

ZirconMusic.com

Music Homepage

ImpactSoundworks.com

Sample Libraries

JillianAversa.com

Vocalist

Andrew “zircon” Aversa
Composer Challenge – Good VS. Evil

Step 1: Outline

Viewed the challenge from afar to determine the key questions.

- The challenge seemed straightforward at first glance, but... There's a catch: the neutral layer is always playing.
- **Question:** How can the neutral layer work with both good and evil layers, using music theory? Without being minimal?
- **Question:** What genre and instrumentation would suit each layer?
- **Question:** How can I create intensity?

Step 2: Imagine

How does the game look and feel?

- Without screenshots, gameplay, or more specific descriptions to go by, I visualized a scenario.
- **The Concept:** Fantasy RPG. Mystical, magical setting for this level: an enchanted forest.
- **Neutral** - you, the traveler, are just passing through, taking in the sights and collecting items.
- **Good** - you encounter a beautiful forest fairy, and decide to help her save the forest creatures or something.
- **Evil** - you'd rather capture the fairy, burn down the forest, rape, pillage etc.

Step 3: Create

Duhhhh...



- Broke out the template to **get in the zone**.
- Had to experiment - lots of trial and error in this challenge (a.k.a. the “**spaghetti method**”).
- Constantly **tested the layers** for flow and consistency.
- **Iterative production** - established a sound or pattern, then built on it over and over.
- Compositional order was neutral first, then evil, then good.

FL STUDIO Composer Challenge_22 labe...

FILE EDIT CHANNELS VIEW OPTIONS TOOLS HELP

Play / pause Space

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MONITOR

321 WAIT

(none)

SRAP

Playlist - Pattern 30

NOTE CHAN PAT

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Bell Octaves

Main Bells

Woodsy Rattle

Soft Hand Drum

String Swells

Strings Octave ...

String Ending

Jill Vox 1a

Contest Vox1a

Neutral Layer

Texture & Motifs

- **Question:** What kind of genre and instrumentation would suit the neutral layer and enhance its mood?
 - **Ambient/New Age/World** genre lends itself well to a mysterious, woodsy feel.
 - **Bells, strings, light acoustic percussion.**
- **Question:** How can I make the neutral layer work with both good and evil layers, using music theory? (Pure ambience or percussion is a cop-out!)
 - Intricate arpeggiated textures along a **modal scale** leaves room for major/minor chord movement in other layers.
 - **Just minimal enough** to leave space for added intensity in good and evil, but gradually changing to maintain interest.



- **Question:** How can I create intensity without crowding?
 - **String swells** and **suspensions** for dynamic contrast.
 - **Light percussive phrases** for additional movement.
- End result has movement and dynamics, but still relatively ambient.

FL STUDIO Composer Challenge_22 labe...

FILE EDIT CHANNELS VIEW OPTIONS TOOLS HELP

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(none)

Playlist - Pattern 30

NOTE CHOP PAT

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

String Ending

Jill Vox 1a

Jill Vox 1b

Jill Vox 2a

Jill Vox 2b

Jill Vox 3a

Jill Vox 3b

Choir Pad

Flute Solo

Contest Vox1a

Contest Vox1b

Contest Vox2a

Contest Vox2b

Contest Vox3a

Contest Vox3a - Volume multiplier envelope

Contest Vox3b

Contest Vox3b - Volume multiplier envelope

Pattern 33

Pattern 37

Pattern 34

Pattern 54



Good Layer

Texture & Motifs

- **Question:** What kind of genre and instrumentation would suit the good layer and enhance its mood?
 - Again with the **New Age/World** influence, but more soothing and ethereal than the neutral layer.
 - **Vocal pads** establish core tonality and a sense of magical purity.
 - Fluttering **flute melody** – not purely “happy,” but wondrous and innocent.
 - Very **light synth arpeggio** adds a shimmering texture, like light rays through the trees.
- **Question:** How can I create intensity without crowding?
 - **Cello/double bass rhythm** adds movement in lower register. (The forest is alive with all manner of creature!)

