

MOVIES

The music of *Chad Vader* Episode 7*Andrew Yonda discusses his work composing the series soundtrack**Kristian Knutsen on Friday 03/23/2007 07:03:52.*

The music is unmistakable. One scene into the first episode of the *Chad Vader* series, "[The Imperial March](#)" accompanies the opening title sequence. The theme composed by John Williams is among the most recognized tunes in movie history. Unlike the martial and bombastic march originally introduced in *The Empire Strikes Back*, however, this version is performed on a solo acoustic guitar.

This theme to *Chad Vader*, along with an industrial version of "The Imperial March" accompanying the closing credits, played a key role in defining the series for viewers when it was originally released in the summer of 2006. The music, like the action on screen, acknowledged but was not beholden to its big screen source material.

The musician responsible for these adaptations is Andrew Yonda. He has composed the most of the soundtrack for all seven episodes of *Chad Vader*, from the immediately familiar variations on the space opera source material to the brief musical cues that are so well-integrated into the feel of the series that they're barely noticeable.

Yonda is best known as one-half of the indie-pop duo the [Buffali](#) ([MySpace](#) and [MMP](#)). He sings and performs the acoustic bass alongside Clare Fehsenfeld, who takes care of more vocals, the piano, and the acoustic guitar. In action for some four years, the pair completed their most recent tour last fall and is currently in the studio plotting their next round of melodic and folk-flavored pop.

Since last summer, Yonda has also directed his energies towards composing the soundtrack to *Chad Vader*, which is created by his brother Aaron Yonda and Matt Sloan of [Blame Society Productions](#). Andrew Yonda, 29, has been playing music for years, playing the saxophone since he was ten years old, and studying jazz sax and composition in the UW School of Music. He also received a degree in art with a concentration in photography at the university, using these talents in his work at [Great Big Pictures](#) and with his own [Thousand Dollar Wedding Photography](#).

Andrew Yonda answered some questions posed by The Daily Page about his work on *Chad Vader*; his responses follows.

The Daily Page: How do you work with the directors on developing the soundtrack for the series? What is your process for composing and recording the soundtrack?

Andrew Yonda: Aaron and Matt come over to my studio with a rough cut of the film and we watch it a couple times while they explain to me what they hear for certain scenes. I take notes, and then they leave.

Then I take their comments and use them as I see fit to compose the soundtrack. I generally go through the film from beginning to end, which I think gives better continuity to the music than if I jumped around. It takes between five and ten hours to make music for a single film.

Have you worked on any other of Aaron's film and video productions?

Yes, tons. I've been doing music for Aaron for at least five years. Not all of his stuff, but a lot of it.

How was "The Imperial March" selected as the theme for *Chad Vader*?

It seemed like a no-brainer to use "The Imperial March," I guess. It just defines Chad, a guy who tries to be dominating and powerful, but comes off as weak and ineffectual.

I definitely remember Aaron and Matt mentioning the theme of the British version of *The Office*, and how their theme was in a similar vein -- cheerful acoustic sounds in a very desperate, hopeless way.

At first we tried to just do an impression of "The Imperial March," instead of the actual thing. It just didn't work; it wasn't the same. Everyone already has this reference of the original song, and you lose that reference if you change the melody *and* the instrumentation.

Have you adapted any other *Star Wars* themes into the music of the series?

We did use the "Cantina Band" theme, I think in the first episode, and then a fake "Cantina Band" song in a later episode.

What about compositions that aren't adapted?

When I make up music, I just watch the scene over and over and play something on the keyboard, or sing along. Sometimes I'll record myself improvising vocally along with the whole episode, because that's usually what results in the most appropriate timing and mood. It

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puts the music in the right context.

Then I use that scratch track to go back and figure out the actual instrumentation and tempo. I do a lot of improvising. Eventually, I'll just put a certain sound on that I think will work, watch the scene, and react to it. I try to keep the tempo steady, because then I add more instruments on top of that original improvised line.

The latest chapter of the *Chad Vader* saga -- [Episode 7](#) -- follows below, complete with Andrew Yonda's latest soundtrack.

Production of *Chad Vader* Episode 8 is already underway, with the first round of shoots slated for tonight, Friday, Mar. 23. Many cast members from throughout the series are returning for this season finale, including Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz. Matt Sloan and Aaron Yonda at Blame Society are planning for an early April release for this episode, the quickest turnaround in series history. At that point, they plan to take a break from producing the series for a time before launching a second season later in the year.

As for The Buffali, the duo is "holed up in our basement bunker recording new demos," explains Andrew Yonda. The duo signed a contract with a new manager at the beginning of the year, and is turning their talents in a new direction.

"We're going to record some songs in New York with a full band," Yonda continues, "then our manager is going to shop those songs around to labels." Therefore, The Buffali may not be touring for some time, at least until its plans are settled. The pair is playing in Madison next month, though, taking the stage on Thursday, Apr. 12 at the King Club.

