

Pokémon Colosseum

A Case Study of a Video Game Soundtrack

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1. Introduction

It's hard enough to write a thesis when you aren't accustomed to being verbose when your career is fixated on using everything but words. Putting something of personal importance into written form can be a tricky and fragile endeavor. You don't want to miss out on details, nor overstep your timeframe out of respect to others, so it's frequent that our favorite memories are merely categorized as "inexplicable", "incredible" or "indescribable" to save the time it would take to justify our feelings towards a subject: maybe hours, days, weeks, months... This thesis is my attempt at doing just that, to take the time to dive deep into my own memories, my childhood, and give some academic substance to a cherished experience.

The reason I chose this particular topic is because it's one of a few games that placed the seeds of interest in my career as a music composer, more specifically, and inspired me during my adolescence to begin my journey by making a compilation of MIDI and virtually instrumented covers of video game music.¹ I don't consider myself a gamer, and in fact would one ask me the total amount of video games I actually played and finished, they'd be met with a disappointingly short list, but I am, by all definitions, a fan. I'm also no novice uninitiated into the language of video games, having worked on composition and implementation for them for well over a decade as of the writing of this thesis.² It is thus my hope that this thesis demonstrates not just my understanding of video game music, but that it also showcases an aspect of my profile and style, as I've frequented this memory as inspiration when composing my own works for audiovisual projects.

To this day I frequently listen to the soundtrack of the franchise, and more specifically that of this game. It's not a title that stands out as an example of innovative composition, nor taking technological leaps, nor even winning awards, although it had been nominated in 2005 for the Console Children's Game of the Year award by the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences.³

1 "BELMERISMS". soundcloud.com. Javier Belmer. Archived: <https://soundcloud.com/javierbelmer/sets/belmerisms>

2 Thesis was finalized in May, 2024.

3 "2005 Awards Category Details: Console Children's Game of the Year". interactive.org. Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences. Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20231027183239/https://www.interactive.org/awards/award_category_details.asp?idAward=2005&idGameAwardType=41

This thesis will dive into the soundtrack of the game Pokémon Colosseum, with a focus on the use of motifs throughout its tracks, their effect, as well as showcasing both the contrasts and similarities in style and narrative function between this game and that of the franchise's previous titles.

2. Music in Video Games

It's been well established the importance and functionality that music has over all mediums. With video games, it's advanced to the point of now existing an entire field of study commonly referred to as *ludomusicology*.⁴ The study of the subject grows in weight as the desire to finding new and creative ways of implementing and composing music for interactive media grows alongside it. Games are, as James Hannigan puts it, "... a distinct art form (...) all humanity can surely benefit from."⁵

Something curious happens in video games that sets it apart from other forms of media and that's its genres. You can have a book be historic, romantic, fantastic, thriller, etc.; the same for film and television. That's where it ends with those forms of media, because the way it's consumed is the same for all books, and the same for all films. However in video game reviews and articles one needs to describe to its audience it by their game genre first, and secondly, if applicable, by their story genre.⁶

The style in which one can play the game alters the game. To follow the rules religiously; to completely alter the game to the point of making that experience unique to the player. Developers, designers and composers have attempted to push the boundaries of how much power a player has over the elements of the game. They can be entirely linear, where you go from one point of the screen to another, level by level until you complete it, or you can be dropped at a 3D spot and left to your wits to figure out what to do.

The sky's the limit in this medium, however, in order it to be crowned a game, it must follow three requirements:

- Someone has to be playing it.
- Rules ought to exist in order to play it.
- Rules ought to come with a reward.^{117,7}

It's an important distinction from other media, because it establishes the prime characteristic of any video game, and the ability to exercise agency over the medium, or simply put, *interactivity*.⁸

4 "The Cambridge Companion to Video Game Music". Fritsch, Melanie; Summers, Tim. Cambridge University Press. 2021. ISBN ISBN 978-1-108-47302-6

5 "Understanding Video Game Music". Summers, Tim. Cambridge University Press. 2016. ISBN 978-1-107-11687-0

6 "Level Up! The Guide to Great Video Game Design". Rogers, Scott. 2nd Edition. 2014. ISBN 978-1-118-87716-6

7 By a reward I mean something has to happen as a response to the rules being followed (or not), whether you win and/or lose in a puzzle, succeed in a quest, jump, attack, move or stay put. If there's no response to anything a player does and/or does not do, there is no game.

8 Chapter 1 from "Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design". Collins, Karen. Cambridge, MA- MIT Press. 2008. ISBN 978-0-262-03378-7

As a result, how music ought to be composed, designed, or implemented depends first on the mechanics and interactive nature of the game itself. Its complexity comes in understanding the function and relationship that exists between the music and playability. Whether meant to actively signal the player to take action; reward accomplishments after successfully performing said action; illustrate the traits of a character or a location.

Taking into account options in interactivity, various possible approaches to altering audio can be considered to best fulfill its purpose, whether gameplay or narrative related. This includes pitch, tempo, dynamics, mixing, harmony, rhythm, melody... Any kind of variations can be achieved quite easily nowadays with middleware when implementing music and/or sound for a game.⁹ This begs the question: does this mean the method of writing music for games differs vastly from others such as film or theatre? Frankly, no. Composers of other fields frequently try to anticipate and direct the audience for their productions, thus engaging in a form of passive interactivity. Non-linearity may be a unique characteristic of video games, and at the heart of interactive media, but playing with audience's expectations has been at the center of most if not all art.

Next, I shall dive deeper into the game Pokémon Colosseum. Before we analyze the game's music, it is important to delve into the background, commercial function and narrative context of the game, as well as the mechanics of previous instalments of the franchise and the impact they have had on this chapter of the Pokémon World.

3. Background of Pokémon Colosseum

The role-playing game was released in late 2003 for the Nintendo GameCube console, published by Nintendo and The Pokémon Company and developed by Genius Sonority.¹⁰ As is usual for most games of the franchise, the player begins in a single remote area, in this case, the Outskirt Stand. It serves as a starting point for the adventure, from which the player progressively traverses the region, its villages and wilderness. Typically, each area is inhabited by magical creatures known as Pokémon (short for "pocket monsters"), waiting to be battled, captured and trained by you, with which you in turn can use in battle against other trainers.¹¹ By defeating your opponents in a turn-based combat system (choosing one attack per Pokémon per turn), the player's monster gains experience points (EXP), which when crossing a specific numerical threshold, increase its level and allow it to learn new moves, upgrade its abilities and stats, as well as change its appearance via "evolution". This gameplay formula has been and remains the core mechanic of all the mainline games of the franchise, immediately establishing a desire to progress for the player as they strengthen their team and strive to become the world's best Pokémon trainer.

Colosseum is no stranger to these features, although we should note a few immediate differences.

9 Chapter 8 from "Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design". Collins, Karen. Cambridge, MA- MIT Press. 2008. ISBN 978-0-262-03378-7

10 "Pokémon Colosseum". ign.com. Craig Harris. Archived: <https://www.ign.com/articles/2004/03/23/pokemon-colosseum-2>

11 "Pokémon Colosseum". ign.com. IGN Staff. Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100419002442/http://cube.ign.com/articles/490/490107p1.html>

An obvious change in the game from its mainline brethren is the shift from 2D to 3D graphics, which while not originating in Colosseum is an evolution from its predecessors, Pokémon Stadium and Pokémon Stadium 2.¹² These two titles were released on the Nintendo 64 to serve as support, spin-offs, for their respective generation's handheld portable games: Pokémon Stadium supported the titles Pokémon Red, Blue and Yellow for the Game Boy; Pokémon Stadium 2 supplemented Pokémon Gold, Silver and Crystal for the Game Boy Color. Back in the release of these Stadium titles, it was a good excuse to encourage Pokémon fans to purchase and play the N64. The shift in presentation from pixelated 2D visuals on a small low-resolution handheld screen to seeing their Pokémon come to life in vibrant 3D graphics on a larger and higher-resolution TV made the games immediately appealing to audiences. With updated visuals and a soundtrack that graced listeners with music from the old games by using modern virtual instruments, pulling away from limited sound chips, it's evident that the success of Stadium 1 and 2 motivated The Pokémon Company to repeat the same for the next generation of games.

