

VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS
- For Educational Use Only -

Those Who Fight Further
(Boss Battle)
from Final Fantasy VII

Composed by Nobuo Uematsu
Transcription/Analysis by Seventh Sam
www.seventhsam.com

A1 ♩ = 160

② b5 of scale = blues note

Electric Guitar

Toms

Drumset

Electric Bass

this note is *not* part of blues minor scale, therefore serves as passing tone at end of 2-bar phrase

①

melodic resolution to tonic via leading tone (G#)

(1) - The repeat/loop point starts at the beginning of third measure due to how the track is structured. The "last" two measures of the track (mm. 69-70) contain nearly the same drum material and an identical bass-line (see above in RED). This essentially means that the "end" of the track sounds like the "beginning". This keeps the music looping seamlessly and the energy/drive constant throughout the battle scene.

(2) - The first 8 measures of the A section (marked here as A1) are best thought of as a vamp (oscillation) every 4 bars between riffing on the A Minor Blues scale and the C Minor Blues scale:

- The melody is derived completely from the respective scales, making use of the b5 of the scale (the blues note, in this context) to create the distinctive sound.
- The bass line resolves via a melodic figure (V-bVII-VII-I) that many listeners will instantly recognize as idiomatic of the blues genre. It has that lovely "suave" sound to it.

The sound is unmistakably "cool", "urban", "smoky", etc. What it is *not* is fantastical, orchestral, or soaring. This is very much Uematsu's intent: grounding the music in a vaguely blue-sy aesthetic fits right in with the grungy sci-fi setting of Final Fantasy VII.

5

b5 of scale = blues note

3

El. Guit.

Electric guitar staff in bass clef. It features a series of eighth-note patterns across four measures. The notes are primarily eighth notes and quarter notes, with a blue-shaded flat fifth (b5) note in the second measure of the second and fourth measures, labeled as the 'blues note'.

Org.

Organ staff in treble clef. It shows sustained notes (represented by horizontal lines) in the first three measures. In the fourth measure, there is a glissando (gliss.) indicated by a wavy line.

Toms

Toms staff with a drum clef. It shows rhythmic patterns in the second and fourth measures, including eighth and quarter notes.

D. Set

Drum set staff with a drum clef. It features 'x' marks representing cymbal hits in the first and third measures, and a quarter note in the fourth measure.

El. B.

Electric bass staff in bass clef. It shows a melodic line with quarter notes. The notes are highlighted in red, showing a resolution from a flat fifth to the tonic (B) via the leading tone (B).

melodic resolution to tonic via leading tone (B)

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Electric Guitar (El. Guit.) in bass clef, featuring a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff is for Organ (Org.) in treble clef, showing sustained chords with a 'b8' marking. The third staff is for Drums (D. Set) in alto clef, with 'x' marks indicating drum hits. The bottom staff is for Electric Bass (El. B.) in bass clef, with an '8' marking, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.

Cm

F

Cm

① F7

C Dorian: i

IV

i

bVI⁷

(1) - This is one of Uematsu's favorite cadences, the $bVI^7 - i$. In classical terms, this is akin to using a G^{+6} (German Augmented Sixth) chord in a *dominant* function as opposed to the usual *pre-dominant substitute* function. The result is sinister-sounding chromatic resolution that leaves the listener feeling somewhat *unresolved*. It makes perfect sense that Uematsu would use this here, then, as this leads straight into the thundering Bridge section that follows. Were he to lead into it with a $V7-i$, it might weaken the forward momentum of the music. When it comes to boss battle music, forward momentum is worth its weight in gold.

17 **Bridge 1**

El. Guit.

Org.

Arp.

Toms

D. Set

El. B.

Am

E7

C

G

F

C

A Minor:

i

V⁷

♭III

♭VII

♭VI

♭III

(1) - Thus far, all the timbral elements of the track have been analog (or electric analog), elements a listener would associate with a rock band playing a rock song. Then, out of nowhere, comes a soaring square wave arpeggio that injects a distinctly digital flavor into the music. Once again, Uematsu is drawing upon disparate genres/idioms (in this case, electronica) to reinforce the specific mood the game he's scoring calls for. We'll hear this with a vengeance in the C Section (starting on mm. 45) when a sawtooth lead takes center stage.

