



“Life is Strange”: Music in a narrative driven game

Raoul Barbet – Creative Director & Music Supervisor
Sebastien Gaillard – Audio Director

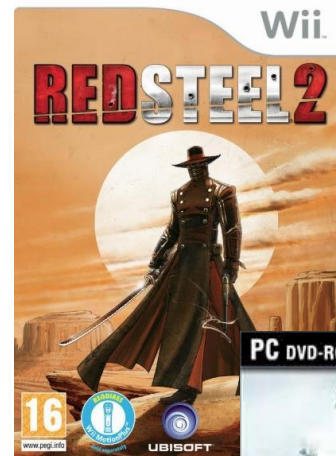
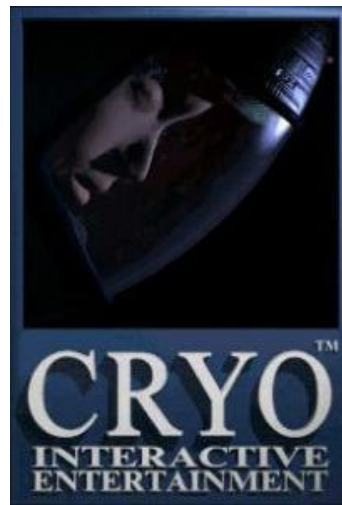
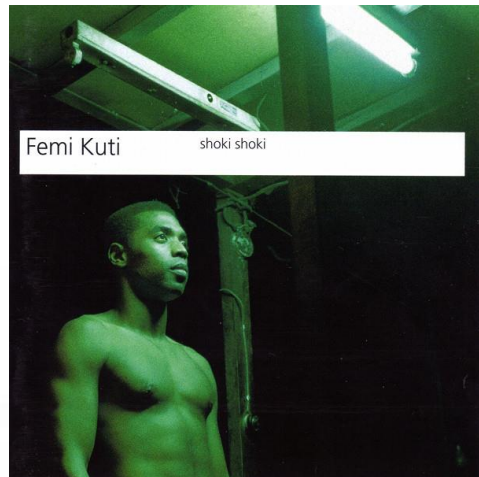
DONTNOD Entertainment

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
MARCH 18–22, 2019 | #GDC19



Personal Presentation

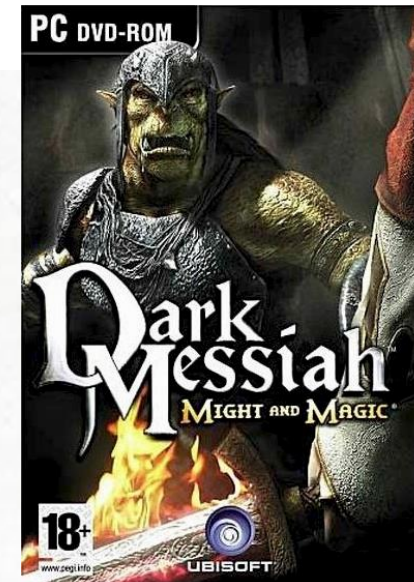
Sebastien Gaillard – Audio Director



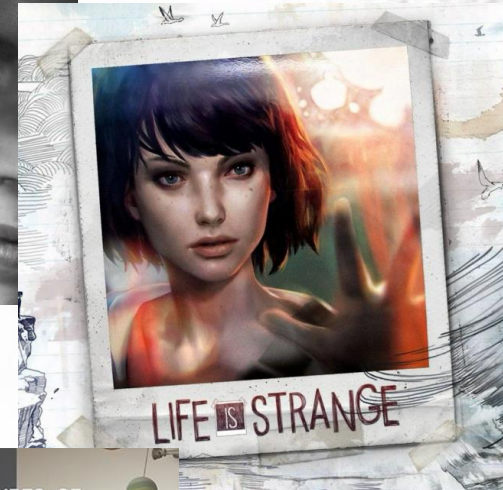
DARKWORKS
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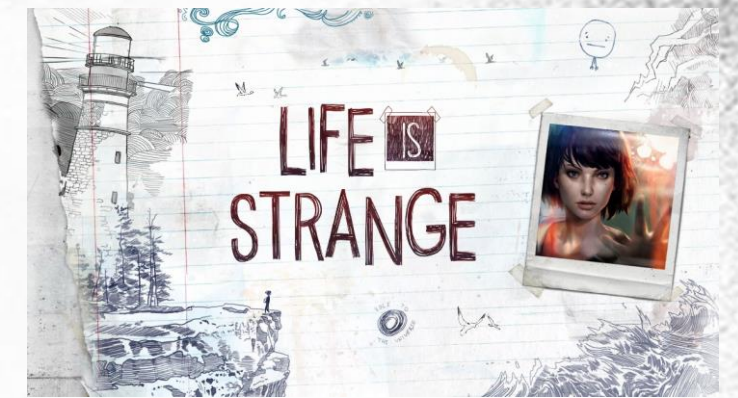
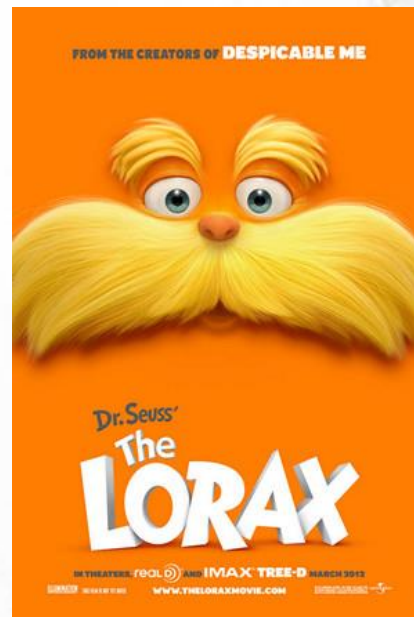
GDC

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Personal Presentation

Raoul Barbet – Creative Director

Animation & Videogames



Three Games

2015 - 2016



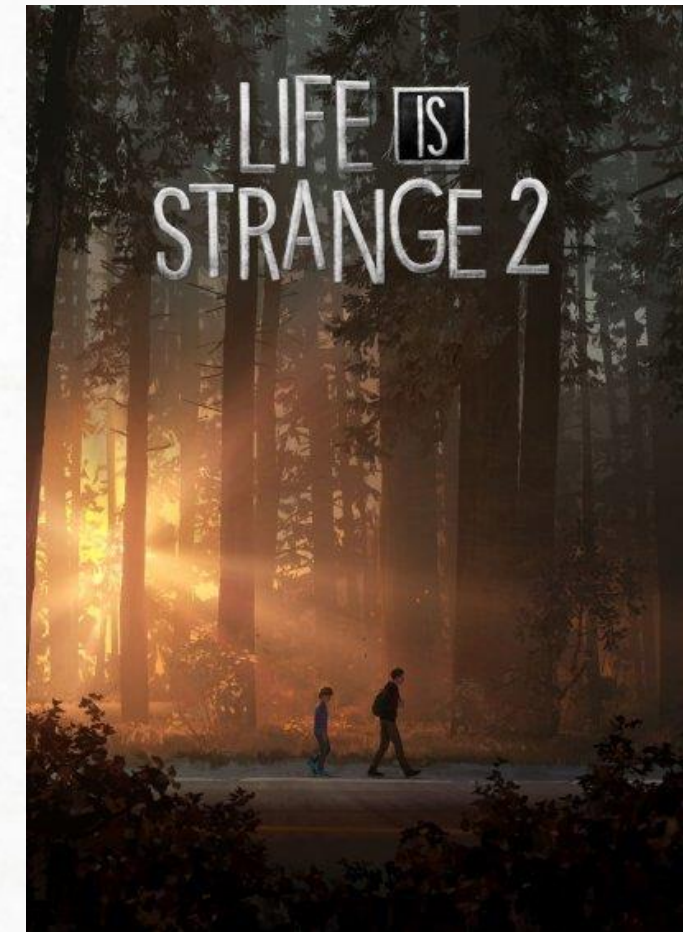
Unreal Engine 3 / Wwise 2013

2018



Unreal Engine 4 / Wwise 2016

2018 - 2019



Unreal Engine 4 / Wwise 2017

Talk Overview

- Music in Life is Strange
- Our first scene
- The original score
- The licensed tracks
- Our characters interact with the music
- The artists behind the licensed tracks



This talk contains game spoiler.