Excerpts from different pieces used in the Pokémon Stadium N64 games and their respective mainline counterparts can be heard and checked in the following referenced hyperlinks:

- Title Screen Music:
 - [Pokémon Red & Blue](#)¹³ || [Pokémon Stadium](#)¹⁴
 - [Pokémon Gold & Silver](#)¹⁵ || [Pokémon Stadium 2](#)¹⁶
- Battle Music:
 - [Pokémon Red & Blue](#)¹⁷ || [Pokémon Stadium](#)¹⁸
 - [Pokémon Gold & Silver](#)¹⁹ || [Pokémon Stadium 2](#)²⁰

Similarly, the attempt with Colosseum was to enhance the player's experience of the third generation of games for the Game Boy Advance: Pokémon Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald. Here's the [title screen](#)²¹ of these three versions, re-orchestrated for the Battle Mode in Colosseum.

12 "Pokémon Colosseum". rpgamer.com. Cain, Derek 'Roku'. Archived:

<https://archive.rpgamer.com/games/pokemon/pokecol/pokecol.html>

13 "Pokémon Red/Blue Opening". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived:

<https://www.youtube.com/clip/UgkxFlrTnG2PZkuRQZ0LIG9TiGxdplJ6EKop>

14 "Pokémon Stadium Opening and Title Screen". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Kenta Nagata,

Hajime Wakai and Toru Minegishi. Archived: https://www.youtube.com/clip/UgkxxE65i4pKqdD_MbCmop2r3DboskG7XG23

15 "Pokémon Gold/Silver Opening and Title Screen". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and

Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://www.youtube.com/clip/Ugkx7IbNoJclETd-Rpi9ETf9w21HyOXTpnTB>

16 "Pokémon Stadium 2 Title Screen". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda and Hajime Wakai. Archived:

<https://youtu.be/d9J0b788MbA?si=hOLpZl0iU52l8V14>

17 "Pokémon Red/Blue Gym Leader Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived:

https://youtu.be/RJKlrqO1Zas?si=7ZvFLoaTgjpIA_dU

18 "Pokémon Stadium Gym Castle Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Kenta Nagata, Hajime

Wakai and Toru Minegishi. Archived: <https://youtu.be/p8fNiN5Gg1A?si=Zrj-so3ORVm22Z1P>

19 "Pokémon Gold/Silver Gym Leader Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and

Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://youtu.be/1pBl5sWchJY?si=N3LyIDLQPObRzldN>

20 "Pokémon Stadium 2 Gym Castle Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda and Hajime Wakai.

Archived: https://youtu.be/83KuH4AS1VE?si=yEIIQ_PvdAzyb5nM

21 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Mode Menu". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and

Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://youtu.be/ONzULrTfVxQ?si=btpMH5IHdb_OErm-

However, Colosseum also deviates from the Stadium titles by incorporating a role-playing Story mode outside of the usual Single Player and Multiplayer Battle modes accessible from the main menu.

To this day, the ultimate goal of most games is cleverly referenced in the slogan, "Gotta Catch 'em All"²², taken from the late 90s theme song from the first season of the English adaptation of the Pokémon anime. In contrast, the slogan placed in the back of the box art for the game took a different direction with the phrase, "Gotta Save 'em All!".²³ This specifically is relevant to begin understanding the tone of the game, which separates it from previous titles, and thus affected the mood and stylistic approach in the music. While the core battle mechanic and goal of capturing and battling monsters remained true to the formula, it was no longer possible to engage in random encounters with wild Pokémon, an element that was at the heart of the mainline games for years, justified in the game by its location, a desolate, arid and inhospitable landscape. See the images below for reference.²⁴



The game's designer, Akihiko Miura, had this to say about the game, "I had been paying attention to the world that Hiromoto-san (Shinichi Hiromoto, art director) depicted for a long time. I thought he was a person who drew manga with a sharp, detailed world, but with characters that had a strong impact. I told him about my concept, and the world and characters that came out were "dry, desert-like". To put it bluntly, it's 'outlandish'. It was a world that was different from the Pokémon of the past."²⁵

Hiromoto's art-style for the game and its characters can be supported by his work as a manga artist.²⁶ Most notably, his works in STONE²⁷ and Sex★Machine²⁸ showcase characters, wardrobe and dystopian environments that mirror that of the ones in Colosseum. (See the following images.)²⁹

22 "Can't Regret Them All: The Story of the Very Lucrative 'Pokemon Theme'". billboard.com. Dan Rys. Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160802071543/http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/7453639/true-story-behind-pokemon-theme-song>

23 "Pokémon Colosseum". thecoverproject.net. US Retail Cover. Archived: https://www.thecoverproject.net/view.php?cover_id=1968

24 "Región de Aura". guiasnintendo.com. Nintendo. Archived: https://www.guiasnintendo.com/2_GAMECUBE/Pokemon_Colosseum/pokemon_colosseum_sp/ciudades.html

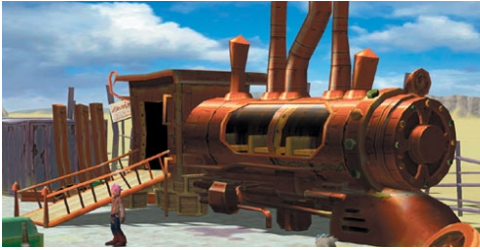
25 "'Let's do something new' brings together specialists". nintendo.co.jp. Manada Yamana, Akihiro Miura, Shinichi Hiromoto and Tsukasa Tawada. Translation by Deepl. Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110629121738/http://www.nintendo.co.jp/nom/0311/soft/interv01.html>

26 "The path to becoming a manga artist". city.tamana.lg.jp. PR Tamana. 2003. Archived: <https://www.city.tamana.lg.jp/q/aview/112/2205.html>

27 "STONE" (2001-2002, Monthly Afternoon, Kodansha) 2 volumes. Hiromoto, Shinichi. Archived: <https://mangadex.org/title/9fdcba2a-fa31-41e5-a1f0-6db9d02a2ddf/stone>

28 "Sex★Machine". (2000-2001, Monthly Comic Beam, Enterbrain) 2 volumes. Hiromoto, Shinichi.

29 "Pokémon Colosseum Screen Shots". Archived: <https://archive.rpgamer.com/games/pokemon/pokecol/pokecolss.html>



This also coincides with Nintendo's attempt at targeting their games for slightly older audiences, competing with other consoles like the PS2 and the Xbox. While staying mostly targeted to its family and kid-friendly fanbase, they expanded their roster of releases available on the console for more mature franchises such as Resident Evil, Metal Gear Solid, Tom Clancy's SplinterCell, Viewtiful Joe, etc. Other friendlier franchises such as Metroid, Sonic and Pokémon were also affected by this new direction.³⁰

In contrast to previous Pokémon games³¹, where lush green meadows, rivers, towns, cities, flora and fauna engulfed the map with vibrant colors, the shades and overall palette of Colosseum is a bit duller, grittier, less saturated, and reinforces the mood and story. The plot can be summarized as follows:

Set in the arid desert landscape of the Orre region, Wes, a former member of the nefarious group Team Snagem, severs ties with them by infiltrating their hideout and claiming their Snag Machine, a potent device capable of forcibly taking Pokémon from other trainers.³²

Your character's primary goal is to rescue "Shadow Pokémon," which are Pokémon whose hearts have been closed off and turned into weapons by an evil organization known as Cipher. With the help of your new friend Rui, a girl with the power to identify Shadow Pokémon, Wes must rescue these creatures from other trainers, restore their hearts, and prevent Cipher from accomplishing their ambition of world domination.

