singing all the greatest hits from the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, 00's, and 10's.

SFIGGY SFIGGY SFIGGY.

Tema con variazione.

YARP YARP YARP YARP.

Verse chorus verse chorus.

I just stood there, gawping at the bird. The blackbird would instantiate a new downbeat: a trill in three notes and a slide, for example. Then he would repeat that downbeat, five or six or seven times, spinning the notes, sliding them in some way, bending them over and backwards just a little. Then the bird would choose a new downbeat, before busting out variations on it.

Thought me: That bird is improvising a bunch of new songs based on common themes. Nothing predetermined. High-level structure to determine low-level variation.

All the mathematics of the previous week played at the back of my mind. Of course an ordinary discrete Fourier transform would let me analyze the frequencies in the signal, but it wasn't merely frequencies that the bird was singing: **it was the possibilities of frequencies, chosen in the spirit of the moment, to suit the mood.**

In a video game, individual sound effects play from beginning to end. Left to right.

Every instant of birdsong was an amalgam of a hundred tiny little bird choices: where to copy, where to change, where to create, and where to keep the silence.

In that moment, I heard that blackbird singing, and traffic rumbling on the distant freeway, and the light rustle of the leaves in the trees, and the inconsistent sound of my heart.

In that moment something happened to me, from which I have not recovered. The world peeled away, and I saw that no sounds were static; I saw that all sounds could be understood and modelled as pure likelihoods.

I went inside and, in my worst handwriting, I scribbled down a page of mathematics. Then I went to bed.



PRACTICE IN FRONT OF A BUSH.

WAIT UNTIL THE MOON IS OUT, THEN GO OUTSIDE, EAT A MULTI-GRAINED BREAD AND PLAY YOUR GUITAR TO A BUSH.
IF THE BUSH DOESN'T SHAKE, EAT ANOTHER PIECE OF BREAD.

– CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

After about eighteen hours of sleep, I prototyped the mathematics into code.

And the code actually worked.

Now I had a sound effect generator that wanted to be trained with examples of the sound effects that you wanted.

I gave the new audio engine a bunch of different words, describing what the software did. And I told it to make new variations on those words.

Varantic, said the audio engine.

Okay, your new name is Varantic then.

Little known fact about the technology. **It named itself.**

I gave Varantic several examples of glass breaking. It gave me thousands of glasses breaking.

I fed it footsteps: slushy snow, soldier in grass, metal plating. I got hundreds of variations of footsteps back. I realized how much time this was gonna save, on the unfun parts of sound effect design.

Wood destruction sounds: I put in five variations, and I got hundreds of different destruction sounds out of Varantic, all extremely realistic and all different.

I wondered: would the Patent and Trademark Office grant me a patent for the invention? I wrote a patent. Sure enough, they approved it.

I wondered: would anyone actually give me money for this thing? Well, Sony did. And then Disney did, and Oculus, and Technicolor and Paramount and Keywords and a bunch of other big video game companies did.

And then it started getting used in theme parks. I had no idea that theme parks would want Varantic. Turns out, they did want it.

And then toy companies started using it, to make sound effects for their toys. Some of the sounds produced by Varantic made their way into Star Wars toys.

Another childhood dream come true, right there.

