

HOTLINE MIAMI

Hotline Miami is a top-down shooter video game developed by Jonatan Söderström and Dennis Wedin, collectively known as Dennaton Games. The game was published by Devolver Digital and released on 23 October 2012 for Microsoft Windows. Set in 1989 Miami, the game revolves primarily around an unnamed silent protagonist—named "Jacket" by fans—who's been receiving messages on his answering machine instructing him to commit massacres against the local Russian Mafia. The game combines top-down perspective with stealth, extreme violence, and surreal storytelling, along with a soundtrack and visuals inspired by 1980's culture. The game itself was influenced in part by Nicolas Winding Refn's 2011 neo-noir crime film *Drive*, as well as the 2006 documentary *Cocaine Cowboys*.

Hotline Miami received critical acclaim upon release, with praise given to its neon-soaked depiction of 1980's underground Miami, overflowing with raw brutality and ultraviolent close combat as the player finds himself outgunned and using his wits to make its way through impossible situations. The game's soundtrack was praised for accentuating the already heightened tension and gritty violence. Eurogamer scored the game 10/10, with reviewer Tom Bramwell saying that the game was a blend of elements, all of which are integral to the overall experience. IGN gave the game a score of 8.8/10 emphasizing its striking blend of fast ultraviolence, a dense, challenging story, and brilliant presentation

The game received the "Best PC Sound" accolade by IGN from its "Best of 2012" awards. It was also nominated for "Best PC Action Game", "Best PC Story", "Best PC Game", in addition to "Best Overall Action Game", "Best Overall Music", and "Best Overall Game". It was the recipient of both Eurogamer's and Rock, Paper, Shotgun's Game of the Show award at their inaugural EGX Rezzed expo. On 24 December 2012, PC Gamer awarded the game with "The Best Music of the Year 2012". Hotline Miami also won "Best New IP", "Best Gameplay" and "Best Soundtrack" at the 2012 Vidya Game Awards, and received several nominations in other categories.



Drive, Strobe Lights, Shootings and Death

Just as said before, Hotline Miami has a lot of influences from films that both of its creator's watch, but there are two in particular, and a film genre in specific, that show the most influences in the game developed by Dennaton Games.

The first film too has its influences in the game was Cocaine Cowboys, a documentary that chronicles the development of the illegal drug trade in Miami during the 1970s and 1980s with interviews of both law enforcement and organized crime leaders, in addition to news footage from the era. This film influence can be traced to the story of the game, more specific, the bad guys of the game and the general scenario where it takes place. The Russian Mafia guys you are killing and that Miami full of Neon light and "80s" music is a reflection of what Cocaine Cowboys showed and presented to the viewers.

The second film makes it to the influences box of these great games was Drive. The drive is a 2011 American neo-noir crime thriller film directed by Danish filmmaker Nicolas Winding Refn. The screenplay, written by Hossein Amini, is based on James Sallis' 2005 novel Drive. This film tells the story of an unnamed, Hollywood stunt driver moonlighting as a getaway driver that gets involved in a series of robberies and shooting by helping the husband of his neighbored to collect some money that he owns to some prison guys. Right after the husband of his neighbor is killed and he sees her and her son in danger he decides to do himself the dirty job and starts to hunt down the people that are threatening the girl and her son.

The influence that Drive had in the game is more than one can imagine and it involves a lot of what we see, hear and understand in the film. The most obvious influences taken from these film are the clothes, as both of the main characters wear White and Black Jackets, the use of masks every time the Driver and Jacket are going to go in for a killing, the fact that both of these characters see the masks as a way to disassociate themselves from their self's to feel as if they were not the ones committing the crimes but other person or personality of theirs, and the lack of a proper name. The other not so obvious influences taken from Drive are the music, the top-down view of the city (in the case of the game these is reflected as the top-down view of the maps), and color intensity and palette, as well as the way the scenario is depicted in both the movie and game. Finally, we should not forget that Dennaton Games didn't seek to create an adaptation of the film but instead decided to take elements from it, just like with Cocaine Cowboys, to develop a new story and product.

An additional element that influences Hotline Miami was the Slasher Film Genre. Slasher films are a subgenre of horror films, typically involving a violent psychopath stalking and murdering several people, usually with bladed tools. Although the term "slasher" is sometimes used informally as a generic term for any horror movie involving murder, analysts of the genre cite an established set of characteristics which set these films apart from other horror subgenres, such as splatter films and psychological horror films. As we can read from the description of this genre, there is a lot of influence, beginning with the idea of the psychopath stalking and murdering several people and going as far as to portrait death and murder in a very similar way. A good example to illustrate all of this is by comparing Hotline Miami and Funny Games, a 1997 Austrian psychological thriller and slasher film written and directed by Michael Haneke. Both of these titles see violence in the same way and show it in a very similar way. Just as you enjoy killing and murdering in Hotline Miami, the two protagonists of Funny Games enjoy with the suffering of the family they are torturing with their sadistic games, and at the same time, both these make you feel uncomfortable after a while and guilty for permitting and collaborating the viewing and realization of these despicable acts of violence. Is also worth noticing that Hotline Miami can also be considered one of the most gore commercial games ever, this because it may have a very 16-bit pixel art style but the realistic way you, as a player kill, the fact that weapons tend to react as normal weapons do in real life (like a sword getting stuck into someone's skull right after a powerful slash), and the fact that there are no "soft deaths" in the game, are elements that go beyond the art style and directly show how raw and violent a mass murder or any murder, in particular, can be, in other words, is a very graphic game even with its neon-old school/punk/16-bit art style.