Life is Strange Games

- Narrative driven games
- Same universe
- Importance of characters and story
- Tackling real world problems



Life is Strange 1



*The Awesome Adventures
of Captain Spirit*



Life is Strange 2

Music in Life is Strange

- Music, a key part of our projects
 - *Link to the narrative*
 - *Mix of original score and licensed tracks*
- Creative Direction and Music Supervision
 - *Why put some music?*
 - *Score or Licensed Tracks?*
 - *Why this title?*
 - *Does it work with the design and cinematography of the scene?*



Music in Life is Strange



- Music, a key part of our projects
 - *Link to the narrative*
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- Creative Direction and Music Supervision
 - *Why put some music?*
 - *Score or Licensed Tracks?*
 - *Why this title?*
 - *Does it work with the design and cinematography of the scene?*
- The Technical Aspect behind the Music
 - *Our constraints*
 - *The software*



Our First Scene



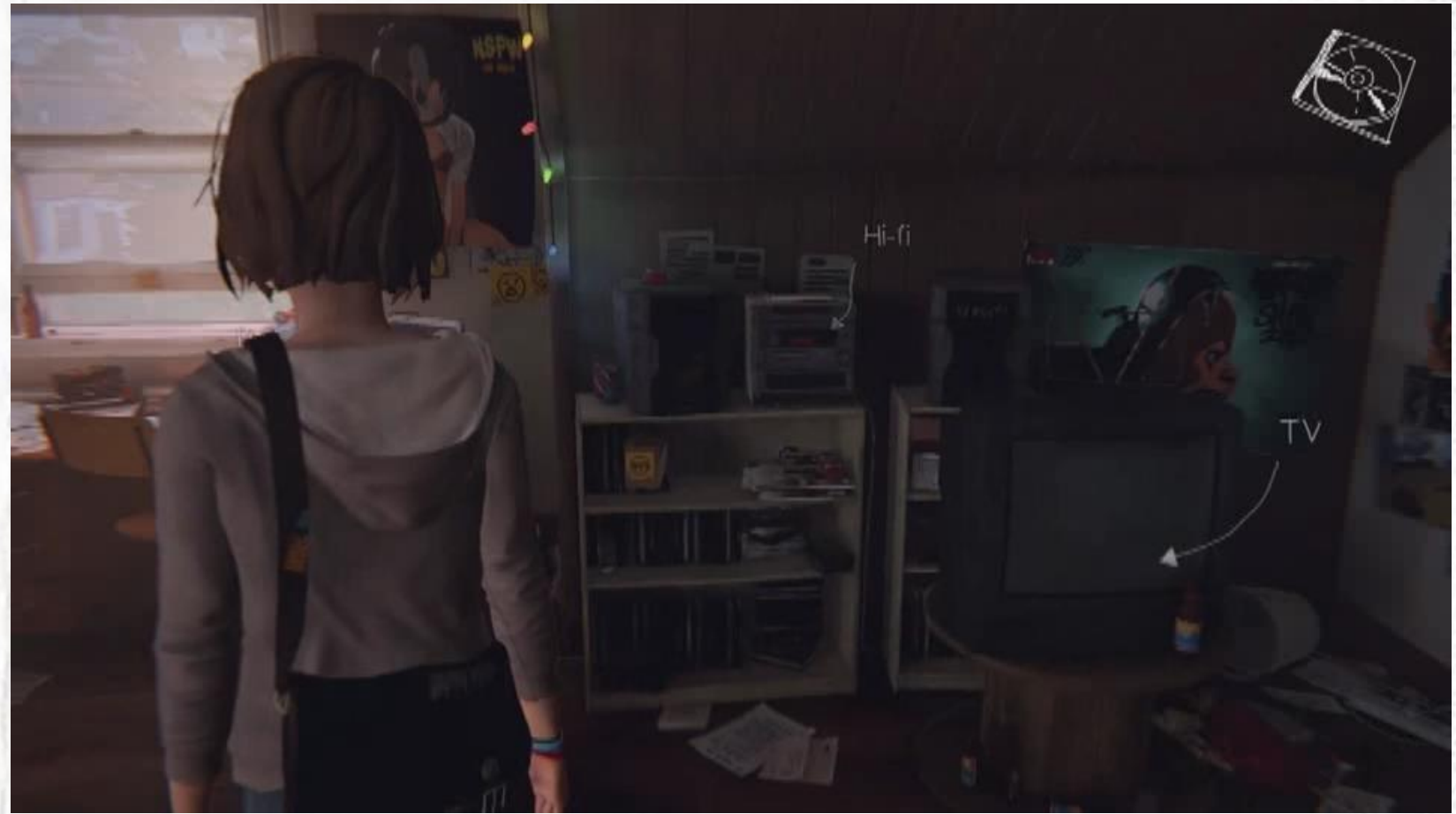
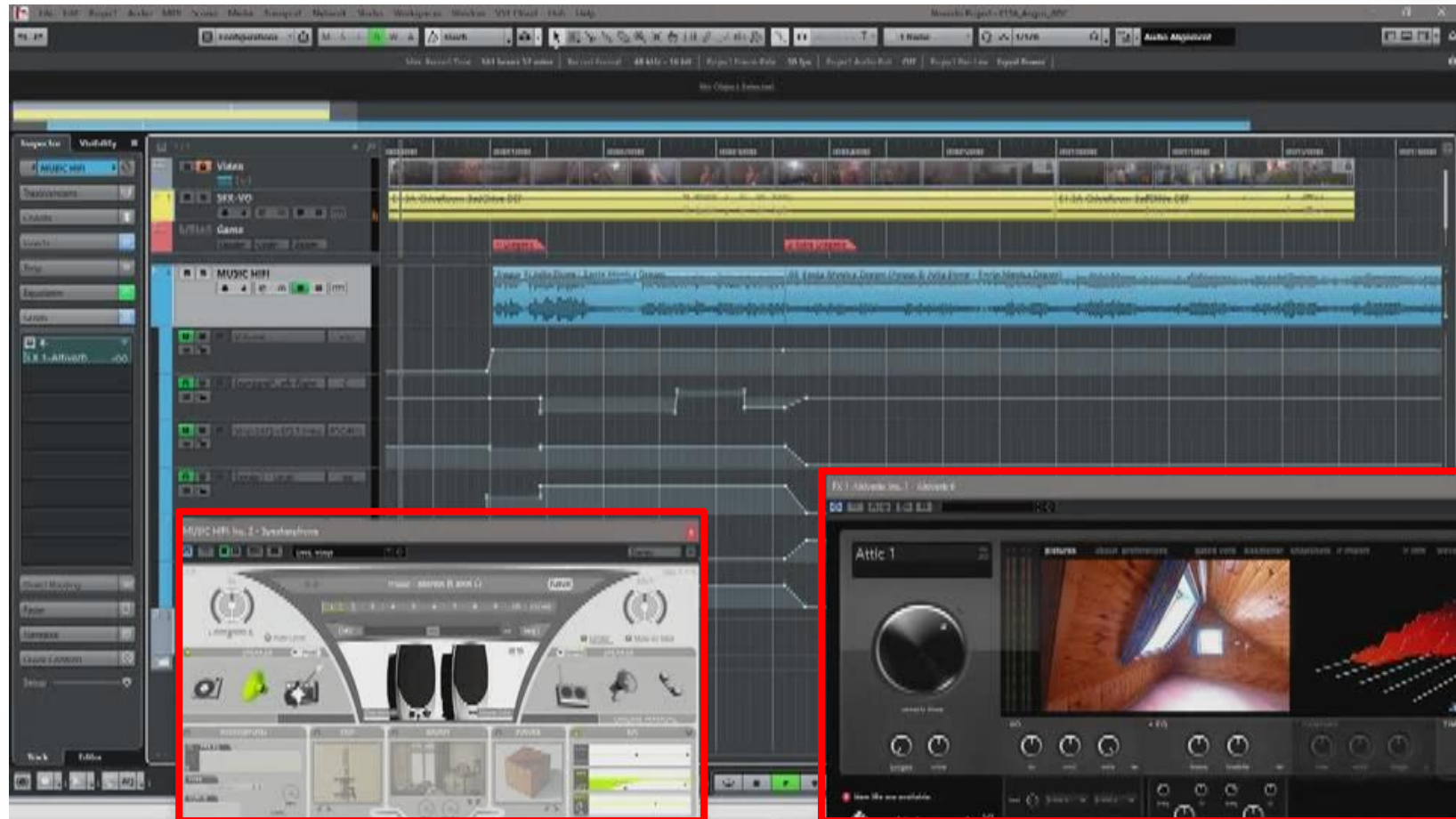
➤ **Chloe Price**

Track:

***Santa Monica Dream* by Angus & Julia Stone**

- Describe character state of mind
- Nostalgic feeling
- Audio direction for the score

Our First Scene



➤ Diegetic music “in-the-world” / Extra-diegetic music “score”