We had a new landscape, a new art style, and new mechanics. In the words of game director Manada Yamana, "After putting the storyline on top of the crazy illustrations and world... the next step was the music."⁹⁸

30 "Adults courted as GameCube's newest audience". chicagotribune.com. Chmielewski, Dawn C.; San Jose Mercury News. Chicago Tribune. 2001. Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220822174639/https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2001-10-15-0110150197-story.html>

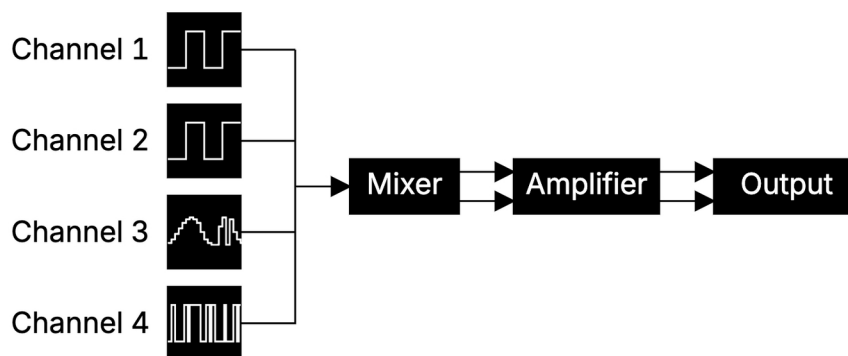
31 Naturally, we don't mention the first generations of games that were released in the Game Boy, as the handheld console's screen was black and white. consoledatabase.com. Archived: <https://www.consoledatabase.com/consoleinfo/nintendogameboycolor/>

32 "Pokémon Colosseum Review". gamespot.com. Ryan Davis (2004). Archived: <https://web.archive.org/web/20201207093551/https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/pokymon-colosseum-review/1900-6091954/>

4. The Sonority of Pokémon Colosseum

³³We've already mentioned in the previous chapter how the change in style of music can be inspired by the shift to 3D graphics. An improvement in technology, visuals, camera movements and animations could inspired a differently paced soundtrack. In chapter 3 we saw differences in pacing between the Stadium games and their handheld Nintendo Game Boy and GB Color counterparts.

The sound chip of the Game Boy console forced composers to get creative with their techniques. It had 4 channels: two of which produced pulse waves, a third loading specific waveforms, and a fourth reserved for generating noise for percussive strikes and sound effects. (See the image below.)³⁴



As such, complex polyphony was limited and harmony was largely simulated by using techniques such as arpeggios. Creative voicings allowed chords and beats to be perceived by a sequence of notes, resulting in a lot of the musical phrasings to feel packed in speed and seemingly endless in pacing.³⁵

The technology in the GameCube however had advanced enough to not have to rely on these limitations. Nintendo developed a DSP (Digital Signal Processor) to provide richer sounds, which allowed streaming pre-produced music through the console's 16-bit stereo audio interface.³⁶ Tsukasa Tawada talks about how in Pokémon Colosseum, where streaming would have been easier to create, he preferred to push the capabilities of the consoles sound source performance.³⁷ Answering to a question that alluded to the concept of "birth pains", and maybe potential difficulties that come with innovation, the composer had this to say, "I'm not that type of person, and I particularly enjoyed working on this project. We had to write five songs in ten days, but it was still fun!"⁹⁸

³³ By sonority, I use the Cambridge University and the Spanish Royal Academy definitions; describing the quality of sound, which can include a number of elements such as timbre, resonance, noise, instrumentation, sound, harmony, acoustic characteristics... Archived: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sonority> ; <https://dle.rae.es/sonoridad>

³⁴ "Audio – Pan Docs". gbdev.io. 2024. Archived: <https://gbdev.io/pandocs/Audio.html>

³⁵ "A Guide To Chiptune Music". synthcentric.com. Schwebel, Dan.2023. Archived: <https://www.synthcentric.com/articles/a-guide-to-chiptune-music#:~:text=The%20term%20%22chiptune%22%20comes%20from,ranging%20from%203%20to%205>

³⁶ "GameCube Architecture". copetti.org. Copetti, Rodrigo. 2024. Archived: <https://www.copetti.org/writings/consoles/gamecube/>

³⁷ ゲームサイド Vol.06. マイクロマガジン社. (2007年6月1日)

We've heard such differences in the examples showcased in Chapter 3. Below is an example demonstrating fast paced arpeggiation in battle music in Pokémon Red & Blue, and how much faster and more reliant on sequential notes it is in comparison to a battle theme in Colosseum.

- [Pokémon Red & Blue](#)³⁸
- [Pokémon Colosseum](#)³⁷

There are other aspects that affected the production and sonority of the music. Over the years, as the games became more and more popular with each release, interest for the Pokémon franchise to expand the use of real-world locations beyond Japan as the source of inspiration for its regions grew. In the last years, the countries of France, Spain, the UK and the US have been the footprints for the region maps and the elements inside of them.³⁹ Its expansion began with Colosseum.

Tsukasa Tawada, composer of Colosseum, had this to say, "Miura (Akihiro Miura, lead designer) laid out the concept and Hiromoto-san showed me the art and illustrations, so I could see the direction of the music we were going to take. Looking at them, I got a very fond nostalgic feeling I had as a child, like 'I want to grow up and look into the adult world'. So I thought, let's show an urban, dry, adult world. The model for this world is Phoenix, Arizona, USA."⁹⁸

Pulling away from the vivid and vibrant landscapes of earlier Pokémon games (although not counting the designs of the creatures themselves), and diving deeper into darker tones, shades and palettes, with a story that matches the aesthetic, and advancements in the console's build, it's clear how the music came to be.

Now, although the entire video game score is influenced by rock, country, pop, blues and jazz, to suggest that the entire score is based on the state of Arizona is a bit of a stretch. However, we can look into a few settlements where the music could reflect that southern American state aesthetic:

[Outskirt Stand](#)⁴⁰: A remote, old, rusty gasoline station and diner, this location serves as the starting point of our adventure (after the game's introductory cutscene). Being able to move around for the first time, explore the interior and interact with a few characters, we immediately get a different feel for the game's tone and the narrative direction. There are two elements to point out from this location: the sound and the music.

- The Sound: Probably the element that stands out first of the two, hearing this gives us a feeling of total isolation, and appropriately reflects the inhospitable desert in which we first commence playing.

38 "Pokémon Red & Blue: Wild Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived: https://youtu.be/aOrmCB4ZGGo?si=82f0aj5_cRds7Rq

39 "Pokémon: Every Region And The Real-World Countries They're Inspired By". thegamer.com. Hanna, Jeremy; Eakin, Jon. 2024. Archived: <https://www.thegamer.com/pokemon-region-real-world-country-inspiration/>

40 "Outskirt Stand with SFX". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/ddTUT9Qhy2M?si=UJNrFUYxriY__Cli

- The Music: A lonely harmonica soloing a minor Blues scale melody. Its almost prison-like feel supports the desolate soundscape.⁴¹ With a metric seemingly free time, uncertainty is how we're first introduced into the harsh world. While this melody isn't repeated elsewhere in the map, the usage of the harmonica is relevant in deciphering some key elements of the score. The Blues scale is important to keep in mind as we go later through the main motifs of the game. (See the image below.)⁴²



These two points are a stark contrast from our usual start to our Pokémon journeys. Let's see how other games illustrate their starting locations:

- [Pokémon Red & Blue](#)⁴³
- [Pokémon Gold & Silver](#)⁴⁴
- [Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire](#)⁴⁵

Now, across all games there's a sense of "humble beginnings", Colosseum mirrors this aspect, however, while in these last three the music surrounds the listener with a feelings of comfort, hope and shelter from the outside world, in the GameCube game those feelings are nowhere to be felt. There's no shelter, which makes it quite the brave start for a Pokémon game. It's not until our second location that we finally turn away from the desolate landscape in exchange for a breathe of fresh air, or in this case, *water*.