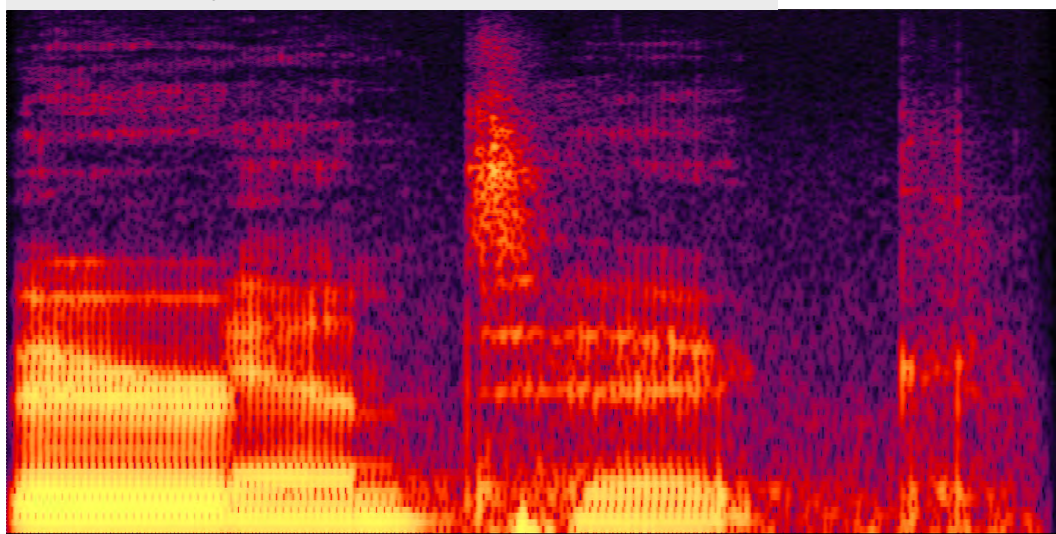
But that blackbird had given me another idea still.

The Kaua'i 'ō'ō is a black bird, native to the islands of Hawaii. It has a very particular and beautiful call, somewhere between a bell and a flute. This bird became extinct in 1988 or so. A particular recording in 1987, is believed to be the song of the very last 'ō'ō, calling for a mate that will never come.

I fed that recording to Varantic. And out came beautiful 'ō'ō songs, all of them new, none of them ever heard before.

Varantic made it so we can hear new songs, from the very avians that inspired Varantic into existence.

A spectrogram of one of the very first words synthesized by the technology: 'Varantic'. The new audio technology combined multiple real words in order to create its own new name.





Choices are good.

The more choices you have, the better.

Give **Varantic** a few takes of a sound effect you like, and Varantic will generate endless variations for you to choose.

Do you need to create realistic variations of impact sounds, destruction sounds, footsteps, or other effects?

Varantic will do in **seconds** what used to take days.

Varantic sounds have already shipped in tons of video games, films, toys, and theme parks.

Now it's your turn to get a taste of the future.

For a delicious demonstration of how Varantic can make your life sweet, visit us now at www.varantic.com.



Varantic

So if it is five a.m., and you are exhausted out of your mind from working on a game, and if you are desperately in need of inspiration, then you need to do exactly like Captain Beefheart says:

“LISTEN TO THE BIRDS.
THAT’S WHERE ALL THE
MUSIC COMES FROM.

**BIRDS KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HOW
IT SHOULD SOUND AND WHERE THAT
SOUND SHOULD COME FROM.**

– CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, 1941-2010



Exclusive Game Audio Network Guild Discount:

As a professional courtesy, Gigantic Software has prepared a discount exclusive to Game Audio Network Guild members in good standing.

By entering the discount code (found in [Member Perks](#)) at check-out, the **first forty members to use the code, will receive a 40% discount** on their license of Varantic.

This is an unusual and steep discount, and it extends **ONLY** to active members in good standing. **Once these licenses are sold, the discount code will cease to work without further notice.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Byrd is the CEO of Gigantic Software. Millions of copies of games have shipped with Gigantic Software technology in them. Gigantic’s new audio synthesis engine, Varantic, is currently being used to make AAA video games, toys, films, and theme parks. Previous roles include founder and CFO of CRI Middleware, USA; director of development at Sega; and senior project manager at Electronic Arts. John wrote the first interactive MIDI demo for a game console in 1995, the same year of his first GDC presentation. John has written on video game development for Forbes.com and Apple News.