(2) - It's interesting to note that Uematsu - a self-taught aficionado of prog rock who found his niche in video game music - takes the time here to follow basic 4-part harmony voice leading "rules" (the guitar and organ in mm. 19-21 form a four part "chorus", albeit non-traditionally spaced due to the instrumentation). No parallel fifths/octaves, no hidden fifths/octaves, an abundance of contrary motion, proper/skillful resolution of suspensions, etc.

El. Guit.

chordal 7th, result of suspension

chordal b9, result of suspension

Org.

Arp.

Toms

D. Set

El. B.

Dm7	E7b9	Am
iv ⁷	V ^{7b9}	i

El. Guit. Org. Arp. Toms D. Set El. B.

8

The musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is for Electric Guitar (El. Guit.) in bass clef. The second staff is for Organ (Org.) in treble clef. The third staff is for Arpeggiator (Arp.) in treble clef. The fourth staff is for Toms in alto clef. The fifth staff is for Drum Set (D. Set) in alto clef. The sixth staff is for Electric Bass (El. B.) in bass clef. Below the staves is a guitar tablature line with a '8' at the beginning, indicating the fret number for the first note.

Am

E7

C

G

F

C

i

V⁷

bIII

bVII

bVI

bIII

Am

①

D

Am

Go

Am

D

Am

E7

Am

A Minor: i

IV

i

vii^o

i

IV

i

V⁷

i

IV chord (D major) is borrowed
from parallel Dorian

(1) - The bass hammers away at a rhythmic diminution (halving of note duration) of the blue-sy bass motif heard in the beginning of the track. In this way, Uematsu simultaneously introduces new material (the rapid-fire, classical style scalar melody in the rock organ) while retaining continuity in overall mood/feel.

B2

33

El. Guit.

Org.

D. Set

El. B.

(1) - The melody is doubled in thirds to add contrast and interest to the second 4-bars of the 8-bar B section. While this changes the harmony on a note-by-note basis, it doesn't change the underlying fundamentals of the harmonic motion (from tonic to pre-dominant to dominant and back again) Given that the bass and guitar remain statically fixed on hovering insistently around the tonic, this section is more about the *horizontal* motion rather than the *vertical* motion.

Bridge 2

37

El. Guit.

Org.

Arp.

Toms

D. Set

El. B.

sus2 of G

sus4 of G

8

① G Gsus2/sus4 G C G Gsus2/sus4 G7 C

C Major: V I V V⁷ I

(1) - An abrupt shift to the relative major (C Major) forms the basis for the second bridge section. These four measures offer a brief but bright change in tone (triumphant and upbeat). Why? If this is a boss battle, shouldn't this sound dire and dramatic? Yes, but if the *entirety* of the music is on one note (so to speak), the effect of the music is greatly diminished. By offering a contrasting tone in these measures, Uematsu is making the upcoming four measures and the subsequent C section that much more *distinguished*.

El. Guit.

Org.

Arp.

Toms

D. Set

El. B.

sus2 of A

sus4 of A

A A(sus2/sus4) A7 Dm A A(sus2/sus4) A7 B \flat ①

D Minor: V V⁷ i V V⁷ \flat VI

(1) - This is an interesting harmonic choice on Uematsu's part:

- In most cases, the cadence in mm. 43-44 would be \flat VI - V⁷, which would then resolve to the tonic in the following section.

This would, of course, create a very decisive and satisfying resolution.

- Uematsu essentially reverses that here, choosing instead to use V⁷ - \flat VI - i. The effect is that of a deceptive cadence that then suddenly "resolves" to the tonic anyhow. The mood this creates, to my ears, is a swelling of unresolved drama and serves to very effectively propel the music forward. It's very fitting that this cadence was used *here*, because the *longest* section of the track is what follows and it's imperative that the listener go into it *wanting more*.

45 **C1** **2**

El. Guit.

Org.

Lead

D. Set

El. B.

Dm

C

Dm

Gm

C

Dm

C

Dm

D Minor:

i

♭VII

i

iv

♭VII

i

♭VII

i

(1) - Uematsu - sly dog that he is - sneaks in the famous "battle motif" found in every battle theme of his throughout the series thus far. More than just fanservice, this is his way of establishing a "cross-game leitmotif" (similar to his victory fanfare, overture, or the chocobo theme). It serves as a musical way to help tie the entire *series* of games into a cohesive whole and make the experience of these stories that much more meaningful to the players, albeit in a very "meta" way. It's a nice touch, I think, and one that shows Uematsu thinks of his audience as more than just customers.

