

[Insert Disc 2]

Not really much of a song, but the album needed some kind of preamble before Dune Eternal's choir hits, and the sounds that play during the act transition seemed like a fitting pick.

My brother still had the old Playstation that we used to play on back when we were kids, so I borrowed it from him to record some genuine disc changing sounds for extra immersion.

Dune Eternal

With this track I wanted to return to the riff-based style that dominated the prelude, as a sort of "this is how far we've gotten" both in terms of quality and progress in the game itself. It's still more melodic and varied than the prelude's music is, but in general I focused more on writing riffs than melodies.

There's a couple other things I wanted to play around with here as well though: The choir that starts dissonant but then slides into a more harmonic chord to sell the initial impact of seeing the pyramid when the doors first open and the double bass amen break beat to bridge the gap between metal drum patterns and electronic drums. As a progression from Lust's constantly changing time signatures, I also wanted to play around with polyrhythms, though that ended up not playing a part in the layer's music with the exceptions of the opening section here, where the guitars play intertwining arpeggios, but one skips forward an 8th note every couple of measures similar to what King Crimson would do with their 80's "rock gamelan" lineup, and the intro to Dancer in the Darkness, which we'll get to later.

Another thing I wanted to play around with on this track was to give more prominence to the bass in the form of some fretless bass solos. I've always loved the fretless bass sound, particularly in the music of the band Cynic, and it fit the deserty vibe nicely.

Should go without saying that the title of this song is a play on Doom Eternal.

Sands of Tide

I actually started this song before Dune Eternal, as it was my first attempt at capturing the desert sound. Pretty early into this song's writing I realized it was way too goofy and cartoony with its bouncing flute melodies to be the opener for the layer, which is why I left it at just the opening measures and went on to write Dune Eternal instead. Luckily the goofy bounciness became more understated thanks to the amen breaks and the distorted guitars, since early on I felt it was too cartoony to fit the game's tone. Felt more like something that'd be in a Serious Sam game, initially.

On the contrary to initial expectations, this ended up being one of the more intense and

driving songs in the game so far, and I'm really happy with how it turned out. There's many layers of instruments but most of it becomes fairly indistinguishable from behind the guitars and amen breaks, so I've included some clean moments in this soundtrack version to bring those layers out more.

Dancer in the Darkness

This song is in three distinct sections, changing as the player progresses through the level. Just as a kind of a challenge for myself I decided I'd refrain from using any guitars or amen breaks on any of the three sections. I also wanted to try to stick to one odd time signature the entire time, so the entire song was written in 5/4.

The first section is a very blatant homage to classical minimalist composer Steve Reich. The focus is on the marimba-style percussion that he loves, the rhythm they play is a sort of parody of the 3-2-1-2 rhythm he uses often and the structure of having two percussionists playing the same rhythm but with one of them occasionally skipping a note to desync the rhythms and cause new synergies is taken from his composition "Clapping Music".

The second section I have the least to say about. It ended up being fairly tricky to up the intensity without losing the vibe and instrumentation, but the low piano notes ended up working well as a sort of replacement for guitars.

For the final section I wanted to have a big church organ climax, because I had been thinking a lot about the WH40K Mechanicus soundtrack at the time and was enamored by its use of the instrument for atmosphere. Initial tests were more in line with how that soundtrack used it, but none of it really felt like it fit this game, so the final version ended up being very different in feel and much more action-y.

Duel (Versus Reprise)

The "bass" intro is actually just the original guitar intro played at half speed. I had initially planned to actually record it on bass but just doing this way was much quicker and cleaner and it gets the job done.

I had a lot of pressure going into this track since Versus is one of the more popular songs in the game, and it didn't help that I didn't have much time to write it since the update was coming out soon. Luckily I could still use the original song as the backbone, taking some riffs and sections and enhancing them with additional layers of melody and instrumentation that changed the way it felt while still staying recognisable. The initial idea was to have the synth solo climaxes not come in until the second phase of the boss fight, but since the first half is where players spend most of their time, it would have been a waste.

