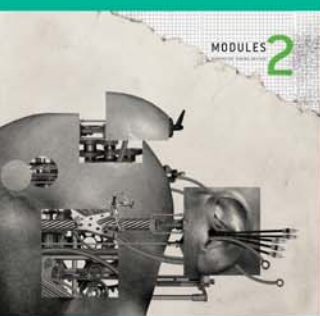




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These  
darkly-dynamic  
modules fuse  
music and  
sound effects.



This new VideoHelper product is more suited for videogames and trailers than spots.

## VideoHelper's Modules

VideoHelper's Modules — a narrative sound design product — is ready-to-serve sound design right out of the box. It's a perfectly thought-out spectrum of sound with horror and suspense sensibilities. Touted as "adventures in narrative sound design," by VideoHelper, each "module" (more like a music track than a sound effect) has an intelligent use of space, layering and timing. These darkly dynamic modules play out like mini movie (or videogame) trailers.

### WHAT IS IT?

Is it music? Is it FX? It's both! Which caused some problems in my normal workflow. As an audio post engineer I do a lot of work for television commercials. A typical spot will call for music and effects, so my first instinct was grab a module and layer it into my upbeat and driving music bed to add some extra punctuation on the product. But since the modules are musical, there were problems with key signatures. When clients pick a piece of music, they are more likely to change a sound effect that isn't working instead of changing music. So the first thing to go in their minds would be the module.

I wanted to see what I could get out of these sound design snippets, so I tried them out on a corporate logo project, which is more sound design friendly than a straightforward TV commercial. Browsing through the module CDs, which I had pulled into a searchable database locally on my hard drive, took longer than I'd planned, since the tracks were named like music tracks instead of like sound effects. There were booklets that came with the discs, but in a work environment built for speed, searching through booklets slowed me down substantially. One quick note about the booklets, they were at least extremely amusing. The humor was as biting as the sound design. (VideoHelper does has a searchable Website where you can preview and download tracks online if you are a registered user.)

Once I selected an appropriate piece, "Timecrash" from Disc 3, I pulled it into my Digidesign Pro Tools session and began cutting it up to make the hits happen with the video. The piece cut easily with a nice variety of hits and transitional sounds to fill the gaps. The only snag was the logo is about :15 and the sound design piece was :40, and there weren't enough separate hits in the module

to fill the necessary hits of the picture. I went back to Disc 3 and found a second module, "Hostiles Approaching," to work with the first. I was surprised how seamlessly they blended together. Since the modules are not just sound effects, but sonically complex and richly layered sound design with

which as the title suggests, fuses a choir and a helicopter starting up. There are modules ideal for space, war, sci-fi, medical, and even aquatic (deep sea) themed projects. They even have a module for those do-it-yourself horror scenes involving power tools — think *Hostel* or *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

### VITAL STATS

**PRODUCT:** VideoHelper's Modules

**WEBSITE:** [www.videohelper.com](http://www.videohelper.com)

**PRICE:** Licensing model based on usage.

See Website for pricing and how to download.

- Skillfully produced sound design with a serious edge
- Each module contains swells, hits and drones, making them easily customizable to fit picture
- Licensing fees apply, so keep your budget in mind



musical implications, I was a bit apprehensive that the overlap would be an issue, but it was quite the opposite. Since the modules all have this edgy feel, any dissonance created by layering different modules only helped to enhance that edge.

### THEY ARE INTENSE

One concern that does remain is that the modules may be a little too dark to apply to any project. If you're looking for home and garden playtime fun hour sound design to enhance a puppet show for children of all ages, you shouldn't start your search here. These modules are intense. For example, "Guitar Hero" on Modules Disc 3 invokes the air raid sirens similar to *Silent Hill*. Even tracks that are supposed to be light and calming have a suspenseful edge, like "Empathy Capsule," on Module Disc 2, which uses backward effects and ethereal rising voices that culminate in abrupt hits, underscored by a wavering didgeridoo-esk low-end drone. Don't be fooled by titles like, "Healing Touches," on Disc 1, which seems misleadingly soothing. The almost sweet sound is cut with a harsh high-end metallic ringing contrasted by deep bass hits and plenty of backwards effects and tense strings used throughout.

But if you are looking for dark and edgy, VideoHelper sound design modules are right on the money. The layered ghostly voices on "Carol Ann" from Disc 1 will haunt even the most seasoned horror movie junkie. There are interesting combinations of elements to fit out-of-the-ordinary needs, such as "Chopper Choir" on Disc 1,

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Also like a stock music track, there are licensing fees that go along with these modules. You don't get the same benefit of a one-time fee that you would with a buyout sound effects library. Though the fees are not astronomical and are applied on a sliding scale the way stock music fees would be, it is still an added cost that needs to be kept in mind. Since the length of the tracks can range from :15 to under 3:00, there is a high potential of using more than one track in a project. For my :15 corporate logo project, I ended up using two modules. The additional licensing fees shouldn't be overlooked. When a budget allows for only limited licensing fees, then the choice of stock music or VideoHelper Modules will need to be weighed.

Unfortunately, I didn't find much use for the modules on TV commercials. The overall tone was a little dark for advertising toilet paper or hair care products. Luckily for VideoHelper, advertising isn't the end all. These sound design modules would be perfect right out of the box for rated M videogames or zombie movie trailers.

They sound amazing and are extremely dynamic and dramatic. Every module contains swells, hits and drones that were easy to edit to fit picture. The modules also worked well together. Their dark and edgy quality was very forgiving of any dissonant by-products caused by using more than one module at a time. With a bit of budget consciousness about licensing fees, these modules could easily be the power that drives the picture.

#POST