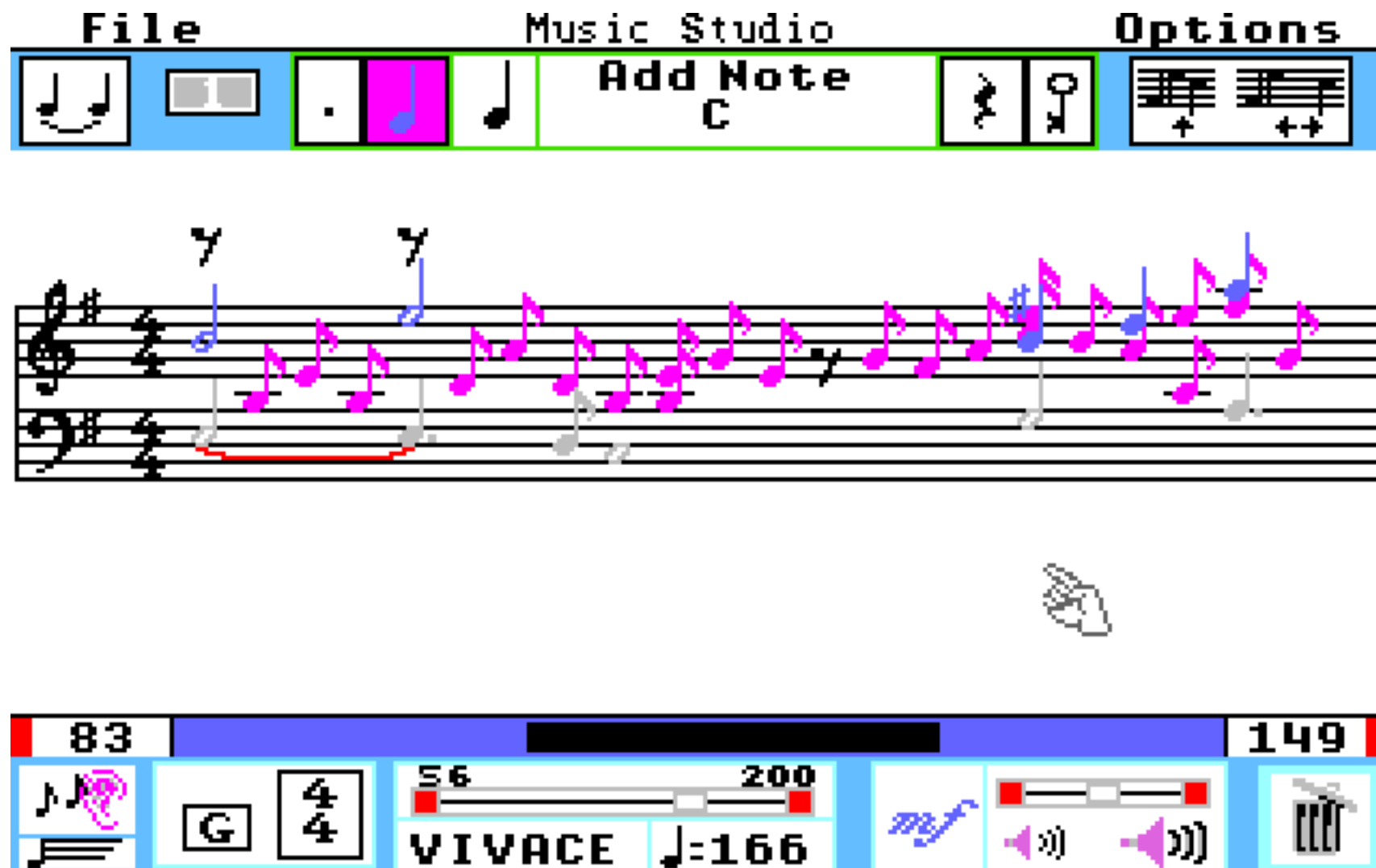# Track Notes

Revered Daughter

NAMES

I want to have my own aesthetic for naming tracks in light of the kind of music I'm making. Enough electronic acts have already named songs after synthesizers, bits of gear or the output of computers. The times when that really needed to be done to make a statement about the novelty of electronic music itself have passed. My inclination is for something more lyrical.

ARRANGEMENT

Ai no kuni

RESURRECTING 20 YEAR OLD MATERIAL

The three main melodic lines for *Ai no kuni* are something I worked out on the piano as a teenager.