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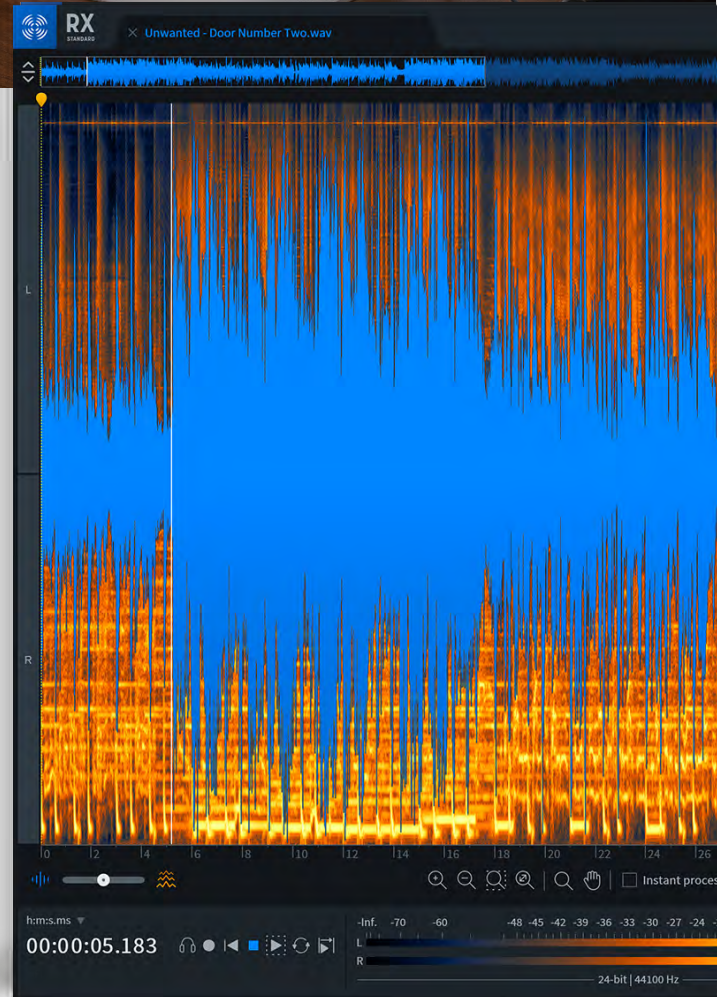
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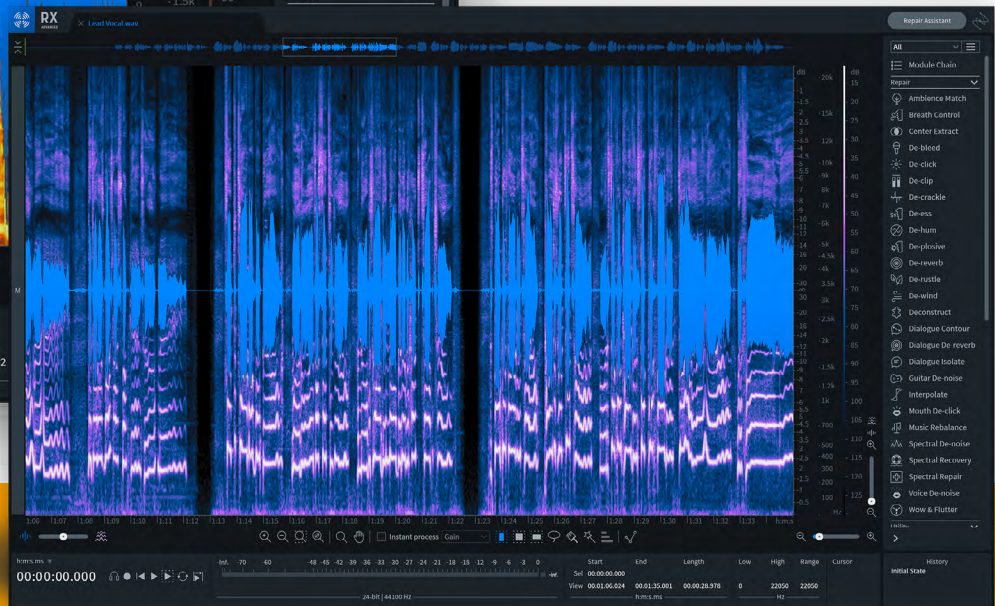


