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Tunesmith Terror Techniques: Identifying Patterns in the Music of Horror Video Games: Annotated Bibliography

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Tunesmith Terror Techniques: Identifying Patterns in the Music of Horror Video Games
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       Ludomusicology, the study of music in video games, is a relatively new field in musicology that faces unique obstacles, like the lack of a standardized analytical method. This paper will use the ALI model proposed by Isabella van Elferen along with techniques suggested by Tim Summers to analyze various video games in the horror genre. Along with using analysis of other games as sources, this paper will compare the compositional techniques used to identify patterns that do or do not show up.

1. Bessell, David. "An Auto-Ethnographic Approach to Creating the Emotional Content of Horror Game Soundtracking." In *Emotion in Video Game Soundtracking*, edited by Duncan Williams and Newton Lee, 39-50. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

       David Bessell is a musician, producer, and composer that has a background in electronic music production along with having written academic papers about audio production. This chapter talks about the process of composing music for a video game and uses the author's current work to provide examples. The beginning of the chapter goes over more of the creative process in composing a video game soundtrack. Bessell uses the first level of the horror game he is currently working on to exemplify the process he described. While most video game analyses are from the perspective of the player, Bessell goes through his thought process and decision making on how he tries to create a horror soundtrack.

2. Bloober Team SA. *Layers of Fear.* Aspyr, 2016. PC. Soundtrack by Arkadiusz Reikowski.

       Layers of Fear was the first game developed by Bloober Team, who, following the success of *Layers of Fear*, went on to develop more critically acclaimed horror video games. Reikowski has worked on other horror video games, but has been the composer for all of Bloober Team's games. *Layers of Fear* is a Gothic horror that follows a painter as he collects materials around his home for his magnum opus. The protagonist's sordid past is slowly revealed as you move about the seemingly haunted house. The player realizes that the protagonist has had a psychotic breakdown after his alcoholism drove his wife to suicide and caused the loss of custody of his daughter. The story culminates to reveal that the materials for his final painting were the body parts of his deceased wife. The music of the game uses similar techniques for the buildup and jump scare as the other games in my bibliography, but, unlike the other games, utilizes classical music to set a creepy ambience as you explore.

3. Elferen, Isabella van. "Analysing Game Musical Immersion: The ALI Model." In *Ludomusicology Approaches to Video Game Music*, edited by Michiel Kamp, Tim Summers and Mark Sweeney, 32-52. Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016.

       Dr. Isabella van Elferen is a musicologist who is currently a professor at Kingston University London and has written many papers about horror music in media, specifically Gothic horror. This essay proposes a method of analysing video game music, the ALI model, based on

how immersive the music is. The ALI model stands for affect, literacy, and interaction. Affect is the emotional response from the player, literacy is the use of common musical tropes to communicate with the player and interaction is how the player's action affects the music of the game. Elferen then goes on to give examples of her analysing *Dead Space 2* and *Amnesia* with the ALI model. The ALI model is a consistent thorough form of analysis. Unlike the other analysis methods in this bibliography, the ALI model focuses more on the effect on the player rather than the musical mechanics of the game.

4. ———. "Gothic Game Music: Hyperreality Haunted." In *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, 1st ed., 100–127. University of Wales Press, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qhhgp.8.

Elferen starts off by giving background knowledge on the Gothic horror genre and how it has evolved as it moved to other mediums like movies and television. Then Elferen discusses how video games are different from other media and talks about how the subgenres of Gothic horror are portrayed using specific video game examples. Elferen then talks about how the music and sound design enhances these differences. In general, the music in Gothic games is used to enhance the blur between virtual and reality in ways that can't be done in film. Although Elferen does not give in depth analysis of composition techniques, Elferen does give an overall look into how sound is used to enhance the uncanny feeling in Gothic horror. This is especially helpful for psychological horror video games because many of them use Gothic horror tropes. .

5. ———. "Sonic Monstrosity." *Horror Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 307–318.

This paper by Elferen focuses on the use of music and sound to identify the monster in media. Elferen talks about the musical techniques used to enhance the scariness or the uncanniness of a monster through diegetic and nondiegetic means and gives various examples of each concept in popular media. Elferen lays out the main concepts of what a monster is in the horror genre and the different musical methods used to enhance the audience's understanding of the monster. Learning these tropes makes it easier to recognize when analysing video games. The explanation of the dorsality of the monster is especially helpful because using sound is the main method of portraying that in video games due to the fact that the player controls where the camera is facing.