I play by ear, so most of my compositions from back then were only stored in my head. I did record some to cassette, but more often I transcribed them into music software on my family's Apple II computer. That's where I stored the above depicted lines back in the early 1990s using the Apple IIGS program *The Music Studio*. The synths I had playing these lines sounded bad, but in this case what I really valued was the composition itself.

These intersecting lines were good enough that even two decades later I didn't want or need to change a note when I had the idea to bring them into an Aeriae track. I'd just heard the riffs anew after rescuing my old Music Studio files from the decaying 3.5-inch floppy disk where they'd lived for twenty-something years. The resurrected lines are heard in their least adulterated form from the four minute mark onwards in *Ai no kuni*, but at a broad level they are the DNA for the whole track.

Heiress

SAMPLES

This track is dense with real world samples. Analogue cameras whirring and flashing, camera compartments being opened or closed or latched or fitted with batteries, camera shutters snapping, digital cameras waking and going to sleep, 35MM film being wound on spools, tapedeck motors whirring, a furnace bubbling, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems venting, mail arriving in Apple Mail.

APPLE II

Two samples are of the output of Apple II computers. The first is the startup and error alert beep emitted by the 8/16–bit Apple IIGS computer, though it's at a slightly irregular pitch as it was generated by an emulator and not the real machine. IIGS expert Alex Lee of *What is the Apple IIGS?* website fame noticed the pitch difference immediately when he listened to a draft of the album.

The second Apple II sample is of the output of Paul Lutus's two–voices–from–a–1–bit–speaker music software from 1982, *The Electric Duet*. Wringing two–voices–from–a–1–bit–speaker appears to have been a relatively minor feat in a life as interesting as Lutus's. He has designed circuits for space shuttles, mathematical models for the Viking space program, programmed a bestselling word processor (*Apple Writer*), engineered social work programs and sailed solo around the world.