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TOM SALTA X HELIX NATIVE

Tom Salta breaks down his creative process using Line 6's Helix Native in creating realistic sounding productions



Award-winning video game composer **Tom Salta** is no stranger to the members of the Game Audio Network Guild, having scored the likes of *Ghost Recon*, *Halo*, *Red Steel*, and more.

Salta is constantly integrating the **Line 6 Helix Native** guitar and effects plugin into his compositional process, making this video in collaboration with Line 6 demonstrating a few of the ways he used the Helix Native while creating music for several games including his recent foray into the *Wolfenstein* franchise for *Wolfenstein: Youngblood* and the *Wolfenstein: Cyberpilot* VR game.

Q & A

Q: Could you please describe your process as a keyboardist writing for non-keyboard instruments such as guitar, bass, etc.?

A: Since I'm not a guitar player, it can sometimes be a challenge when the focus is on the guitar. There are two mindsets one can choose...am I going for realism or am I just going for a cool sound? The answer to that will dictate my approach to sound source selection and the processing I choose. If it's realism I'm going for, then I will focus on choosing the right kind of guitar samples, most often, non-processed, and choosing the most authentic and appropriate signal chain that I can. If I'm just going for a cool sound and something that gives the same edge and aggression as an electric guitar, then I can have some fun breaking the rules and choose whatever sound sources I want. In that case, I will usually have the signal chain in place first and run various synths and samples through it until I get the character I'm aiming for.

Q: Any advice, tips or tricks you use to create convincing and realistic mockups during the demo and approval process?

A: When the goal is to create a convincing and realistic mockup of any kind, the first step is to be familiar with what the "real thing" sounds like. It doesn't matter if it's guitar, synths or live orchestra... being familiar with the real thing is critical, otherwise you're just shooting in the dark. Fortunately, when it comes to guitar tones, there are some tools out there that do a lot of the legwork for you. Helix Native is one of those tools. Keep in mind that Helix was created by and for people that play guitar... and Line 6 has been a leader in this area for decades. Helix was designed to run real guitar and bass through and the modules in Helix were carefully modelled from the real-things, so you can trust that you're getting authentic tones, even if you're using sampled guitars. Especially for non-guitarists, it just becomes a matter of choosing the right presets and having a little fun to go in there and tweak the settings however you want.

Q: What is your favorite part of Helix Native?

A: One of my favorite aspects of Helix native is that it's easy to use, incredibly robust, and very flexible. I use it for all kinds of things well beyond just guitar sounds. I've used it on vocals, drums, synths, bass... you name it. It has a really great character that's musical and I find it a fantastic tool to have on hand in the studio. Go in there and tweak the settings however you want.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR GAME AUDIO NETWORK GUILD MEMBERS TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS VIDEO IS THAT ALTHOUGH HELIX NATIVE WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED FOR GUITARISTS, IT IS ALSO **INCREDIBLY USEFUL FOR PROCESSING OTHER SOURCES—FROM SYNTHS TO DRUMS AND EVEN VOCALS,**"

– TOM SALTA

Primarily a keyboard player, Tom Salta details how Helix Native fulfills his requirement to have "fake keyboard guitar" sound amazing. *"I've worked with lots of guitar plug-ins over the years, and when I used Helix Native to transform a static guitar sample on my keyboard into an amazing heavy guitar tone, it was really the first time I felt like, 'Wow, this is a no compromise guitar sound that stands on its own.'"*



Watch the Video - https://youtu.be/RHa8n24_Ins

Try Helix Native Free - <https://Line6.com/download-helix-native>

Game Audio Network Guild members receive a 30% discount on Helix Native via Member Perks. Login to your account and head to the perks page!