41 "Outskirt Stand". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/gkjjw815GB8w?si=0NlaXiheB4q9V9Tj>

42 Outskirt Stand Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aago1_YAwAp9p7CIVbkBCHsXDZ11114/view?usp=drive_link

43 "Pokémon Red & Blue: Pallet Town". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived: <https://youtu.be/whK10hyYKPo?si=dwHpd2ScsJNlqbil>

44 "Pokémon Gold & Silver: New Bark Town". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://youtu.be/oDbp35Rm0ds?si=0nI_CQJivb0rKB1b

45 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Littleroot Town". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://youtu.be/vpS_BN9jL7A?si=AUzvAyLrx3mR7aKM

[Phenac City](#)⁴⁶: The first and biggest town our hero arrives at, this oasis in the desert of the region⁴⁷ is a shift from the Outskirt Stand at the start. Filled with visuals and sounds of running water, the music⁴⁸ that accompanies us here can be separated into two sections:

- First section: A simple arpeggiated harp in E major scale like water droplets accompanied by high strings sustaining the fifth (B) signal to the player a contrast from the rusty and strong winded pit stop. In a land as unwelcoming as Orre, this town serves as a resting spot for weary travelers, as you stop by the Pokémon Center and PokéMart to heal and stock up on supplies. It's, literally, refreshing⁴⁹.
- Second section: an ascending cadence directs us to an accelerated beat, alluding to the liveliness and size (for a game) of the city, as well as the friendliness of its citizens. It is in this part where we hear a familiar sound, the harmonica, this time upbeat and cheerful, no longer wandering around in the sad uncertainty of the desert. The last few bars before the piece repeats and returns to the first section displays a climactic progression, the relevance of which will be showcased in the next chapter as we explore the main themes of this adventure.

Tsukasa Tawada can be seen performing his work from his YouTube Channel⁵⁰, curiously starting with the second section, and continuing with the first. Let's move on with the next stop on the map.

[Agate Village](#)⁵¹: After tirelessly traversing through towns with rough terrain, battling trainers and rescuing Shadow Pokémon, a lush green environment on the north western mountainside of the map, populated primarily by elderly folk, meets the character's gaze. One will realize when playing the Story Mode that the pacing and order of events allows the player to take breaks and frequently change sceneries. The slow pace gameplay that accompanies the arid and desaturated landscape requires locations like these to be sprinkled throughout the map. The once again, the tranquil melody of the harmonica and the swaying arpeggiating acoustic guitar creates a sound approximating a Country/Folk waltz, only it fails to keep the 3/4 time signature, staying at 6/8.⁵² In Tawada's performance of this piece on his YouTube Channel⁵³, you can hear it contains elements of a reduced and slowed down saloon ambience, the Major Blues scale being showcased in the A sharp, which ultimately appropriately accompanies the visuals of the village.

While in Phenac City the back-and-forth between the two sections added a sharper dynamism between clean serenity and city excitement, Agate Village manages to keep its tempo and instrumentation consistently, and alongside the rushing sound of the river, succeeds in transmitting a very calm and aged feeling.

46 "Pokémon Colosseum: Phenac City". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/5wEZW1ZSeEM?si=cvkeExj7LVrcEire>

47 "Pokémon Colosseum: World Map (Phenac City description)". bulbagarden.net. Nintendo. Archived:

https://archives.bulbagarden.net/media/upload/archive/4/4b/20150607051519%21Orre_Phenac_City_Map.png

48 Phenac City Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R6vX6C0x3L0bq6E7yXIE37c-uAqf-XqI/view?usp=drive_link

49 Pun intended.

50 "Pokémon Colosseum Phénac City – Tsukasa Tawada". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed and arranged by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgBgsPFQNKY&ab_channel=TsukasaTawada

51 "Pokémon Colosseum: Agate Village". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/ciMGPjSvc6g?si=BS_Dc2Bx0vo3ahce

52 Agate Village Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1932jTT9DYFWWzmxUzMTgEuF33ThXpJH0/view?usp=drive_link

53 "Pokémon Colosseum Agate Village – Tsukasa Tawada". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed and arranged by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/fe3O3wQPugY?si=ElbuRCjOGBFEwNeU>

We move onto a minor example (and frankly a bizarre one), used in one small and remote location, though it reiterates what has been showcased in previous examples.

[Mt. Battle Break Room](#)^{54, 55}:

Mt. Battle is where, like many locations in the region, one can challenge trainers and increase their skills. The break room, which can be accessed after reaching a threshold of battles to rest and heal your Pokémon, calls back to a that laid back and relaxed sound. This time, however, we don't have a harmonica to lead us, only a pitch bending acoustic guitar, which, while not exactly wowing the crowd with the MIDI performance, serves as a disconnect from the battle ambience.

Finally, we arrive at the last of the pieces that possibly accentuates this Arizonian landscape.

The following location has two phases:

- [Construction Lot](#)⁵⁶: Since the accessibility of the building itself is tied to the events of the story, when you first arrive, you're met with rubble and a busy site not much to explore, and few people to talk to. However a familiar sound is brought back, the same wind as in the Outskirt Stand. It doesn't take much to see the intent behind this coincidence, nor is it surprising that a location that isn't "built" wouldn't contain music. Also, given that we're still in the world of Orre, it stands to reason that the same tempestuous soundscape would take center stage in the soundtrack.
- [Realgam Tower](#)^{57,58}: A gargantuan construct in the middle of the desert on top of which a new Colosseum has been built. This setting serves as the final stage of the Story Mode, where you'll have to battle old bosses, and meet the final villain of the entire story. Now, at first glance, the music doesn't necessarily allude to the finality of the game, nor does it hint at the infiltration of the evil organization inside the Tower itself, at least not yet (we'll get to that in a moment). Fast strummed acoustic guitars, steady and upbeat percussion, horns, and even a surprising Latin Pop section, all to celebrate the Colosseum's opening. While the music doesn't have a harmonica in its score, which tied the other examples together, the soloed guitar melody that carries the first section forward gives a very Country/Folk mood that matches the joyful styles of Phenac City and Agate Village.

An honorable mention in this analysis is the exterior⁵⁹ to the Cipher Lab location, which, although lacking any music, utilizes the same wind effect as the Stand and the Lot.

54 "Pokémon Colosseum: Mt. Battle Break Room". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/d8QkHnT1kDY?si=IB9MTzgdzeu9XKq>

55 Mt. Battle Break Room Music Sheet. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_xkXLP8WzThA1JxLHz_xDUoJYX-D9dpp/view?usp=drive_link

56 "Construction Lot". youtube.com. Gameplay footage by Geocax – Chapter Gameplays. Archived: <https://youtu.be/2f2b1V6D53I?si=sGDFy2g8uY0udViY>

57 "Pokémon Colosseum: Realgam Tower". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/VUx_qeC6Oc0?si=aR8d4pah69oo0e_k

58 Realgam Tower Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KImJqd7nJuPiDvep3g0u8lqn0AcOGmyX/view?usp=drive_link

Now, what do these pieces of music have to do with Phoenix, Arizona? Well, even if a bit low-brow, one can speculate it has to do with the use of the harmonica as a lead instrument, layering the soundtrack with acoustic guitars (sometimes leading), as well as using Folk and Blues progressions, harmonies and melody lines. We know that Arizona was used as inspiration for the game's world aesthetic, however I question the extent to which that was applied to the game's music, as I just attempted. While I don't believe that inspiration was applied to the full scope of the soundtrack, we can state with certainty a coherence in sonority and instrumentation among some of its tracks with this "quasi-western" style aesthetic.

