

# Ongaku Concept

## 音楽コンセプト

### VIDEO GAME MUSIC THEORY

#### Video Game Music Theory

Home About Resources Sheet Music Ask me anything! ⌵

#### Ongaku Concept Interviews: Rémi Gazel (composer for Rayman 1)

Rayman holds a special place in my heart as a gamer. It was my first "non-PC" game, that got me into playing video games to begin with. Recently, a [friend of mine](#) showed me a [video he found](#) of the Rayman One Project – a live performance of the game's music, lead by main composer Rémi Gazel himself on piano! I was very impressed by how much work was put into it, and that even 20 years later, Rayman's soundtrack is still being appreciated by fans.

I managed to get in touch with Mr. Gazel about an interview, and happily he agreed! Read on for more. :)

**OC:** Ongaku Concept: How did you first become interested in playing music, and how did you get started working as a composer?

**Rémi Gazel:** I started music at the age of 8 years, at the conservatory of a small town in southern France. I followed that school's courses for 7 years or so, but I was not very serious in my studies. Anyway, I have learned to read and write music. Then I stopped everything, and I started learning to play jazz on my own. Then, I became interested in many musical styles (Latin music, blues, rock, etc.). I wrote my first compositions at the age of 23 years.

**OC:** What was it like to compose for "Rayman"? There are so many beautifully intricate songs on the soundtrack ("Betulla the Fairy" and The Blue Mountains are personal favorites of mine!) Did you also program the arrangements for the GBA port of the game?

**Rémi:** Note: Betulla and The Blue Mountains are not my compositions. :) Don't forget that even though I composed most of R1 music, other composers participated. It was a great adventure, and a great pleasure to work with Michel Ancel and his team. I felt that anything was possible, and I believe that everything was as it seemed. For cons, I have not worked at all on the side of "programming" or integration.

Mildly embarrassing on my part there, I always thought he composed those tracks! Rayman never had a true "soundtrack release" though, so individual credits were never given. That said, I decided to ask Mr. Gazel about his favorite songs that he worked on.

**OC:** Come to think of it, do you have a favorite song that you worked on?

**Rémi:** [The Wizard](#) and [Replay](#) (I very much like [Mr. Dark](#) too).

Listening to those tracks, among others, it's clear that Mr. Gazel has a strong understanding of music theory. I asked him about his experience with it and he gave a wonderfully insightful response.

**OC:** What's your take on music theory, and do you utilize it consciously while composing? Listening to your [jazz piano videos on YouTube](#), it's clear that you have a very good understanding of complex harmony. Does that just come naturally, or is it something you've studied?

**Rémi:** My theory on theory, hmm... I think it's very useful to know it in order to forget it. The composition is a process that comes from the heart, and I find it unfortunate to bridle with made rules.

**OC:** What musicians/bands have you been influenced by most?

**Rémi:** Michel Petruccianni, Pat Metheny, Keith Jarrett, Lyle Mays, Chick Corea, Stevie Wonder, Earth Wind & Fire, The Doors, Pink Floyd, and today Snarky Puppy (I think I forget a lot)... and they inevitably influenced my music.

**OC:** Any advice for new composers?

**Rémi:** Listen to your heart, and do what you gotta do. :)

I also asked him one other question, just because I was curious...

**OC:** I have one last question, just for fun: Do you have a favorite chord?

**Rémi:** Strange question. I don't have a favorite one, but I very much like #5/#9#11 chords (in certain cases). But a simple 3-note major chord could be very nice. :)

It's an amazing feeling to have been able to interview the composer of one of the games that sparked my love for video games/VGM. Thanks again to Rémi Gazel for being so kind and agreeing to the interview, it was a lot of fun. :)

If you want to find out more about the Rayman One Project, you can find the website [here](#), and the official Facebook page [here](#).

*Note: This interview has been edited slightly for clarity. :)*

