Rip & Tear: Deconstructing the Technological and Musical Composition of Mick Gordon's Score For DOOM (2016)

Alongside titles *Wolfenstien 3D* (id Software, 1992) and *Quake* (id Software, 1996), *DOOM* (id Software, 1993) is arguably one of history's most influential computer games. The 3D graphics, game engine and in-game assets were all causal factors in the popularity of this science fiction/horror game. Core gameplay, an exhilarating combination of linear level exploration and the dispatching of numerous enemies using a minacious array of weaponry, largely defined the first-person shooter genre.

An ambient metal soundtrack composed by Robert C. Prince III (Bobby Prince) accompanied gameplay in original versions of the game, taking inspiration from bands including Metallica and Slayer. Subsequent to related sequel and expansion games, the series' original developer company recently released *DOOM* (id Software, 2016), with Australian composer Mick Gordon composing the score. Gordon's music dances nimbly upon a dividing originality befitting this reboot of the franchise, and homage paid to the original game's midi soundtrack.

This was achieved through a number of experimental, procedural, musical and technical processes. Motivic content such as distinctive electric guitar riffs from the 1993 game soundtrack were reconstructed and transposed down onto a Schecter nine-string guitar. The ominously guttural melody produced was altered with effects, a process that was ultimately a cornerstone of the score's aesthetic.

Gordon stripped his music to its fundamental sine wave and noise forms, and pulsed rhythmic excerpts of this sound through vast arrays of analogue equipment. Eschewing the traditional effect processing capabilities of vintage guitar effects pedals and reel-to-reel tape machines, Gordon unconventionally used the circuits within this equipment to corrupt the pure sine waves and noise. Ricocheting electrons transfigured the sonic matter, and Gordon harnessed the capturing of this energy to imbue his musical phrases with literal charge.

A similarly explorative process was undertaken in using a Soviet-era Polivoks synthesizer, labeled in Russian, made all the more experimentally nuanced as Gordon does not speak this language. These sounds were combined with dark synth-rock rhythm section parts and numerous metallic, electronic and 'other worldly' sound effects to suit *DOOM*'s in-game environment.

The narrative does not explicitly expound a post-human paradigm, however the two settings of gameplay are a research centre on the planet Mars and a seemingly secularist depiction of hell. These are both distinctly chaotic locales, devoid of genuine humanity but replete with monsters, and as a non-diegetic musical accompaniment to play the score reflects the abstract-cum-dystopian visual elements and themes.

Gameplay can swiftly evolve such that the player may need to engage in close-quarter combat against limited opponent numbers, thence rapidly adapt to face

oncoming waves of enemies in vast areas. The score reacts dynamically to such changes, altering components such as instrumentation and theme in real-time and based on player actions. In so doing, a musical intelligence is presented that at any one time may provide the player with both a substantiated diegesis, and individualised soundtrack experience.

It is the singular technical construction and musical composition, broader narratoligocal links and gameplay experiences of Gordon's score for *DOOM* that this paper seeks to elucidate.