



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.



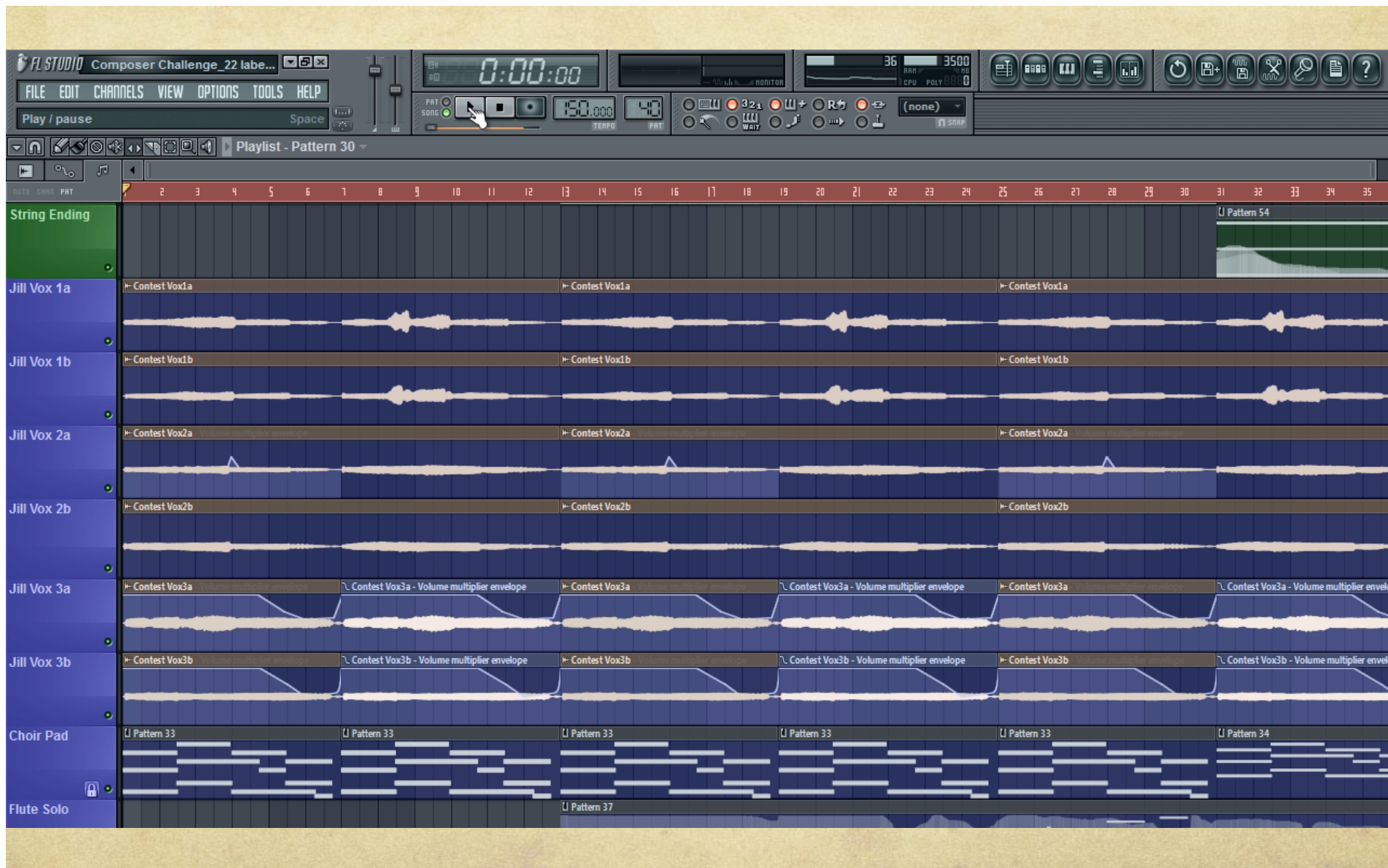
Neutral Layer

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.