Lutus reclassified the music player routine from *The Electric Duet* under a GNU General Public Licence in 2013. Apple II heads like myself continue to use and admire the output of this early music software today.
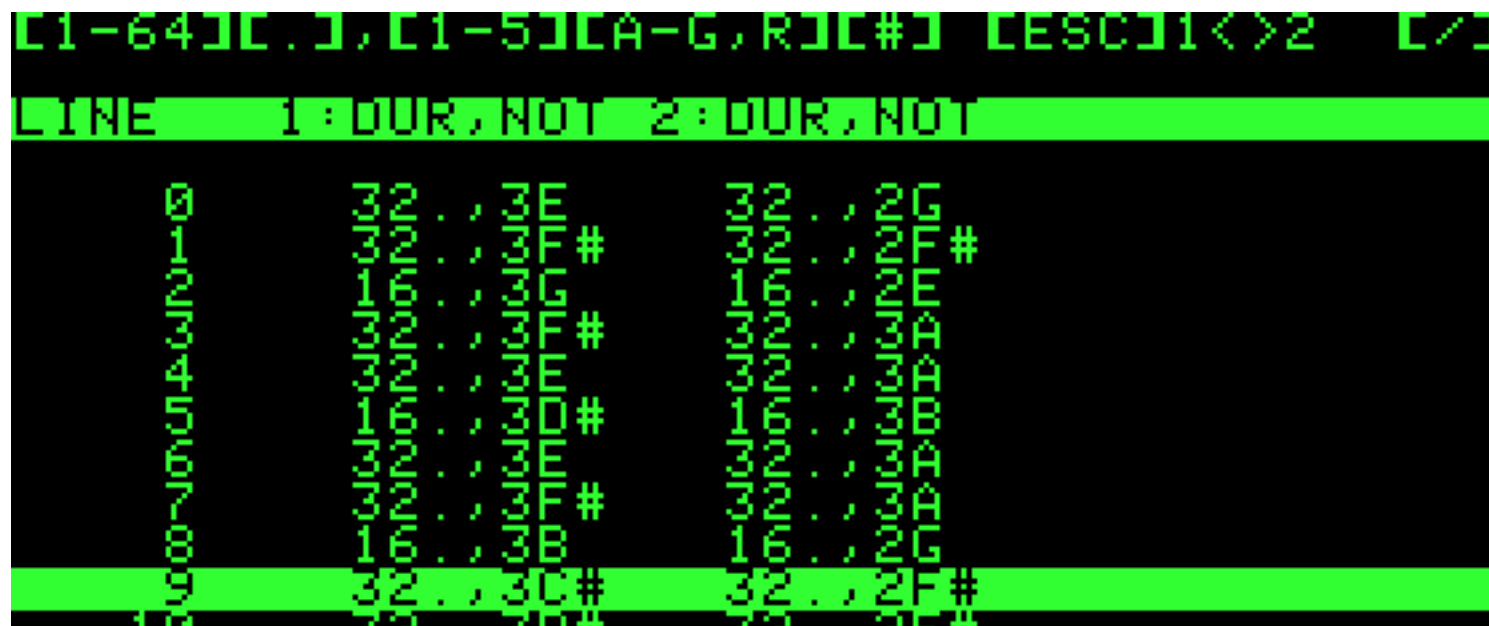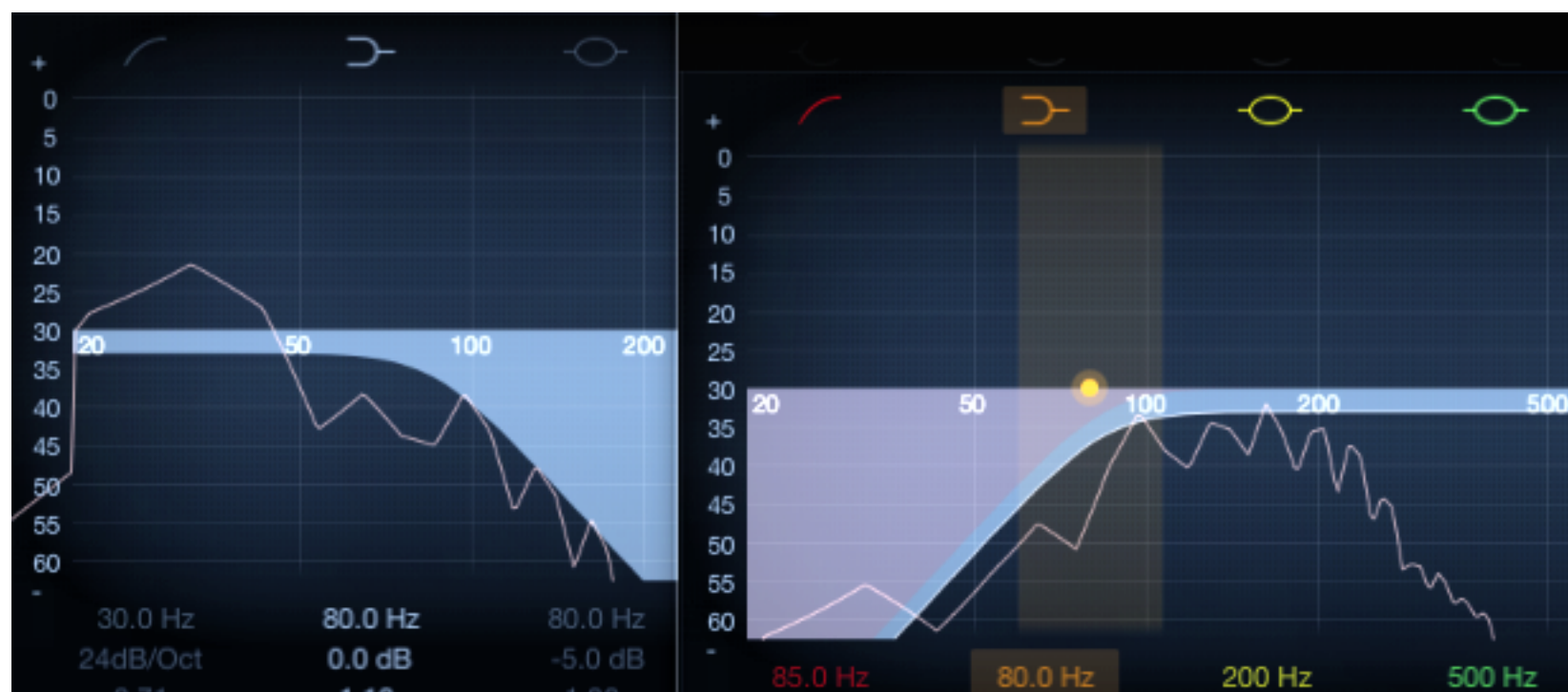
Sword of State

RIGHT / WRONG

In whatever this genre of music is, the producer decides upon the rules for what will sound good or right in the case of each track. Compare this approach to that of a rock'n'roll record, for instance, in which a guitar tends to have to sound like a guitar, otherwise the listener might fail to recognise it as one, or react negatively.

