

Song of the Weekend

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From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group

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

Entry: 20211211 – Smoke and Mirrors

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

Smoke and Mirrors gets its name from a couple of sources. First, when I wrote the song, I envisioned a 1940s-1950s crime drama, where a lot of the special effects action is done with "smoke and mirrors." I also pictured the soundtrack to a smooth stage magician, who'd use this kind of music in a routine where the magic was done with a lot of "smoke and mirrors." No puns this time around, sorry.

The inspiration for Smoke and Mirrors is, sort of, Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn" theme, minus the usual Duane Eddy twangy guitar solo. It is only an inspiration in passing - I did not base any of my composition on "Peter Gunn."

Smoke and Mirrors is written in D Minor and trundles along at 118 beats per minute. It is written for the following General MIDI orchestration: Pizzicato Strings (3 parts), Picked Bass, Trombone, Brass 1, Flute, and Standard drum kit.

Musical Analysis:

Smoke and Mirrors starts off with a sneaky sounding four measures of drums and ostinato Pizzicato Strings playing in octave unison. The sneakiness continues with another octave of strings added above, along with a Picked Bass line entering the scene. This continues for four more measures, at which point the strings drop down to just a single part playing the ostinato figure, which will continue for most of the rest of the song.

At measure 9, the Brass 1 line kicks in, sounding like a trumpet section playing tone clusters for eight measures. These are punctuated a couple of times, first by one flute, then by a pair, playing short standalone passages in between clusters. This goes on for 16 measures.

Just before measure 25, a solo Trombone plays a sixteenth-note pickup pattern on beat four, leading into a feature which will run through measure 40. It's reminiscent of a sleazy trombone solo you might hear in a smoke-filled jazz club of the 50s. Anyway, it ends on a high note, while the Brass 1 trumpets build a pyramid cluster into measure 41.

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At measure 41, the Brass 1 trumpets split: the two lower parts play a tone cluster, while the two upper parts play a rhythmic part with a somewhat ambiguous melodic line. The four parts come together in a syncopated figure eight bars later.

All brass completely drops out at measure 49, where a jazz flute solo takes over and plays for the next 15 bars, ending in measure 64. A Brass 1 figure punctuates its line at a momentary silence in measure 57, then drops down low and plays accompanying chords and figures until measure 63. Brass 1 then begins a pyramid build into the final phrase of the song, which begins at measure 65.

The final phrase consists of Brass 1 playing stacked, alternating, syncopated chords every two measures, at a *forte* level for the first time through, then at *fortissimo* for the remainder of the song. The last repetition of the chords is done in unison with the Pizzicato Strings and the Picked Bass. This sets up the loop.

Not a terribly complicated song, but a fun one nonetheless. With that, please allow me to leave you with 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=T-keWEvlQsc>