

# 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. In 2014, Neil scored Henrik Ruben Genz's feature thriller, **Good People**, starring James Franco and Kate Hudson, and finished work on Vertigo Films' **Monsters: A Dark Continent**, director Tom Green's follow up to Gareth Edwards' very well received 2010 feature, **Monsters**. More recently, Neil completed the soundtrack to Canal+ and Tandem Communications' 2015 crime drama, **Spotless**, co-created by Corinne Marrinan (*CSI, Crossing Lines*) and Ed McCardie (*Shameless*), BBC's 7-part crime drama, **New Blood**, created and written by Anthony Horowitz, and Sky's epic historical 10-part series, **Britannia**.

Neil won over an entirely new audience in 2012. 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 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 release of **Halo 4** - the latest incarnation of the wildly successful gaming franchise - that Neil Davidge is understandably most excited about. 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 was released in 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 the **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

**MONSTERS: A DARK CONTINENT**

Vertigo Films

Director: Tom Green

Producer: Scoot McNairy, Gareth Edwards, Rory Aitken, Allan Niblo, Rupert Preston, Ben Pugh, James Richardson

Starring: Joe Dempsie, Johnny Harris, Nicholas Pinnock, Parker Sawyers, Kyle Soller, Jesse Nagy, Jeff Hill

**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 Cottrel Boyce  
Starring: Eddie Marson, Omid Djalili

**\*\*\*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 Guiggioli, 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

**BRITANNIA**

Vertigo Films / Amazon Studios / Sky  
Directors: Sheree Folkson, Christoph Schrewe, Luke  
Watson, Susan Tully  
Producer: Rick McCallum  
Starring: David Morrissey, Kelly Reilly

**NEW BLOOD**

BBC / Eleventh Hour Films  
Directors: Anthony Philipson, Bill Eagles  
Producer: Eve Gutierrez  
Starring: Mark Strepan, Ben Tavassoli

**SPOTLESS**

Canal+  
Director: Pascal Chaumeil, Colin Teague, China Moo-Young  
Producer: Moritz Polter, Hugh Warren  
Executive Producer: Rola Bauer, Jonas Bauer, Suzanne Berger  
Starring: Marc-Andre Grondin, Denis Menochet

**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>