

Written by Amanda Dyar
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Sam Hulick is a BAFTA award-nominated and multiple award-winning composer best known for composing the signature music for BioWare's epic sci-fi franchise MASS EFFECT, and the dramatic score for Tripwire Interactive's groundbreaking RED ORCHESTRA 2: HEROES OF STALINGRAD. FANGORIA recently set down with Hulick to discuss the MASS EFFECT series, which just released its highly anticipated MASS EFFECT 3: EARTH DLC on July 17th.

FANGORIA: Where do you draw your inspirations when creating music for the MASS EFFECT series, and which of the numerous genres in which you have worked would you say is your favorite?

SAM HULICK: It's really easy to draw inspiration from all the content that BioWare has, in order to immerse myself in the MASS EFFECT universe. Concept art, story, and musical direction (Vangelis, Tangerine Dream, Jerry Goldsmith) all serve as creative fuel to the music that I write to enhance the emotional experience. I've worked in a wide range of styles within the MASS EFFECT series, from purely synth to traditional orchestra. I don't think I have a preference either way, though I will say that I really enjoyed writing all these heartfelt piano-based pieces in MASS EFFECT. Having action music and underscore is important, but creating deeply emotional pieces that connect with people at their core, that's something special.

BioGamer Girl: Composer Sam Hulick on the "MASS EFFECT" series

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FANG: The MASS EFFECT series has obviously been one of the most important projects you've been a part of in your career. As a composer who has worked on nearly every game in the series, when did you learn about MASS EFFECT 3: EXTENDED CUT and what was going through your mind when you realized your work on the series was not yet completed?

HULICK: Right after I finished up on MASS EFFECT 3 in January, there was talk of having me work on future DLCs, though it was nothing specific at the time. Obviously, the Extended Cut had not been conceived at that point. Later on, I believe around late March, I was made aware of the Extended Cut being developed, and BioWare wanted to bring me on to extend a couple tracks as well as write new material. I was really excited to come back and work on something as emotionally charged as the Extended Cut! There was some really interesting musical direction provided, such as asking me to create a piece that feels very similar to the galaxy map tune. That was one of my favorites.



FANG: You've created 15 minutes of original tracks for MASS EFFECT: EXTENDED CUT in addition to numerous themes you composed for the other three games in the trilogy. What were the overall tones you were trying to set for the various endings in the new content and how were you able to capture these intense emotions in your music?

HULICK: There are a lot of emotions packed into the different ending epilogue pieces, as well as a scene I'll refer to as the "memorial wall," just to avoid any spoilers. The three epilogue pieces each have their own moods to them ("Destroy" being peaceful, majestic, militaristic; "Control" being dark and slightly sinister; "Synthesis" being wondrous, exciting, intriguing). The piece that plays during the memorial wall scene, as well as the scene afterwards, serves as the official wrap-up to the trilogy, and has a bittersweet, but hopeful, tone. Injecting powerful emotion into music is a process that's difficult to put into words. It's not a formulaic or structured process for me; it's rather organic and amorphous. When I set out to write these pieces, I put

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together melodies and chord progressions iteratively, until the feedback I get from what I've recorded in real time evokes the right emotions in me. So, I use myself as a gauging tool to judge whether I've got the right emotions embedded into the music I'm writing.

FANG: Having done extensive work on the MASS EFFECT series, it would be safe to assume you've had a chance to play the trilogy and MASS EFFECT: EXTENDED CUT. What do you believe will be the most important thing these new endings will add to the legacy of the trilogy? How will your music further impact and justify these epilogues, and do you believe fans will be pleased with the finalized version of the MASS EFFECT: EXTENDED CUT?

HULICK: I have played through it all, though it took me a while to find the time! I think the Extended Cut will provide answers to a lot of questions people had about the previous ending: what happens to Shepard's crew, what happens to all the various alien races who are fighting the Reapers, what are the consequences of Shepard's decision in the long term. The music has always served as a powerful emotional backdrop to the story-telling throughout the MASS EFFECT trilogy, and continues to do so as it supports the epilogues and provides a subtle power to each character's monologue as they describe future events after "The Decision." I think most fans will be happy with the Extended Cut, or at the very least, appreciate the effort that BioWare has put into creating it.

FANG: In addition to the MASS EFFECT series, you've also done plenty of other work in the gaming industry including the first-person shooter RED ORCHESTRA 2: HEROES OF STALINGRAD and the dungeon-crawler RPG BALDUR'S GATE: ENHANCED EDITION, so you obviously stay busy. What other projects do you have coming up that you can tell us about?

HULICK: I recently scored a short film which will be airing on a German TV station this summer. I've also been commissioned to write a main theme for an indie game in the fantasy genre. BALDUR'S GATE is still keeping me busy, and I've got a few irons in the fire, but nothing I can really talk about at this point.

You can learn more by visiting the official [Sam Hulick](#) and [MASS EFFECT](#) websites.