

Neil Davidge

COMPOSER

As co-writer and key sonic facilitator on the lauded **Massive Attack** albums **Mezzanine**, **100th Window** and **Heligoland**, Bristol, England's Neil Davidge has been integral in birthing some of the most arresting and innovative sounds of recent times. He has also enjoyed a parallel career composing for Film and Television.

To date, feathers in his cap have included **The Storm That Brought You To Me**, from **Louis Leterrier's, Clash Of the Titans**, and his co-write score for **Trouble The Water**, a moving study of Hurricane Katrina victims that won a **Sundance Film Festival Best Documentary** award. Neil is currently scoring Henrik Ruben Genz's feature thriller, **Good People**, starring James Franco and Kate Hudson.

Now, however, Neil looks set to win over an entirely new audience. Microsoft / 343 Industries, the company behind famed multi-million-selling franchise **Halo**, commissioned him to write the score for the quantum leap in fun-filled alien slaughter that is **Halo 4**. As Neil explains, a certain hands-on experience was as vital as his musical credentials when securing the gig: "I don't really play a lot of video games, but I've always played Halo. I started when I was making **100th Window** with **Massive Attack**; it was how I entertained myself while I was waiting for the band to show up. Even later on, if I was in the studio and feeling frustrated, Halo was one of the first things I'd turn to get my head straight."

Neil Davidge was born in Bristol, England in 1962. As a teenager he loved to paint, creating both fine-art works and more abstract pieces. Prior to studying graphic design at Brunel Technical College, he became enamoured with the late 1970's UK punk and reggae scenes and began painting likenesses of the Banshees' Siouxsie Sioux and the dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, amongst others.

Having learned guitar in line with the punk DIY ethic of the time, Neil later embarked upon long hours of alchemical, 'suck-it-and-see' experimentation during which time he learned the complex but rewarding art of sound recording. Happily, he was in situ at Bristol's Coach House Studios when famed trip-hop act **Portishead** recorded parts of their debut album **Dummy** there between 1991-1994, and in 1996, he hooked-up with **Massive Attack** on **The Hunter**, a song for the **Batman Forever** soundtrack that featured **Everything But The Girl** vocalist **Tracey Thorn**. That same year, **Massive Attack** won a 'Best Dance Act' **Brit Award**, cementing a working relationship with Neil Davidge that would continue for some 17 years.

It was **Massive Attack's** stately, cinematic sound - together with Neil's longstanding affinity with visual mediums that lent his scoring for film, TV and advertising an air of inevitability. After auteur **Luc Besson** approached Neil and Robert Del Naja of **Massive Attack** to commission music for his martial arts thriller **Unleashed**, a swathe of other, attractively varied coups followed. Among them were scores for the films **Bullet Boy** and **Battle In Seattle**, advertising campaigns for **Jaguar** and **Adidas**, and Neil's collaboration with **Snoop Dogg** while scoring music for **In Prison My Whole Life**, a feature documentary about US death-row journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

It's an impressive résumé as it stands, but it's his score for the upcoming release of **Halo 4** - the latest incarnation of the wildly successful gaming franchise - that Neil Davidge is understandably most excited about right now. This, after all, is the video game franchise that has already sold over 40 million copies and generated some \$2 billion of merchandising revenue. The game whose worldwide community of fans is known

as the 'Halo Nation and the game that has spawned a series of much loved comic books, and anime films. Some would say it is... THE GAME.

"To be honest, I can't think about all that", laughs Neil. "If I did I might go mad! I just have to concentrate on the music and hope that, if it moves me, the fans and the people at 343 Industries will get a similar feeling. If they do, I'll have done my job. *Halo* is a very iconic game, so composing the score for *Halo 4* is a dream gig for me. I've got a huge amount of respect for what Martin O'Donnell did in the past, and I suppose there's a subtle homage to his music in my own indirect way. I've tried to keep things sounding like *Halo*, but we're in a different galaxy now!" Neil Davidge, April 2012.