Mixing wise this song is probably the loudest on the Act 2 soundtrack. I tried to mix it more

in line with how the previous Greed songs are mixed, but it always ended up sounding wrong and weak, so I just kept it really loud and clipping, which gives it this meaty and thick sound. The original Versus was also more compressed than most of its surrounding songs, so that ended up being an accidental parallel.

The drones at the start and end are done with an instrument called the Tanpura (or rather a soundfont of one). For some reason I always thought this kind of drone was done with a sitar, so I'm glad I found out.

Deep Blue

The main piano section is from an old song I made back in 2016 called The Abyssal. It's played at double speed though with the original pitch maintained, since the original was quite glacial in pace which was a common factor in most of my music at the time. It was just that originally, but for the Wrath reveal trailer Dave felt it was lacking excitement, so I added the amen breaks in that trailer in post onto the video itself. The response to this short snippet was overwhelmingly positive, which ended up being detrimental, because I only managed to add a single new section to the song afterwards and the song remained unfinished and untouched for almost a full year until I was forced to come back to it as Act 2 was nearing completion.

Initially I wanted to go for a sort of collage approach where I'd be using a lot of my old music remixed and recontextualized in the same way that A Shattered Illusion did to A Thousand Greetings. The second section of this song is fused together clips from two songs, the clean guitar patterns in the background are from another song from the same album as The Abyssal, "What the Sea Left Behind", while the low piano riff is from an even older standalone song called Last Train to Denver, which I wrote all the way back in 2014.

As the deadline was closing in though and I finally had to force myself to continue the song, I decided to scrap that idea and go the simpler route of using what I had so far as well as new synth melodies and putting all the focus on the amen breaks. By having the amen breaks drop out during calm sections, the song could effectively whiplash between calm and serene and fast paced at a moment's notice just by the addition of the drum track.

Quetzal Tirado, a free jazz / free improvisation saxophonist I met through a mutual friend, had helped out with the game's music earlier by adding textural layers to the song CHAOS from P-1. Since those ended up being so subtle in the mix, we both wanted to give her a moment in the spotlight, which I promised would be in this song all the way back when I started it. I unfortunately kept her waiting on it for almost a full year since I kept delaying the continuation of the song.

Quetzal is more focused on free jazz, so our feels for music are extremely different, which proved to be a bit of an issue because of how precise I try to be with rhythm and composition while free jazz is the polar opposite where rhythm is loose and spontaneity is

encouraged. It didn't help that the pressure was already so high with this song that I was constantly worried about ruining it with unnecessary additions. The way we ended up doing it was that Quetzal recorded a whole bunch of improvised takes on tenor saxophone and I cut and pasted the chunks I felt fit the best together to form the current saxophone solo you hear now.

Also, fun fact: the horn that summons the Insurrectionist in 4-2 is edited from a sound clip of Quetzal holding a sustained low E note on bass clarinet, which I requested she record during our CHAOS sessions "just in case I find a use for it".

"He Is the Light in My Darkness"

This song was a sort of warm-up to return to songwriting, since it had been half a year since I stopped trying with Deep Blue and started writing this. I had done some music for White Hell in the meanwhile but nothing for ULTRAKILL. The idea I started with was to have this song also focus more on percussion like Deep Blue, but it ended up being more of an ensemble affair.

The high pitched whistling sound that leads the song gives it a sort of mysterious ghostly vibe and the uncommon 5/4 time signature (or maybe 5/8, I can't tell the difference honestly) matches the Ferryman's unpredictable and sudden but flowing movements. The climax returns to an even time signature with 3/4 (or 6/4?) to give a feeling of balance and finality as the player has gained the upper hand against the Ferryman.

As with basically all the Wrath and Heresy songs, I didn't have the time to record and mix this track until just a few weeks before launch, but I think I got the sound on this right the first time around. Very happy with how the chopped amen breaks sound as well, there's a creaky sounding fill at the end of every fourth measure in the opening section that I particularly love the sound of.