The initial position for an instrumental electronic track is that nothing necessarily has to sound like any particular thing that is real. This is perhaps the full extension of the idea that produced music recordings sound only like produced music recordings, that they don't have real world counterparts – an idea discussed at length in Greg Milner's mostly excellent 2009 book *Perfecting Sound Forever – The Story of Recorded Music.*

Still, a lot of synths in electronic tracks are likely to end up sounding like particular things which have a history of being well received by listeners. Some obvious examples include the sounds made by famous electronic hardware instruments like the Roland TB–303, or simulations of the elements of a drum kit.

Part of what defines a track like *Sword of State* is audio engineering that doesn't have any real world simulation goals. The goal is just to allow certain kinds of sound to exist.

Sword of State: The bass tones are split into two frequency bands at around the 80 Hz mark. Each of these are in turn sidechained (quickly pushed down in volume) by particular kick drum hits or bass sounds, so there are four interdependent audio paths determining which one of them dominates the output at any time.

The Book of Peace

PAINTING

The Book of Peace is a 1913 painting by Edgard Maxence held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. It was purchased by the gallery from the Paris Salon in the year it was painted. The real painting has a shiny, lacquered darkness which cannot be conveyed by a digital reproduction.

DIATONIC

The track *The Book of Peace* is a diatonic composition. What this means here is that it uses only the white keys of a piano. No black key is ever pressed.

COUNTERPOINT

The track makes use of careful but uncomplicated counterpoint compositional techniques *(contrapuntal)* of the kind strongly associated with the Baroque Classical period. Back before I knew what counterpoint was, an online friend of mine (one with a music degree) pointed out that an electronic track I'd made using the original Playstation was contrapuntal, and structured like a fugue, so it seems this is an approach I've been attracted to for longer than I've consciously understood it.

MONO overleaf

MONO

The Book of Peace is the first of two mono tracks on Victris.

My dad, who lived through the evolution of records from shellac 78s to vinyl 33s and 45s, and then of vinyl records from mono to stereo, before ultimately championing CDs, asked "Why?" when I said I was going mono. Mono was the bad old thing he'd got away from. Of course, whatever is out of fashion eventually becomes interesting again to those for whom it was never in fashion.

Mono mixing can force a discretion and focus in sound, at least when compared to stereo. The obvious tradeoff is the loss of the sensation of varying width. A stereo mix can be visualised in a 2D square. Sounds which are fighting each other can be moved out of each other's way on two axes within the square: frequency and stereo placement. A mono mix has only one axis, the axis of frequency, so I visualise it not as a square but as a line. You can't push a sound out to the left or right to solve your mix problems in mono, so it encourages a kind of vertical clarity. And when a mono track plays, any and all speakers involved in playback are reproducing the same waveform at the same time.

