

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

**Searching for**  
**Friends**  
*from Final Fantasy VI*

Composed by Nobuo Uematsu  
Transcription/Analysis by Seventh Sam  
[www.seventhsam.com](http://www.seventhsam.com)

# Intro ♩ = 124

voice doubles 1st violins to accentuate the top voice melody, from i - iv (A - D)

upwards planing of 1st inversion triads creates a sense of "taking off" or "taking flight". Coupled with Dorian brightness, it's perfect for an airship theme.

Natural bVI of Dorian.

Hihat pattern remains steady throughout the track, barely deviating. This creates a straightforward, "endless journey" feeling. Less of a story, more of a mood.

In original track, bass contains lots of slides. Omitted them here due to MS playback weirdness.

Am

Bm/A

C

D

i

ii<sup>7</sup>

♭III

IV

Intro progression is decidedly derived from A Dorian (evidenced by the presence of F#). This creates a brighter, more uplifting harmonic coloration than Aeolian would, and fits the mood of the track much better.

NOTE: The original track contains a pitch-shifted noise channel that's panned L/R throughout at a rhythmic pace. This is almost certainly to evoke the sound of propellor blades - fitting, as this is an airship theme. I didn't include this in the transcription since that's more of a sound design thing. In the SNES era, this was often done for economy's sake (i.e. Ruined World in Chrono Trigger); modern games can, of course, separate sound design from music to their heart's content.

5 **A1**

Guitar creates a "pedal ostinato", simultaneously driving the rhythm and reinforcing tonal center of A.

suspensions

accented N.H tone  
incidental, part of rising melodic minor

Lots of ways to interpret this measure harmonically.  
I'll stick with Cmaj7 for brevity's sake.

melodic minor

Am Cmaj7 Fmaj7 Dm7 E7

i bIII<sup>7</sup> bVI<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup>

#### ABOUT THAT BASS:

Uematsu **nails** the bass line in this track. Due to channel limitations, the E. Bass was his go-to to keep the music grounded in the absence of a large amount of orchestral sub-bass fundamental tones. In this track and others, he allows it to go nuts and take a near contrapuntal mind of its own.

What sticks out to me is that juxtaposition of the syncopated, funky nature of the baseline with the straightforward flute melody.

Allow me to get a bit abstract:

FF6 is a game about Hope vs. Despair. This dichotomy manifests in so much of the music, and it's one of the major reasons this soundtrack stands above many others in terms of artistic depth and authenticity.

- The flute, as a lyrical line, represents the plaintive, mournful, and desperate "voice" of despair, in a way. It cries for help, hope, and comfort. As the top voice, it's the one we hear most, and could be thought of as the "conscious" voice of the protagonist's inner conflict. The straightforward rhythms, the gentle contours...they all contribute to this kind of expression.

- The bass, on the other hand, is leaping all over the place, bending and sliding, and - it would seem - almost having *fun*. This track is about searching for companions thought dead in a post-apocalyptic world ruled by a psychotic, sadistic god-king; where does fun come into it? Well, what if the bass represents the deep, underlying "hope", the subconscious knowledge the everything's gonna be okay, the excited drive to meet the challenges ahead and overcome them no matter what.

Was Uematsu thinking about all this ahead of time? Who knows. But the effect is undeniable, and I believe it's a big reason why this track resonates with so many who've played the game (and perhaps a few that haven't!).

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Fl.

Guit.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

there's something really effective about how the bass "pokes its head out and introduces just a wee bit of chromaticism. gives the music such personality!

I just love this dive bomb.

Am

Em<sup>7</sup>

D<sup>7</sup>

E<sup>7</sup>

Am

i

v<sup>7</sup>

IV<sup>7</sup>

V<sup>7</sup>

i

Interesting turn of tone, here.  
Em<sup>7</sup> is more mellow sounding, and offers a more hopeful,  
bright uplift to the arc of the music's "mini-story"

D<sup>7</sup> modally interchanged from  
A Dorian OR A Melodic Minor.  
Same difference.

Interesting to note: usually, in SNES music, woodwinds and brass are not given "time to breath" Here, Uematsu chose to add rests that suggest he was thinking about a potential live player...

13 **A2**

Fl.

Guit.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

Am

Cmaj<sup>7</sup>

Fmaj<sup>7</sup>

Dm<sup>7</sup>

E<sup>7</sup>

i

♭III<sup>7</sup>

♭VI<sup>7</sup>

iv<sup>7</sup>

V<sup>7</sup>

The section repeats identically, save for a final measure that ends on the major tonic via ye old sus4 resolution to picardy third (major third in a minor tonality)

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Fl.

Guit.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

Am

Em7

D7

E7

Asus4

A

i

v7

IV7

V7

I

picardy third

**B**

22

Guitar cuts out in favor of both the voice and flutes doubled at the third, thickening their presence.

Why? Obviously contrast with the A section, but on an emotional level, it matches the brighter and more hopeful, dare I say *comfortable* sound of the B section.

