



“Wheelman” Exclusive VX Interview with BadolatoMusic

by Janine

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In May '09, VX's Weekly Question was all about two of the composers of the *Wheelman* soundtrack, Jorge & Guillermo Badolato, BadolatoMusic. You asked, and they've answered!

Jorge, Guillermo, thank you so much for offering the interview. We are beyond thrilled to be able to talk with you about the *Wheelman* soundtrack!



VX: First of all, please tell us how you were chosen to be the sound track team?

J&G: We talked with Midway's content manager in the USA at the end of 2006, who told us about the game and asked if we had some music demos that could fit. We sent them, and we were contacted in 2007 by Craig Beattie, *Wheelman*'s audio director, who sent us in-game video examples with some of our previous music already mounted in them, asking if we wanted to compose a specific *Wheelman* demo following that style. Other composers were also bidding for the project, but we were lucky enough to touch their sensibilities, and be able to do the majority of the soundtrack.

VX: Had you been given a copy of the game to play to get the feel for it before composing, or was it storyboards and written descriptions of the action that inspired you?

J&G: We started composing the music with the videos they sent us as a reference, which included early on foot mission and a car chase mission scenes. They also gave us some guidelines about what they would like the music to reflect and overall feel, leaving us plenty of liberty on composing the music as we saw it would fit better.

VX: And on a side note: do you also love to play computer games? Are you, by any chance, fellow geeks?

J&G: Of course! We love playing video games from when we were kids. We remember starting playing with an old Texas Instruments calculator

from our father that worked with small magnetic cards to store the software. It featured mathematical games, with no graphics at all. Later on, we owned some of those first consoles that had only four fixed games or so, *Pong* and others. We also played the Atari 2600, and after that, remember having plenty of those small Nintendo handheld video games that were just great, and some other bigger-sized handheld consoles with *Pac Man*, primitive car chase games and others.

Then we discovered *Manic Miner* and had to get the Sinclair ZX spectrum 48k, which we enjoyed for years. Then it was the Commodore 64. We started with the PC games and kept playing in parallel with the main consoles, such as the Super Nintendo, Playstation, Dreamcast, etc. We still keep up to date with the latest ones. As any kid, we also remember checking the big arcade machines that were all over the place in the city.

We include a photo taken by surprise by Guillermo of Jorge playing *Wizball* for Spectrum in 1987, in the kitchen of our home at about 1AM. Note the couple of added custom gray buttons we inserted into the big ball, Frankenstein-type joystick we used for playing Olympic games, *Arkanoid* and others. You can read the hand written info on the Polaroid.

VX: How much did the location and setting of the game influence the selection of the music?

J&G: Very much. The first music brief had a very straight, traditional Spanish influence, and later on, the music direction changed to a more straight Hollywood car chase orchestral, with spiced Spanish elements over it—Spanish & Electric Guitars, percussion, etc. If the game were located outside Spain, the tracks would have had a very different music style.

VX: Did you travel to Barcelona to get a feel for the city? Are there any particular sources of inspiration you had while composing, like maybe Spanish folk music?

J&G: Being natives of Spain—Madrid—we've been exposed to this style from our early days, so the incorporation of these elements to the soundtrack was very natural. Of course, we've also traveled to Barcelona and many other places in Spain over the years. There are quite a few different traditional Spanish music styles from many local places in the country, but the part that has been most featured in the game is the Flamenco style, which happens to be the most international Hollywood-like, universally known Spanish music.



VX: Did you have any direct contact with Vin Diesel while working on the soundtrack? Did that have any influence on your work? And, even if you didn't get to work with Vin himself, did his appearance in the game influence you in any way?

J&G: We hadn't the pleasure of meeting Vin Diesel, of course, it would have been great to meet or chat with him! Maybe for the *Wheelman* movie?! *Wheelman II* game?!

His appearance in the game influenced a lot of our music, as we had a clear idea of what type of music productions were featured in the action movies that he's worked on—*The Fast and The Furious*, etc—which we also used as an “intensity” reference meter for our tracks.



We tried to do all the car chase music as intense as possible, never dropping the power for a moment.

VX: Did you have specific requirements to meet for the soundtrack or were you able

to let your creativity run free?

