

IOL 8: ITERATION

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Aim

This week my goal was to iterate on the sound design for my project, using both instruments and samples from the BBC Sound effect library to create a soundtrack which ties both halves of the piece together.

Context

There were two main musical influences for this piece: *The Son of the White Mare* soundtrack, and songs by Mitski which incorporated a change in energy from slow to more loud and volatile ('Francis Forever', 'Townie', 'Your Best American Girl').

Son of the White Mare tells a Hungarian folk tale, while the soundtrack is experimental and modern for its time. It mainly uses proto-synth sounds and is very minimal, so it creates harmony between the present and the ancient story being told. This dichotomy is similar to the divide between modernity and the medieval within my project.

The Mitski songs I am interested in here contain rupture, and cross between wrath and peace. The change in tempo is also similar to the change between subtle and dynamic movement in my piece. Moreover, these songs are more moody and sentimental, and this project also aims to elevate the moodiness of a youthful main character.

METHOD

- To have a starting point I looked at the key of the songs I was interested in and the main chords used → Key of D, Main Chords: F#m, D, Bm, G, A
- I then went to BBC sound effect library and collected the following sounds from the Machines and Electronics Category:
 - Sewing Machines, Two Key Punches, Telephone being put down noise, Telex Machine, Radio switching channels, Static, Electric Signals, Office photocopy machine
- I also tried different online tools with different instrument and synth options
 - DotPiano had limited options for sound, and you couldn't play chords
 - MidiCity had lots of options but was hard to record and mainly relied on piano knowledge (I don't know how to play the piano)
 - SkyMusic Heroku App - simple interface and lots of different instruments, but couldn't play multiple notes or sustain notes well
- → [ChordPlayer](#): Can set key, tempo and style. It was mainly just picking and arranging chords, so it does most of the work for me. This alleviates the stress of having limited musical skill level and having too many options. This also meant it had some limitations since it was so simplistic, like with making gradual changes to rhythm, but its limitations were easy to work around.

METHOD CONT'D.

- Played around in ChordPlayer with instrument and style before choosing to use a bass guitar because it wasn't too overpowering.
 - Process mainly involved listening to a random progression of the main chords I wanted to use, and editing it over and over again until I was happy with it
 - I wrote down on paper parts I liked and would adjust it accordingly
 - I also noted how many beats were in each of my scenes so I could get an idea of when to have the music change tempo
 - Changing tempo in steps - a bit like tweening
- Once I was satisfied, I exported it and began to work in Audacity. I also tried a few other instruments, and exported the 'wurliser' version of the progression because it had an interesting sound.
- I uploaded all my other sounds into audacity and tried to make a rhythm from these samples
- First I tried to make one from the sound of putting down a phone, but I wasn't satisfied with it. Then I found the radio switching channels was already basically on a 4/4 beat, so I just used a clip from that and repeated it over and over throughout.

METHOD CONT'D.

- I then tried incorporating the static a few times, but I wasn't satisfied with it. I tried changing the pitch and using different parts of it, but since it didn't have a melody or rhythm I thought using a different sound on top would help
- At this point I started playing my visuals in a miniplayer whilst editing on audacity because it has no viewport
- One of the computer sounds had some progression of sounds to it that I thought could be used to make the transition from the first part of the video to the second more impactful and interesting → I tried different pitches, tempos and portions for it but it sounded too automated to be used
- I then tried to add a beat over the static with a part of the whirring of an office machine → I felt it was interesting but not working well with the song and visuals
- I realised I needed to use a software that would allow me to see the video timeline along with multiple audio tracks → HitFilm Express (Free and takes up less space than Adobe)
- I added in the bass, radio rhythm and static again, then started iterating with syncing different samples with the visuals. At first I made a noise sync with every jump and crunch, then I took some away and moved some around but I wasn't totally satisfied.

- The noise in the second half didn't feel like it was going anywhere after the crescendo, so I added the Wurliser on a whim and played with different parts of it.
→ Similar effect to *Son of A White Mare*, kept iterating until it started to come together
- I reused the sample from the office machine as the frog's croak and it felt complete.
- Sound Documentation: <https://youtu.be/N0yiCqdZHy8>

RESULT & REFLECTION

Final Video: <https://youtu.be/w89Jc1k0VA8>

Overall, I am quite happy with the sound track I made, especially since I have limited experience in this area. I think the addition of the synth was important because it cuts through the other noise, and feels a bit dreamy. Its kind of comedic to elevate the emotions of the teenage character in this way, but it also gives voice to someone often dismissed as trivial. The movement and sound shift to a very subjective depiction of the world because it is meant to reflect her world, which is imbued and defined by her emotions. I feel like this could have more impact if the character's voice was heard, so maybe this sequence would occur in the second half or third act of a larger piece, after some more conversation or motivation of the character is revealed. On a more technical note, I feel like the volumes could be mixed a bit better, since I am unsure if it feels consistent across multiple volume levels.