

More With Nox Arcana's Joseph Vargo

Leader of ambient, dark, Halloween music band speaketh on!

By [Rick Koster](#) Published on 10/7/2008

You can read my story about Nox Arcana [here](#) but there was a lot more involved in the original Q&A. So I decided to use some blog space to include a bit more of the exchange with Vargo.

Q: You're on record stating the influence of and affection for the soundtrack work of John Carpenter and Danny Elfman. Do I also hear hints of Tangerine Dream?

A: I have listened to Tangerine Dream in the past. I really enjoyed their soundtrack work, especially on the films Legend, Risky Business, and Thief. I also like Vangelis. Since we don't use synthesizers, our music doesn't reflect this influence. Most of our work is more symphonic, along the lines of soundtrack composers like Jerry Goldsmith, Hans Zimmer and Wojciech Kilar. John Carpenter's work has a very definite synthesized sound, but he's also got great acoustic sounding pieces like his piano themes for Halloween and The Fog. You can definitely hear these influences in our music.

Q: You've got a lot of sound effects going on. Do you create them?

A: We create and record all our own ambient sound effects and we have an extensive library of howls, cackles, wind, rain, thunder, dripping water, rattling chains, crackling fire, creaking doors, etc., as well as animals like wolves, ravens, bats and cats.

Q: Your partner in the band is William Piotrowski. He's a multi-instrumentalist, producer and engineer. How'd you guys meet and how much does he have to do with the thematic concepts of Nox Arcana?

A: I am actually very good friend's with his father and I've known William since he was very young. He's always been into music. When I decided to create Nox Arcana, he was only 15 and was just beginning to work with music editing programs on his computer. When I saw how quickly he was developing his skills as a studio engineer, I asked him if he wanted to work together on a new project. As far as our themes go, I develop all of our concepts, but William has a terrific grasp of the subject matter and brings some great ideas to the table.

Q: For a guy who spends an enormous amount of time dwelling on Halloween subjects, what do you actually do when it IS Halloween?

A: I throw my annual Halloween Horrorama party. It's like an elaborate murder mystery with a supernatural twist. I've been doing this since 1990, and each year covers a different theme, ranging from witches, mad scientists and evil toymakers to cursed pirates, sinister cults and Lovecraftian horrors. It's an exclusive, invitation-only affair and costumes are mandatory. Guests take part in a dark mystery and must search every room of the house, from the attic to the cellar (and sometimes even the yard) in an attempt to solve the case. They must also solve puzzles, decode secret messages and find keys to locked doors — picking up clues along the way.

So there you have it: THE Maestro of Halloween. Any thoughts on what y'all's favorite creepy music might be?

It was pretty fascinating to get to interview a guy — Joseph Vargo of the duo Nox Arcana — who actually makes a (lot of) his living making dark, spectral music that's sold in Halloween stores. How cool is that gig?

Let me answer that for you: very cool.



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Interactive Profile

MUSIC

Rick Koster has covered music, books and dining for *The Day*, and is a regular columnist. He also host's the paper's online Behind the Scenes feature. A native . He Southerner, Koster is the author of two books, *Louisiana Music* and *Texas Music* thinks, for the most part, dogs are better than people.

Rick's Playlist - October 7, 2008

Marillion -- *Happiness is the Road* (advance review copy)

XTC -- *Nonsuch*

Gipsy Kings -- *Gipsy Kings*

Shearwater -- *Rook*

Robert Fripp -- *A Blessing of Tears*

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