Song of the Weekend

By Lee Jackson

From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group
(https://www.facebook.com/groups/ljackaudiodiscgroup)

Entry: 20210918 – Gloomy

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This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Gloomy, from the 3D Realms hit game, "Duke Nukem 3D."

I'll admit this right up front: Gloomy is not one of my favorite songs. In fact, if anything, Gloomy was written solely as a big middle finger straight up at one of the producers of "Duke Nukem 3D," who shall remain nameless. Said nameless producer complained about the alleged overuse of melodies in my songs and requested something more ambient, more atmospheric during a meeting in my studio one day. I turned to my music keyboard and played some random, ominous-sounding notes on it. He said, "Yes, like that," or words to that effect. I proceeded to create a song that had no real melody to it, although if you dig deep enough you can find a hint of a melodic line in the first half of the song.

Gloomy is written in 4/4 time and proceeds at 120 beats per minute, but it does not use a particular key signature. It is atonal and chromatic, basically meaning the notes are all over the place on the staff. The notes consist of a lot of "footballs," as old school Drum and Bugle Corps members would call the tons of whole notes I used in the piece.

Musical Analysis:

What can I say? There is not a lot to analyze in Gloomy. I literally chose random notes that sounded ominous and laid them down into Cakewalk. However, there is a bit of a pattern, which I'll attempt to note here.

The piece starts with a Synth Brass patch playing the bass line. A Choir patch and a Warm Pad double the lead. They play a very chromatic "melody" beginning at bar two that runs until bar 24. At that point, the bass line is taken over by the low Strings patch, with occasional interjections from a Sawtooth patch and the Synth Brass patch. The high Strings take over the "melody," playing the same pattern played by the Choir and the Warm Pad. This goes on through measure 48.

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At measure 49, the Choir jumps back in, using the range of the "male" voices and sounding a bit like a Russian men's chorus. The bass line drops out altogether and is replaced by a delicate Music Box patch, playing a two-bar quarter-note pattern over and over while the Choir plays random tones and intervals. The Warm Pad rejoins the mix at measure 59, doubling the Choir notes until both drop out at measure 74. The Music Box keeps playing a haunting solo until the end of the loop at measure 76. Approximate time of the loop is 2 minutes 32 seconds.

I'm sorry that the write-up is so short this weekend, but there's not much else to say about Gloomy. It's a short, simplistic piece that really defies description. If you have any questions about it, do not hesitate to ask. With that, please allow me to leave you with a link to a YouTube video of the work. Thank you for reading, and thank you for voting for your "Song of the Weekend!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyPbsopZcIo