

Written by Amanda Dyar  
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The sounds of award-winning composer Jesper Kyd (who's most well known around the world for his contributions to mega game franchises HITMAN and ASSASSIN'S CREED), return this August alongside DARKSIDERS II. FANGORIA spoke to Kyd on how he began composing in the video game industry, his inspirations on DARKSIDERS II and his involvement with director Cameron Romero, son of the legendary George A. Romero.

**FANGORIA:** How did you end up working on video game soundtracks as your primary career path?

**JESPER KYD:** I listened to a lot of music growing up. The first album I remember really getting into was THEMES from Vangelis, as well as the early albums from Jean Michel Jarre such as OXYGEN, RENDEVOUZ, MAGNETIC FIELDS and ZOOLook. My parents would play these CDs, and I would be fascinated. Then, I was given a Commodore 64 for Christmas, and friends of mine would bring over these games that had all this awesome chip music. The C64 had an analog music chip, and it was the first time I heard this type of music style. To me, it sounded like Jarre and Vangelis done with computers, and I spent hours every day listening to these awesome compositions. So, that kind of instrumental music was fascinating to me, but I had no music program to utilize the awesome analog power (for its time) of the C64 analog SID chip. Once I became part of the underground demo scene, I was able to get a hold of a music program called Sound Monitor, which was unavailable in retail. This program was used by a lot of demo scene musicians, and that's when I started writing music every day.

At this time, I was 14 years old, and after writing around 100 tunes, I joined my first demo group Zargon and started going to demo parties. Back then, we called them copy parties since you would go and copy demos, games, etc. and, basically, get inspired from all the new software you would take home. Copy parties were often closed down by the police, and so, these parties were re-named demo parties. There was more focus on the demo competitions where people go and program demos and submit those for the official demo party competition. That's

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basically how I spent a lot of my teenage years, making music for demos and going to demo parties.

When I was 18, we started working on games; a natural transition from making demos. One of our first games was SUBTERANIA, which was sold to Sega, and that's when we decided to go to the US to make more games. However, after the company folded (since we weren't paid by the publisher), my friends left the US and went back home to Denmark where they started IOI, while I stayed in the US to pursue a career as a freelance composer. IOI created the HITMAN series which I scored, followed by composing the music for Ubisoft's ASSASSIN'S CREED series, and now, I'm writing music for television and films as well as upcoming video game projects.



**FANG:** THQ's highly anticipated sequel DARKSIDERS II is an emotional tale of the horseman of the Apocalypse Death attempting to clear his brother War of charges of which he's been wrongfully accused. How were you able to capture all of the various emotions and tones of the game's storyline into your score?

**KYD:** Vigil Games wanted to capture a different mood in each of the six realms in the score, so I worked on combining different instrumentations and music styles into each realm. The Makers area is Celtic-inspired with lots of acoustic instruments such as bag pipes, dobro guitars, Irish vocals and so on. The Death Plains area is very different, though it's just as atmospheric as The Makers realm. The challenge for The Death Plains was to create something dark, atmospheric and melodic—no atonal, claustrophobic or aleatoric music. Vigil were looking for a new and unique sound. I used a lot of analog synths and vintage electronics for this realm such as organs, spring reverbs, tape echos, analog delays mixed with modern effects and recording techniques.

**FANG:** Being an avid gamer yourself, how excited were you to receive the task of creating a soundtrack to this epic sequel?

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**KYD:** It's a great match with my style, and getting back into writing fantasy music was a thrill. The serious undertones and the strong mysticism in the game was something I could really sink my teeth into. Writing music for the afterlife, from Heaven to Hell, became quite a journey and Vigil and THQ really supported what I was looking to achieve with the score.

**FANG:** Where did you draw inspiration when creating the DARKSIDERS II soundtrack? Did you happen to play the original DARKSIDERS before coming into this project, and were you able to play DARKSIDERS II before or during the time you was creating the score?

**KYD:** Yes, I have played the original DARKSIDERS, as well as DARKSIDERS II. In my research, I was careful not to study any religious texts about the subject matter. I didn't want to come from a certain religious angle and DARKSIDERS is very much its own world, even though it's inspired by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Ultimately, the score became more of a personal journey, and the music is inspired by the different realms of the afterlife.

**FANG:** Having already played the game, what are your thoughts on DARKSIDERS II, and what can fans of the series look forward to in the completed version of the game?

**KYD:** I can say that I really have enjoyed what I have played so far, and the inspired setting they created is deeply atmospheric in the game. The art direction is simply stunning.

**FANG:** In addition to DARKSIDERS II, you've also composed music and soundtracks for other games such as the HITMAN series, the ASSASSIN'S CREED series, and BORDERLANDS. I'm assuming your passion for gaming led you to many of these projects, but as a gamer, how does it feel to play through the games you've composed, and how does it feel to receive such high recognition for your hard work?

**KYD:** It feels great. The first time I played BORDERLANDS, I was really surprised and amazed at how they were using my music. ASSASSIN'S CREED II was also definitely a high point. I worked on that project for such a long time; we put so much work and time into the implementation of the score in the game. It was a special and unique period, and the fans really embraced the music. It's interesting and rewarding to see how many of the overall music style

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ideas I created for this score have now become part of the ASSASSIN'S CREED franchise.

**FANG:** THE RESISTANCE—a SyFy television series from Sam Raimi's Ghost House Pictures and Starz Media—was also composed by you. How did you land this gig, and what was your most memorable moment from working on the show?

**KYD:** It was a great experience. I was at the set when they were shooting parts of this show and it's really amazing to watch Adrian [Picardi] and Eric [Ro] work. They know exactly what they want, and the impressive, chaotic camera style in the episodes were so well thought out and planned.

**FANG:** You're currently working on an upcoming television series METAL HURLANT CHRONICLES known in the US as HEAVY METAL. Can you tell us a bit about the show and your contributions?

**KYD:** Each episode is a different story. I am almost done with music for the first season and it's interesting how each episode really has something to say. It reminds me of THE TWILIGHT ZONE in a sense that there are glimpses into a lot of "what ifs?" The cast is brilliant; I especially enjoyed working on the Pledge of Anya episode, which features Rutger Hauer (BLADE RUNNER). The most amazing part however, is that all the episodes are really good. It's hardcore sci-fi, the kind that is not seen much anymore, since short attention span has simplified this genre so much.

**FANG:** You also composed the soundtrack for STAUNTON HILL, the 2009 debut film by director Cameron Romero that stars TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE's Kathy Lamkin. What would you say are the primary differences, as a composer, when creating scores for films, television series and video games, and which do you prefer most?

**KYD:** The primary difference is that you work closely with a director. You are trying to give the score its own unique sound, and you are also working on writing what the director will like. Writing for movies requires a completely different mindset since you need to match the music to everything that happens on screen at any given moment. Games scores are often written more like movie scores such as BLADE RUNNER, in a sense that it's more about writing appropriate themes that are then threaded throughout the experience. Therefore games often

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end up using a lot more melodic composition and multiple themes, whereas film scores often repeat and vary the same theme many times. When playing a game for 30 hours, you don't want to hear the same theme over and over, but in a two hour movie it works great.

**FANG:** You will also be composing the soundtrack for Cameron Romero's upcoming film RADICAL. What is your working relationship like with Romero?

**KYD:** I love working with Cameron, and he is a good friend of mine. We really have the same taste in so many things, especially horror. I think he did a great job with STAUNTON HILL.

*For more information on Jesper Kyd, visit his [official site](#).*

*DARKSIDERS II is out August 14 on PS3, Xbox 360. For more information, head right [here](#).*