

## Music 4 Games

### Silent Hunter 4: Wolves of the Pacific

Review Date: 8.22.2007

Category: Soundtracks



Music by Jason Graves

Label: Ubisoft

Availability: [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

I've been sitting on this review for a while. I usually try and get at the core of what a soundtrack says to me before I write anything down. *Silent Hunter 4* for a long time just said to my brain and my ears, "submarine epic". The score is an orchestral display of beautiful, haunting tension with nobility. You certainly get images of classic submarine movies in your head without seeming derivative at all.

But the Silent Hunter franchise is a "submarine-sim" which doesn't have the same political intrigue and character progression as a movie. And while I'm on it, why compare a submarine game to

submarine movies? Or any game to any movie? I only mention it because I think more of us have seen submarine movies than played submarine games, so there is going to be some analogy here and there. I'll leave it at that.

Briefly, the game is really all interface. Charts, navigation, personnel, tactical positioning. They aim for realism in this game, ultra realism. Playing the game is a bit slow at times and tedious. There is no "arcade mode" to put it more bluntly.

So why don't I talk more about the score instead of the game? I thought you knew me by now. The game and the score go hand in hand. I'm more about appropriateness than quality of score really. So while a score may be technically proficient, if it doesn't go with the game then it's pretty much a waste.

The verdict is: Jason Graves has produced a high quality score that so appropriately fits both the gameplay style and artistic direction of the best (only?) submarine sim out there. This may sound like a dry comment, but I think it speaks boatloads. (Sorry about that.) I'll expand.

So I ask myself, what is the gameplay here? Well, like I mentioned...it's a lot of interface stuff. You pull out maps, you estimate trajectories, you command personnel, you receive intel, you survey top-side, and eventually you get to some (hopefully) heavily planned sub-on-sub or sub-on-ship action. What suits best? Well, I'd like to hear noble strings, full, rich orchestral percussion and some tense brass - something that's both going to make me feel important, confident and aware of the danger that surrounds me; perhaps hinting at the greater picture and impact this single battle may have on the universe I inhabit. Nothing too fast-paced but for brief moments. Think chess rather than checkers. It'll need some military injection so we'll have some snare riffs and rolls here and there, nothing too brash or over the top (though the "Main Theme" track does get a bit full of itself, again...in a good way!). You're in charge here, what you do matters, everything you do is important and impacting. That is exactly what I get from this score.

The theme usage is really nice. *Silent Hunter 4* has a strong theme that is used so brilliantly throughout the soundtrack. It serves very well to tie things together as one cohesive package. To me, that's one of the strongest elements any game can deliver.

This is ultimately background music. Very strong, but not too strong background music. The developers of *Silent Hunter 4* even included a way to import your own tracks into the game, because they understand that for a game like this you'll want to listen to music that you personally enjoy and excel with during gameplay. My argument (and I imagine the argument made by Graves) is that the music is best suited for the game. It's a fantastic argument. I couldn't imagine wanting to hear anything else while playing *Silent Hunter 4*. Truly, the score makes me want to see and play more. And I don't think I even like submarine games, but the score put me right in place without intimidating me. It's called balance, appropriateness, technical proficiency, artistic direction. It's called a damn good score.

**Tony Porter**