

Pascal

NieR: Automata

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The musical score for 'Pascal' is presented in four systems. The first system (measures 1-6) is the 'INTRO' with a tempo of 92 and a 'clap + percussion' accompaniment. The second system (measures 7-12) is 'VERSE A-1' with a 'piano + guitar + drum' accompaniment. The third system (measures 13-19) is 'VERSE A-2' with a 'chorus of Machine' accompaniment. The fourth system (measures 20-24) is 'VERSE A-3' with a 'Chorus of Human kids' accompaniment. The score is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. The chord C7sus4 is used throughout the Intro and Verse sections. Melodic phrases are highlighted with colored circles: orange circles highlight the bass line in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Green circles highlight the treble line in measures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. A yellow circle highlights the bass line in measure 21. A blue circle highlights the treble line in measure 22. A red circle highlights the bass line in measure 23. A green circle highlights the treble line in measure 24. The score includes dynamic markings (p, mp, mf) and a key signature change to A major (A b M7) in measure 17.

Figure 2. Score analysis of <17. Pascal>
(The coloured notes are added by this study)

As shown in Figure 2, the same chord, C7sus4, is used from INTRO to VERSE which functions as the base to unite different parts of the music. Even in the VERSE, different phases are assigned to different voices—either it's the vocoder, the human chorus, or just the instrumental melody. More importantly, the same theme (i.e., the melodic phrases circled in orange and green) appears almost every phase of the VERSE with slight variations—sometimes in the change of time interval (e.g., bar 9-12), sometimes having adjustments for the need of chord progression (e.g., bar 17-20).

According to the research by Sho Iwamoto, the programmer and the author of 《Grimoire of Game Design》, one prominent feature of the music at 《NieR: Automata》 is the vocals sung in every single soundtrack, which is very rare to see in

games. 'Compared to other games that use vocals only on battles or important events, NieR: Automata uses vocals to boost the emotions of the scene. That is, the vocal within the music is triggered by the progression of narrative, not just by the enemies'.⁸³ Iwamoto observed that 'either at the Resistance Camp or Machine Village, before the player is able to have any conversation with the characters of the place, they might feel suspicious about the people there. Once the main characters (such as Anemone, Pascal) introduce themselves with kindness, the vocals come in naturally within the ongoing music, which also represents the player's feeling of security'.⁸⁴ This is often applied to the dialogues happening in Machine Village. For instance, in gameplay 3, after Pascal has introduced himself, dubbed by a voice actress⁸⁵, his conversation with 2B and 9S immediately become silent and are replaced with subtitles. Instead of having a "sounded dialogue", the child's chorus comes in <17. Pascal> to accompany the activities that the players are going to complete in the village. By flexibly switching between voice acting or the vocoder/human chorus within the music, <17. Pascal> successfully makes the atmosphere harmless and creates a pleasing mood that encourages the players to think about profound questions thrown out by the characters, such as : 'Wait, [do] they [machine lifeforms] have genders?' by 9S, or 'Do you believe that existence precedes essence?' by Satre (see Appendix #1).⁸⁶

<17. Pascal> reveals the main theme directly with the visual—Pascal and the Machine Village at the beginning. Nevertheless, not all the location music follows the same rule. <35. Tower> shows exactly the opposite approach of presenting "place"—not only the "physical" mediated space, but also the "abstract" mental space of the characters. This track doesn't appear until gameplay 14, then it shows up in gameplay 16 and 20.

⁸³ Iwamoto, S. (2018, September 25). NieR: Automata—音楽によって「接続される」世界. [Web log post] note. Retrieved from <https://note.com/geekdrums/n/n9bbd292c74e1> (The citation is translated from Japanese by this study, the same hereafter).

⁸⁴ Iwamoto, *op. cit.*, p.11

⁸⁵ Although Pascal is set to be a male machine, he is dubbed by female voice actress both in Japanese and English versions.

⁸⁶ Both examples are quoted in gameplay 3, 33:40—33:50 for 9S, 34:10—34:35 for Satre.