FL STUDIO Composer Challenge_22 labe...

FILE EDIT CHANNELS VIEW OPTIONS TOOLS HELP

Play / pause Space

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CPU POLY 0 0

MONITOR

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SRPP

Playlist - Pattern 30

NOTE CHAN PAT

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

Growing Bass

Wub Wub Bass

Ominous Strings

Strings Octave ...

Synth Riff

Jill Whispers

Jill Hissing

Jill Creepy Sing...

Electronic Perc1

Pattern 14

Pattern 64

Pattern 65

Pattern 66

Pattern 67

Pattern 68

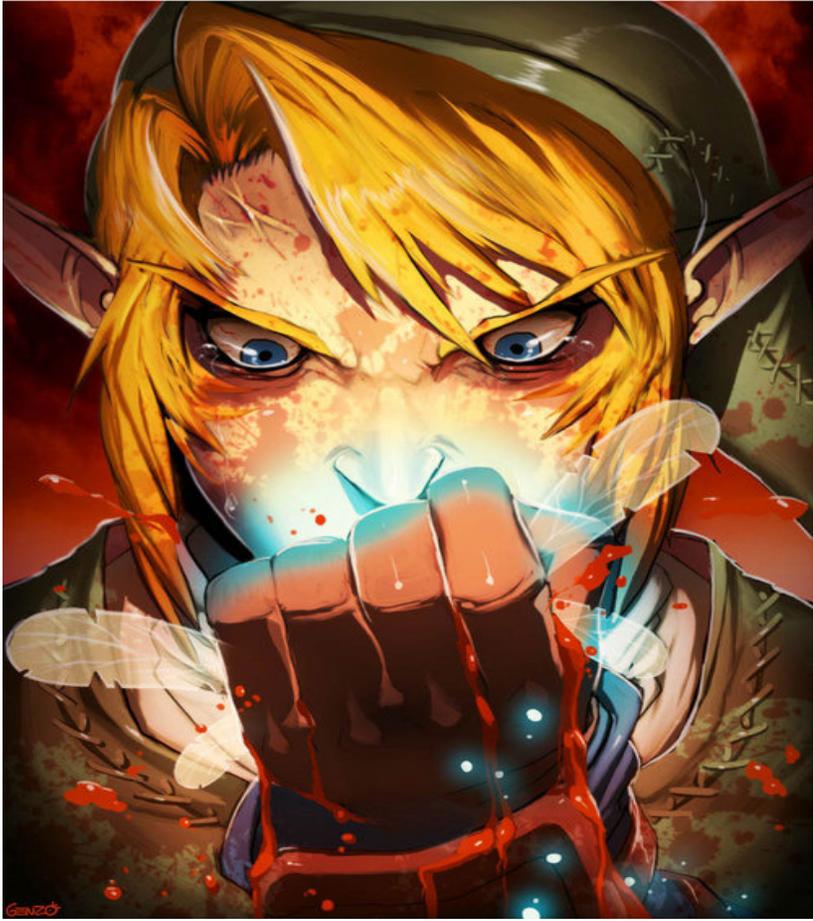
Pattern 51

Creepy Whispers

Creepy Hissing

Creepy Singing

Pattern 39



Evil Layer

Texture & Motifs

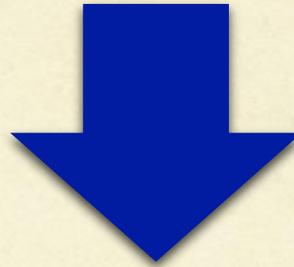
- **Question:** What kind of genre and instrumentation would suit the evil layer and enhance its mood?
 - New Age/World influence from the first two layers morphs into **Ethnic Electronic** - related genres, but darker.
 - **Synth bass drone:** low, sustained note establishes dark tonality, and multiple slow notes for something huge and sinister.
 - Rapid **filtered drums:** dynamic movement with a “burning” filter.
 - **Middle Eastern-style voice:** “cry of the forest” makes an excellent contrast to other elements.
 - **Creepy whispering** is creepy.
 - **String 16th notes** add constant momentum and serve as the primary dynamic energy, while reinforcing the tonality.



