

# Song of the Weekend

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From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group

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

Entry: 20211113 – Spray

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This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Spray, from the Apogee cult classic, "Rise of the Triad."

Spray was inspired by the robot boss of one of the episodes of "Rise of the Triad," the "Nasty Metallic Enforcer," also known as the "N.M.E.". This robot was nicknamed "Spray" by the development team (and in fact carried a license plate with that name) because of the manner in which it dispersed large amounts of weapons around itself when approached by the player. This is the origin of the name of this week's song.

The inspiration for the content of this week's song comes from a composition by Russian composer Alexander Mosolov. According to Wikipedia, between 1926 and 1927 he wrote a piece called "Factory: machine-music, Op. 19," which is "commonly referred to as the 'Iron Foundry'." I first heard this work in 1981, when I was a student at the University of Texas at Austin, on a show on classical FM station KMFA called, "This Is Modern Music." The piece is very mechanical and violent at times, bringing to mind the images from inside a mechanized, white-hot iron foundry. I did my best to emulate the style of the piece in a way that would fit a computer game level.

Spray was written in a key I'd rather not talk about (more on that in the Musical Analysis section) and rolls along at 116 beats per minute in 4/4 time. It loops right at around 2 minutes 29 seconds in length. It was written for the General MIDI patch set, and uses Strings (left, center, and right), Trumpets, Trombones, Tympani, a Reversed Cymbal effect, and a brace of percussion instruments including snare, cymbals, toms, and miscellaneous effects.

Musical Analysis:

So, what's up with the key signature?

I wish I could answer that question. For once, I must feign ignorance. Spray does not exist within a conventional key or mode. Instead, it is written using an Ab Major scale with the 6th and 7th notes flatted. If any of you out there know what mode or scale this might be, please enlighten me - I was forced to leave the University before I was taught what this was, and in this case, Google is not my friend.

(con't)

Spray starts out with the Tympani, Reversed Cymbal, and miscellaneous percussion setting up an ostinato pattern that will run the length of the song. Together, the three make the sounds of the "heart," "lungs," and "gears" of the robot that is Spray. After four measures of this, the Trumpets and Trombones come in with ostinato clusters that signify more machine activity. They are joined four measures later by the right Strings (low) in a triplet ostinato pattern that brings to mind a slow, whirling motion - perhaps the robot's wheels. The robot's head comes into play four bars later when the right (high) Strings begin playing an ascending ostinato pattern for eight bars. Finally, the whole robot is set into motion when the snare drum comes in, playing a fortissimo military march figure over the top of the entire mix for four measures.

At this point, the Strings drop out and the Trumpets and Trombones take over. They play a transitional pattern, consisting of two marcato sixteenth notes followed by a marcato eighth note, one on each downbeat for the next four bars, each one ascending higher and higher until the final pattern on the beginning of the fifth bar. During this time, the snare pattern also drops out, as does the Reversed Cymbal, while a Toms pattern accompanies the brass.

The next section sees the military snare figure resume, albeit not as loud as before. The brass revert to their cluster ostinato patterns as well. Meanwhile, the right strings begin playing the main melody of the song. The melody cycles through the center and then the left strings over the next 12 bars, ending with a joint build-up over 4 further bars with the brass into what can best be described as a "brass feature."

The "brass feature" in fact features mainly the Trumpets, who play 16th note chords and clusters constantly for 8 measures. They are joined in the 6th measure by the Trombones, who play an ascending counter-feature before both brass parts end on a fortissimo statement on the first downbeat of the ninth measure. During this time, they are accompanied by the Toms at first, and later by the snare drum.

Once the "brass feature" wraps up, the Strings recap the main melody in a slightly shorter version, while the brass revert once again to their cluster ostinato figures. Everything wraps up, and the song sets up for the loop after the melody.

Quite an involved song, Spray is, and I fear I have glossed over its surface. Please forgive me if I have done so. At least allow me to include a link to a YouTube video of the song. Thank you for reading, and thank you for voting for your "Song of the Weekend!"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EKSrrQ8X\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EKSrrQ8X_0)