Pump-up the Music

The music of Hotline Miami is one of the most, if not, the most important element that this game has to describe, explain and make us feel good about what is happening. Just as Dayo (Jose Altozano) says in his video review about this game back in 2012 "[...] *But if we are going to talk about factors that impulse us to be more violent I can't go on without talking about the music, that is probably the most important element to makes of this game a satisfactory experience. Hotline Miami barely has original music but it has completely appropriate of its Official Sound Track [...]*". Just as Dayo points out, Hotline Miami has almost no original music and almost all of its soundtrack is made up of songs by M.O.O.N, Seattle, El Huervo, and some other artist that approve the use and inclusion of their work (music) as part of the video game. Is also worth noticing that the developers chose the music very carefully because it is not easy for a movie or video game to completely appropriate its license music because you have to be very careful and understand the mood, feel and intentions of that particular music piece (s) so that when you use them you can help the viewers connect with the scene they are watching and what it's trying to communicate. Two great examples of directors that are masters in what it means to completely make their own and appropriate the licensed music they use in their films are Tarantino and Kubrick, and in truth, they are the best at this for a lot of directors have tried to do the same and failed.

Another element that the music in this game does perfectly is set the rhythm and pace of the game, and this is something that Dayo is also happy to point out in his analysis when he says "[...] *Hotline Miami uses themes that vary a lot in tone but that encapsulates each moment perfectly. The constant beats of Hydrogen are technically an anthem to the violence that is about to be unleashed in each level, Daisuke helps keep the motors warm between each mission with its smooth and comfy style, and the distortion bass of Silver Lights reflects the psyches of Jacket [...]*". The music for this game is one, if not, the main reason why even though we are murdering and committing mass shootings, all of this feels good. This is not something made by accident and we know that the developers were aware of this because right after you finish each level the music stops abruptly and you have to walk back and redo your journey all the way to beginning of each level, passing by all the bodies and death you have left by while an ambiances sound effect (SFX) plays in the back, helping the player re-evaluate, reflect and re-think what he has just done. This tells us that the game not only supports itself a lot on its music but also in its use of silence. For this game the music is as important as is the silence because that is what at the end helps create the dichotomy of adrenaline shooter and enjoyment, and the sensation of guilt and regret that you experience right after finishing each level, hearing the music stop and watching the results of your violent actions.

Hotline Miami can't be without its music, because the music in this game flows through the game itself to the point that even the use of silence is also an important part of it. It's very interesting to investigate and find out that Jonatan Söderström is a musician, he is the Bass player, keyboard player and lead singer of Fucking Werewolf Asso (rock/chip-tune/EDM) but didn't intervene in the composition of the game's Official Sound Track. This something kind of weird the first time you read about it, but at the same time, if you happen to listen to his music you can make yourself an idea of why he didn't participate in that process, because even though his music is good, well created and structured, it's so different from what they needed for this project that if used it would have changed the feel of the game completely.

Finally, the Hotline Miami OST is made up of 22 songs, composed by a variety of artist and has a complete duration of 1 hour 35 minutes. It is also important to point out that some of the songs that make up this OST appear in more than one level, but that does not affect the general feel that the pieces have in the game and the experience of it.

Conclusion

After looking closely to the music that makes up the OST of Hotline Miami we can conclude that it is as part of the games as any other aspect, even though the pieces are mostly made up of license music instead of original compositions. The way the game appropriates the licensed music that makes up the OST is amazing and, as said before, can be compared to the way other artists have done the same like Kubrick and Tarantino. Additionally, is one of the very few OST's that can be consider as an important part of a game for multiple reasons, not only because it's cool or sounds good, but because without it the game would have had another feel and generate a different reaction in the public, as well as one of the only OST's to be able to portrait all of the influences that a game has so well that just by listening to it you can infer a bunch of them. The fact that Jonatan Söderström decided not to compose an original OST and instead let the licensed music become the OST is an important lesson that teaches that not everyone is made to complete or fulfill all jobs, and that sometimes is better to take something that works even if it's not of your creation (with permission of the original creator or author of that work) than denying the final product of something that fits perfectly only because it's not an original piece of yours. Finally, just as Dayo says in his Hotline Miami Review of 2012 " [...] *The music flows through the veins of this game, it's not a separate element. Hotline Miami can't be without its music, because it sets the rhythm of the game and it's an important part of the game's style [...]*".

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