Naturally, Neil visited 343 Industries' development HQ in the Seattle, Washington suburb of Kirkland prior to starting work on his score. The company's vast, open-plan, airport-hangar premises were an inspirational sight, and their workforce's energy and appetite for excellence soon rubbed off. "I came back to Bristol on a high and immediately starting writing", says the composer. "I wasn't even officially engaged yet, but that period generated a number of major themes that we've ended up keeping."

Halo 4 is due for release summer 2012. Neil says his soundtrack is a fairly even split between orchestral and electronic elements, this a tailor-made match for him and his co-arranger Andrew Morgan since both men are well versed in both fields. The orchestral elements were recorded at Abbey Road with **COOL Music Ltd's, Chamber Orchestra of London**, and the electronic pieces were hatched at Neil's mysterious and moniker-less studio complex in "an apartment building somewhere in Bristol.

GAME

HALO 4

343 Industries / Microsoft

FEATURE FILM

GOOD PEOPLE

Film 360
Director: Henrik Ruben Genz
Producer: Ed Cathel III, Ben Forkner, Thomas Gammeltoft,
Eric Kranzler, Avi Lerner, Tobey Macguire
Starring: James Franco, Kate Hudson, Tom Wilkinson,
Omar Sy

CLASH OF THE TITANS
(Additional Music)

Warner Bros Pictures
Director: Louis Leterrier
Producer: Kevin De La Noy, Basil Iwanyk,
Starring: Sam Worthington, Ralph Fiennes, Liam
Neeson,
Gemma Atterton

PUSH

Summit Entertainment
Director: Paul McGuigan
Producers: Bruce Davey, William Vince, Glenn Williamson
Starring: Dakota Fanning

GOMMORAH
(Soundtrack)

Fandango Films
Director: Matteo Garrone
Producers: Domenico Procacci

TROUBLE THE WATER
(with Robert Del Naja)

Elsewhere Films
Director: Carl Deal, Tia Lessin
Producers: Carl Deal, Tia Lessin
Writer: Frank Cottrell Boyce
Starring: Eddie Marson, Omid Djallili

*****Sundance Film Festival Best Documentary*****

BATTLE IN SEATTLE
(with Robert Del Naja)

Hyde Park Ents
Director: Stuart Townsend
Producer: Stuart Townsend, Mary Aloe, Maxine Remillard,
Kirk Shaw
Starring: Woody Harrelson, Ray Liotta, Michelle
Rodriguez,
Channing Tatum, Charlize Theron

IN PRISON MY WHOLE LIFE

Fandango
Director: Marc Evans, Livia Guiglioli, Nick Goodwin-Self
Producer: Christine Langan
Starring: Timothy Spall, Juliet Stevenson

MIAMI VICE
(soundtrack)

Universal Pictures
Director: Michael Mann
Producers: Michael Mann, Pieter Jan Brugge
Starring: Colin Farrell, Jamie Foxx

UNLEASHED
(with Massive Attack)

Europa Corp
Director: Louis Leterrier
Producers: Luc Besson, Steve Chasman, Jet Li
Starring: Jet Li, Morgan Freeman, Bob Hoskins

BULLET BOY

BBC Films
Director: Saul Dibb
Producers: Mark Boothe, Ruth Caleb, Paul Hamann
Starring: Ashley Walters, Jamie Winstone

BLADE II
(soundtrack)

New Line Cinema
Director: Guillermo Del Toro
Producer: Peter Frankfurt, Patrick J. Plamer, Wesley
Snipes
Starring: Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Ron Perlman

MOULIN ROUGE

Twentieth Century Fox
Director: Baz Luhrmann
Producer: Fred Baron, Martin Brown
Starring: Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor, John Leguizamo,
Jim
Broadbent

TV

LUTHER

(Title music, Massive Attack)

BBC

Director: Sam Miller, Brian Kirk, Stephan Schwartz

Producer: Katie Swinden

Starring: Idris Elba

Neil Davidge Website: <http://www.neildavidge.com/index.html>