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### Interview with Craig Beattie, Composer/Audio Engineer for *Black and White 2*



**Music4Games: Please tell us your role at Lionhead and how you got into scoring music and became a composer in the games industry.**

**Craig Beattie:** My role at Lionhead is Lead musician/audio engineer. I basically left an Apprentership in shipbuilding about 15 years ago and went to study music technology for 5 years in Newcastle College. I was very fortunate to get offered a job in the games industry off the back of my showreel about 7 years ago. Sadly those days have gone due to the large volume of people wanting to work within this field; We get stacks of CDs every week and we just don't have the time to listen to any off them.

**M4G: How was the experience scoring the fickle-deity universe of *Black and White 2*?**

**Craig Beattie:** To follow in the footsteps of Russell Shaw was very scary, what he had achieved in the original was amazing. So I sat down with the studio head and Russell at the time and we talked about what was possible and the direction I felt I needed to go in. I came to the conclusion everything had to be on an epic scale. It basically had to be orchestral based, so I was offered the option to go with a full blown orchestra or write it all on computers. The easy option would have been to go with an orchestra to record it all, but I really wanted to see how far I could push the boundaries of computer music; This was around about the time when orchestral cube had just come out. I decided the main orchestral scores, would be for the battles and the epic spells.

**M4G: Can you tell us about the style and direction of the score for *Black & White 2*? How did you expand on the themes and tonality developed in the first game by Lionhead Audio Director and Composer Russell Shaw?**

**Craig Beattie:** The whole feel of *Black and White 2* is on an epic scale, and I had to achieve this in the music/sfx. The main influence came from Howard Shore's *The Lord Of The Rings*; Many late nights I would sit and listen to the way the music was composed and think about how this could be achieved with computers. Because *Black and White 2* is very different in many ways to the original game, I felt most off the music had to be different as well. One of the styles that had stayed the same is the landscape music which changes depending on your alignment, because you are hearing this music nearly all the time it has to be very

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05 HALO 2 Original  
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06 Final Fantasy VI  
Original Sound Version

07 Xenogears

08 ICO: Melody In The  
Myst

09 Final Fantasy IV: Celtic  
Moon

10 The Black Mages - The  
Battle Music of Final  
Fantasy

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ambient sounding. There are 5 alignments for every tribe: good, good and neutral, neutral, evil and neutral then evil. Then within these alignments there are about 8-10 pieces of music. I think it works out about 180 pieces of alignment music alone. I also think silence plays a very important role in audio. I remember some testers saying to me that they wanted to hear the music all the time as they really liked it, so silence worked as I would rather have people coming back for more than turning the whole music system of.

**M4G: Overall, what were you hoping to accomplish sound/music-wise for *B&W2*?**

**Craig Beattie:** Once again everything had to sound epic/film-like. I would really love people to listen to this music and be convinced they were listening to a real orchestra, then all my hard work would have paid off. It can be easy to be very lazy when writing orchestral music on a computer because it takes a lot of hard work to get it to sound right i.e. rather than using a separate midi track for up and down violin strokes most people just use a violin sample. I actually hope people will believe it can be done to the same standard as a real orchestra after listening to the score. The technology has been around now for about 3 years to make it sound convincing, but I am afraid I haven't really heard anybody pushing the technology which is a shame. I think the music really has to match the visuals in every way. Some people who were testing the game said they could easily sit by a beach listening to the sea and music for hours which is a great compliment and it also has a lot to do with how amazingly real the water looks. I really wanted the audio/music to be part of the whole world and your experience within that world almost to the point where you don't notice the music at all.

**M4G: How did the production workload for this game compare to previous games you've worked on? How many minutes of music did you write for *B&W2*?**

**Craig Beattie:** I think overall there was about 3GB worth of music that had been composed for *Black and White 2* which came to about 250 pieces of music. I never worked on a project that has been this vast before. They range from orchestral, ethnic, ambient, among many others. The most complex work was the orchestral score which had to be mixed like a real orchestra. The stereo positioning of every instrument and where it sits in the mix had to be arranged for every midi track which sometimes totaled 100 separate tracks. This was very time consuming to say the least, also everything had to have the same room reverb but with different wet/dry due to where the instrument sits in the orchestra.

**M4G: How has the implementation of audio in *B&W2* differed from the previous game?**

**Craig Beattie:** I decided to start from scratch and not use any sounds from the original game, mainly because I didn't want to be pushed into a certain direction with the audio content and I don't feel it's fair on the gamer using all the same sfx's from the original. Also, there are lots of smaller things going on in the background with the audio tools. We really went to town on adding new functions in the audio tools; Loops in an atmosphere can fluctuate in volume randomly, so you don't just have a static loop, among many other things. There was a huge dynamic music system which myself and Paul Knight (audio programmer) spent 6

months designing purely for orchestral based music that changes in battles in real time with your actions. It's very easy to do this with static dance music jumping from one bar to another, but much more complex when it is orchestral-based as it is very rarely static, so we came up with the idea of having an orchestral bridge section that linked the music together. I can't really go into too much detail about it as it would bore you stiff and you would need about 25 pages to cover it, but it is the most ambitious musical project we have ever done.

**M4G: The original game had so many genres of music; what aspects of composition or sound design in *B&W2* differ from those in the first game?**

**Craig Beattie:** The only area that sounds similar is the alignment-based music, and some of the sfx for the creatures, because there are only so many sfx that a lion can make and I did not want to humanize the creatures in anyway. Also I sourced a lot of sfx material from the same library as the original, so some will sound the same. I think it's a bit disappointing to the gamer if they can hear all the same audio again so hopefully 99% of it will sound different to the original.

**M4G: Since no live orchestra was used, is that because it is not flexible enough an option for such a complex game?**

**Craig Beattie:** Yes mainly so. When working with the new dynamic music system in *Black and White* you could probably use a live orchestra but it would be very restricting. Also I decided not to use a real orchestra 3 years before I even had the new music system in place. There are the right situations for using a real orchestra, i.e. *Fable*, but I am so glad I didn't use one for *Black and White 2*. Looking back I don't think it would have worked, and I am very pleased with the results.

**M4G: How much of your experiences with previous Lionhead projects were carried over to *B&W2*?**

**Craig Beattie:** I generally don't like to carry things over onto other projects mainly because it can be very hard to come up with something fresh. I like to start with a clean sheet.

**M4G: Do you think a *B&W2* soundtrack will be released for fans?**

**Craig Beattie:** There is talk about this happening, so I have decided to go back to the original music I had written 3 years ago and just touch up the mixes a bit.

**[Click here to listen to \*Black & White 2\* Overture](#)**

**Interview by Tina Huang**

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