Two sets of recordings in particular got me interested in monaural mixing. Autechre's 2000s albums, especially *Draft 7:30* and *Untilted*, contain a lot of mono or mono–leaning music. Then there was the release of *The Beatles in Mono* box set in 2009, which I'd naively expected I'd be able to purchase in a shop on launch day. It turned out that a zillion people were actually interested in mono recordings, or at least in The Beatles's mono recordings, and that those people had bought all the mono box sets in advance.
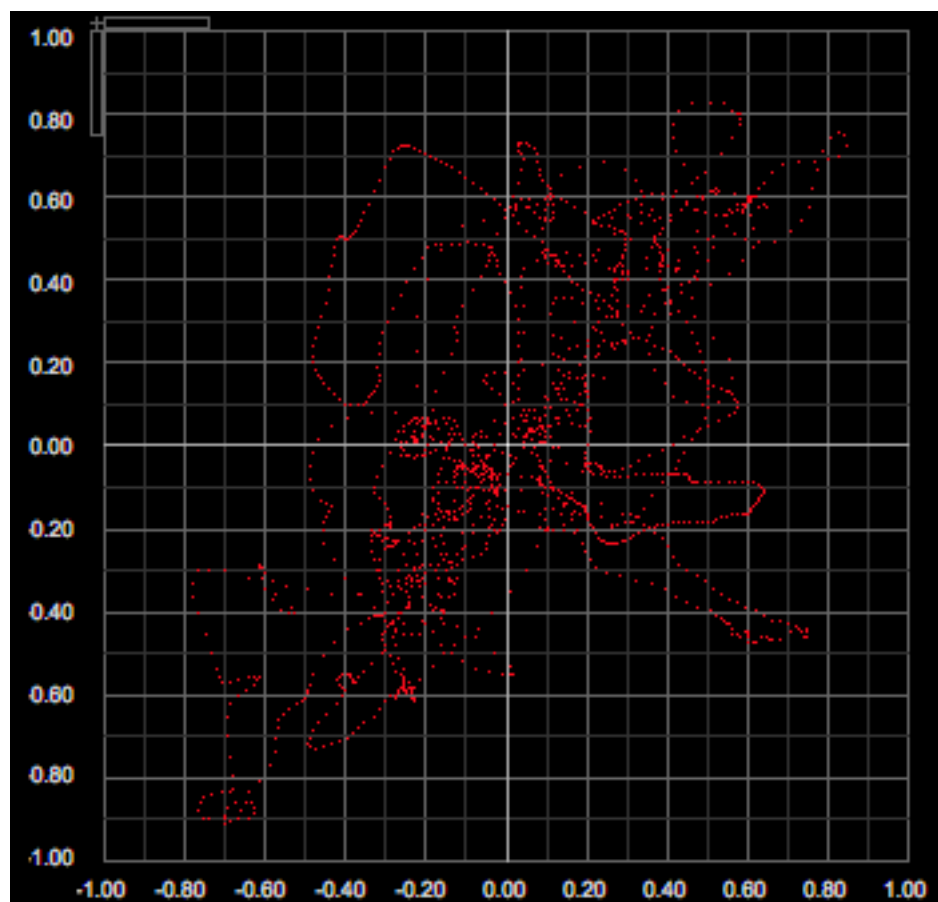
STEREO   MONO
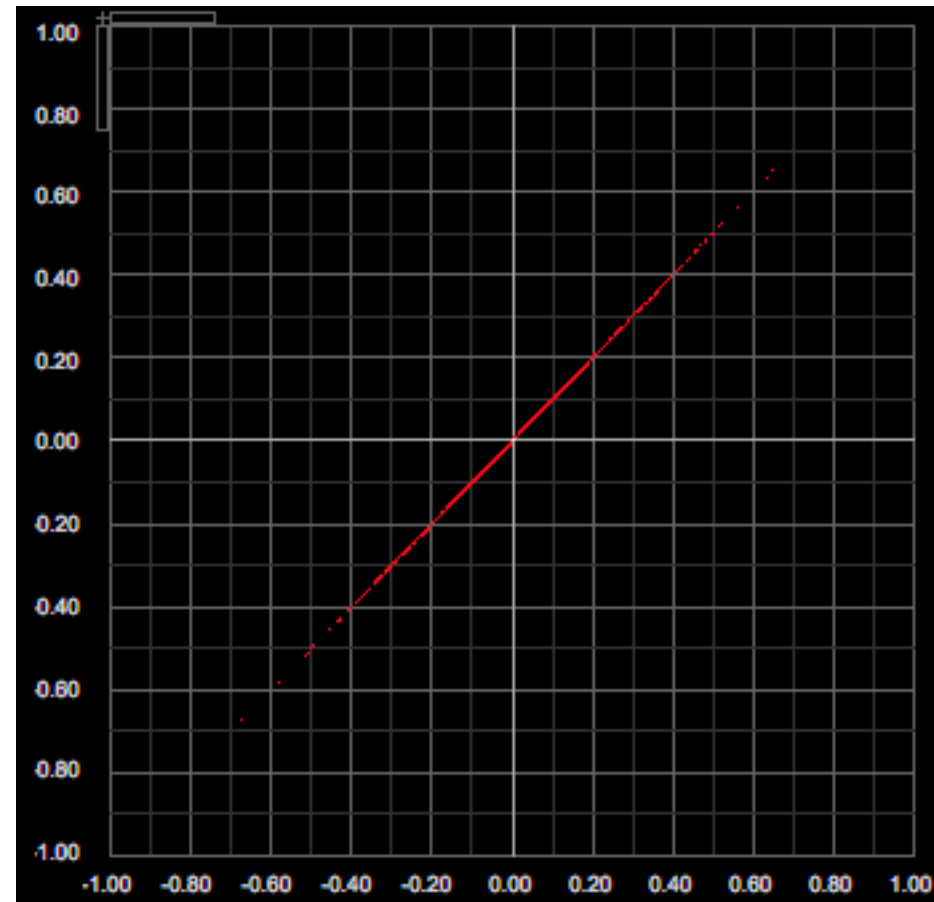
Kathle'en

GAUCHE

Male pop and rock musicians have a long history of cramming the namespace of songs with women's names. Some of the women are or were real, others are or were fictional.

