

VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS
- **For Educational Use Only** -

Clockwork
from Castlevania III

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3

Lead 1

Lead 2

Bass

G_m

$C^\#dim$

$D7^{b9}$

(A)

(B)

i

vii°/V

V^{7b9}

(A) - The NES only had three channels through which to play definite pitch. So, a neat-workaround is found in this measure: in order to let the high G ring out in Lead 1, the composer(s) used descending broken 10ths to give the illusion of two voices in Lead 2.

(B) - This measure of 7/8 truncates the normal 4/4 pulse by one 8th note, allowing for a 3+3+4+4 grouping of 16th notes. The dotted 8th note creates a nice "catch", with the following "release" catapulting the listener into the next section.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Lead 1, Lead 2, and Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two measures, 5 and 6. Above the staves, chords are indicated: Gm, A°, D7, Gm, A∅, and D7. A boxed letter 'B' is placed above measure 5. Red brackets labeled (A) and (B) highlight specific notes in the Lead 1 and Lead 2 parts. Below the Bass staff, Roman numerals are provided: i, ii°, V⁷, i, ii°, V⁷.

(A) - Syncopating these notes prepares for the implied pedal point employed in the following measure.

(B) - These last four notes are a variation of the bass motif in measure 6. The motif is diminished (duration halved), sequenced (starts on C, not A), and the last note descends by step rather than skip.

7

Lead 1

Lead 2

Bass

Gm *A°* *Gm* *A∅* *C#°7* *D_{sus}⁴* *D*

8

i *ii°* *i* *ii∅* *vii°⁷/V* *V₄* *V*

(A) - The notes in red indicate the implied pedal point. Again, the broken nature of the melody creates the illusion of two voices, allowing this "bottom" voice to raise smoothly to E natural and fill out the harmony more than the NES usually allows.

Same

Musical score for three parts: Lead 1, Lead 2, and Bass. The score is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. Lead 1 starts at measure 9 with a melodic line of eighth notes, including a trill marked '10'. Lead 2 is mostly silent, with some notes in measures 10 and 11. Bass provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with quarter notes.

Same

The section repeats, but transposes the Leads up an octave.

11

Lead 1

Lead 2

Bass

C_m $C^{\#dim7}$ D_{sus4} D

12

iv $vii^{\circ7}/V$ V_4^5 V

Detailed description: This musical score consists of three staves: Lead 1 (treble clef), Lead 2 (treble clef), and Bass (bass clef). The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). Measure 11 (labeled '11') contains the first part of the piece. Measure 12 (labeled '12') is the start of a new section. The chord symbols above the staves are Cm, C#dim7, Dsus4, and D. The figured bass symbols below the staves are iv, vii°7/V, V4, and V. The bass line in measure 12 starts with a sharp sign (F#) on the first staff, indicating a key change to one flat (Bb).

The image shows a musical score for three staves: Lead 1, Lead 2, and Bass. The key signature is G minor (one flat). A box labeled 'C' is in the top left. Above the first staff, 'Gm/Eb' is written above measure 13, and 'D11' is written above measure 14. Below the staves, 'bVI7' is written under measure 13, and 'V11' is written under measure 14. Measure numbers 13 and 14 are also written above the first staff. Red notes are used in measures 13 and 14, and blue notes are used in measure 14. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note pattern.

This section switches to highly imitative counterpoint, using several motifs derived from the previous section's bass part. The repetition of these motifs makes up almost the entirety of the C section's melody, with some free counterpoint flourishes filling in the gaps.

RED NOTES: Motif #1, derived from the rising scalar passage in the Bass in mm. 11-12. This motif is diminished (duration halved).

BLUE NOTES: Motif #2, an inexact retrograde inversion (pitches played backwards) with retrograde rhythmic inversion (the rhythm is played backwards) of the Bass motif from mm. 1 of the track. I say "inexact" because the inversion is not 1:1 - the intervallic steps and leaps are different (even in this section, between Lead #1 and Lead #2) and the reverse rhythm is, well, not an *exact* replica of the original.

EXTENDED HARMONIES?

- While the motifs imitate away in the Leads, the Bass creates an interesting sound in mm. 13. By plodding away at an Eb, the sound of an Ebmaj7 chord is heard, which creates a nice tonal contrast in this section from the very "classical minor key" sound of the first two sections.

- In mm.14, Motif #2 hammers away at a vamp between G and F#. When placed over the bass pedal of D, this creates a dissonant tension between the "suspended fourth" of D7 (G) and the third of the chord (F#). In this case, we get the sonority of a D11. With the melodic motion, it gives the impression of a sus4 chord continually suspending and unsuspending itself, which I think is a very cool effect (and is what makes this track sound more unique than it otherwise would).

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Lead 1, Lead 2, and Bass. The score is divided into two measures, 15 and 16. Measure 15 is marked with the chord Gm/Eb . Measure 16 is marked with $D7_{sus^4}$ and $D7^{b9}$. Below the staves, the chords bVI^7 , $V^{\frac{7}{4}}$, and V^{7b9} are indicated. In measure 16, a red bracket labeled (A) highlights a dotted note in the Lead 2 staff.

(A) - This dotted note gives a "freeze-frame" effect, halting the rhythm slightly for added tension/interest. I wonder if the composer(s) tried making this measure 7/8 as well...?

Gm/E \flat

D $^{\#11}$

17

Lead 1

Lead 2

Bass

\flat VI 7

V 11

19 $C7^{b9}$ D_{sus}^4 D

Lead 1

Lead 2 (A)

Bass

$\flat VII^{7b9}$ V_4^5 V

The C natural in the bass in mm. 19 is an interesting choice. The resultant chord being voiced is a C7b9, but in terms of harmonic functionality that doesn't really mean anything given the key we're in. Of more interest is that cross relation formed between the C natural in the bass and the C# in the top voice. Both voices lead up step-wise to D, giving the impression of a simultaneous subtonic and leading tone resolution.

(A) - The way the 16ths are grouped here (indicated by the slurs) creates a vaguely cross-rhythmic effect of 4:3 against the bass-line.

The musical score consists of three staves: Lead 1, Lead 2, and Bass. Above the staves, the following chord symbols are indicated: Gm , $F\#o7/G$, Gm , $F\#o7/G$, and $D7b9$. Below the staves, the following figured bass symbols are indicated: i , vii^{o7} , i , vii^{o7} , and V^{7b9} . The score includes a 'D' chord diagram above the first staff and measure numbers 21, 22, 23, and 24.

The D section acts as a bridge back to the beginning of the track:

- The meter changes to 3/4, most likely to speed the music along in anticipation of the loop.
- The bass plods along a pedal point of G, rooting the listener in the tonic key.
- The Leads return to the highly agitated style of the A and B sections, further easing the listener back into the loop to the beginning of the track.
- Nothing less than a V - i cadence leads us back to the beginning, although the cadence is imperfect and not much different in weight from the other V - i cadences found throughout the track. Neither the top or bottom voice leading give anything remotely like the impression of a perfect cadence. This could be seen as a structural defect of the composition, but in the context of the track being part of a video game soundtrack, I think it's intentional: if the music doesn't resolve *too* decisively, it is easier to loop indefinitely.