Vo.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

**Fmaj<sup>7</sup>**

**Em<sup>7</sup>/F**

**Em<sup>7</sup>**

**Am**

**bVI<sup>7</sup>**

**v<sup>7</sup>**

**i**

A common Uematsu technique:

transfer the tonal center from the tonic to the bVI of the minor key in the B section, often using a maj7 chord.

Why?

bVI degree can go down to V or v, or go up via reverse andalusion (bVI-bVII-i) to tonic. Both sound dramatic and effective. Maj7 chord is unmistakeably sharp and dramatic. It's a winning formula.

### ABOUT THE B SECTION:

Immediately standing out to me is the use of the voices. There's a beautiful quality, almost heavenly. It suggests the kind of euphoria or inner peace one comes to when they've overcome a personal challenge or come to accept something. The final act of the game is almost *entirely* about this kind of thing. Well, that and grinding dinosaurs for XP in that one forest :-)

In all seriousness, a big reason this track resonates is this kind of emotional depth that - due to Uematsu's now finely honed skill in VGM composition - is still tightly and concisely wound up in a short, looping track. As the player flies around the ruined world and gains strength to seemingly do the impossible, they feel more and more at peace, despite the looming pressure and stakes. This section captures that perfectly. More details on the following pages!

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Fl.

Vlins. I

Vlins. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

**Dm<sup>7</sup>**

**G<sup>7</sup><sub>sus<sup>4</sup></sub>**

**G<sup>7</sup>**

**C<sup>maj</sup><sup>7</sup>**

**A<sup>m</sup>**

iv<sup>7</sup>

bVII<sup>7</sup>

bIII<sup>7</sup>

i

**Key of C (rel. maj):** ii<sup>7</sup>

**V<sup>7</sup>**

**I<sup>7</sup>**

ii-V-I turnaround leads us to a simply gorgeous Cmaj7 chord. That unmistakeable, mellow, early jazz sound.

But it's not just gorgeous to be gorgeous. Nor is it jazz to be jazz. That would be superficial and miss the point of incidental music.

The world is ruined, the sky is red, and all hope is (seemingly) lost.

This beauty is an \*inner\* beauty, the beauty of strength of will, spirit, and love in the face of everything horrible and cruel.

A fine example of a common musical device used for a specific, functional purpose within the soundtrack medium.



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Vo.

Vlins. I

Vlins. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

$F_{maj}^7$   
 $bVI^7$

$E_m^7/F$   
 $v^7$

$E_m^7$

A  
I

This phrase based in Eb Lydian scale

Fl. 34

Vlins. I

Vlins. II

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B.

**Dm<sup>9</sup>**

**Bbmaj<sup>7</sup>**

**E<sup>b</sup>(add2)**

**Cm<sup>9</sup>**

**iv<sup>9</sup>**

Despite the chord symbols, the harmonic motion in the strings suggests A major to F major (the chords), a bright and striking chromatic mediant progression. A good example of how more basic triadic motion can be "cushioned" within extended chords.

As far as chromatic mediants go, regardless of whether the chords are major or minor, if the root movement is by a *major 3rd* (in either direction), the voice leading will be entirely by half-step, resulting in smoother motion. This is evidenced by the mellow C# -> C natural in Violins I, and the E to F natural in the Violas. The contrary motion makes it even smoother.

Ultimate result: a bright transition to the final stretch of the B section, the most hopeful sound of the entire track, which takes us into Lydian territory before returning us to the desperate A minor sound of the A section.

RNA gets a bit funky here:

Dm9 contains the notes A-C-E, which is the vii chord of Bb Lydian.

vii - I resolves to Bb Lydian.

Bbmaj7 is the tonic seventh of Bb Lydian.

Bbmaj7 contains the notes D-F-A.

D-F-A is the vii chord to Eb Lydian.

vii - I resolves to Eb Lydian (with an add2 for extra sweetness)

The combination of the melody, strings, and bass then form a big old mess of a Cm9 chord, which then smoothly transitions to a D6/9.

What the hell can we learn from this:

Uematsu was thinking "Lydian, bright, hopeful"

Also, "We need to get back to E7 so we can loop to A minor"

"Oh, look, D6/9, when voiced with the 6 and 9 in the bass, can smoothly lead to E7. The 6 and 9 become the root and 5th, while the D that was the root of the 6/9 becomes the 7th of the E7 chord."

Alternatively, he played around on a keyboard until it sounded good, then went with it!

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Fl. flute cuts out here to avoid sounding F#

Vlins. I ...this D natural (the 7th of E7) is held in the topmost voice to emphasize the dominant nature of this chord. Very smart.

Vlins. II D-F# suggests D major, E-G# suggests E major. a I-II in Lydian fashion...except...

Vlas.

D. Set

El. B. I love this little lick at the loop point. Didn't have to do it, but small details like this make a good track great.

D<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> E<sup>7</sup>

The 6/9 is in the bass, which allows for the least amount of movement between the tones (elaborated on previous page)  
 This is a \*far\* different feeling than if these were block chords.  
 In this way, Uematsu employs dense harmony for its mellow and soothing effect without overloading the listener with unnecessary dissonance. A testament to economy of motion, smart voice leading, and awareness of listener perception.