NEW SILVER SPONSOR: CRYSTAL YANG DESIGN



CRYSTAL YANG ART DIRECTOR & BRANDING DESIGNER

*The Game Audio Network guild is proud to announce our first of two new sponsors: **Crystal Yang Design**. Crystal has helped redesign and update the Game Audio Network Guild look & feel for the organization as a whole and our newly renovated website.*

*Crystal Yang is a freelance Art Director and Designer with a history working with well know companies and IPS such as **Marvel, The Walt Disney Company, City University of New York, ParentChild+**, and many more.*

“SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY.”

For Crystal, design is not a luxury, but a critical story telling tool to convey a brand identity, which is clearly displayed in her bold, powerful and minimalistic choices of color, graphics, and typography. Says Crystal, “*a great design clearly and boldly translates strategic insights into powerful communications.*”, all of which is brought to life through designing advertisements, websites, illustrations, typography, color hierarchies, and more.

After pursuing a degree in Communications Design from Syracuse University, Crystal was hired post-grad at **The Walt Disney Company**’s in-house creative agency, Yellow Shoes, as an Associate Art Director. Here Crystal’s main responsibility was to collaborate and develop create seasonal and events-based campaigns for the Anaheim parks, Disneyland and California Adventure. Her work included grand aesthetic schemes, advertisements, and branding across a range of mediums including out of home and direct mail advertising, in store point of purchase, digital and social formats, and on-property graphics and wayfinding in-park physical print; all with one goal in mind – to drive park attendance.

After Disney, Crystal moved to New York City to pursue agency work to explore a broader range of design work for a variety of clients. At the agency Siegelvision, under direction of titular agency giant and self-claimed founder to coin the term “brand voice”, Crystal helped on design campaigns for **City University of New York, Fidelity & Guaranty, ParentChild+**, and the **New York City Mayor’s Office**. Her work involved conceptualizing and executing full visual identities across multiple touchpoints, including advertising campaigns, website and user experience design, print collateral, and comprehensive brand guidelines.

“DESIGN SHOULD BE USED TO CLARIFY AND SIMPLIFY COMPLEX SUBJECTS.”

Recent months have brought a new shift to Crystal's career, leaving the agency and **pursuing more freelance work to build an independent career** – coincidentally a forced but welcome change at the hand of COVID-19 related downsizing complications at the agency she was working at. She is now taking on more clients and expanding into new territories including exploring **Apparel Design, Digital Design, and Editorial Design (see this issue!)**

Emperia Sound and Music donated the funds to proudly hire Crystal to refresh our design guidelines and create a fresh, modern, and updated look and feel for the website, working in collaboration with web programmers AI City, Inc. to push all of the changes to the website.

— CODY MATTHEW JOHNSON



Sometimes an organization's look only needs a refresh, a small update, or a light touch, and it's important as a designer to recognize those moments.

I saw the potential within the existing Game Audio Network Guild brand, and knew that by **simplifying the logo, adding a bold, contemporary typeface, and amplifying the colors**, the organization would really pop.

These same design principles were applied to the refreshed website, giving the Game Audio Network Guild that **consistent, bold and modern brand presence.**

— CRYSTAL YANG



NEW SILVER SPONSOR: EMPERIA SOUND + MUSIC

“All of us at Emperia Sound and Music are thrilled to be enthusiastic sponsors of the Game Audio Network Guild!”

Emperia Sound and Music was founded in 2019 by Cody Matthew Johnson and Jeff Rona. The duo worked together for years on numerous video game, film, TV scores before deciding to embark on a journey devoutly exclusive to the audio needs of video games and interactive media. Emperia Sound and Music’s award-winning and diverse team specializes in creative audio services – **providing flexibility and scalability without compromise**. Recent notable projects include *Devil May Cry 5*, *Resident Evil 2*, and *Marvel vs. Capcom: Infinite*. Their work in games has garnered nominations and accolades at **The Game Awards**, **SXSW Gaming Awards**, **NAVGTR Awards**, **Game Audio Network Guild Awards**, **Hollywood Music in Media Awards**, and more.

