

1. You were with Soft Enterprises from the beginning, but Hartwig joined after Brain Artifice. How did Hartwig get involved? What was the division of responsibilities between you two?

I wasn't there from the beginning. I applied to join Soft Enterprises together with my former friend Joachim Preuss. I think after first seeing one of Martin Hoffesommer's ads for the company. The first meeting was quite adventurous. Joachim and I were invited to a party in Frankenhain to meet everyone, and we set out carrying demo tapes with some of our Amiga music. The train station had sold me our tickets. However, there was an important fact we did not know. Past the border there were over 4 cities that had this same name. So the train took us to East Germany and dropped us off in no man's land. Then a telephone call came in informing us that we were actually one hour (as the crow flies) away from Frankenhain in Hessen. In the evening, after a more than 12-hour journey, we arrived. The party was short but productive, and we were allowed to make music for Soft Enterprises. First I think I contributed a few chaotic pieces to the PC version of "Brain Artifice". For these Martin sent me some software which enabled me to compose Pro-Tracker-like music on the PC. So this was an adventure, but overall a successful one.

Hartwig I met at our local dial-up club. A mutual friend, Patrick Feldhusen, brought us together because he knew I liked to compose music and that Hartwig owned various synthesizers along with a Commodore Amiga 3000. I was interested and so we agreed to meet more and more frequently. We became good friends. Eventually I asked him if he would take join me in composing music for computer games. At the time, Joachim had no real interest in this, if I remember correctly.

We composed together mostly at night. We had a different daily routine from our friends, but at night we had the quiet and time to sit down and compose. A division of labor, per se, did not exist. Each of us tried things out for ourselves on the keyboard, and when we met, we tested out different ideas, discarding some as well as brainstorming new stuff. This was often a very creative process, but sometimes a very exhausting one. Especially if we were unable to come up with an idea or we managed to maneuver ourselves into a dead end. All in all it was a terrific time that I don't regret in the slightest.

2. Why did you and Hartwig form a separate company (Dynamic Soundworx), instead of being credited directly as part of Soft Enterprises?

It was less a company and more of a project name. We had the stupid idea to make a name for ourselves by using a made-up name. In retrospect, this was silly, useless, and pretty messed up. We were not part of Soft Enterprises, but were, so to speak, working on their behalf.

3. Can you please describe the process of creating a piece of music for THB?

Chaotic and wildly variable. You have an idea in your head and you either develop it further yourself or share it. This can be a chorus or even just a few chords. Or a melody. And then you polish this further. Sometimes the frustration helps create interesting results. One or the other piece arose because we made fun of ourselves and the music. After all, we saw this as a hobby, that could maybe (with a big question mark) turn into something professional. We had fun. At least, most of the time...

4. All of the music is fantastic, but one of my favorite pieces is the song that plays during the death cutscene (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fVjhbV5qsw>). What was your inspiration for this piece?

Yes, there I was definitely inspired by films. I'm a big movie fan and love soundtracks. At the time I loved to listen to James Horner, John Williams, and many others. But in particular, the soundtrack to Aliens moved me very much, because the music was very vivid and the atmosphere was to me very tangible. I wanted that too. I remember discussing my idea for the ending cutscene with Martin and the guys to get their opinion. They were very fond of the idea, and I had a tune stuck in my head which I could not get out. I wanted something momentous. Which was of course quite presumptuous, when you look at the technology available to us back then. The music was composed on the Roland LA soundcard, a precursor to General Midi. It sounded terrific. The beeping soundcard is hardly a comparison, but Joachim Preuss did a great job converting the pieces over. For this, again I give him huge respect and a big thank you!

5. THB contains a wide variety of sound effects, from the crunching of alien larvae to the opening of an airlock door. How was this diverse set of sounds generated?

Each in a very different way. We searched everywhere for sounds to sample and added these, distorted. As it remember it, Hartwig locking a door had to serve as the sound for loading the shotgun. We also worked a lot with clipping. The whole digital trend was at that time still in its infancy, and we often felt a lot like beta testers, especially when we later had the stupid idea to switch to the PC. Up to that point we had been working with the Amiga 3000.

6. When designing the enemy death sounds, why did you avoid the short cries of games such as Doom and Wolfenstein, instead causing the enemies to issue drawn-out, guttural screams? The reviewers criticized these screams for being too over-the-top, although I found them quite entertaining. ;-)

Oh, I barely remember that anymore. But we definitely had a lot of fun with the vocal work...

7. Did you attend the work parties and help with the game design, or did you and Hartwig stay fairly separate from the rest of the team?

At that time we communicated mostly by email and phone. We met every six months, as we were students and either I was unemployed and therefore without income or, later, I was an apprentice. Also, later we were together in London for the ECTS. Now there is a beautiful and painful memory for all of us. A very instructive one. But let's leave that for another time. In fact, we often suffered from poor communication, since we wanted to contribute and exchange stuff. Nowadays we could videoconference, but back then we couldn't. Even the game we had often seen only on VHS tapes, which was all we had to use to orient ourselves. Sometimes we were able to contribute ideas. But it was quite tedious. Basically, we got an idea of the trials a film composer must endure. Near the end, the clock ticks away quite furiously...

8. One odd thing about the game is that during the intro, the music drops out suddenly (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO4WjBTAab4>). Was this an artistic choice or a technical glitch?

We composed the music without knowing the exact sequences. In addition the music in the video is just Soundblaster music. The LA Synthesis music was, if I remember correctly, better timed. This is example of the poor working processes we had at the time. We were all just nerds with an ambitious hobby...

9. Given that most people did not own an MT-32, were you happy with how the music sounded when converted to Soundblaster by Joachim Preuss?

Joachim did a magnificent job, especially given the short time he had. In particular he really succeeded in getting the right mood, which was difficult given the technology. Soundblaster squawking just does not compare to General Midi music. I got Joachim a spare PC from my friend Uwe, who owned a computer business at the time. I don't know what software he used. Like the rest of us, Joachim also had his own Commodore Amiga. I'm more than satisfied even today with the results.

10. Do you have any favorite memories of working on the game that you'd like to share?

It was an exciting time. The Internet wasn't there and in 1993 the World Wide Web had just started. I got to see the beginnings at the University of Oldenburg. I had great friends in Hartwig and Joachim. We had fun, but there were also moments of frustration and moments of anger. But all in all, I look at this time quite fondly. In retrospect I certainly would have made different decisions here or there. But pretty much everyone feels that way, don't they?

12. Have you kept in touch with any of the folks from Soft Enterprises since it shut down?

Unfortunately not. Contact broke off around the time that we finished working on the racing game [ed:Battle Race] after having very bad experiences with the PC technology during that project. We at that time recorded live music for the first time completely overextending ourselves. It was at that time I stopped composing music. And unfortunately, I also broke off contact with Hartwig, who after all this time I would love to warmly greet! And I also would love to say hello to Joachim again. It was a wonderful time. To Martin, Björn, and all of Soft Enterprises, I would like to say thanks for this wonderful experience. I wish them all the best, good luck and continued success in what they do.

13. Do you have high quality recordings of the music lying around somewhere that you could share with us (seeing as most people *still* do not own a MT-32)?

Unfortunately, no. The LA synthesis pieces have been lost. However, I still have a sticker here that says "I survived THE HIDDEN BELOW". It's available. Maybe it could be reprinted? :)

14. What have you been up to recently?

For the last 20 years or so I've been self-employed, or alternately working in retail in Austria. Today I work for one of the largest computer manufacturers in the world.

Thanks so much for your time!

With pleasure :)