

Song of the Weekend

By Lee Jackson

From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group

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

Entry: 20210814 – Megamusic

This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Megamusic, from my third album, "Duke Nukem Tank Tracks."

Megamusic is not so much a play on words as it is a play on styles. There is a popular genre of "Epic Music" out on the internet, styled after huge Hollywood-like scores. I merely did my part to add to this genre, and I titled my piece appropriately in the process.

I'm going to do a hybrid musical analysis / general description this week of Megamusic. The piece is rather simple, harmonically speaking, but there's a lot to describe when it comes to what's going on behind the scenes. Therefore, this week's installment is going to be less theory-techy and more nuts-and-bolts.

Megamusic is written in the key of D minor and runs at 136 beats per minute for the first 8 measures, before switching to 144 bpm for the remainder of the piece. It can be best described as a trio for Roland SC-88Pro and two instances of Native Instruments KONTAKT (a software synth/sampler for Windows, if you're not familiar with it - I've given a link in an earlier post). Within the first KONTAKT instance, I've got a huge "Black Toms" patch, two brass ensembles, and a string ensemble running, and within the second, I've got a Native Instruments concert grand piano (called "The Grandeur"), a metallic hit, and a "crushed cymbal" loaded.

The piece begins with a soft chord played on the Space Voice patch of the SC-88Pro. It crescendos and morphs for 8 bars until it reaches the 144 bpm section, where the real action begins. Several SC-88Pro voices kick in at that point, including the Atmosphere, Metal Pad, Piano 1, and Tympani patches along with accent percussion. They play a repetitive, ponderous march figure that continues throughout almost the entire song.

In the 8th measure of the faster section, the "Black Toms" come in with a rapid, thundering passage that introduces another SC88Pro ostinato patch, this time an OB Strings patch playing sixteenth notes. Four bars into the segment, the "Black Toms" reannounce their presence with another thundering measure. Finally, the lower segments of the two KONTAKT brass ensembles get involved with a pair of massive Eb fortissimo whole notes spread across an octave straddling middle C (a.k.a. "C4" in American Standard Pitch Notation). This leads into the main brass melody of the piece.

(con't)

The low brass notes begin the melodic section by jumping down an octave to D2 and D3, sustained for four measures again at fortissimo. They play part of a scale, going from D2/D3 to Eb2/Eb3 for 4 measures, then F2/F3 for 2 measures, G2/G3 for 2 more, then finally back down to D2/D3 for 4 measures, with the tie broken in the middle (i.e., 2 measures tied/2 measures tied). Meanwhile, the upper brass plays a broad, sweeping, majestic melodic line over the top of the low brass that ends on the second set of tied D2/D3 measures in the low brass.

In the following two measures, the KONTAKT string ensemble plays a staccatissimo, dissonant, rhythmic pattern. The "Black Toms" mimics this pattern loudly in the two measures that follow. The patterns are repeated in the next four measures, although the string ensemble plays slightly different notes.

The brass ensembles come back after this segment, similar to before. This time, the low brass plays a G#2/G#3 octave fortissimo whole note sustained for four measures before dropping back down to a D2/D3 whole note for four more measures. The upper brass plays another sweeping melody over the top of the low brass, ending on a unison D4 above middle C. In the last measure, the string ensemble plays a unison 16th-note run from high D6 down to middle C (C4), hitting a couple of Eb notes along the way.

The next 16 measures are a bit more subdued. The softer background parts from the SC88Pro - Atmosphere, Metal Pad, Piano 1, Tympani, and OB Strings - begin to shift back and forth every four measures from an Eb chord base to a D minor chord base. Meanwhile, the KONTAKT concert grand piano begins an ostinato figure that runs through the entire 16 bar segment. That figure is a whole-tone scale, based on D3, and played as a series of 16th notes that wrap around back to D3 once D4 is reached.

The piece alternates between Eb and D minor for 3 more groups of eight bars, however this time, the brass ensembles join in on the fun while the concert grand drops out. The low brass begins by playing a scale of Eb2-F2-G2-A2, then D2-E2-F2-G2, both played as a series of whole notes. This repeats with more low brass joining in an octave higher, then again with the upper brass an octave above that, but with the last measure as a pair of half notes played as G(2,3,4)-A(2,3,4) instead of just a whole note.

The climactic section is rapidly approaching now. The "crushed cymbal" is now introduced, playing steady eighth-note triplets for eight bars. The string ensemble plays a staccato, dissonant two-bar eighth-note pattern 4 times, getting more dissonant as it goes. During the last 2 times, the brass sections play a building pattern that ascends from an A2 up to a Bb4, with each section layering on top of the previous one. Finally, at the climax, the "Black Toms" hit a pair of bombastic eighth notes on the first beat of the measure by themselves, followed by a sforzando brass octave A holding for 11 counts, with the "crushed cymbal" playing triplet eighth notes behind them. Over the top of the massed brass, the string ensemble plays 16th note runs for 2 1/2 measures. Everything finally comes crashing back down, with the SC-88Pro parts resuming their ponderous march and ostinato 16th note patterns. This will eventually loop back to a point within the 144-bpm section.

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As I've mentioned elsewhere, this has been one of the longest write-ups that I've ever done for the "Song of the Weekend." I hope I haven't lost your attention along the way, and I congratulate you if you've made it to the end without nodding off. With that, please allow me to give you a link to a YouTube recording of the work. Thank you for reading, and thank you for voting for your "Song of the Weekend!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9io1gffUH8E>