Since the level otherwise doesn't have any music, I wanted to include some of the environmental ambiance in this soundtrack version. I'm a big fan of Field Recordings, but having an extended section of just sounds of waves, wind and rain would be really out of place in terms of pacing, so it ended up being a short vignette, though I still think it enhances the song.

The song title "comes from" the Ferryman's diary in 5-2, though in actuality I came up with the song title first.

Death Odyssey / Death Odyssey Aftermath

The opening few measures I wrote very early on in the level's development but the whole rest of the song came much later. There was also an early attempt at a more electronic

sampling approach similar to Deep Blue, where I sampled classical music, but the response to it was lukewarm among New Blood so I decided to scrap that idea and go with the usual bombastic melodic affair, which was a good call since the level itself ended up being one of the longest.

This is another song I had a bunch of trouble writing, and I think it shows in the finished product. Stylistically the song goes all over the place, starting with a seafaring vibe with accordions, then fuses that with a sort of pseudo-flamenco style and then completely shifts in the second half into an almost big band jazz explosion. It all still kind of fits luckily, though it made naming the song a pain since every name I came up with felt like it only fit one of the styles or sections.

Like many other songs, this one has a lot of different layers of instrumentation, but here I felt it's a lot more necessary for the feeling of the song, so I tried to mix the drums and guitar a bit quieter to avoid the Sands of Tide problem where it all gets lost in the intensity.

Aftermath takes each of the sections from the main song and adapts them into a melancholic string quartet style as a contrast to the intensity of the original song. This song has 3 different versions instead of the usual two, since there's an extra minimalist version at the start, which then switches to the usual calm/combat variants after you reach the inverted hologram room. The sudden transition is somewhat masked by a subtle gong hit which fades out fairly quickly in-game, but I kept it going for the majority of this soundtrack version, since the MIDI instrumentation felt a bit anemic without the background texture.

The Abyss and the Serpent

The intro here uses the same bells or chimes that summon the ship in 5-2 and can be heard at the start of "He Is the Light in My Darkness". There's no deep lore implication to this, I just like the sound of bells and chimes and felt it was a perfect fit for the kind of ethereal atmosphere of the deep dark bottom of the ocean Styx. This intro pretty much entirely consists of just the same bell/chime being played at different speeds and layered on top of each other as well as reversed.

This boss theme I wrote quickly in an evening as I was waiting for something, probably tweaks to the Leviathan's rig since we had to go through many iterations. I wanted a break from all the metal so I tried to go for an orchestral track to sell the massive scale of the Leviathan, though my skills at making orchestral music sound good in MIDI are limited. Not much to say here otherwise, the instrumentation with the music box and church bell may seem odd, but at least to me they fit the nightmarish and surreal nature of the monster.

Chord of the Crooked Saints

This track consists of multiple layers of sound that phase in and out as the player progresses

through the first half of the level. Most fan uploads unfortunately only include the main drone, which really sucks out a lot of the richness and overwhelming nature of the sound.

The main drone here is, from what I can remember, just a sine tone stretched out really far with some effects and editing done on it afterwards. It's something I made as a quick example while discussing editing sound with David Szymanski, though I forget the full context. I kept it in the "just in case I find a place for it" folder where I keep a bunch of similar drones and sounds. When entering combat, it shifts into a heavily compressed and distorted version of itself.

The additional layers are a gong hit at the start, which slowly decays over the course of 20-30 seconds or so as well as additional gong loops fading in when the player enters the second wave of the red tube arena, a looped and reversed piece of a guitar hit with cymbal flairs which fades out after the red tube arena, as well as a constant quiet background ambience of unnerving noises, which was achieved by just taking the desert night ambience that plays when you turn off the sun in 4-2 and slowing it down greatly.

I like having an occasional fully experimental track in the game for the sake of atmosphere and pacing and hopefully to evoke some unexpected strong emotions which, based on how I've seen people react to the doors of Heresy first opening, seems to have worked out. Hopefully this track also introduces some people to the world of drone music.

