

Music within Finland's Computer and Video Game Industry: Global Opportunities for Local Musicians

This paper explores the current Finnish computer and video games industry, and in particular its musical component, highlighting key facts and suggesting possible future research as to creative and business opportunities for musicians.

In the past decade, the Finnish game industry has grown significantly, largely, though not exclusively due to the global success of Remedy Entertainment, producer of the internationally acclaimed *Max Payne* and *Alan Wake* series', and Rovio Entertainment, creator of the *Angry Birds* series, three of whose games figure amongst the top ten best-selling iPhone apps of all time¹. This statistic does not cover games alone, but includes all applications. These companies'sales are measured in the millions: the original *Max Payne* sold over four million copies worldwide². While *Max Payne* and *Alan Wake* franchises range in price from 10 to 100 € for select special editions, Rovio's *Angry Birds* applications are generally priced at 0.99 US \$. Rovio's 2011 annual report is impressive:

Rovio's game offerings in 2011 consisted of three games, all based on the Angry Birds characters: Angry Birds, Angry Birds Seasons, and Angry Birds Rio. The games are available as both free and paid versions on all popular mobile and connected devices. The total number of game downloads reached 648 million by the end of year 2011 and the total number of active monthly users, across all platforms, reached 200 million.

*The number of employees grew from 28 to 224 during the year 2011.*³

Both of these companies collaborate internationally: *Max Payne* was made into a Hollywood film, and *Angry Birds* is integrated into Lucas Films' *Star Wars* franchise and 20th Century Fox's animated film *Rio*.

Above and beyond these two companies, the gaming industry is fast becoming one of Finland's leading exports. What role does music play?

Modern games are created to be holistic experiences, one in which music is central, thereby creating new opportunities for local musicians who compose their soundtracks. University of Tampere researcher Anu Tuveva has looked into music's significance in games, and suggests local music education plays a key role, as training both in classical and popular music is of a high standard⁴.

Petri Alanko, who composed the soundtrack to Remedy's *Alan Wake*, was selected for the job because of his demo tape, but between his selection and the game's release, five years had elapsed⁴, suggesting the long-term nature of such projects. Personal friendships can also prove important: the rock group *Poets of the Fall* got their song *Late Goodbye* on the *Max Payne 2* soundtrack because the composer happened to be a childhood friend of members of the game production team. This gave the band much international exposure and increased interest in their music, as more than one song was featured in the game⁵. We see thus how such visibility can have a concrete impact on musicians' careers.

The music of Rovio's games is simpler, reminiscent of the more traditional notions of game music of the eighties and nineties. Ari Pulkkinen, composer and sound designer, developed thematic approaches to symbolise the game's key concepts⁶, one that takes into account *Angry Birds*' simpler

nature. It is worth noting that Finnish music education integrates thematic approaches to music-making in both performance and practice.

According to Tukeyva, Finnish musicians have not yet realised the gaming industry's full potential. Alanko, who has won awards⁷ for his *Alan Wake* compositions, suggests that to stand out in a new and emerging field requires both strong musical and marketing skills⁴. This in turn implies a need to provide young musicians with appropriate training in these areas.

This initial analysis could benefit from further research, above and beyond the role played by these two companies. Clearly, musicians have a major role to play in this new field, one which offers real creative opportunities, possibilities for global exposure and financial success.

¹ <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-top-10-best-selling-iphone-apps-of-all-time-2012-3?op=1>

² <http://remedygames.com/games/>

³ <http://www.rovio.com/en/news/press-releases/161/rovio-entertainment-reports-2011-financial-results/>

⁴ http://yle.fi/uutiset/pelimusiikista_suomalainen_vientituote/5320284

⁵ <http://www.eurorockpromotions.com/interviews/Marko%20Poets%20of%20the%20Fall%20Interview.mp3>

⁶ <http://www.aripulkkinen.com/2011/03/14/making-of-angry-birds-music/>

⁷ <http://www.petrialanko.net/bio/>



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