However, we can jump into the next level of sonority this soundtrack presents, which, while deviating from the previous aesthetic, it's the one that transforms this bizarre adventure into an epic Pokémon tale.

The use of military-style marches and orchestration in Pokémon is nothing new, so this section will be brief, serving mostly to demonstrate that this game, too, follows that aesthetic. If we look once more at some pieces of not just the Pokémon Stadium games, but excerpts from the handheld titles, we see the desire to expand the sonic palette into the orchestra. Below is an image of an arrangement for piano of Pokémon Red & Blue's Gym theme.⁶⁰ It's a great example to use as the original music on its own already invites the trainer to the challenge and anticipates the tough battle ahead.



59 "Shadow Pokémon Lab Exterior". youtube.com. Nintendo. Archived: https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxR-uws7toSj6TmU20aiO_lJykKWHGs-QT?si=jOTLI29akYYr5wrE

60 "Pokémon Gym: Red & Blue Versions". ninsheetmusic.org. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived: <https://www.ninsheetmusic.org/download/pdf/75>

11 *8va*

mp

14 *f* *ff*

Let's hear now the orchestration from other Pokémon titles and compare their sonority. What we find is that, although there are differences in the quality of the sound chips and midi files, the core of the quality and feel stays consistent, although there's a certain satisfaction in hearing these pieces with updated MIDI instruments.

- [Pokémon Stadium](#)⁶¹ || [Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire](#)⁶²

Colosseum does this as well. In its Battle Mode, outside the single player role-playing Story Mode adventure, we can hear tracks from its Game Boy Advanced contemporaries, Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire. Let's see how Colosseum translates those pieces to its game's sound.

- Trainer Battle⁶³:
 - [Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire](#)⁶⁴ || [Colosseum Battle 1](#)⁶⁵
- Gym Leader Battle⁶⁶:
 - [Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire](#)⁶⁷ || [Colosseum Battle 2](#)⁶⁸

61 "Pokémon Stadium: Stadium Theme". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Kenta Nagata, Hajime Wakai and Toru Minegishi. Archived: <https://youtu.be/qxqvXZCCAIA?si=S1KzuZi-VrWbBvre>

62 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Pokémon Gym". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://youtu.be/BlvAjW6MUIk?si=k6nm_pB70oNIXSju

63 "Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire: Trainer Battle Music (Sheet Music)". Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oaJ63C0hA88oz1-8z20PrXEajEpZ_ux/view?usp=drive_link

64 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Trainer Battle Music". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://youtu.be/Cp-waxoLeI8?si=Ymsuhxo6qAo7VBci>

65 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Mode: Battle 1". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://youtu.be/DGuHD-eLI28?si=BuKV3uSKR28nzwPy>

66 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Gym Leader Battle Sheet Music". Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g8Qj6lwnmvuVGNsuxvJ9YGJPDQILBV6L/view?usp=drive_link

67 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Gym Leader Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j4sfjIXTA0&ab_channel=Pokeli

68 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Mode: Battle 2". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://youtu.be/VJ627O7K5s0?si=qcj7SrDxeQDzBLz0>

- Champion Battle⁶⁹:
 - [Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire](#)⁷⁰ || [Colosseum Battle 3](#)⁷¹

Overall, it's action driven, a constant call to arms that eggs the player on through the different areas of the map. Let's refocus and look at the prime sonority of the original tracks of the Pokémon Colosseum. This can be divided into two key points: the Battles and the World.

Battle Sonority:

In this game, the turn based battles contain various characteristics that both nods to the old games, as well as pulling away from the formula. Elements of Progressive Rock and Hard Rock, with fast paced hard hitting drums, sweeping distorted guitar leads, busy bass-lines, and even incorporating aspects of orchestral instrumentation add weight to the clash.

While generally battle music tends to be accelerated in contrast to the rest of the gameplay tracks to inspire excitement, danger and urgency, if we compare Colosseum's battles to its main console and handheld predecessors, we find that the pace is significantly slower. While many of the Pokémon battle themes have an alarming tempo what could be described as *Prestissimo* (oscillating between 180-190 beats per minute), the battles taking place in the Orre region sit between a cool *Vivace* and *Presto* (roughly around 140-150 bpm). It's still fast, but we have more room for textures and melodies to ring out. One could argue that the reason for this has to do with, again, the change of console. While in the Stadium games the tempo stayed largely the same in their iterations of the battle music, the rhythm section playing in half-time, giving it a much slower feel.

If we listen back again to Colosseum's own Battle Mode versions of the Ruby, Sapphire and Emerald^{59,56,53}, and contrast them with the Story Mode's music, the difference is noted.

Here are key battle tracks:

- [First Battle](#)^{37,36}
- [Normal Battle](#)^{2,1}
- [Cipher Peon Battle](#)^{72,73}
- [Semifinal Battle](#)^{74,75}

69 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Champion Battle Music (Sheet Music)". Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k_TiYoQ2KO6QHx4I0G6QZ03lHKldNkEi/view?usp=drive_link

70 "Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire: Champion Battle Music". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: https://youtu.be/LaAGsbtETlg?si=hyQ_la4ai0oYpgvX

71 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Mode: Battle 3". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda, Go Ichinose and Morikazu Aoki. Archived: <https://youtu.be/z9HhUHm97xc?si=1-w4HD8W3YclSo8O>

72 "Pokémon Colosseum: Cipher Peon Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/6pgnCANOW_A?si=j4aA6jIXkjPKadMu

73 Cipher Peon Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J_5G-LmmibFtbVJ-QFAjPoQusIAHVV-W/view?usp=drive_link

74 "Pokémon Colosseum: Semifinal Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/LIOD6jDRgg4?si=iLM54NlupRjMiXax>

75 Semifinal Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1As0OT2yNR5s1v1_dulKSaFp6CBXOFqJk/view?usp=drive_link

Something I've mentioned, but bears expanding a bit regarding these tracks is the use of electric guitars as lead instruments. It reiterates that, while still being a Pokémon game, and still targeted towards children, the use of more aggressive styles of music as inspiration attempts to attract a slightly older audience, at least matching the age of the lead character. Akihiko Miura (one of the game's lead designer) had this to share, "I wanted to create a story that was a little different from the world of Pokemon that we've seen so far, and a little more expansive. That's why the main character is around 17 years old, and his clothes are a little darker, so he's a little older."⁹⁸

World Sonority:

If one looks at the music piece of the world map, the title screen, one of the main arenas called Mt. Battle, and even the introductory music for the Colosseum, the use of classic orchestral instrumentation can be greatly appreciated. Even in a location as desolate as this, and having even explored the remote characteristics of the soundscape, the score soars above the desert sands triumphantly, as if expecting us to tackle the harsh landscape and conquer it. Here are some key examples.