I've previously ventured into this terrain by naming tracks for Tanith Lee (real British author), Irena Karpa (real Ukrainian musician/author), Hermione Granger (fictional British witch), Caylin-Calandria (fictional Australian movie teen from *Jindabyne* – I don't know if the character has a surname, but it's her amazing double-barrelled first name which pushes my eyebrows up) and Ania Pieroni (real Italian actress).

For me to name tracks after real women from the physical sphere of my life would strike me as way too gauche, even in this world of instrumental music where there aren't any lyrics to explicitly nail meanings to things. Nevertheless, I've been gauche and named this track after one such woman in the only manner I'd dare: an anonymising one. There are a zillion Kathleens out there and I'm convinced no-one else will know who this one was, is or will be.
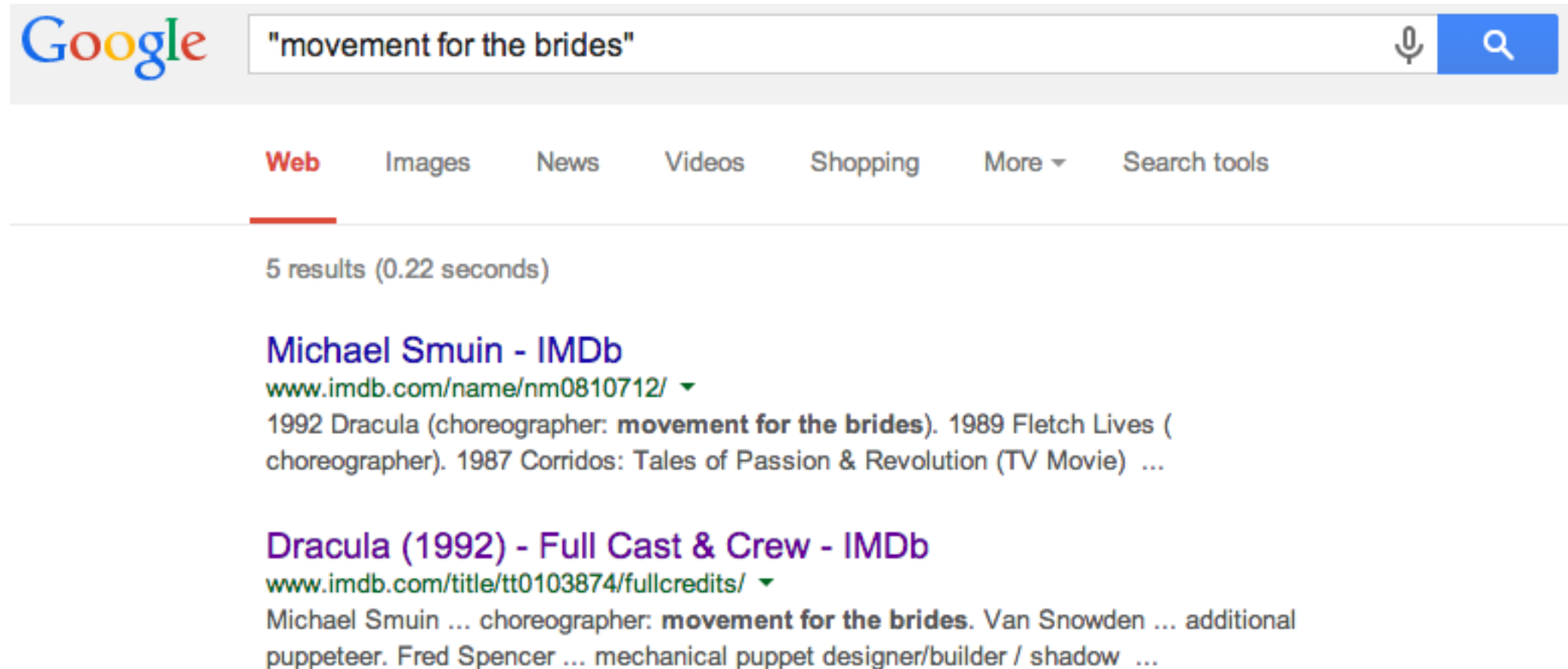
EUROVISION