Other Examples: 2D/3D Treatment

Life is Strange 2, EP1

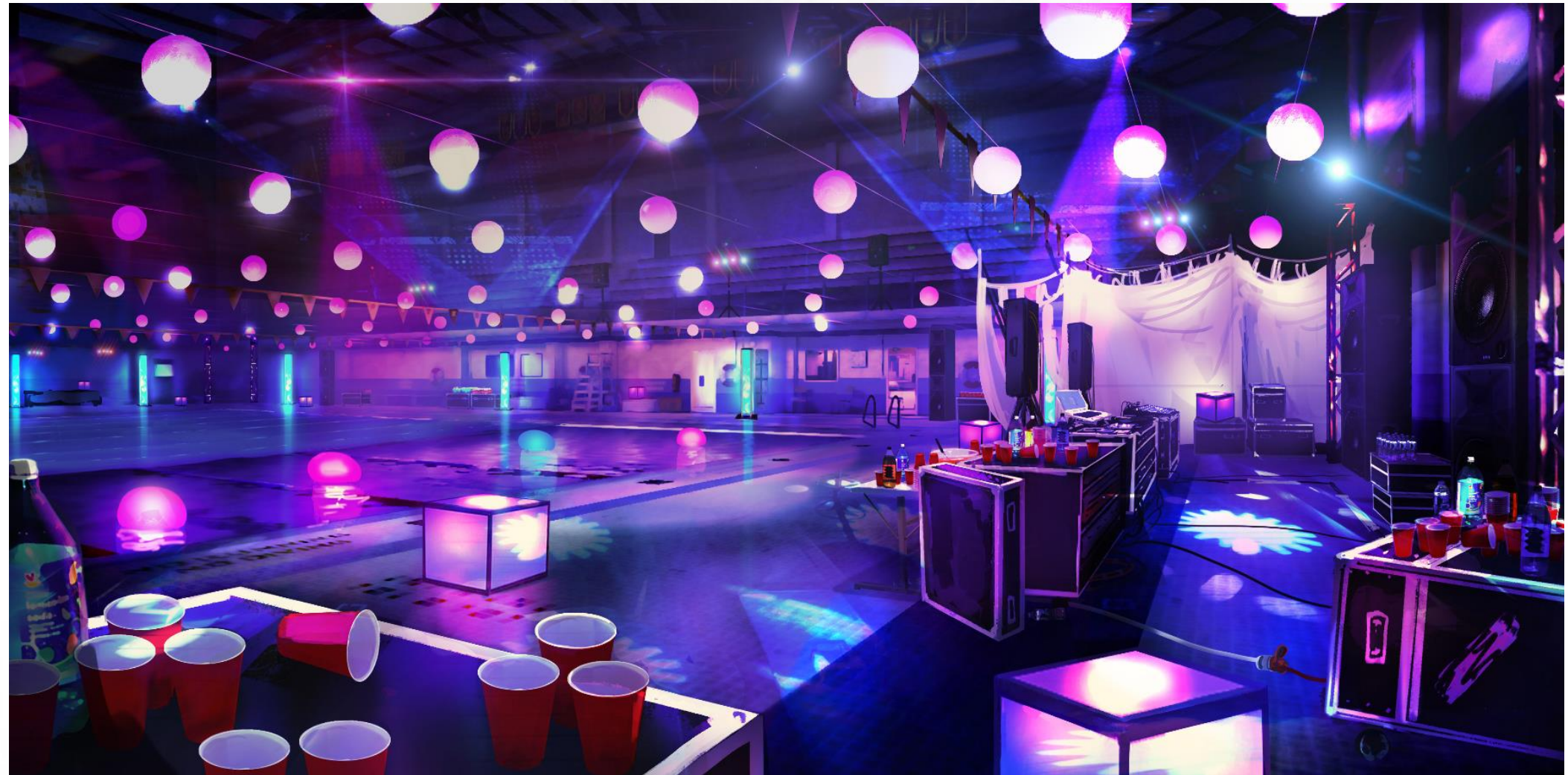
Track:
Lisztomania by Phoenix



Other Examples: 2D/3D Treatment

Life is Strange 1, EP4

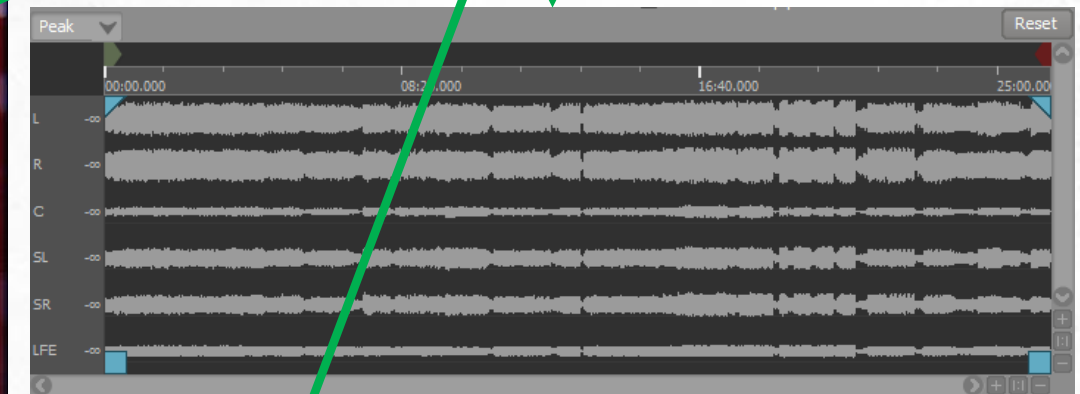
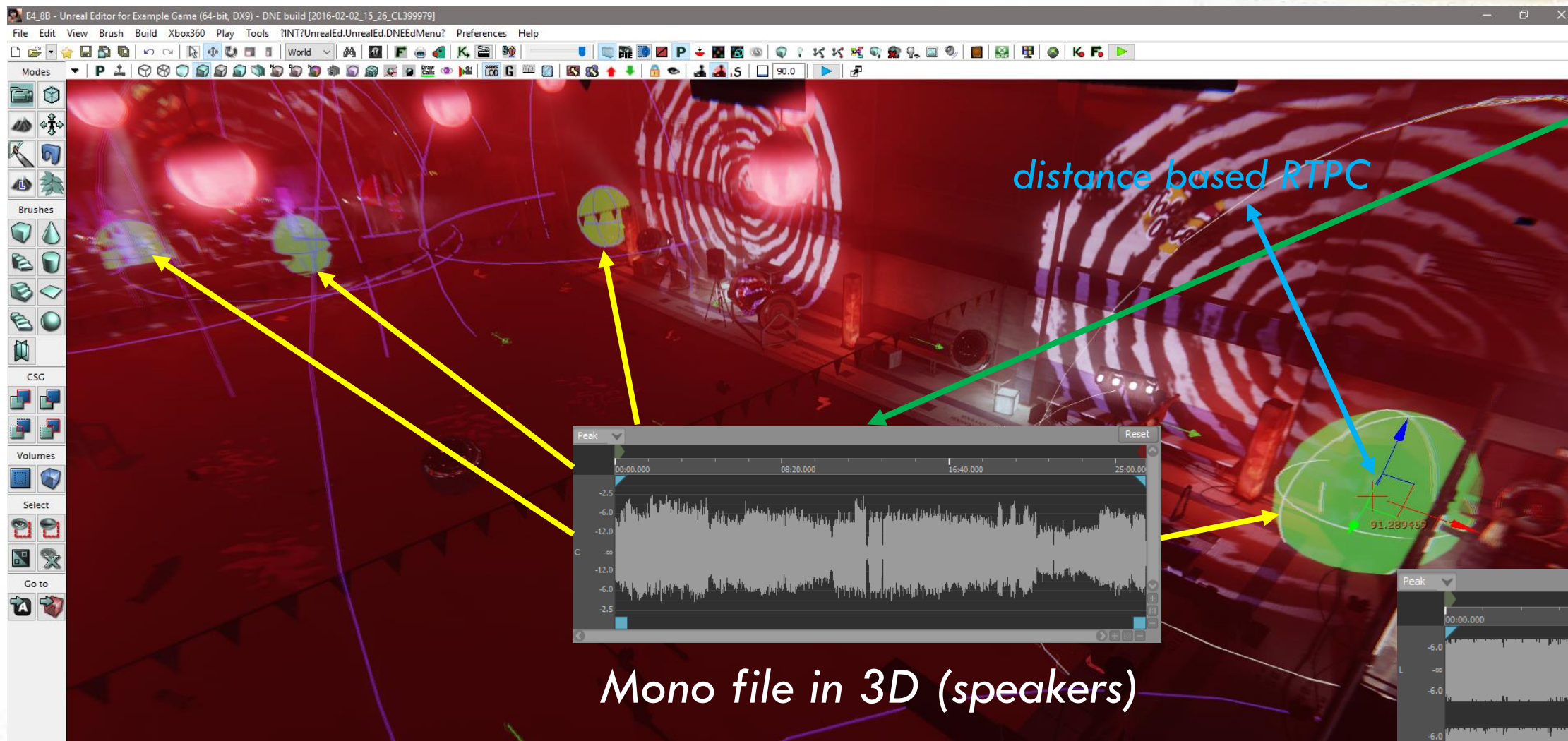
Track:
Got Well Soon by Breton