- **Question:** How can I create intensity without crowding?
 - In this case, it was **all about the mixing**. Tons of rhythmic elements were used, but they had to be meticulously balanced.
 - (Check out my **tutorials** on ZirconMusic.com for production tips!)

The Mixed Bag

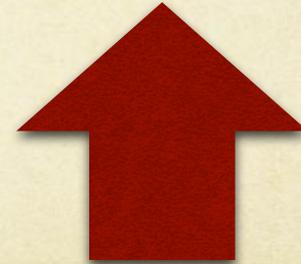
All three layers fading in and out interactively



Good



Evil

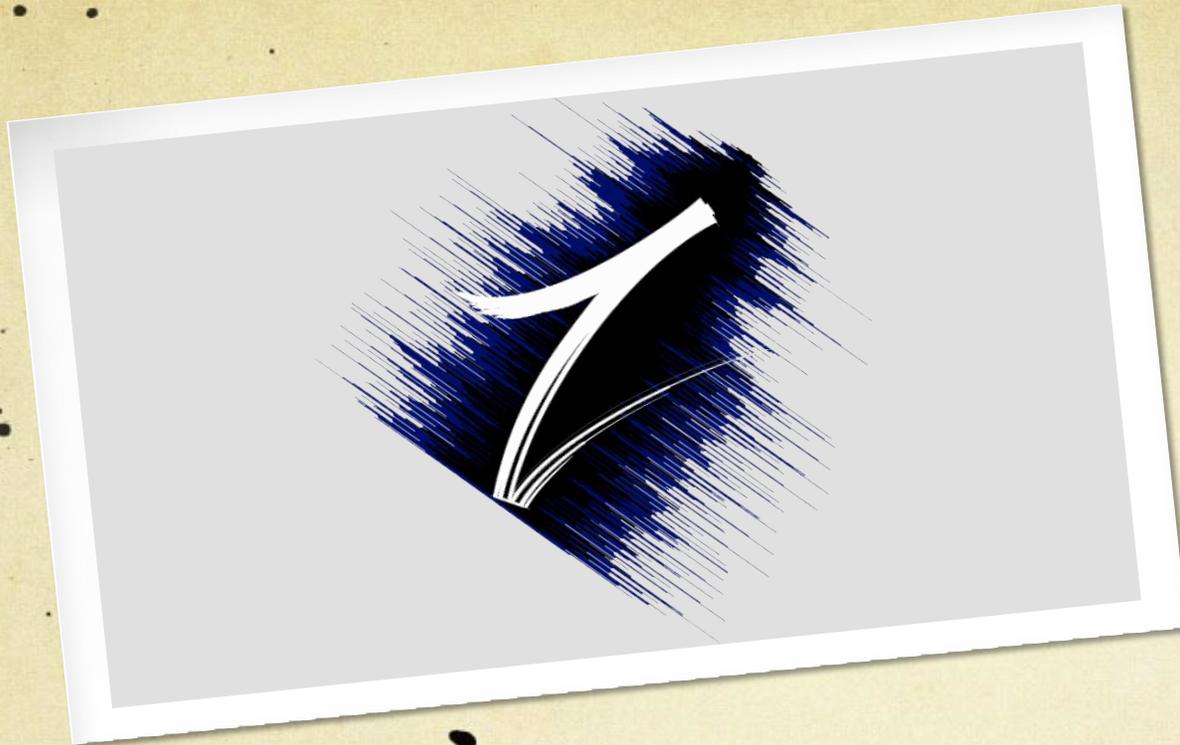




Conclusion

- Sound design and instrumentation were as important as the actual writing to establish mood.
- Thinking about **imagery** really helped.
- Focused on making a solid **neutral layer first**, and everything fell into place.
- **Layering** and more layering!
- Total time: 20-25 hours





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