- [Title Screen](#)^{41,40}
- [World Map](#)^{35,34}
- [Mt. Battle](#)^{32,31}
- [Cipher Admin Battle](#)^{29,28}: though being a battle theme, the significance in relation to the plot motivated the music to be orchestral, and thus has more gravitas than the other battle tunes.
- [Final Battle](#)^{27,26}: being the last battle of the story, it's self justified in having a full orchestra play while you face off against the head of the Cipher corporation.
- Battle Intro Fanfares⁷⁶:
 - [Fanfare 1](#)⁷⁷ || [Fanfare 2](#)⁷⁸ || [Fanfare 3](#)⁷⁹ || [Fanfare 4](#)⁸⁰

Having dived deep enough at the acoustic characteristics of this soundtrack, it's time to begin exploring the motifs and themes more thoroughly.

76 Round Intros Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x5aZtWIS95xtbwJ8oBeish7jnyBbl1jD/view?usp=drive_link

77 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Fanfare 1". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/xxBF_4AmLW4?si=VN07YOOUb8MalrcC

78 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Fanfare 2". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/1sJT3ly8j8M?si=UQ3xlx03kydPRcw0>

79 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Fanfare 3". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/g6fDBcCMDP4?si=UV55DEyvU9yIBVWw>

80 "Pokémon Colosseum: Battle Fanfare 4". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/uOTsDatUzFA?si=5yze9OXDdibOLJG>

5. The Musical Themes and Motifs in Pokémon Colosseum

We begin diving into motifs with the title screen of Pokémon Colosseum. A track in C Mixolydian, a frequently used mode in the franchise games. From this piece, a multitude of variations can be detected upon analyzing the score and paying close attention to the first melody line. For this, I used Mr. Andrew Mulhern's piano arrangements⁸¹ of the piece to better dissect the themes.

[Theme](#)^{82,83}

81 Pokémon Colosseum Full OST". Mulhern, Andrew. 2022. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1srYjQhK64ByvSJqIkhfWx0wXArIAEpiK>

82 "Pokémon Colosseum: Title Screen". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8_h08uzZo&ab_channel=GamingThemes

83 Title Screen Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kOh4ZuJNXCTgHZh2Sw6ihENoBhvraKM2/view?usp=drive_link

5 $\text{♩} = 125$

Ext. *pp*

Motif A

Pno.

9

Ext. *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Pno. *mf*

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system starts at measure 5 and includes an Ext. (External) staff and a Pno. (Piano) staff. The Ext. staff has a tempo marking of 125 and a dynamic marking of *pp*. A box labeled 'Motif A' highlights a specific melodic phrase in the Pno. staff. The second system starts at measure 9 and also includes Ext. and Pno. staves. The Ext. staff features a series of dynamic markings: *p*, *mf*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, and *mp*, with sixteenth-note runs. The Pno. staff has a dynamic marking of *mf* and continues the accompaniment.

This motif represents the story's main character, Wes, and matches the fanfare military style of previous Pokémon titles with its epic and full orchestral sound. As such, for fans of the franchise and people who are familiar with its music are immediately met with a wave of nostalgia, while at the same time being welcomed into a new adventure. It's rarely heard with non-orchestral instruments, and it's referenced primarily during key moments in either plot or gameplay.

We can hear this theme in the following segments:

[Wes Steals ... Machine](#)^{84,85}

84 "Pokémon Colosseum: Wes Steals ... Machine". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGsc7PvNMbs&ab_channel=GamingThemes

85 Wes Steals ... Machine Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ENF26MF3XB6PFFSRUyphBbvUFTJCKyZ/view?usp=drive_link

The image displays three systems of musical notation for 'The First Battle'. The first system (measures 13-15) features an 'Ext.' (Extended) part on a single staff and a 'Pno.' (Piano) part on two staves. The 'Ext.' part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fermata. The 'Pno.' part starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. An orange box highlights a specific melodic motif in the right-hand piano part across measures 14 and 15. The second system (measures 26-28) shows the 'Pno.' part with a forte (*ff*) dynamic in the right-hand part, also highlighted with an orange box. The third system (measures 31-33) shows the 'Pno.' part with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the right-hand part and a forte (*ff*) dynamic in the left-hand part, with an orange box highlighting the right-hand part.

The First Battle^{86,87}

Being the very first (tutorial level) battle of the game, it makes sense to allude to the main theme of the game, rather than jump head first into the main battle music, that hints more at the other, darker motifs. In this piece, while these melodies are performed by strings, the backing instruments are more reminiscent of classic Pokémon battles, if anything a little bit slower paced, which allows the melodies to ring out better. In this version, the melody is noticeably different, but you can still make out enough of the outline of the motif.

86 "Pokémon Colosseum: First Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/wk2M1Ti4pRY?si=Og1KBmFV0pV6WxnC>

87 First Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j52x1hqLpGRWOO6kzrhPLTT8XBz9nvgY/view?usp=drive_link

[World Map](#)^{88,89}:

This is the overworld (or hub world) of the game, from which one can choose to fast travel to different locations as they become available on your journey.⁹⁰ As such, it stands to reason that the orchestral ambience would take center stage, with bits and pieces of the motif sprinkled across the sheet music.

[Mt. Battle](#)^{91,92}

This location serves as the ultimate challenge for players to strengthen their skills and become Orre's greatest trainer, and ultimately represents the indomitable spirit of the hero. With 100 trainers waiting for you to defeat, it's an element of the game that, while appearing in a small section of the story, it stands out as one of the many tough quests and features that extends beyond the plot's adventure. Here we see further developments of

88 "Pokémon Colosseum: World Map". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/9E_9lI7DZiY?si=QJe8A3fkoNLQzQtj

89 World Map Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fvDEWk4EXhjzF3MkHGTR0cnBPXRwS0Vkv/view?usp=drive_link

90 "How Hub Worlds Shape Video Game Design". wired.com. Everman, Tess. 2021. Archived:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210824210436/www.wired.com/story/how-hub-worlds-shape-video-game-design/>

91 "Pokémon Colosseum: Mt. Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/UDI_16Gpn4?si=lp9BmZBkFG4n2hVK

92 Mt. Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qN3OvGE-iaetqleZXM2l50iicNBRsrww/view?usp=drive_link

the title screen music, similar to the World Map, keeping a constant combat ready pace. We'll see this piece being used as the centerpiece of the credits music.

This piece of music shares similarities in scope, weight and sonority as previous titles when venturing to challenge the Pokémon League, the strongest trainers in the region.

- [Pokémon Red & Blue: Indigo Plateau](#)⁹³

[Cipher Admin Battle](#)^{94,95}

This particular track has elements of other motifs to give it the weight it deserves, as it accompanies the tough battles against Team Cipher's bosses. It's a musical culmination of the villain's themes, and after a series of displays of those motifs (which we will get to), a defiant reiteration of the game's melody shines a short beacon of hope in the second to last bar against the onslaught.

93 "Pokémon Red & Blue: Indigo Plateau". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Junichi Masuda. Archived: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uV5kZeZi4mw>

94 "Pokémon Colosseum: Cipher Admin Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/a1k-O0xpLIQ?si=7SOZdcJviJsezoBh>

95 Cipher Admin Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lbyanVSxn85RPkUzmAMirF-6QBEIqfhJ/view?usp=drive_link

Final Battle^{96:97}

Of course, a final battle wouldn't have won its name if it didn't include the leitmotif of the game, which, in contrast to the previous Cipher Admin battle, rings out more confidently and triumphantly against the enemy's theme. The theme stands victoriously as you finally defeat the head of Cipher.

96 "Pokémon Colosseum: Final Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/OzNzZVrNj2A?si=4xHkfNkJJeQAZ5XKr>

97 Final Battle Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j52xlhqlpGRWOO6kzrhPLTT8XBz9nvgY/view?usp=drive_link

Credits^{98,99}

Being the end of the game, it's self evident that the main theme would be referenced. What composer in their right mind wouldn't? Despite the entire score being sprinkled with references to the motif, the euphoria that comes with this introduction start us off by granting the listener a true sense of completion and finality to the game, leaving the player enjoying a medley of pieces reminiscent of the experiences they had.