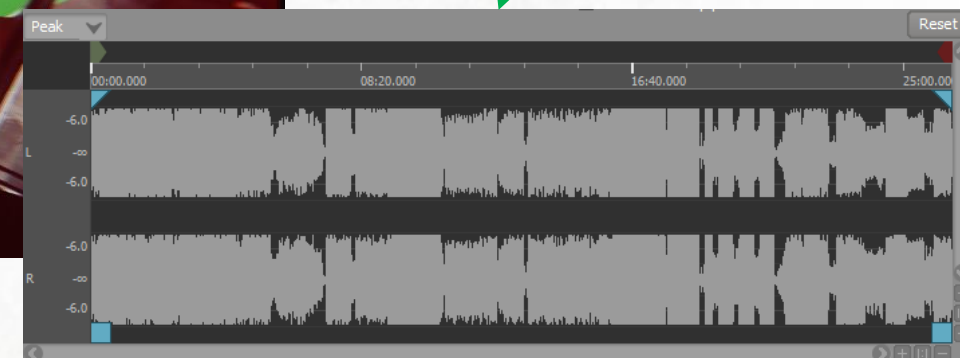
Other Examples: 2D/3D Treatment

Unreal Level Editor

Wwise blend container



5.1 file in 2D (main stage)



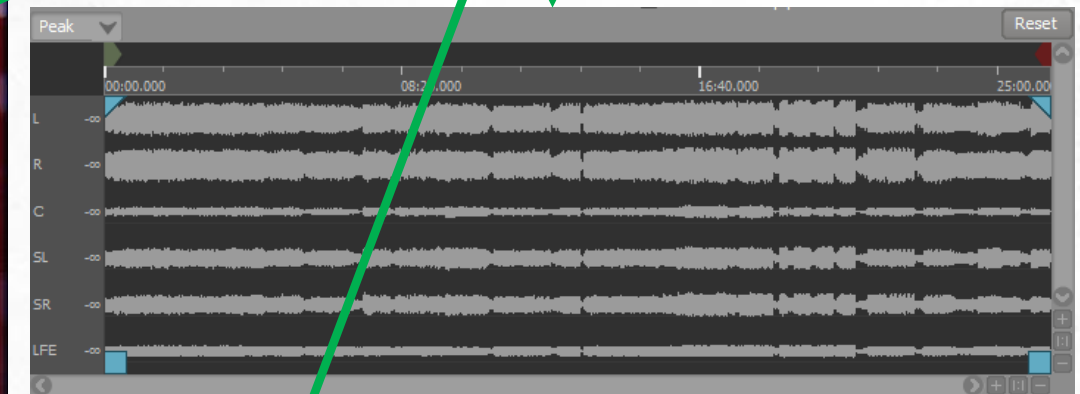
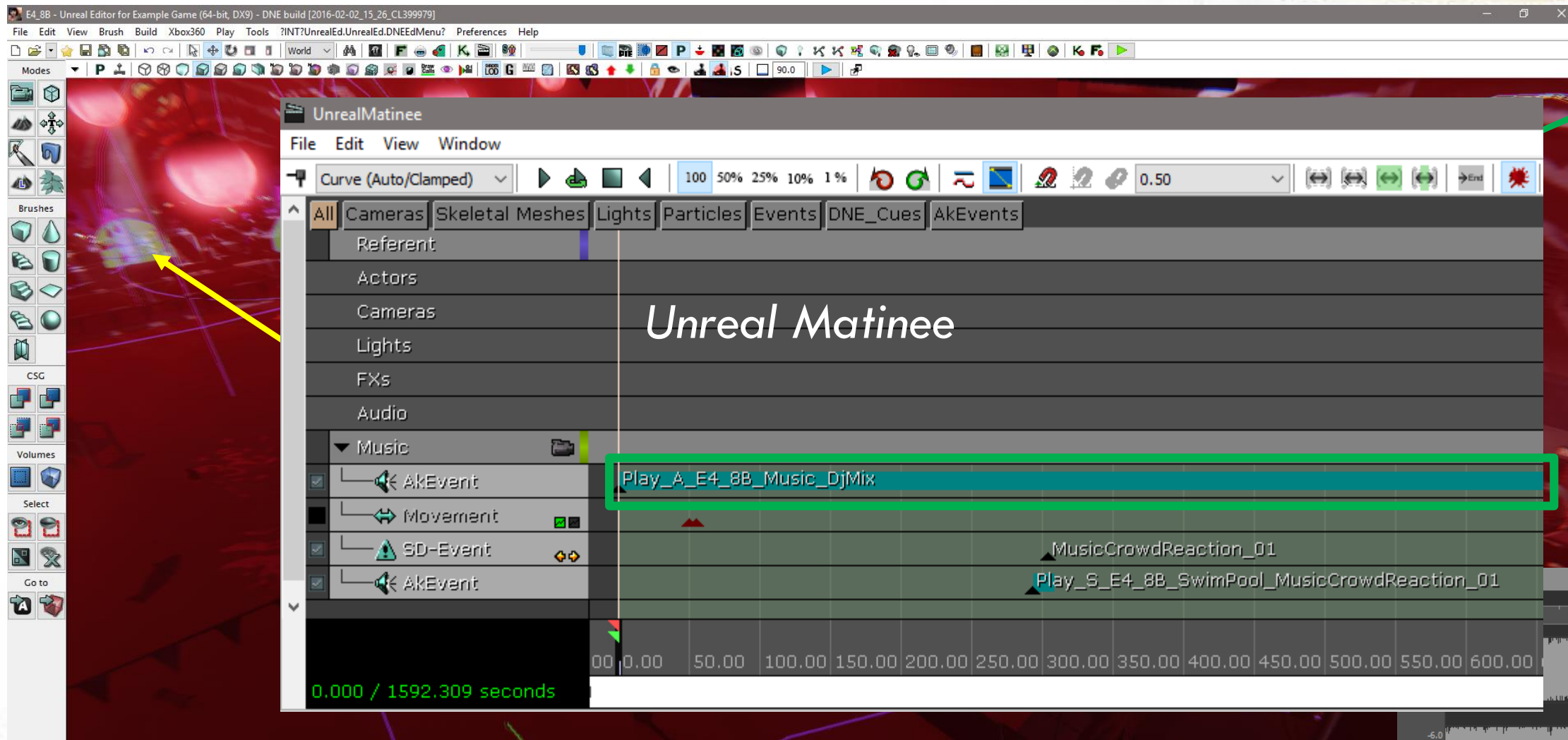
Stereo file in 2D (bathroom)

➤ 7 songs / 30 minutes

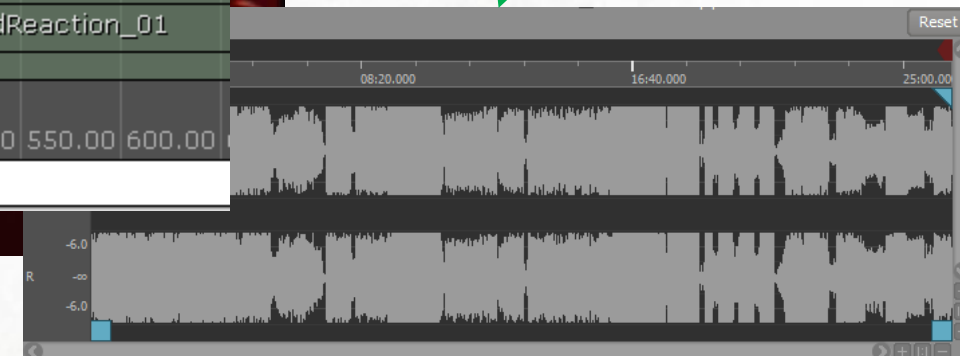
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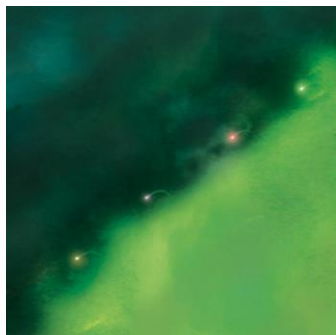
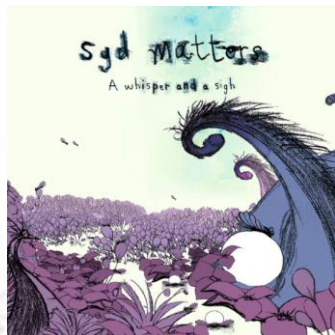
The Original Score