I tend to think of any really obvious key changes in a track as "Eurovisionesque". With this word, I refer to the tendency of Eurovision songs to crank up the emotion with a brazen key change. It's one of the few musical devices that's both fast-acting enough and apparent enough to get the job done in the brief amount of time available to Eurovision songs: three minutes.

I'm glad that I don't have a three minute time limit on my tracks, but I still think of the main key change in *Kathle'en* as Eurovisionesque.

Movement for the Brides

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

THERE WAS A LITTLE GIRL
      AKA **MADHOUSE**
           AKA **AND WHEN SHE WAS BAD**
                AKA **FLESH AND THE BEAST**
                    AKA **SCARED TO DEATH**

Some female vocal samples in this track are sourced from the 1981 horror film *There Was a Little Girl*, one of the 39 official Video Nasties from that early 1980s moral panic in the UK.

The only DVD print of this film available to date suffers from an extremely botched soundtrack encoding. Most of the dialogue is inaudible unless you turn the volume up so high that you can hear the noise floor during quiet moments – right after which a sudden volume spike will inevitably blow your head off. You have to ride your volume dial through every minute of this film if you want to be able to make out what's being said while also guarding against the threat of severe hearing damage.

Nurse 2 Alyssa Type

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

Several years ago I significantly relented on my lifelong playing of computer and videogames for all of time, interest and RSI-related reasons.

My favourite occurrence in gaming during my adult life was the arrival of Survival Horror games: the *Resident Evil* series (before they became action fests) and the *Silent Hill* series, and all of both their cousins. Playing *Resident Evil 2* on the original Playstation was like being transported into George Romero's strongest zombie film *Day of the Dead* (1985).

The heyday of this original model of tough, arduous and harrowing horror games for consoles ran from about 1996, when the original *Resident Evil* appeared, to 2004, when *Resident Evil 4* ushered in an actional focus change for both gamers and the industry. Survival Horror games have added tremendous quality to my life, and I know they've done that for tons of other gamers, too, so I'm always thinking about them, about the atmosphere they create, the physiological experiences they engender and the shots they've given to my horror imagination. I have a great backlog of these games which I've collected for the older Playstation consoles, and which I intend to play my way through over time.

I've always liked horror, but as an adult I've also noticed that horror material is about the only genre material guaranteed to have a positive effect on me when I'm having trouble with my depression. Horror always makes me feel more alive.

Angel Team

SAMPLES

1978 Cassette "Applesoft 2 Step By Step" by Program Design, Inc
Breathing machine
Chain strike
Computer fan
Exhaust pipe
Fire extinguisher
Hydraulic Press
Metal box
Metal cabinet
Metal junk
Mic crackle
Nailgun
Radio static
Ratchet
Ruler, desk, coin
Shovel
Stapler
Steam
Tape hiss
Water pump

TAPE

My previous album *Hold R1* was bounced off a STUDER reel-to-reel tape recorder at the mastering stage. This was suggested by the mastering engineer Reece Tunbridge, and I really liked the result.

For *Victris*, I came into the mastering session asking Kathy Naunton about using tape again. She talked me around to trying a Rupert Neve tape emulator unit instead, the idea being to bring to the all digital source material a lot of the pros of analogue tape (something akin to a rounding quality – harshnesses tamed, harmonics added et al.) without a lot of the cons (tape hiss, tricky frequency contour changes, the increasing expense and rarity of real tape, et al.).

Regina doesn't have the technical knowledge for that

DINO CRISIS

Rick: "… We should gather up the parts, and assemble the devices."

Gail: "Don't be ridiculous. Regina doesn't have the technical knowledge for that. We don't even know if all the right parts are there. We'd be better off simply trying to hunt down the completed devices."

Rick: "It's too dangerous down there! She won't make it!"

Gail: "It's your call then, Regina. You're the one who has to do this. So what's your choice?"

Aeriae

Victris

Clan Analogue CA043

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Track notes by Wade.

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