

# Song of the Weekend

By Lee Jackson

From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group

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

Entry: 20210410 – Underground Train

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This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Underground Train, from the album, "Duke Nukem Tank Tracks."

There was no wordplay used when I came up with the name for this track. However, Adam Chebot-Goldman, the creator of the YouTube video for this song, used a bit of wordplay in the video. He mixed shots of "underground" raves in with footage of trains to create the final product. Turned out well, IMHO, and I'll link you to it in a separate post.

As complex as Underground Train may sound, it only uses two synths: Native Instruments' MASSIVE for the bass line, and the Mighty Roland SC-88Pro for everything else. It uses some of the more esoteric patches on the SC-88Pro, such as "Brass sfz" and "Oct Strings2." It also uses \*both\* MIDI channels of the unit in order to access dual percussion banks. In other words, I pushed this puppy to the length of its leash for this song.

Musical analysis:

Underground Train is written in the key of C minor at a bpm of 114. It occasionally slips into the C Phrygian mode, since it borrows heavily from Grabbag, the theme song from "Duke Nukem 3D," which uses Phrygian mode.

It begins with 8 measures of nothing but the bass drum on beats 1 and 3, backing a simple MASSIVE synth bass pattern. This continues for another 8 measures, joined by strings playing swells on an interval that switches slowly from a perfect 5th to a tritone, back to a P5, then to a minor 6th, then back to a P5, then repeats for 4 measures. In the last measure, a horn fanfare figure plays, signaling the end of the lead-up of the intro. The brass then plays two rhythmic measures from Grabbag, using an Fmin+min6th chord to do so. They're accompanied by a run in the vibraphone, marimba, and tom toms in the last half of the second measure that ends on the first measure of the transition to the next phrase.

The transition is short, only 4 measures long. It consists of the same MASSIVE bass pattern with the bass drum beneath, but now a high-hat is added to emulate the sound of a train chugging down the tracks.

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The next phrase is in essence the main melody from Grabbag, played by the vibraphone and marimba, but spread out over 16 bars. It's followed by another 8-bar transition of bass line and percussion, but with the percussion being more complex this time.

The following phrase begins with the strings. After a two-beat rest, they launch into a slow chord progression that ends on a quarter note 23 measures later. Brass notes punctuate the progression 9 and 13 measures into the string feature. As the feature ends, the drums use the last 2 measures of the 24-measure long phrase to do a bit of showing off on the tom-toms.

Another transition follows, this one just 4 bars long. The high-hats continue, but the drums are replaced with Asian counterparts: Taiko, Wadaiko, and Buk drums, all on the second channel of the SC-88Pro. After the transition, the French Horns take over and play a flowing 8 bar melodic line. They repeat this line, joined by the strings, but in the repeat the strings break out into a harmonic line in the last measure. The vibraphone and marimba play an accompanying rhythmic harmony below the horns and strings, and the bass drum rejoins the percussion ensemble when the strings jump into the fray. When everything converges at the end of the second time through, the horns and strings speak out the most famous rhythmic motif from the end of Grabbag, using a descending perfect 5th to enunciate the call. Meanwhile, the Asian percussion drops out while the vibraphone and marimba launch into 16th note runs for 8 measures, finally ending on an octaved C. The piece continues with the bass line, high-hat, and bass drum for several measures before setting up for the repeat.

Kinda complicated, but not more so than others you've seen done here. Please allow me to link you to my Bandcamp page for this piece. Thank you for reading, and thank you for voting for your belated "Song of the Weekend!"

<https://leejackson1.bandcamp.com/track/underground-train-2>

Music Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcSXwmpf2c4>