

An Evening with Marty O'Donnell
Wednesday, September 17 • 8 p.m. • FREE
Weigel Hall Auditorium

**Co-sponsored by The Ohio State School of Music
and Advanced Computing Center for the Art and Design**

Martin (Marty) O'Donnell will share what it's like to compose jingles for TV commercials and then work with the best video game developers in the world. Here's the behind the scenes story of hiring monks to sing on a commercial for insurance and then hiring them to sing the theme to *Halo*. He'll also share some stories of working with folks like Peter Dinklage and Paul McCartney.

Marty be talking about and taking questions on the following:

- His background and education
- His early career after receiving a Masters of Music Degree in Composition
- Creative collaboration and technological revolutions (analog to digital)
- His interest in interactive entertainment
- Composing and producing audio for video games
- Being creative in the world of business
- Surviving adversity - his studio burned to the ground in 1999 - he lost everything
- The future of video games - Virtual Reality?

Marty O'Donnell earned his Masters of Music Degree in Composition with honors from USC. Marty then founded the Chicago-based commercial music and sound production company, TotalAudio, which in 1997 produced sound design for Cyan's *Riven*, the sequel to *Myst*, and created all of the audio for Bungie's award winning *Myth* series. His body of work also includes numerous original scores for television, radio, and film.

In the spring of 2000, ten days after Marty accepted a position as Bungie's Audio Director and Composer, Microsoft purchased the studio and moved them to Redmond so they could focus their efforts on developing *Halo* for the Xbox platform launch. The highly acclaimed *Halo* series went on to be extremely successful, with *Halo 3* shattering entertainment records for both single day and first week sales, and with the total number of *Halo* games played now tallied in the billions.

The audio and music for the *Halo* series has received numerous honors and awards, including the Game Developers Choice Award, the Edge Award, Rolling Stone Magazine's Best Game Soundtrack, and Best Sound/Music from the AIAS, IGDA, GANG, TEC, and Spike TV. The critically acclaimed soundtracks are also best sellers.

In July of 2007, Marty became one of the partners in the once again independent Bungie. Among Bungie's many accolades are the Wired Rave Award and being named to the Time 100 List. For Halo 3: ODST, Marty produced more than three hours of new original music. In September 2010 Halo Reach was released for which he wrote and produced over five hours of music. In addition to creating and overseeing sound design, music, and implementation, Marty also casts and directs all the voice acting for Bungie's games.

Destiny is Bungie's newest and most ambitious project to date. Marty and his long-time writing partner Mike Salvatori have teamed up with Sir Paul McCartney to work on all new music. The first fruit of this collaboration is called Music of the Spheres, an eight movement, fifty minute long orchestral/choral suite recorded at Abbey Road Studios. The recording features a one hundred and forty piece orchestra and choir as well as the Libera Boys Choir. It was engineered by Peter Cobin, mixed by Dennis Sands, and includes an original, never-before-heard song by Paul.

Some links:

<http://www.sumthing.com/game-soundtracks/composer/martin-odonnell/>

<http://martyodonnellmusic.com>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_O'Donnell

See Below regarding collaboration with Paul McCartney

From: <http://www.edge-online.com/features/paul-mccartneys-videogame-destiny/>

Paul McCartney's videogame Destiny – Bungie's Martin O'Donnell on working with a music legend

David Valjalo at 12:19pm August 1 2013



“I never in a million years thought I’d be able to just call him ‘Paul’” begins Martin O’Donnell, explaining his collaboration with the legendary Paul McCartney on Bungie’s Destiny. But O’Donnell himself should be no stranger to the concept of celebrity by now, having scored each of Bungie’s Halo titles to universal acclaim.

O’Donnell’s rise to industry prominence started at Mac World in 1999, when Bungie unveiled Halo for the first time. The three-minute scripted demo took people by surprise and the series, of course, went on to take the game industry by storm. Part of the bold impression made by Halo at that first showing, and a crucial element of its continued iconic status, was O’Donnell’s first audio composition. So when Bungie showed Destiny to the

world at E3 this year I was slightly disappointed not to be obsessively humming a new O'Donnell theme for the rest of the month. What happened?

“I’m certainly working on it,” O’Donnell says. “It’s hard for me – and some of the guys get impatient about it, like ‘hey Marty, quick just write an iconic theme and show it to us’. But that’s not what I did with Halo. I like to write music. And now getting to work with Paul McCartney it’s just great to work on a whole bunch of music with a lot of themes. So we have this really great start on many, many pieces of music that all seem to work together well. Most of it hasn’t been heard yet. Exactly which element will rise to the top and become the iconic thing? I think that happens over time, organically. I feel like we have really iconic stuff that at some point will rise to the top and become the iconic theme. It probably hasn’t happened yet.”

O’Donnell was able to get McCartney’s interest thanks to this unique approach to scoring Destiny. “I came up with this idea of music of the spheres. I came up with eight pieces, a suite, it turned out to be 50 minutes long, we’re going to be releasing it before the game. And that’s the thing that I got Paul interested in working with us on.”

It’s a collaboration that stretches back nearly three years, when McCartney was working with the Rock Band franchise. A friend of O’Donnell’s offered to reach out to McCartney on his behalf and O’Donnell’s initial reaction was understandable: “I said ‘that’s insane, but sure, do what you want...’”



Fast-forward six months and McCartney had reached out to O'Donnell, offering to spend time with him and trying to understand game music. "Paul's one of these guys who just never seems to want to stop developing and moving, so we had a great meeting and started collaborating. And for two years we traded music back-and-forth, met at several studios. We did this session at Abbey Road. I'm really looking forward to getting that out for people to hear because it has... it's the 50-minute suite that tells its own story that's within the story of the Destiny universe. It's written by Mike Salvatori, me and Paul McCartney."

It's this very suite that comes up repeatedly in our conversation which O'Donnell clearly sees as holding the secret to Destiny's soundscape. "I'm hoping there's enough substance there that as Destiny develops into the future we can keep adapting that score," he says, "arranging and growing new themes that are the germs of ideas right now in the suite. That's the general plan right now. It allowed us to do a purely musical approach that can be adapted over the next number of years."

That "purely musical" approach is down, in no small part, to McCartney's involvement, which was initially a concern for O'Donnell: "That was one of the things we were quite worried about: would Paul even be interested in a sci-fi shooting game? But he seemed excited about it. He's played Halo with his grandkids and was... I can't speak for Paul, but I

think he's pretty excited that he's stretching into an area he hasn't stretched before."

McCartney didn't just bring a new paradigm to O'Donnell's methodology; he brought some new (and old) technology: "He brought out his old tape-loop machine – he said the last time he used it was on Sgt. Pepper. So he sent me an entire session where he was playing around with all these tape-loops. We were just thrilled. That [was] the same machine that was on Revolver."

O'Donnell evangelised the medium to McCartney, and the composer is set to continue his work when he revisits London in September for [Game Music Connect](#), a event that aims to lift the lid on working in the game music industry.

McCartney's influence and legacy in the music industry is unrivalled, and in O'Donnell he not only seems have a game industry collaborator but an equivalent; few composers working in games have the level of control O'Donnell has. Bungie has entrusted him with all of Destiny's audio direction, from sound effects and those monastic chants to a game's dialogue and final mix. Or, as O'Donnell puts it: "Whatever's coming out of the speakers, I'm the one saying 'yes, I like it that way'".