- **Jonathan Morali**

Composer of the original score of Life is Strange 1&2

- **Syd matters**

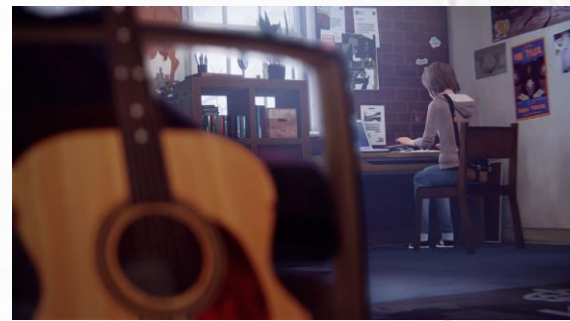
Two songs by the band in Life is Strange 1:
To All of You and *Obstacles*



The Original Score

Life is Strange 1

- 30 minutes composed
- 8 themes
 - Linked to characters: Max & Chloe, Kate
 - Linked to places: Campus, Blackwell Academy
 - Linked to a mood: Golden Hour, Storm
- Extended to more than 4 hours in the final game



Life is Strange 2

- More than 30 minutes
- 5 themes (so far)
 - Seattle
 - Into the woods
 - Stress (Abduction)
 - Winter woods
 - Grand Parents home
- 3 scores to picture (so far)
 - Seattle incident
 - Into the woods
 - Nightbus



The Original Score: Zen Sequence



Life is Strange 1: 11 zen sequences



Captain Spirit: 2 zen sequences



Life is Strange 2: 8 zen sequences (so far)

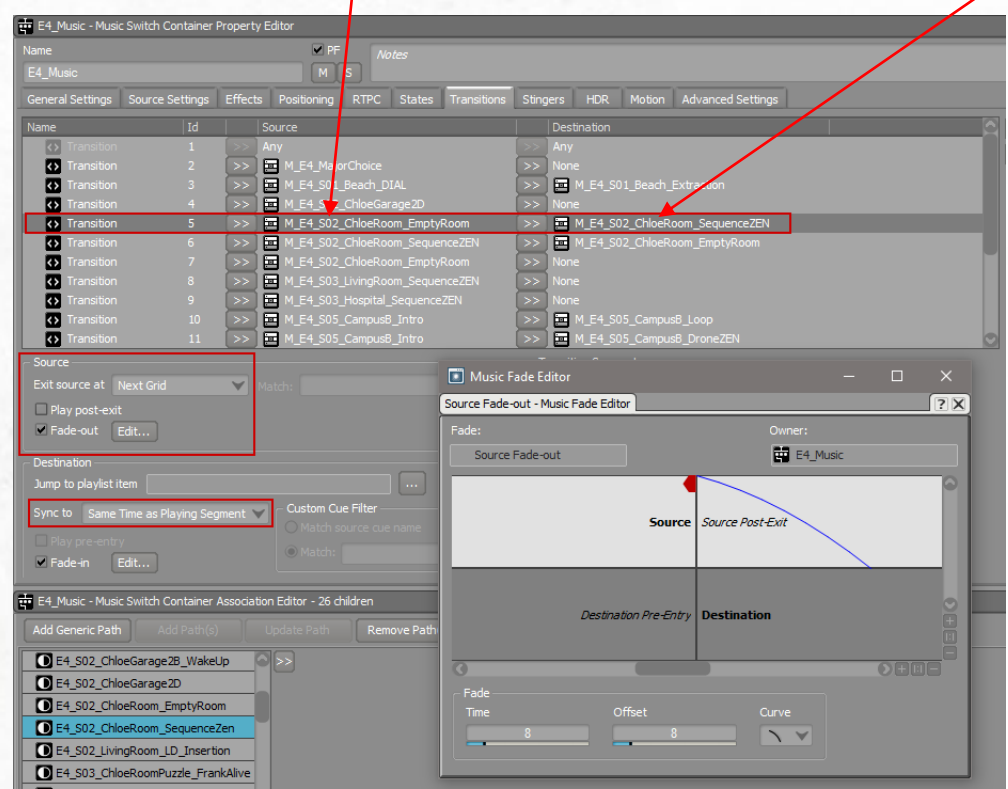
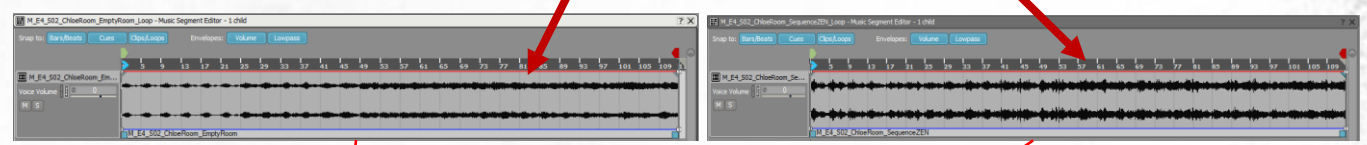
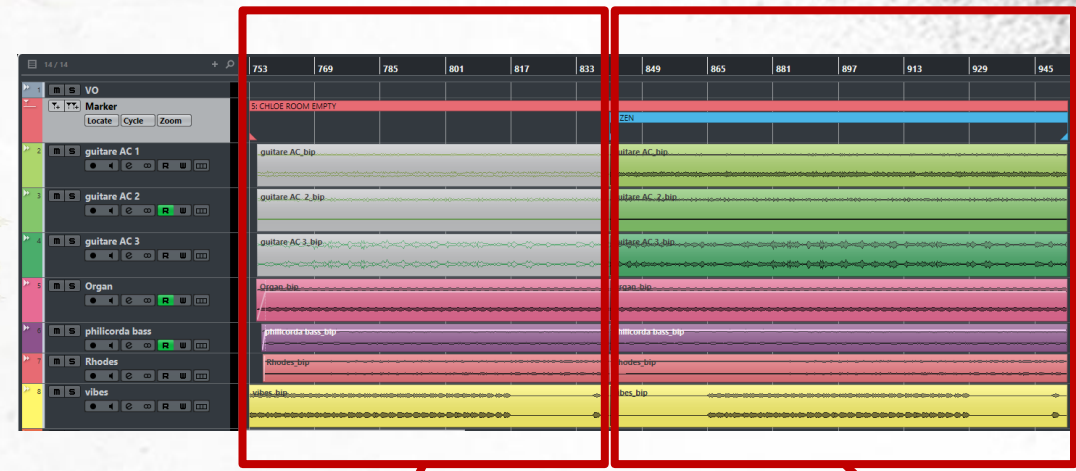
- **Optionnal**
- **Nostalgic**
- **Contemplative**

- **Reward for the player:**
 - Voice Over
 - Camera Angle
 - Music

The Original Score: Zen Sequence



The Original Score: Zen Sequence



➤ Transition
Next Grid

➤ Fade
in/out

➤ Sync To “Same Time Playing Segment”

The Original Score: Menu - LiS1



The Original Score: Menu - LiS2

➤ Before incident



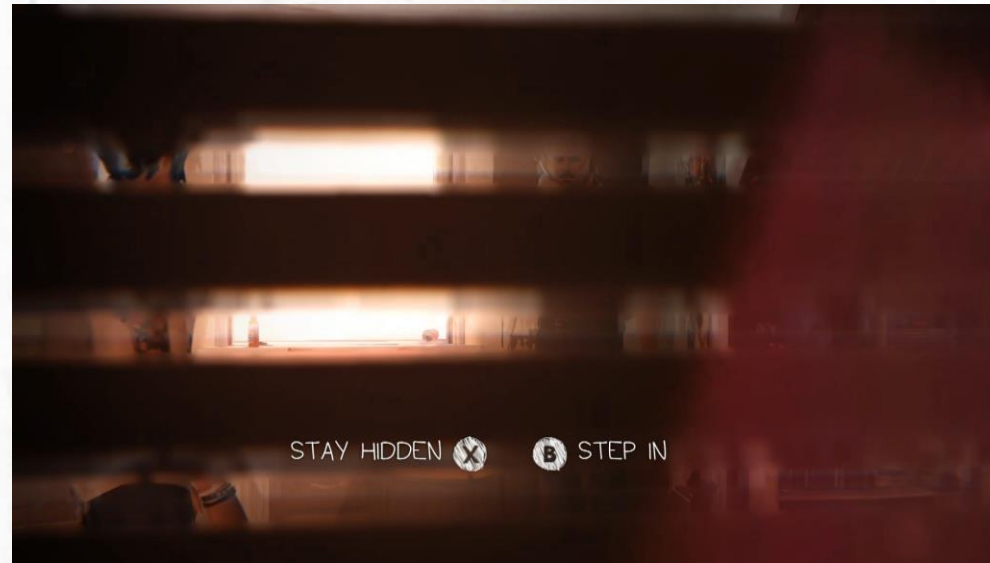
➤ After incident



The Original Score: LIS1

➤ Using score for UI feedback

- Major Choice
- This action will have consequences
- Inventory



Licensed Tracks as Score



- Nathan last words
Rhythm and voice acting
- Max emotion
Body and facial animation
- End of the world feeling