Interactive music and sound are the pinnacle blend of art and technology, combining innovation, psychology, a high degree of sonic creativity, expertise in all aspects of audio production, and a deep savvy of game design philosophy.

“Working with great game developers has taught us the perspective needed to bring great work to each project. And each project brings its own set of challenges and opportunities. While our developer clients command vision and drive the ship, we approach audio development with audience accessibility and experience as the leading imperative.”, says Emperia Sound and Music Co-Founder, Jeff Rona.





“We’re deeply passionate about interactive media and the experiences it allows us all to share.”

It’s well known that video game scores are a unique medium and require a hybrid left-brain-right-brain creative approach that differs from the traditional linear storytelling of film and TV, actively and equally engaging the technician and artist within. Both rely on strong use of themes, high production value, and a deep sense of style. The goal is always **to create something that feels powerful, emotional, and evocative** throughout and lets the player’s agency and interaction with the world have **as much control as possible**.

Emperia Sound and Music began when two musicians, deeply embedded in scoring and a long-time passion for game design, saw the opportunity to merge these perspectives and offer **a unique and low-friction solution for game developers at every level**. Every project project is infinitely unique, but the underlying skill and attitude never changes.



Said Emperia Sound and Music Co-Founder and Audio Director, Cody Matthew Johnson,

“Jeff, the entire Emperia Sound and Music team, and I have had tremendous experiences in interactive sound and music and now, thanks to the important work and deep generosity of the Game Audio Network Guild members and community, we have been able to take those skills and experiences and make them our core mission. We hope this can begin to pay some of that support back and offer abundance for the entire community. As a company, we take private mentors every quarter and hope to continue and expand that program to include more Game Audio Network Guild members!”



NEW MEMBERS OF TH

It's with pride and excitement to introduce a new member to the team, Gabriella Ciaramella who has filled the role of Assistant Communications Manager.

Gabriella has been working with the Game Audio Network Guild for a little over a month, beginning in July of this year. Ciaramella's primary role at the organization is the **maintenance and content creation for all social media platforms** in addition to **researching, writing and conducting interviews for our new quarterly magazine-style format newsletters**. Additionally, Gabriella will assist and collaborate with Annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards show throughout the awards season cycle – she is already working with the team on the nomination submission process of which is right around the corner!

Her work with the communications team on social media has been pivotal in re-approaching the organization's methods of reaching the membership base, engaging with non-members and potential membership, and creating sustainable and lasting value through engaging content. Currently Gabriella is working with the staff and officers to **expand the online presence of the organization, refine the online "voice" of the organization, and create curated content for each specific platform**. Additionally, Gabriella has been instrumental in the startup and execution of this new magazine-like newsletter format; writing, co-writing, editing, conducting interviews and wrangling interviewees.

Said Gabriella, **"I'm excited to be a part of a community that's talented, innovative, and inclusive, and look forward to serving the members of the Game Audio Network Guild and expanding the offerings of the organization."**

Gabriella grew up surrounded by family in the entertainment industry, and has enjoyed going to recording sessions, the Game Audio Network Guild Awards, and other events over the past ten years. Some of her favorite sessions she attended are ***Gears of War*** and ***God of War*** at Skywalker Sound, and ***Magic: The Gathering*** at Fox Newman Scoring Stage. A fun fact is that Gabriella inspired Disney's Lullaby Album as a toddler. She would sing along to the lullaby songs in her crib, and that's how the concept for an instrumental album was born. She was presented with a **certified RIAA gold award** for that album in 2015. Gabriella has a passion for all genres of music, especially alternative rock, and she plays guitar and writes songs in her spare time just for fun.