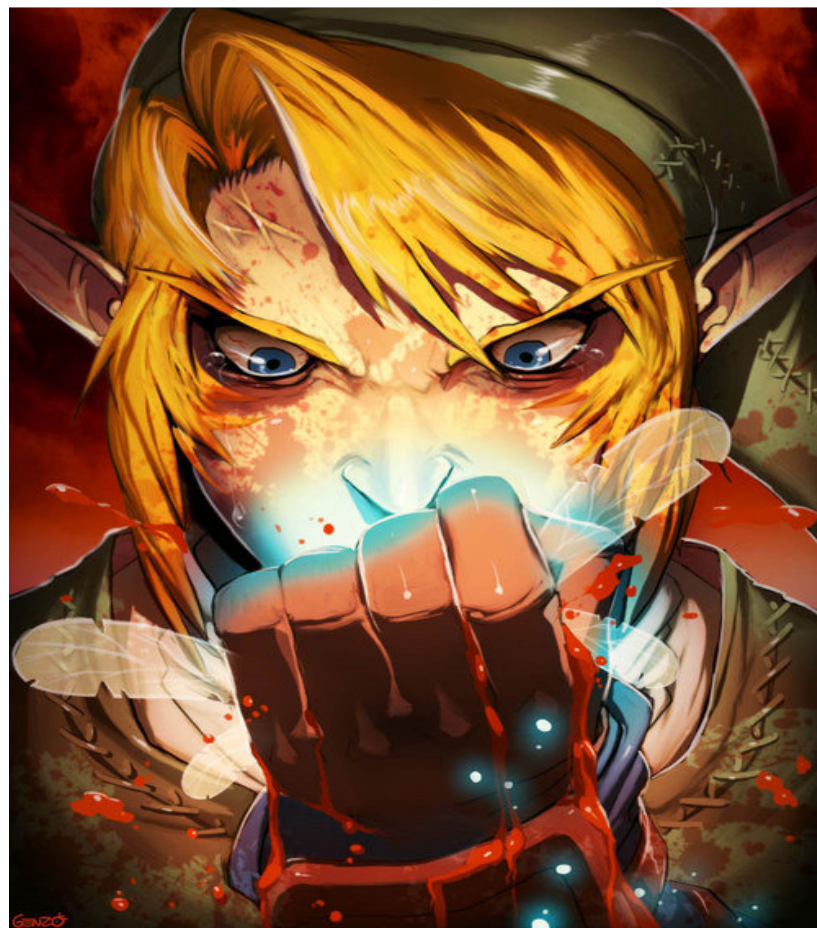


Good Layer

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!)





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

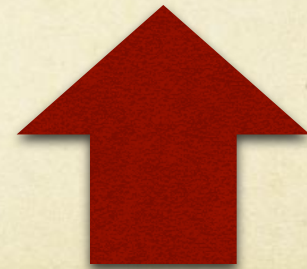
All three layers fading in and out interactively

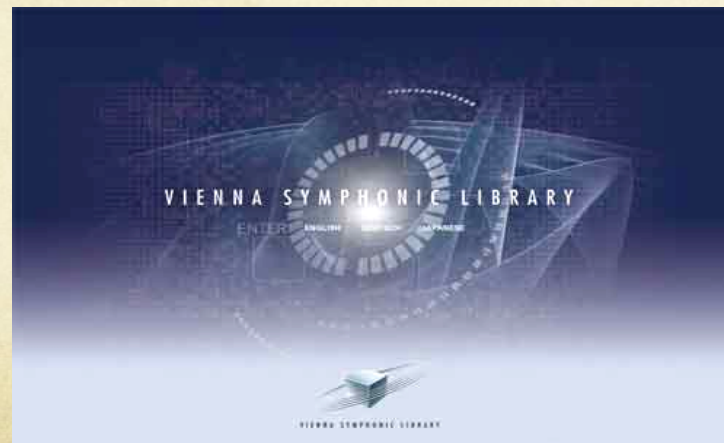


Good



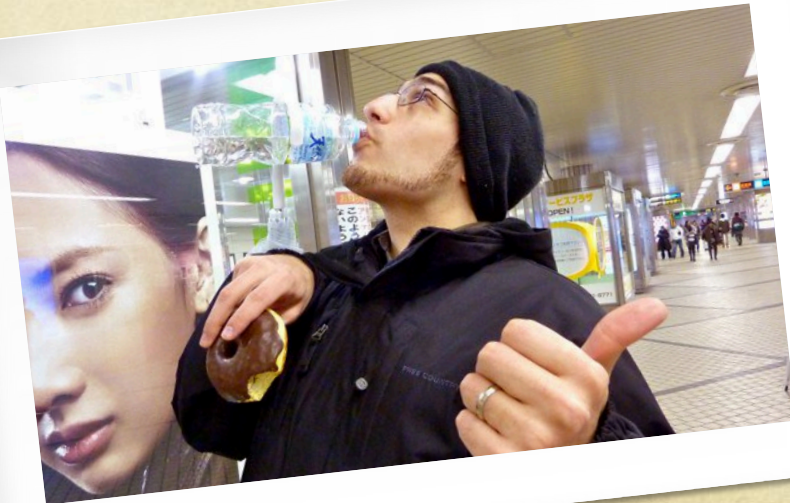
Evil





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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