6. Grimshaw, Mark Nicholas. "The Audio Uncanny Valley: Sound, Fear and the Horror Game." Paper presented at the 4th annual meeting Audio Mostly, Glasgow, United Kingdom, August 2-3, 2009. https://vbn.aau.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/61573698/audioUncannyValley_MG.pdf.

Mark Grimshaw is a professor of music at Aalborg University in Denmark and has focused his research on music technology and music in media. This paper is a survey of papers that discuss how sound affects the achievement of the Uncanny Valley. The papers surveyed cover all types of media, but there are some analyses of techniques used to create an uneasy feeling in players of horror video games. This paper also provides a list of sound effects that the

author suggests to use to create uneasiness. Compared to my other sources, this paper focuses more on how to make players anxious.

7.   Merriner, Ashley. "Aural Abjections and Dancing Dystopias: Sonic Signifiers in Video Game Horror." M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, 2017.

Ashley Merriner has a Master of Arts degree in musicology from the University of Oregon focusing on popular music studies. This paper seeks to ask the question of "what does fear sound like?" by analysing two games, *Silent Hill* and *Bioshock*. Merriner relies on film theory to analyse and compare these two games. This thesis is a good example of a very thorough analysis of a horror game.

8.   Mitchell, Helen R. "Fear and the Musical Avant-Garde in Games: Interviews with Jason Graves, Garry Schyman, Paul Gorman and Michael Kamper." *Horror Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 127–144.

Helen Mitchell, the interviewer, is a senior lecturer in media audio at the University of Hull. Mitchell has focused her research in music in film and games and audio-visual interactions after receiving masters of both music and science. She interviews Jason Graves and Garry Schyman, both video game composers, along with Paul Gorman and Michael Kamper, both audio directors on video games. The interview focuses on how twentieth-century music experimental techniques, modernism and atonality have inspired the composers of horror video games. There is no specific analysis of the games the interviewees worked on, but more of an insight into their thought process and decision making when it comes to inciting fear in players.

9.   Odd, Christopher. "Let's Play: Layers of Fear [Full Release] - Part 1 - A Beautiful Canvas [Twitch Facecam]." ChristopherOdd. Uploaded February 21, 2016. https://youtu.be/M095GUg_5Yk.

Christopher Odd is a longtime youtuber who live streams video games and then uploads the unedited video onto youtube. This is a video of Odd playing through the first few hours of *Layers of Fear* with a video of himself in the corner. Tim Summers suggests adding videos of other players' playthroughs as sources for analysing video game music. One player's experience of a video game may not be the same as another, so it is good to have another person's playthrough so that one can catch things that may not have happened during their own playthrough. Also, since video games are an interactive real time experience, it will be much easier to use a rewindable video to analyse the music and the effect it has on the player.

10.   Roberts, Rebecca. "Fear of the Unknown: Music and Sound Design in Psychological Horror Games." In *Music In Video Games: Studying Play*, edited by K.J. Donnelly, William Gibbons, and Neil Lerner, 152–164. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Rebecca Roberts received her masters in musicology from the University of Southampton, focusing on video game music. In this essay, Roberts talks about how music is an important part of horror video games and how music and sound design enhances certain aspects of the game. Roberts gives examples of events in specific video games and how the music intensifies the event. Unlike the other analyses, this is more of a general overview of music in horror games.

11.   Summers, Tim. "Analysing Video Game Music: Sources, Methods and a Case Study." In *Ludomusicology Approaches to Video Game Music*, edited by Michiel Kamp, Tim Summers and Mark Sweeney, 32-52. Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016.

Tim Summers is a teaching fellow in music at Royal Holloway, University of London. Along with writing many academic papers on video game music, Summers is also a co-founder of the Ludomusicology Research Group. Recognizing the lack of a standard methodology for analysing music in video games, Summers goes through the main sources of video game music and how to analyse them. Although this paper aims to analyse music with Elferen's ALI model, Summer outlines the ways to go about collecting the data that will be used.

12.   Sweeney, Mark. "Isaac's Silence: Purposive Aesthetics in Dead Space." In *Ludomusicology Approaches to Video Game Music*, edited by Michiel Kamp, Tim Summers and Mark Sweeney, 172-197. Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016.

Mark Sweeney is the executive director of the Society for the Study of Sound and Music in Games and is a co-founder of the Ludomicology Research Group. In this essay, Sweeney analyses the soundtrack of the *Dead Space* series composed by Jason Graves. Sweeney goes over how Graves's music was inspired by, but also evolves, the music of horror films and modernist avant-garde music. The analysis of this music focuses on the compositional techniques that provide a narrator aspect along with the techniques that provide the frightening gameplay aspect. This essay goes more in depth into music theory more so than sound design, like the other sources.