GABRIELLA CIARAMELLA **ASSISSTANT COMMUNICATIONS** **MANAGER, ASSISSTANT EDITOR** **"THE AUDIO SOURCE"**

Gabriella recently graduated from the University of California, Irvine with degrees in Psychology and Social Behavior and Criminology, Law, and Society. She looks forward to working closely with the game audio community, uplifting the members of the Game Audio Network Guild, and expanding the offerings of the organization.

THE TEAM

LUCAS FEHRING ASSOCIATE PRODUCER GRAMMY AWARD WINNING ENGINEER

We are pleased to announce the newest member of our team, **Lucas Fehring**. Lucas joins The Game Audio Network Guild as an **Associate Producer** and will be working closely with Communications Manager Cody Matthew Johnson and other co-producers and committees.

Lucas will be assisting and producing events for the organization such as conference **Demo Derbies** and the **Annual Game Audio Network Guild Awards** show. Lucas is a freelance composer, sound designer, and **Grammy Award winning engineer** who works primarily with world-renowned percussionist MB Gordy at Riot Drum Studio in Los Angeles.

Lucas attended California State University, Northridge, where he earned his Bachelor of Music in Media Composition. During his senior year in 2015, he interned for MB and enjoyed all aspects of the recording process. While working with MB, he learned how to engineer by shadowing successful engineers who would come to the studio. Lucas describes the experience as, “The perfect internship.”

Today, Lucas is a freelance engineer who works on a variety of records, media projects, and film and T.V. He



is also a sound effects editor for film and TV. In 2018, Lucas won a **Grammy award for engineering the Best New Age Album, *Opium Moon***. He also recently engineered ***The Walking Dead: Saints & Sinners*** virtual reality game and looks forward to working on more video games and interactive projects.

Lucas is excited about the position and meeting more people in the video game industry. He said, “I’m excited to join the game audio community and am eager to learn new skills in my role as an Associate Producer. I mainly want to do my part to be a part of the community and positively contribute to the industry.”



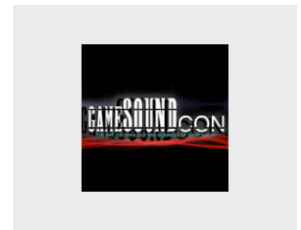
Lucas Fehring engineering Joshua Mosley's score to *The Walking Dead: Sinners and Saints*

MANY THANKS TO

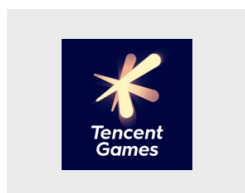
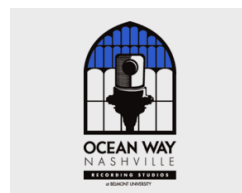
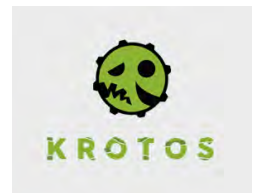
DIAMOND



GOLD



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AUDIO OF HALL OF



<i>Death Stranding</i> — Kojima Productions	2020
<i>God of War</i> — SIE Santa Monica Studio	2019
<i>Cuphead</i> — StudioMDHR	2018
<i>Uncharted 4: A Thief's End</i> — Naughty Dog	2017
<i>Ori and the Blind Forest</i> — Moon Studios	2016
<i>Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare</i> — Sledgehammer Games	2015
<i>The Last of Us</i> — Naughty Dog	2014
<i>Diablo III</i> — Blizzard Entertainment	2013
<i>Battlefield 3</i> — DICE	2012

THE YEAR OF FAME

- 2011** *Red Dead Redemption* — Rockstar Games
- 2010** *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* — Naughty Dog
- 2009** *Dead Space* — EA Redwood Shoes
- 2008** *Bioshock* — 2K Games, 2K Boston
- 2007** *Gears of War* — Epic Games, The Coalition
- 2006** *God of War* — SIE Santa Monica Studio
- 2005** *Halo 2* — Bungie
- 2004** *Call of Duty* — Infinity Ward
- 2003** *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin* — IO Interactive