With this we jump to the second theme I wish to explore, which in contrast to the first, which illustrated the righteous heart of our hero and the glory of the quest, paints a different picture; the villain's side of the story. I wish to clarify that the villains have more than a few themes, but my intent is to focus on the most important ones, while acknowledging the others. It's worth noting that this theme departs in orchestration from the main motif, straying away from the traditional instruments, and diving into the world of Blues, Jazz, Folk, Pop and Rock instrumentation. One could speculate that the contrast in sound further creates a divide between the good and the bad in the game. The motif actually has two main sections, which will be showcased in the following examples:

98 "Pokémon Colosseum: Credits." youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/830RyLeYqto?si=UFc8p4UB3bmkCi5l>

99 Credits Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RzWqaKn_N9sD_pYHwOt9CHgvc8De8BwT/view?usp=drive_link

Pyrite Town^{100,101}

Appropriately named after the commonly dubbed “fool’s gold”¹⁰², this track steps out of the comfortable fresh ambience of Phenac City and thrusts us into an unlawful junkyard of a town. Said to be the capital city of crime where Shadow Pokémon distribution is most prominent, it’s where you begin capturing these creatures, which you find in practically every trainer’s possession. The music reflects a cool, careless and uninterested attitude, willfully turning away from the nefarious dealings under its citizen’s noses. As such, the music is unclear about its intentions. There’s something whirling in the background,

The image shows a musical score for the track "Pyrite Town". It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a bass clef staff. The second system is labeled "Pno." and includes both treble and bass clef staves. A blue box highlights a section of the treble staff in the second system, containing measures 9, 10, and 11. A purple box highlights the bass staff in both the first and second systems. The music is in a key with three flats and a 4/4 time signature.

Pyrite Building^{103,104}

As we explore the town of Pyrite, and begin to figure out more about the sinister plot unfolding, the music reflects a steadier beat, creepily and slowly uncovering the blindfold that has been placed over the town, revealing secrets hidden underground, introducing more variations and layers of complexity to Cipher's plans, and thus the motif.

The image shows a musical score for the track "Pyrite Building". It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a dynamic marking of *f* and a bass clef staff. The second system is labeled "Pno." and includes both treble and bass clef staves. A blue box highlights the treble staff in the first system, and a purple box highlights the bass staff in both the first and second systems. The music is in a key with three flats and a 4/4 time signature.

100 “Pokémon Colosseum: Pyrite Town”. youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/Fq_3RssL_Rk?si=IXImwnF9iTa87UZo

101 Pyrite Town Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b5LDhGkJP7UjVGGSHelrDRuqy245XJ8m/view?usp=drive_link

102 “What is Fool’s Gold?”. usgs.gov. Archived: <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-fools-gold#:~:text=Iron%20pyrite%2C%20also%20known%20as,acid%2C%20an%20important%20industrial%20acid.>

103 “Pokémon Colosseum: Pyrite Building”. youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/h438tvUH8uo?si=RD3AwXQ6prg_Blay

104 Pyrite Building Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vnZnQ4P5oeZULQAdok0I5hFJehN6EfyA/view?usp=drive_link

The Under^{105,106}.

As the name suggests, this mining city sits right underneath Pyrite Town, and is the place where Shadow Pokémon are transported. The place is populated with supporters of Cipher, and as such, the motifs no longer swings in an evasive manner, but solidifies with a straight beat and hard hitting beat. With strict control over who can enter this domain, the music explodes with malicious intent and aggression. Here, we hear a more developed variation of the villain's theme.

The image displays a musical score for 'The Under' in B-flat major, 4/4 time. It is divided into three systems, each with an 'Ext.' (Extended) part and a 'Pno.' (Piano) part. The Pno. part is further divided into a right-hand and a left-hand section. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *fff*, and *mf*. The first system (measures 19-21) features a *ff* piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 22-24) includes an *8va* marking and a *fff* dynamic. The third system (measures 25-27) features a *mf* dynamic. The score is annotated with blue and purple boxes highlighting specific musical passages.

105 "Pokémon Colosseum: The Under". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived:

<https://youtu.be/8s9zRwHH5nl?si=GC1zJdS5g2iNj2AV>

106 The Under Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VgtpiZeUyKS22xNdfxGO4TzzgvX3W-c7/view?usp=drive_link

Cipher Syndicate's Theme^{107,108}

We finally arrive to the theme of the criminal organization in charge of the abuse and darkening of the hearts of the imported Pokémon. It's in this piece that we finally get a clear and fully fledged form of the motif, elements of which are referenced and scattered across the entire score of the video game, signaling the effect their group has had over the land of Orre since the very start of the game.

♩ = 126

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Cipher Syndicate's Theme'. It is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 126 beats per minute. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score is presented in four systems, each with a purple border. The first system (measures 1-3) features a piano introduction with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second system (measures 4-6) includes a section with a forte (*f*) dynamic, where the right hand has a complex chordal texture with some notes marked with 'v'. The third system (measures 7-10) shows a return to the *mf* dynamic, with a blue box highlighting a specific melodic phrase in the right hand of measure 9. The fourth system (measures 11-14) continues with the *f* dynamic, featuring a more active right hand with many notes marked with 'v'. The bass line throughout is a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

107 "Pokémon Colosseum: Cipher Syndicate's Theme". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/oqN_NKdq7Zg?si=HdOytT-AVi0cINWx

108 Cipher Syndicate Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TpKB_zkLNV2N1Rjnvw03xvTawr7hPi6q/view?usp=drive_link

Now let's look at some more examples where this motif is sprinkled. Curiously, we return to come familiar pieces:

[Title Screen](#)^{41,40}.

While in this track the theme of the hero reigns supreme, there's a subtle and very minor detail on the last few bars of the piece. When you first hear the piece, one just assumes it's something to allude to a lack of finality, an adventure being left opened to explore. While that may be true from a purely rational perspective on the function of the title screen, it's clear that Cipher's theme is gently placed there as a foreboding towards events yet to be revealed.

Musical score for piano (Pno.) in 12/8 time, starting at measure 32. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 100. A purple box highlights measures 32-34, with a label 'MOTIF' above it. Measure 35 is marked 'poco rall.' and 'ppp'. The score shows a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

[Outskirt Stand](#)^{82,81}.

This is one not many realize at first, and it's one that took me a bit of thinking to notice the reference. Equally trying not to call too much attention to itself, it's cleverly spaced out so as to not cause suspicion.

Musical score for piano in 12/8 time, measures 1-7. The score is in treble clef. Measure 1 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 2 has a dynamic marking of *f*. Measure 3 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 4 has a dynamic marking of *f*. Measure 5 has a dynamic marking of *mp*. Measure 6 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 7 has a dynamic marking of *mp*. Purple boxes highlight measures 1-2 and 7. A blue box highlights measure 4.

Spoiler Alert: the infiltration runs deeper than one assumes.

[Phenac City](#)^{77,75}:

Well, what else do you expect of a criminal organization? The perfectly polished, blissfully ignorant people of Phenac, and the player, are made complete fools considering their beloved mayor Es Cade^{109,110} was the true mastermind behind Cipher's operation all along! The music does a fantastic job at appearing to be friendly and inviting, until you look at the score. It just narrowly avoids being spotted, and it dances and playfully taunts the player, unbeknownst to them of course.