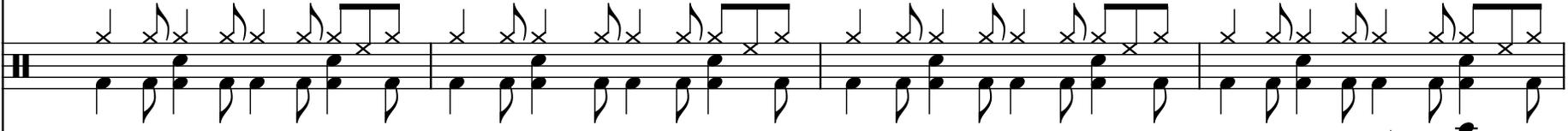
(2) - The guitar, bass, and drums combine to make the unmistakable rhythmic framework of none other than...an irish jig?!?!

(3) - And then, to top it off, a *saw lead* straight out of Blade Runner or an old-style techno track swoops in to take the lead... what *genre* is this?...

El. Guit. 

Org. 

Lead 

D. Set 

El. B. 

There's that blue-sy bass motif again....

① Am Dm Am Dm Am G Am G Am

A Minor: i iv i iv i \flat VII i \flat VII i

(1) - Throughout the C section, Uematsu continues the 4-bar vamp harmonic model. This time, it's a vamp between D minor and A minor, with some modal interchange for good measure (pun not intended).

Dm

Em Borrowed from
parallel Dorian

Dm

Gmadd4

Dm7 Borrowed from
parallel Dorian

G

Dm

D Minor:

i

ii

i

iv

i

IV

i

(1) - And, to top it all off, an orchestral string section enters to deepen the harmony and escalate the tension. So, let's review...of all the musical genres, styles, and idioms Uematsu has drawn upon to specifically craft this track in service of the game, we have:

- Blues riffs/licks in guitar and bass
- A rock organ that follows basic 4-part harmony voice leading and whips out functional scalar melodies
- Synth arpeggios and leads straight out of old-school electronica
- A 12/8 rhythm that blatantly dives into irish-jig territory
- An orchestral-sounding string section

That's a hell of a line-up! Bound only by the artistic needs of the story and experience at hand, Uematsu weaves a diverse and eclectic range of inspirations into a singularly unique and unforgettable track. It's iconic, it's well composed, it serves the game...and ultimately, it just sounds *fun*.

The musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is for Electric Guitar (El. Guit.) in bass clef, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern with fret markers (A) and a final triplet. The Organ (Org.) staff is in treble clef, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and a final triplet. The Lead staff is in treble clef, showing a melodic line with various intervals and a final triplet. The Strings (Str.) staff is in bass clef, providing harmonic support with chords and a final triplet. The Drum Set (D. Set) staff shows a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks for cymbals. The Electric Bass (El. B.) staff is in bass clef, playing a steady eighth-note line with a final triplet.

Am Bø Am Dmadd4 Am7 Borrowed from D parallel Dorian IV Am

A Minor: i ii^ø i iv i⁷ i i

61 **C3**

El. Guit.

Org.

Lead

Str.

D. Set

El. B.

①

Same

(1) - The section repeats with the strings transposed up an octave. Higher pitch = higher tension. This is setting us up for the final cadence that takes us to the loop.

El. Guit.

Org.

Lead

Str.

Toms

D. Set

El. B.

voice leading facilitated by bVII-V

gliss.

gliss.

C	D ①	G	E
\flat III	V/ \flat VII	\flat VII	V

A Minor:

(1) - Quick harmonic analysis:

1. C to D creates a "lift" by virtue of the Lydian sounding progression of major triads by root movement of a major second.
2. This "lift" lands on a secondary dominant (D), which will resolve to G.
3. G serves as the \flat VII pre-dominant. Why this chord? It facilitates chromatic voice leading from G to G# (see above).
Not only is G# the leading tone, but this chromatic movement (G -> G# -> A) is reminiscent of the chromatic bass motif (the blue-sy one) that recurs throughout the track.
4. The chord of E major, then, serves as the dominant which, of course, resolves to the tonic.

El. Guit.

Org.

Lead

Str.

D. Set

El. B.

same bass line as mm. 2

Am

i