

# Song of the Weekend

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

Entry: 20200808 – Okinoww!a

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This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Okinoww!a, the main title from the 3D Realms game, "Shadow Warrior."

First up, the traditional play on words. This one is rather obvious. Since Shadow Warrior is set in Japan, I chose to use the Japanese island of Okinawa as part of the song name. I also substituted the word "oww!" for part of the name of the island, implying that there would be a lot of pain doled out in the game you were about to play.

Never trust a punster to come up with your song titles.

Now, coming up with the song was a bit difficult. This was one of the first games I'd set out to intentionally write a theme song for (Stargunner being the other one). The theme song I'd done for Duke Nukem 3D, Grabbag, came out purely by accident (i.e., it was picked by someone else for me). With Shadow Warrior, I had absolutely no inspiration for a theme song.

I'm ashamed to admit it, but I chose the cheesiest possible way out of my conundrum. I sang my way out of it. More about this in the next segment.

There were, in fact, three versions of Okinoww!a sent out with the game. The shareware version used a form of General MIDI for playback (actually, it used proprietary EMIDI files and the Apogee Sound System, or A.S.S. (seriously) for playback). The registered version used CD-Audio instead. There was also a third version of the song, called Okinoww!a Reprise, which played at the end of each level. It was a shortened version that played as either a .VOC or a .WAV file in the shareware version, but played as CD-Audio (in mono) on the registered version.

## Musical Analysis

Okinoww!a is in the key of A minor, with occasional incursions of flatted II (Bb) chords. It begins with a three-bar introduction in a pure Japanese style, using traditional Japanese instruments: the koto stringed instrument, the shakuhachi flute, a small taiko drum, and high-pitched wood blocks. The third bar transitions from Japanese to Western style until you get to bar four, which begins a four-bar Western introduction involving two guitars, a "power" drum set, and a bass guitar. A synthesized calliope joins in after two bars.

(con't)

Here is the part where I embarrass myself, right where the melody comes in.

Like I said, I had trouble finding inspiration for the theme song to Shadow Warrior. So, I did something absolutely dreadful. I sang the words "Shadow Warrior" to myself, thusly:

Sha-dow,  
Shadow War-rior,  
Sha-dow,  
Shadow War-rior!

Play the first four bars of the melodic line and listen to the Fantasia synth playing the lead melody. You won't be able to unhear it.

Anyway, to continue the analysis, the koto joins the traditional Western rhythm section as the melody plays, giving it a slightly Eastern feel. Another Japanese instrument, a Shamisen, provides further rhythmic accents during the eight bars of melody. At the same time, the guitars drop out, leaving just the bass guitar and the drum set as the only true "Western" instruments.

After the eight bars of melody are finished, the Western ensemble takes over completely for eight bars - all of the Eastern instruments drop out. Both guitars play 16th note pattern, with the occasional held note. This continues to a rapid technical transition in bar eight which leads to a repeat of the original eight bar melodic section, this time with an extra one-bar transition played by the guitars.

What follows is 12 bars of interaction between the Eastern and Western percussion sections, with the shakuhachi and koto repeating their segments from the first intro (albeit a bit more spread out). In the registered CD-Audio version (which I will focus on), this leads to a repeat of the entire song, but with the guitars replaced by a distorted synth patch in their place. The repeat is otherwise identical except for the percussion section at the end - it involves much more Eastern percussion, like high pitched gongs. It finally leads to a short segment of the first pass of the song which quickly fades out.

And, there, in a rather embarrassing nutshell, is Okinoww!a. With that, please allow me to leave you with a link to the song. Thank you for reading, and thank you for voting for your "Song of the Weekend!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUmA3uRuwRA>