The image displays a musical score for the track "Phenac City". It is divided into three systems, each featuring a Piano (Pno.) part and an External (Ext.) part. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows the Pno. part with a purple box highlighting a specific melodic phrase in the right hand, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system shows both parts with purple boxes highlighting similar melodic phrases in the Ext. and Pno. parts, with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic marking. The third system shows the Ext. part with a rest and the Pno. part with a blue box highlighting a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand.

109 "Pokémon Colosseum: Es Cade's Theme". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/KXgwHf8IyuQ?si=1g1IAHwky0RXLLQx>
110 Es Cade Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SYcsCjw1ysS0i-FXxb1dK3u8chs-dAy/view?usp=drive_link

I believe the point is made, however some honorable mentions ought to be referenced for their use and development of this theme in their respective locations: [Cipher Lab](#)^{111,112}; [Snagem Hideout](#)^{113, 114}; [Nascour's Theme](#)^{115,116}; [Evice's Theme](#)^{117,118}; [Fadeen the Fortuneteller](#)^{119,120}; [Realgam Tower](#)^{66,65}; [Mt. Battle Break Room](#)^{69,68}.

Now let's see how this villainous motif appears in the Pokémon battle music tracks.

[Normal Battle](#)^{121,122}:

This piece is heard when encountering your average trainer. Considering the goal of the game, and the battle, is to capture and rescue Shadow Pokémon from your opponent, it makes sense the typical battle theme would contain a section of the Cipher theme at the end of the piece.

111 "Pokémon Colosseum: Cipher Lab". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/wkIM8aSRyeg?si=pNXMGW9WVAHRCv6P>

112 Cipher Lab Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/14FEAF8qWT407fj53hArqbmJq0OEdp_KP/view?usp=drive_link

113 "Pokémon Colosseum: Snagem Hideout". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/j2OrZKfVf8Q?si=oEPFN7_cdMIW2t5m

114 Snagem Hideout Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QnKutWfLFSJfeR4PfoErY2cn1EHloqZZ/view?usp=drive_link

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118 Evice's Theme Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nU5QLRn28vCviVsVpdLdFoSZuYSEg0Q9/view?usp=drive_link

119 "Pokémon Colosseum: Fadeen the Fortuneteller". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: https://youtu.be/xok_S3BsmZw?si=D5Gc2iodsCYtCcdm

120 Fadeen the Fortuneteller Sheet Music. Archived: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19E-B2J8jXZF0RXQJO_wRv4ddP0ISeFWW/view?usp=drive_link

121 "Pokémon Colosseum: Normal Battle". youtube.com. Nintendo. Composed by Tsukasa Tawada. Archived: <https://youtu.be/d6-P7YqF0F4?si=GLMWINhH1hm8v5NQ>

122 Normal Battle Sheet Music. Archived https://drive.google.com/file/d/18C3flsFqesPL0yXXC9RyEbdLuK2V6R6N/view?usp=drive_link

[Cipher Admin Battle](#)^{29,28.}

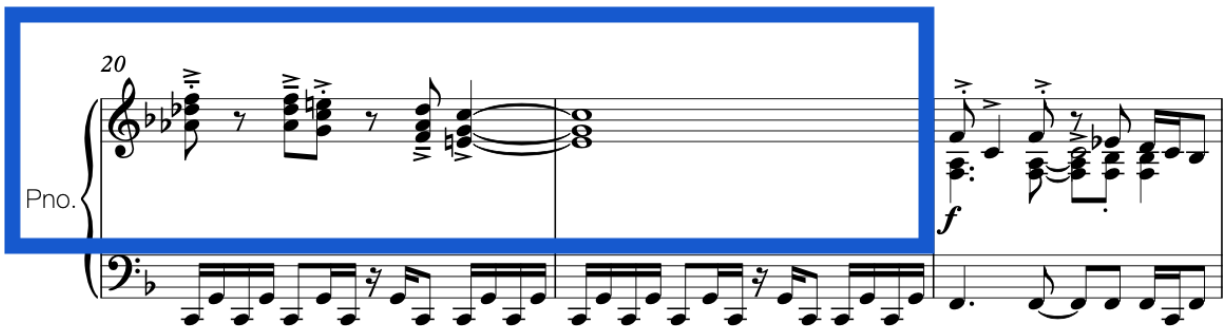
As mentioned earlier, this track is a vicious whirlwind of the villain's theme. Although we're used to hearing the motif expressed with Blues, Jazz and Rock instruments, this time, the orchestra steps in, menacingly cackling at the hero, and hitting us left and right with variations of the motif. A low sustaining G signals to us the goal of this battle: survival and perseverance; the hero's theme hinting at small victories with each flurry of attacks.

Final Battle^{27,26}:

Frankly, there's little that the villain can do at this stage. Having Evice revealed himself to be the true mastermind behind the tyranny, a final conflict ensues. The music lifts up victorious against Team Cipher's theme, which, although losing ground in the conflict, still has enough power and fight left to drop a few last aggressive variations, before being overwhelmed again by the Main Theme. Only one foe remains, and you have him on the ropes.



Musical score for measures 18-19. The score is for three parts: Ext. (External), Pno. (Piano), and a Bass line. Measure 18 is marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The Ext. part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a dotted quarter note. The Pno. part features a series of chords, with a fortissimo *ff* dynamic marking. The Bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment.



Musical score for measures 20-21. The score is for two parts: Pno. (Piano) and a Bass line. Measure 20 is marked with a fortissimo *ff* dynamic. The Pno. part features a series of chords, with a forte *f* dynamic marking. The Bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

And with this the journey comes to an end.

6. Final Reflections

So what have we learned from this game analysis? Let's review:

The game's predecessors, and overall, the legacy of the Pokémon franchise plays an important role in influencing the nature of the game and its core mechanics, having orchestral pieces that nod the adventures in previous titles, while exhilarating players in battles with upbeat tempos and arpeggiations that, although slower in pace in comparison to the past, still marches us onward and puts into the front lines of the conflicts. That said, enough aspects were taken into account to separate it from the average roster of the mainline games. The console itself, the GameCube, also played a crucial role in allowing complexity and richness to be appreciated in the quality of production. The game's target audience was important in the discussion about the tone and pace of both the story and the gameplay. The developers and even the composer himself also talked about the source of inspiration of the landscape to be based on Arizona, and we saw how the artists took elements from their own teenage oriented prior works and plastered it onto the canvas of the game. These elements resulted in quite the shift in aesthetic, our hero being older, and characters wearing darker and less saturated shades, surrounded by a desolate environment, all in all affecting the sonority of the music.

While my association between the inspiration of Arizona and the selected pieces would seem at first out of left field, it's undeniable that the contrast from previous titles, which lacked such characteristics and localizations in the music, is noticeable and can't be dubbed as mere coincidence.

We hear and read in the motifs how the topics of good, evil, heroism and deception were continuously put against each other and spread out across the entire score, consistently reminding us of the importance of our quest, and the warning signs of incoming enemies. What first seems like a bizarre hinting towards the games inspiration for localizations in Outskirt Stand, Phenac City, and even Realgam Tower, actually contain disguised variations of the villain's motif. Much like a Pokémon battle, the themes take turns presenting themselves and attacking each other with great ferocity, with the villain's motif finally coming to an explosive defeat, and the main theme victorious.

Overall, what it demonstrates is that it doesn't take a video game to be in the mainline roster of titles, nor necessarily be pinned against its handheld brethren, to be a worthy addition to the ever growing list under the Pokémon trademark. To this day, it remains a hidden gem¹²³ of the Pokémon franchise, one that fans such as myself continuously revisit, well beyond the game's year of release.

¹²³ "An Overlooked Gem" screenrant.com. Loveland, Justin. 2021. Archived: <https://screenrant.com/pokemon-colosseum-overlooked-series-final-fantasy-7-ff7/>

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