➤ Nathan Prescott

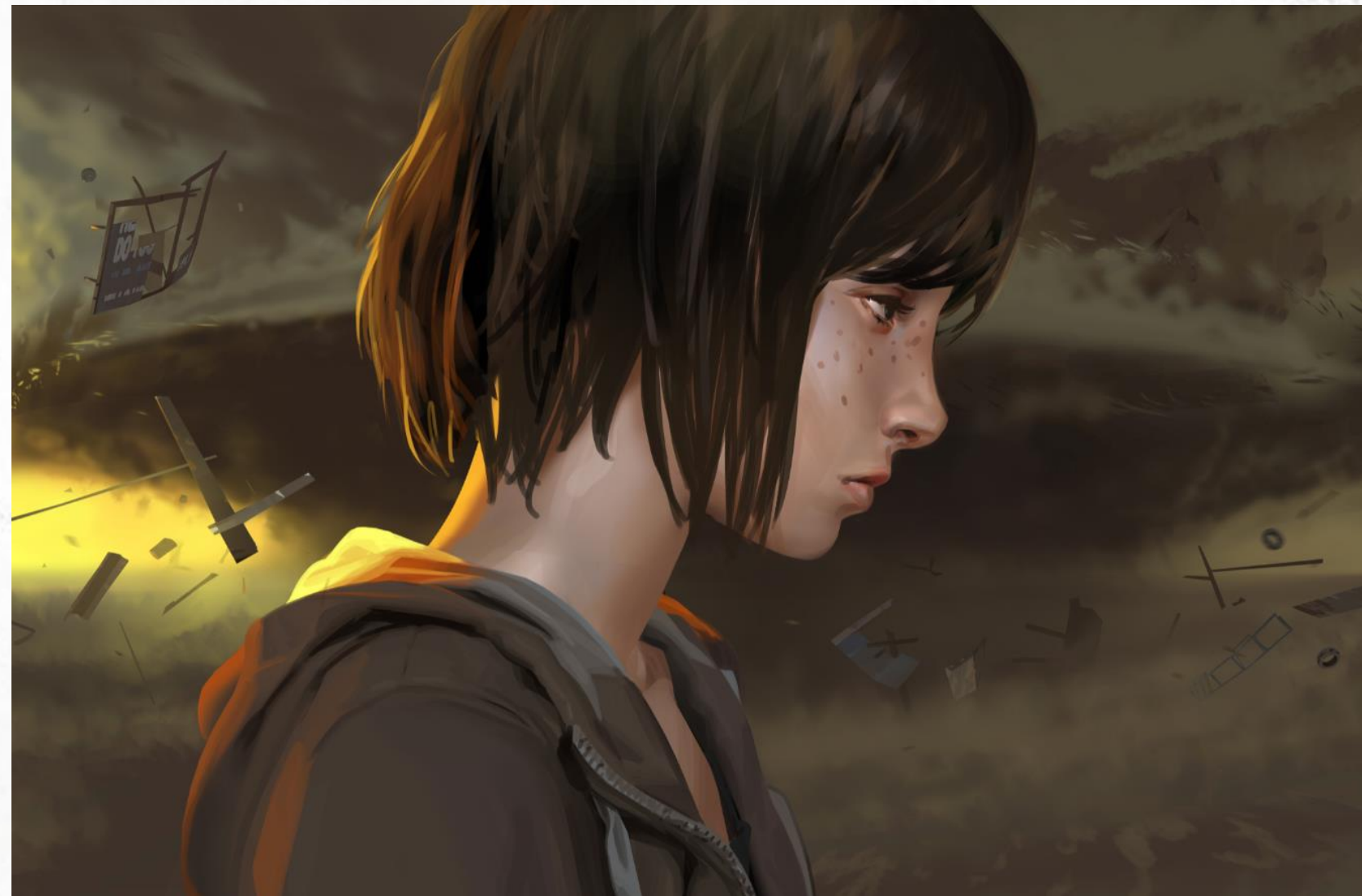


Licensed Tracks as Score



Track:
The Sense of Me by Mud Flow

- Original song
- Not edited



Dark
Room

Radio
Speech

Message
Reception

Nathan
Message

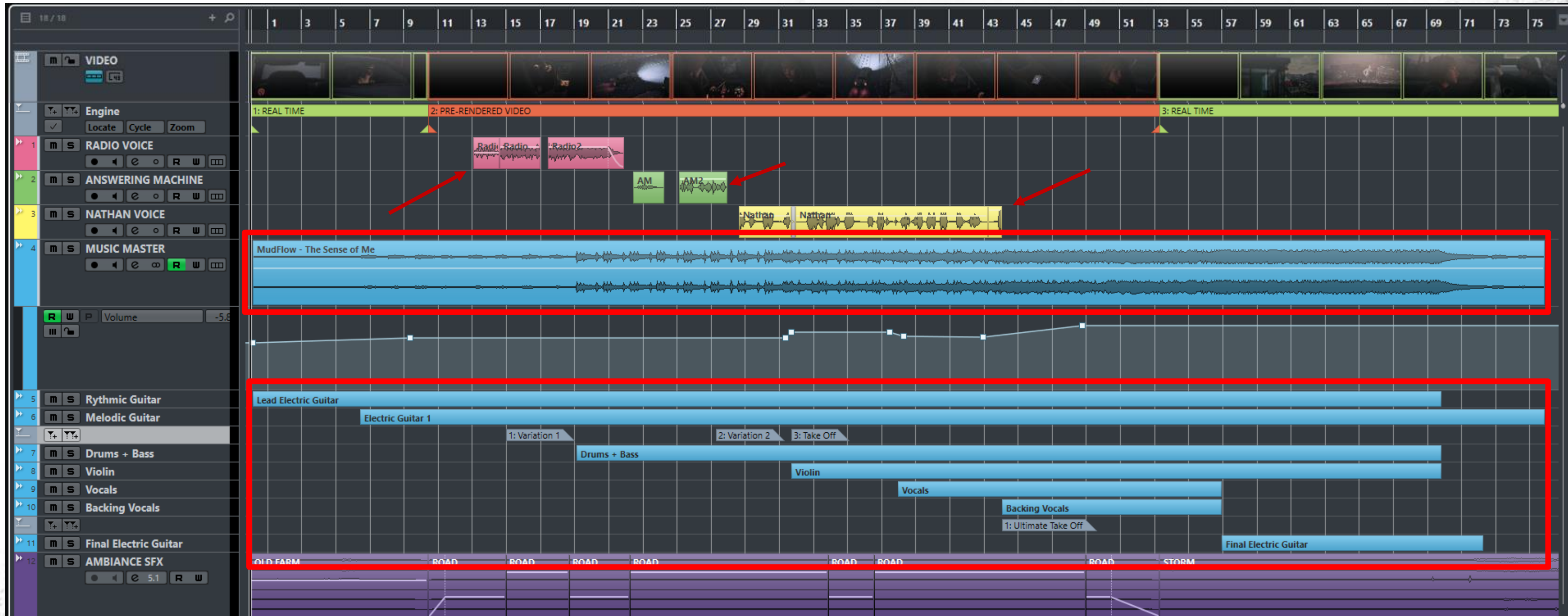
Nathan
"Sorry"