Altars of Apostasy (incl. "Hall of Sacreligious Remains")

In the past year or two I've been really into black metal, so it seemed like a no-brainer to try my hand at making some for the Heresy layer, especially since I found the idea of amen break blast beats to be hilarious. This song has by far the most simultaneous guitar tracks in the game currently with the most dense section having 7 guitars playing simultaneously. I was worried it'd sound muddy, but luckily it didn't take much tweaking on the mixing to make it sound fine.

The Glory reprise wasn't actually in the song when I originally wrote it, it was tacked on afterwards when I had the thought that it would help elevate the song and the section it plays in emotionally, which it most certainly did. Much like how it worked in its original context, the lightness of the Glory motif works wonderfully to contrast with the darkness of the rest of the song.

The Castle Vein reprise ended up being a bit of a lucky coincidence of multiple things coming together. I had already decided that I wanted to reintroduce both the Swordsmachine and the Hideous Mass in 6-1, but I happened to see one of the beta testers for the level editor use Castle Vein for an exciting hype moment, which gave me the idea of combining those thoughts together and holding off on using Hideous Masses until the very end to have them be reintroduced alongside a new more black metal style version of the Castle Vein motif.

I rarely write solos so the length of this guitar solo caused a bit of redundancy and repetition in it, but in the context of the game it really isn't noticeable at all.

Fallen Angel (An Adaptation of Bach: BWV 639)

Not much to say with this one. I wanted to have Gabriel's intro use the same Bach piece, but didn't want it to be a carbon copy, so I made a simplified adaptation of the first couple of measures. The start is with a gamelan instrument, don't know which, and the rest is a church organ. The stripped down nature of it helps sell the image of Gabriel having lost everything he used to stand for, I think.

The Death of God's Will (incl. "Horns of Insurrection")

I started writing this piece 9 hours before the update was slated to come out. Someone in the ULTRAKILL discord bet that they'd eat a spoonful of toothpaste if I managed to make it good. I finished composing and soundfonting the piece in 4 hours, though I didn't have time to record or mix it obviously. Still, after hearing the song, the guy disappeared from the discord, so I think that speaks for its quality.

Mostly built on the backbone of Gabriel's previous theme, "Divine Intervention", but fully embracing the maximalist approach that its instrumentation hinted at. I'm very happy with how this piece turned out, it feels like it's reaching of the original's potential. The only part that I'm not 100% confident in is the final section before the loop, as it's quite a lot more dissonant than the rest of the song, but I think it sounds really cool so I decided to keep it.

Also, similarly to how it was written on the day of the update's release, the song was recorded and mixed the night before this soundtrack's release. Funny how that works.

Horns of Insurrection samples a clip from an old 2014 dark ambient piece of mine called "A Blinding Light Shattered the Stars". I always loved the way those horns sounded and felt their potential had been wasted on the ending of a song nobody's heard, so I'm glad to finally be able to reuse them and let them blossom into what they were supposed to be. Although it's the last piece of music in Act 2 in the game, I've decided to append it to this track, since it fits both thematically and in terms of sound, and the mainliner here doesn't really have a proper ending otherwise, plus it's nice to have an intense album like this end with two calm pieces to let listeners wind down.

Silence. Introspection.

Very similar to its counterpart in the Act I intermission, "Disgrace. Humiliation.", but more fleshed out and a sadder tone. I also made a quick original ending for this track for the

soundtrack, since it fading out would've felt awkward for the album's pacing.

Beethoven: 7th Symphony, 2nd Movement: Allegretto (An Excerpt For Piano)

I originally heard this piece in the 2008 film *Love Exposure*, or at least that's where I really became aware of it, as it's used in a very powerful monologue scene. It's stuck with me ever since due to its powerful feeling of melancholic determination and slow, measured pace (most renditions of it play this section too fast I feel, losing the magnificence of the piece). It felt like the perfect pick for this scene, though unfortunately I couldn't find a public domain orchestral recording of it, but this piano rendition works just as well. A great introspective way to close off an otherwise really intense album in my opinion.