

# Song of the Weekend

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

Entry: 20211002 – Suck This

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

Suck This was written shortly after Goin' Down the Fast Way, the song used as the Level One music for the shareware version of "Rise of the Triad" (a.k.a., "The H.U.N.T. Begins"). There were several discussions held between myself, Tom Hall, and the other developers as to whether or not "Fast Way" should be kept as the first level music for the registered version (a.k.a., "Dark War") as well. In the end, it was decided that a different song should start the registered version, and Suck This was chosen. In retrospect, this may have been a mistake, since the decision has led some players to think that "Fast Way" was not used in the registered version. It is indeed used, just not with the first level.

Suck This is in the key of D minor and runs at 134 beats per minute in 4/4 time. It clocks in at just a hair over 1:49 in length - rather short by today's standards. It starts out with the following instrumentation using Roland GS standard patch names: Saw Wave (lead), Brass 1, Slap Bass 2, Distortion Guitar, Saw Wave (bass), Saw Wave (see next paragraph), Saw Wave (high ostinato), Square Wave, and several tracks of percussion being played on MIDI channel 10.

The MIDI file mostly complies to "old style" standards for safety, which called for MIDI channel 1 to be left unused and no MIDI channel higher than 9 to be used (except for the drums, which are all on channel 10). In the case of Suck This, I used channels 2 through 8, which led to some "tricks" being implemented on one of the tracks (Track 6, MIDI channel 7, "SawBass," if you have the MIDI file and want to read along). I employed mid-song patch changes on that track/channel. The track/channel starts out with a Saw Wave, then changes to a Strings patch just before measure 33. At measure 53, I change the patch to an Overdrive Guitar. I switch back to a Strings patch in the middle of measure 57 before changing the patch back to the initial Saw Wave patch at measure 59 in time for the loop.

I did stray from the "old style" standard for one track: track 12, MIDI channel 11, the Square Wave patch. However, the sound engine that powered "Rise of the Triad" maintained compatibility with the old standard by ignoring MIDI channels higher than 10 for sound cards that did not support them, so the standard was "de facto" upheld in the software. People who had newer sound cards were treated to the extra sounds I'd built into the MIDI file, while those with older cards never knew what they were missing. A neat trick.

(con't)

## Musical Analysis:

The first part of the song begins with the Slap Bass and the Distortion Guitar playing repeated 16th note patterns that alternate between a D and a C. The Saw Wave bass plays these notes as held bass notes at first, then joins in on the 16th note fun after a couple of measures. This goes on through measure 8.

Meanwhile, at measure 2, the Saw Wave lead begins a two-bar 16th note chromatic scale run that starts on C3 (in American Standard Pitch Notation - [link to follow after this article](#)) and ends on A5. It holds the A5 for 5 1/4 counts into the start of measure 6, then goes off on a melodic line for several more measures, ending on an eight-count tied pair of whole notes in measures 13 and 14.

Back to the "musical rhythm section." The Slap Bass, Distortion Guitar, and Saw Wave bass play one more measure of the D/C alternating 16th note pattern at measure 9. This switches to a Bb/C pattern in measure 10, then to a descending G/F/E/D pattern in measure 11 that continues downward in measure 12 through the notes C/Bb/A (although the Bb jumps up an octave halfway through) before going back up with a quick F-G-A 16th-16th-8th note pattern in beat four of measure 12. They then go back to the initial D/C pattern in measures 13 and 14.

While all of this is going on, the Brass 1 patch is playing accent notes, beginning with a simple pair of notes in measure 5 that expands to a brief trio of notes just before and into measure 8. The accents continue through measure 14.

All of the aforementioned instruments are playing through measures 15 and 16. The Saw Wave lead plays another chromatic scale through the same C3-A5 range, this time joined by the Square Wave a major 3rd below. The "musical rhythm section" continues its D/C 16th note figures, while the Brass plays ascending accent notes. This gears everything up for a virtual repeat of the entire first phrase (measures 1-16) beginning at measure 17. The second time through is pretty much a true repeat, with the exception of the Square Wave playing an accompanying melody against the Saw Wave lead.

The second phrase starts wrapping things up earlier than the first. At measure 27, immediately after the two tied whole notes, the Saw Wave lead and Square Wave play another ascending chromatic scale, with the Saw Wave lead going from C3 to E4 in measure 27 (the Square Wave goes from Ab2 to C4). Both patches end on a 16th note pattern in the first beat of measure 28. In fact, the entire ensemble (more or less) ends in the same 16th note pattern in the first beat of measure 28, leading into a three-beat drum break.

The Slap Bass picks up the D/C 16th note pattern at measure 29. This is followed by the Distortion Guitar, who plays straight 16th notes on a D3 from measure 31 through the first two beats of measure 40. The Slap Bass also plays through the same range.

(con't)

Above them, from measure 29 to 32 (the end of the second phrase), the Saw Wave lead plays a cascading chromatic scale ascending from D3 to the stratosphere above the treble clef. One scale starts on measure 29, another follows on measure 30, and another follows on measure 31. All the time, the MIDI velocity of the notes decreases, while the pan position of the Saw Wave lead changes from one side of the stereo field to the other (it gets reset in time for the loop).

Two beats before the third phrase at measure 33, the Brass take over the melodic line. They play over the top of a String section in a line that runs through measure 40. At that point, everyone still playing transitions into a part of the music that has a "Spanish" flair to it. The bass line goes into a pattern of: measure 41=A, measure 42=Bb, measure 43=A/Bb/C, measure 44=Bb,C, until a temporary modulation to the key of A Major is in place by measure 45 with a four-bar bass line transition wailing away.

An Overdrive Guitar patch takes a solo beginning at measure 49, playing a distinctively "Spanish" sounding solo through measure 56. The bass line plays an arpeggiated pattern that alternates between an A Major chord and a Bb Major chord every measure. The whole mess wraps up beginning in measure 57, where the Brass reprises the end of its melodic line while the rest of the ensemble repeats its accompaniment from earlier. A transition at measure 61 sets everything up for the loop.

For 1:49, that's a lot going on! Now you can see why this writeup took so long. I do appreciate you reading it, and for your trouble, please allow me to leave you with a link to a video of the song. Thank you again for reading, and thank you for voting for your "Song of the Weekend!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaB3NXAGIKo>