Max
Sadness

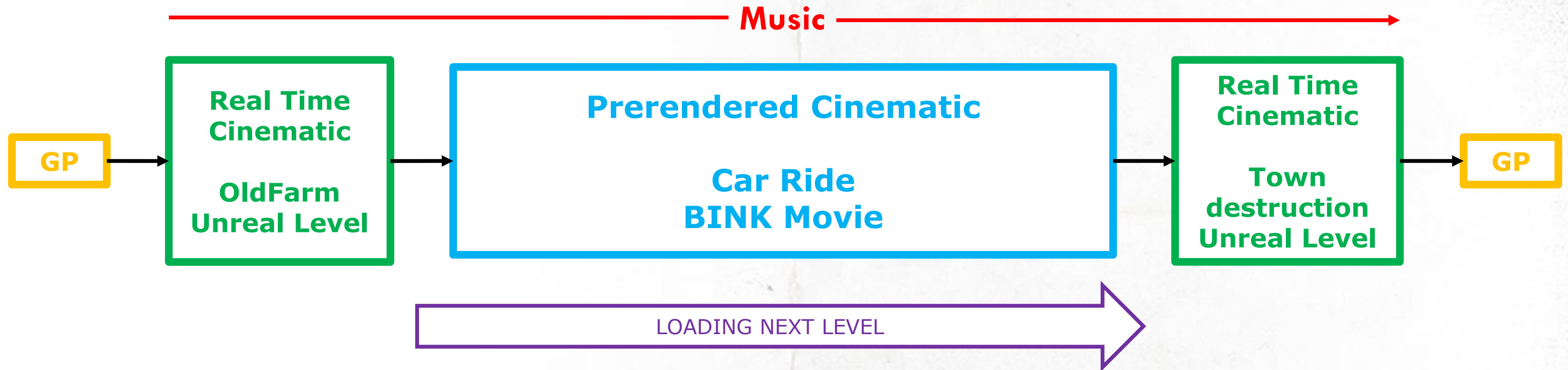
Town
Destruction

Car
Exit

Back
to GP



Licensed Tracks as Score: Seamless transition



- No loading screen
- Perfect synchronization

Licensed Tracks as Score: Other Examples



Rachel discovery EP2

Track: ***Mountains*** by **Message to Bears**



Ending EP3

Track: ***Kids will be Skeletons*** by **Mogwai**



Ending EP1 and Ending EP5

Track: ***Obstacles*** by **Syd matters**



Ending EP5

Track: ***Spanish Sahara*** by **Foals**

Licensed Tracks as Score (with layers)



➤ The Awesome Adventures of Captain Spirit

- Track separated in layers
- Different process
- More interactivity
- Respect the work of the artist

Track:

***Death with Dignity* by Sufjan Stevens**

Licensed Tracks as Score (with layers)



- The Awesome Adventures of Captain Spirit



- Chris Eriksen

Licensed Tracks as Score (with layers)

Part 1/3 Introduction



Part 2/3 Zen Sequence



Life is Strange 2



Part 3/3 The Treasure



- Beautiful soundtrack
- Insight on Chris' story
- Reward the player

Our characters interact with the music



Track:
Crosses by José González



➤ **Max Caulfield**

Our characters interact with the music



Our characters interact with the music



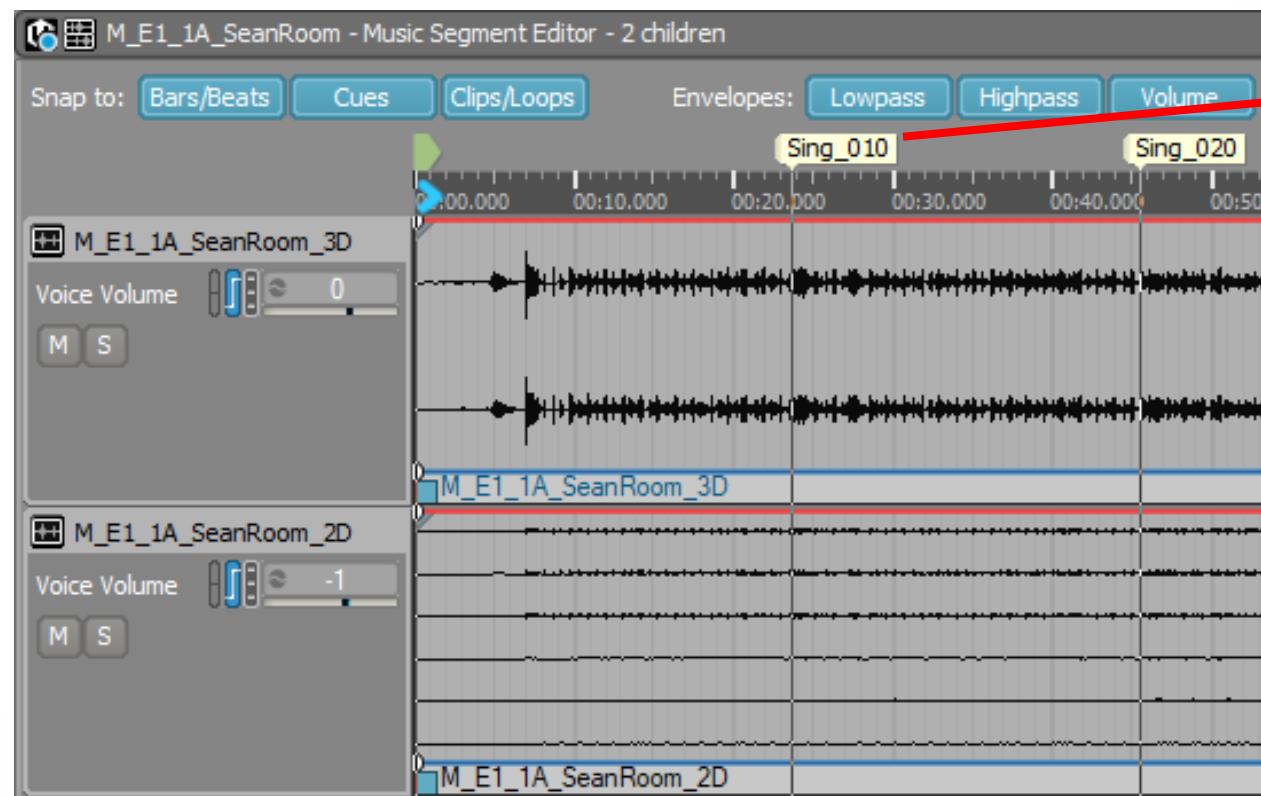
Track:
On a Flip of a Coin by The Streets