J&G: We were able to let the creativity run free. It was something they made clear from the first moment we started demo-ing for *Wheelman*. They wanted to let the composers of the game bring their own identity to the game.

VX: Did you have other, radically different, ideas that didn't make it to the game, or did it come together pretty much as we hear it?

J&G: There were some adjustments to the music as the project was being developed, and the music direction and style changed a bit at one point, but usually they were small things in the mix, such as being a little more or less Spanish, more or less electric guitars. Things like that. So, everything is more or less as you hear it on the final game.

VX: How long did it take to develop and produce the soundtrack?

J&G: The actual scoring work for the half of the in-game music tracks we did, started in late September 2007, and lasted about three months.

We started the music for most of the cutscene videos of the game, about 18, in late-December, and did them as they were coming from Midway in 2008. They all featured new original music.



When the music for the cutscenes were almost finished, another Midway Studio called for doing some music for promotional trailers.

VX: Is there anything, upon seeing the release, that you would now change in the score if you could?

J&G: For us, everything can always be better; there are always things that

we would have polished, tweaked or added if we had more time. But I guess that happens to everyone who does creative things. You have to get used to doing the music the best you can in the time range that you have been given to do it, applying all your energy, knowing when it is ready and then moving forward to work on the next track.

Being aware of that, and after having finished playing the game ourselves, we're very happy with *Wheelman's* soundtrack overall.

VX: What other games, movies, TV series have you worked for?

J&G: Latest projects include all music and sfx for a 74-minute animation feature movie, *Santa vs. Claus*, which premiered in December, 2008. We've recently finished the music & sfx for a couple of unannounced videogames that will be released by Ubisoft in 2009, and a *Terminator* game for the iPhone that just came out. You can check our credits in all areas on our website, www.BadolatoMusic.com.



VX: How does the experience with *Wheelman* differ from other games you have worked on?

J&G: *Wheelman* has been our best experience in games so far. It has been a total pleasure to work with Craig Beattie on this game. He gave us liberty to propose all

we wanted for the soundtrack, and luckily he liked everything we submitted.

VX: Now that you've been involved in the making of the game soundtrack, will you be working on the movie's musical score as well?

J&G: That would be really awesome. It would be a honor for us to work on scoring music for the movie. Please let Vin know if you see him!

VX: What are the differences in composing music for a game as opposed to composing music for a movie? Are there any special requirements to meet when composing for a computer game?

J&G: Although it can seem very similar, scoring a movie is very different from scoring a game, yet both are equally challenging to do for the composer. The objective is the same for both—to create an emotional soundscape for the project.

We used both styles of composing on *Wheelman*: movie-style for the cinematics (animated videos), and game-style for the in-game tracks.

In the movies, both music and sfx are linear, and follow a series of images that always have the same timing. The movie sequences are fixed and that's the reference a composer needs to build the music and sound around. Everything is already pre-planned to happen at a given point in time, and the composer can score it by watching and playing to the sequence.

The difference with videogames, especially in next-gen ones that feature the music as an important gameplay element, is that the audio has to be adaptive to the gameplay in real time. There's no way the same situation is going to happen exactly the same way twice in the game.

The music should be constructed in a way so it can adapt to what the player does and see on the screen in realtime. This can be more complicated, but



basically, as an example, the composer creates 3-4 different sub-mixes of the same track, which are played at the same time while playing the game.

The game engine chooses which of those 3-4 layers is heard by the player at a given time, by doing volume fades smoothly between them. The submixes are mapped to the beat with marks on every bar, so the engine knows which points are good for doing the transitions and still sound musical.

VX: Do you have, or are you planning to have, a promotional MySpace and/or Facebook profile, where you can share your wonderful music?

J&G: First of all, thanks a lot for the compliments on the music! You can hear a lot of music and videos from *Wheelman* and other newer projects on the front-page player of our website, www.BadolatoMusic.com, and other music demos in the "Music" section.

We'll be happy to receive any feedback about it! We'll be doing a MySpace, Facebook and sites like that, soon. Will keep you updated on it.

VX: Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions, it is greatly appreciated!

J&G: Thanks a million to you Janine, and for Lynn and all the members that posted their questions, and all people reading this. It's been a pleasure for us.