

Song of the Weekend

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(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ljackaudiogroup>)

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This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Spray, from the Apogee Software classic, "Rise of the Triad."

Spray got its name from a character in the game, or more accurately, from a nickname for a character in the game. The character in question was the Nasty Metallic Enforcer, or NME, one of the episode bosses. The NME was nicknamed "Spray" due to its ability to spray bullets in every direction, if memory serves. It even had a license plate attached that read SPRAY.

I wrote the music specifically for the NME level. I figured that something mechanical was needed, but instead of going robotic, I went metal - very heavy metal, as in the kind you'd find coming out of a white-hot forge. Allow me to explain.

Back in my early days at the University of Texas, I used to listen to a program on the local classical music radio station called, "This Is Modern Music." I recorded one episode, during which they played a piece called The Iron Foundry, written by Alexander Mosolov (see link and Wikipedia entry in following post). It's a brutal piece, written during the brief period of avant-garde Russian music permitted in the late 1920s, which very accurately conjures up images of a massive iron foundry in operation. I fell in love with the work immediately, and when the time came for a song for the NME, I could think of nothing better to use for inspiration.

Spray is more of a march than The Iron Foundry is, but it does retain some of the mechanical aspects inspired by Mosolov's work. It's also a tad bit more melodic to make the loops work better.

One thing I ran up against with Spray was a technical limitation of the early Sound Blaster cards. You see, 8-bit Sound Blasters could only support 9 melodic notes on MIDI channels 1 through 9 + an unspecified number of percussive notes on MIDI channel 10. 16-bit Sound Blasters, however, could support notes on all 16 MIDI channels, including the percussion on channel 10. Our programmers, Jim Dosé in particular, found a way around this that let me write only one MIDI file. If you told the game you had an 8-bit SB card, you'd only hear tracks 1-9 plus the percussion. However, if you had a 16-bit SB card, you'd get all 16 tracks. (This was also the beginning of the EMIDI format, mentioned in previous weeks' SOTW entries.)

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With that bit of musical and technical knowledge in mind, I now invite you to listen to Spray once again. Thank you for reading!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EKSrrQ8X_0