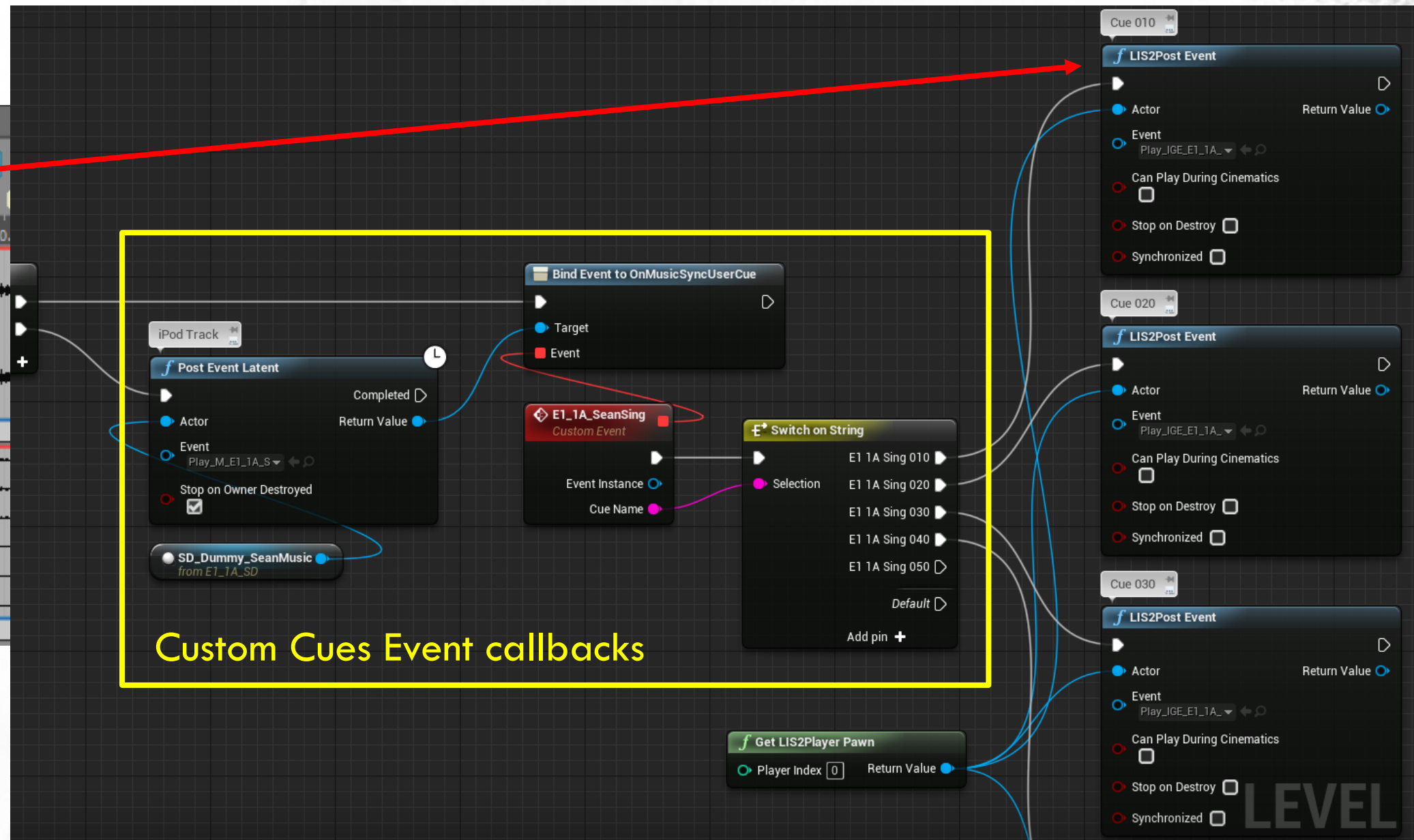
➤ Sean Diaz

Our characters interact with the music

➤ Wwise using Music Custom Cue

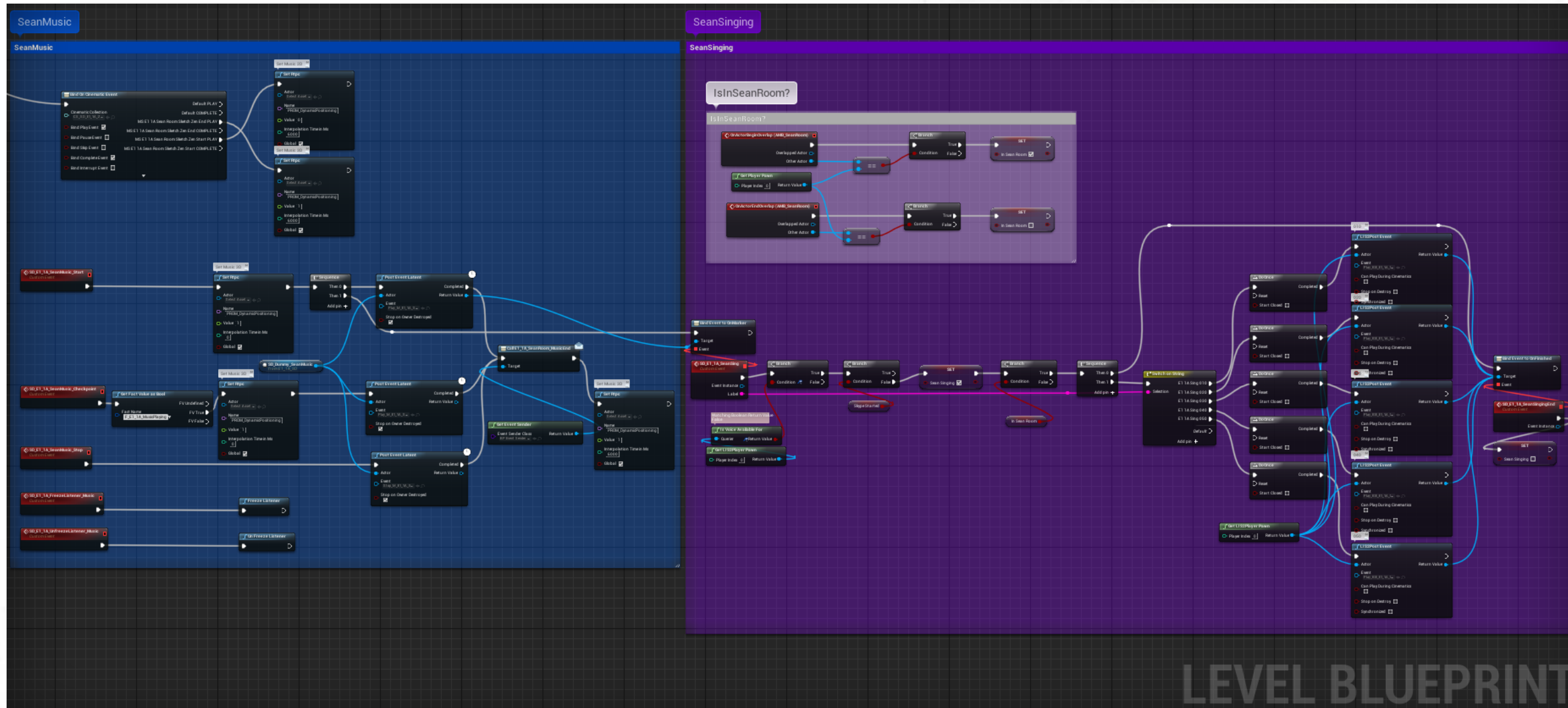


➤ Unreal blueprint behavior



Our characters interact with the music

➤ Global scripting



Our characters interact with the music

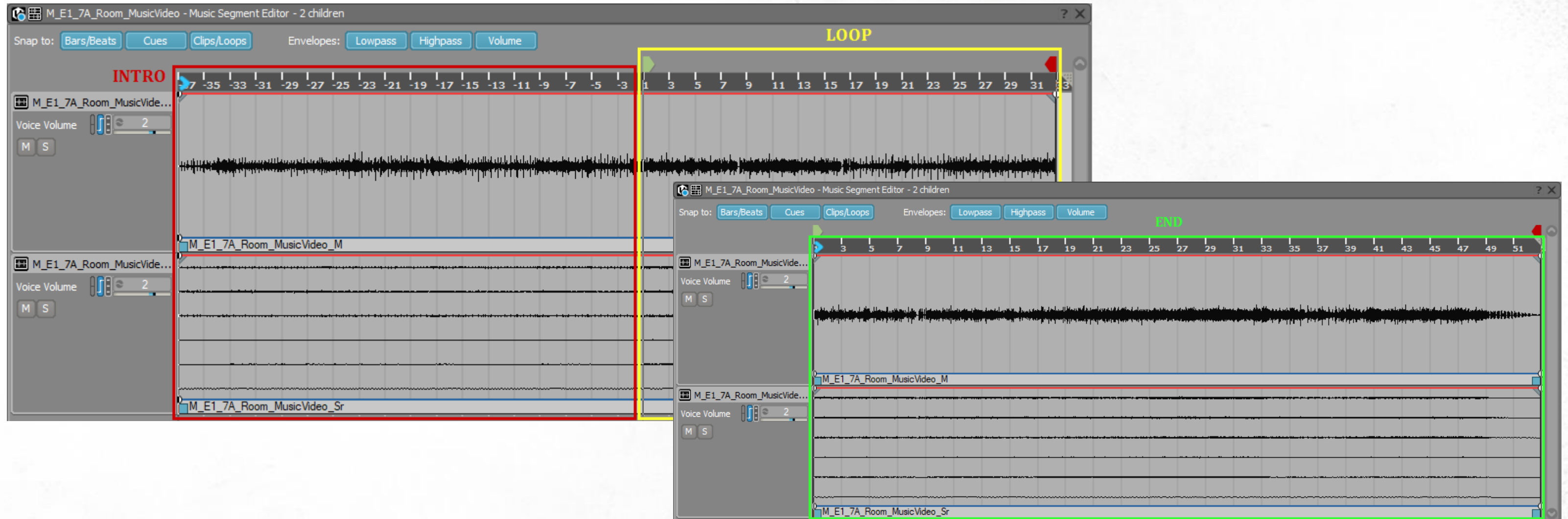


Track:
Banquet by Bloc Party



➤ Daniel and Sean Diaz

Our characters interact with the music



The artists behind the licensed tracks

- alt-J
- Amanda Palmer
- Angus and Julia Stone
- Bat for Lashes
- Bloc Party
- Breton
- Bright Eyes
- First Aid Kit
- Foals
- José González
- Local Natives
- Message to Bears
- Mogwai
- Mt. Wolf
- Mud Flow
- Phoenix
- Rone
- Sparklehorse / PJ Harvey
- Sufjan Stevens
- Syd matters
- The Streets
- Whitney

Example of Process:

1. Listen to music (a lot...)
2. Choose the title
3. Test on the scene
4. Check the price
5. Approval and Contract

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- Whitney

Example of Process:

1. Listen to music (a lot...) *(no time for that)*
2. Choose the title *(nobody agrees)*
3. Test on the scene *(it doesn't work)*
4. Check the price *(too expensive)*
5. Approval and Contract *(artist says no)*

Conclusion

Advice:

- **The main one: Don't use too much music!**
- **The little ones:**
 - Do not create a jukebox
 - Think of the music as part of the whole game
 - Don't ask too many people for feedback
 - Keep coherence by having one person in charge
 - Always have a plan B



Concept Arts by:

- Edouard Caplain
- Florent Auguy
- Gary Jamroz-Palma
- Alysianne Bui
- Michel Koch

Conclusion

Thank You!



Contacts

Raoul Barbet, Creative Director & Music Supervisor

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Sébastien Gaillard, Audio Director

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Jonathan Morali, Incredible Composer

<http://www.jonathanmorali.com/>

<https://soundcloud.com/jonathanmorali>

Feel For Music, London, Licensed Tracks

Ben Sumner & Glenn Herweijer

<https://feelformusic.com/>

Audionetwork, Global Music Company

Jean-Charles Kaczmarek

<https://www.audionetwork.com/>

