

= Dungeons & Dragons (album) =

Dungeons & Dragons is a studio album by Midnight Syndicate , released August 12 , 2003 by Entity Productions . The album is designed as a soundtrack to the role @-@ playing game Dungeons & Dragons and was produced by Midnight Syndicate at the request of Wizards of the Coast , the company which owns the rights to the Dungeons & Dragons franchise . Midnight Syndicate were approached by game designers at a gaming convention where they had set up stall , and they agreed to produce the album .

After an initial meeting with Wizards of the Coast , the two members of Midnight Syndicate ? Edward Douglas and Gavin Goszka ? were left to write and produce the album themselves . They went their separate ways and produced tracks independently of one another , but came back together to arrange the album and master the tracks . The album was a change in style for Midnight Syndicate , because most of it had a fantasy feel , whereas their earlier works had been almost entirely horror @-@ based . Artwork within the album booklet came from Dungeons & Dragons sourcebooks , including works from prominent game designers such as Skip Williams . The album was well received by Wizards of the Coast , with positive reviews from music critics and the gaming community . It is reputedly the only official Dungeons & Dragons soundtrack .

= = Conception and production = =

According to Bob Ignizio of Utter Trash , an ezine featuring " music , movies and more " , Midnight Syndicate 's older albums had already been used as background music to role @-@ playing sessions for many years . Wizards of the Coast described the band 's music as " the perfect accompaniment to role @-@ playing game sessions " . Support for Midnight Syndicate 's music as a role @-@ playing aid grew so much that the band decided to set up stalls at gaming conventions . At their first convention , Midnight Syndicate was approached by Wizards of the Coast , which subsequently asked if they would be interested in recording an official soundtrack , to which they agreed .

Before the band started writing or recording music they sat down with the Dungeons & Dragons designers who informed them of several elements that were essential on the album . According to Ed Stark , special project manager of Wizards of the Coast , this consisted of " a chase scene and a fight scene and things like that " . This was new to the band who had never written music to fit someone else 's ideas before . Stark said , however , that " ... they really got that . We were very impressed , because we 're in sort of a niche industry , and we 're not always used to people getting exactly what we need right away " . After this , the band was mostly left to deal with the music themselves . The designers were already familiar with Midnight Syndicate 's music and knew what to expect from the album . As inspiration for earlier albums had sometimes come from Dungeons & Dragons gaming sessions , Douglas said that writing the album came very naturally .

After the initial meeting with game designers , the album was written in the same way Midnight Syndicate conventionally write . First , Douglas and Goszka agreed on the setting they were trying to create with the album and then filled in details about the setting . Once this was done , they worked on music separately , in their own different studios . They remained in contact throughout the writing process to ensure that their work was cohesive and appropriate for the album . Once writing was complete , they worked together on arranging , mastering and mixing the tracks .

Douglas said that , for him , instrument choice came naturally and that " sounds and sometimes even melodies fall in line themselves " . The band had a wide number of instruments at their disposal , as all the music is produced on synthesizers . To ensure Douglas stayed true to creating the musical landscape he intended , his studio was covered with Dungeons & Dragons artwork and module covers throughout recording .

Joseph Vargo , executive producer on Midnight Syndicate 's albums Born of the Night and Realm of Shadows , as well as the author of LegionoftheNight.com , says that he was the one who initiated the first contact between Wizards of the Coast and the band . Vargo claims that , in 1999 , he sent a copy of Born of the Night to Dungeons & Dragons game designer Jason Carl , at the time employed

by TSR , who described the album as " terrific gaming music " . Vargo also says that he sent a copy of Realm of Shadows to Carl a year later , and this communication helped forge the link between the band and Dungeons & Dragons game designers .

= = = First soundtrack = = =

Wizards of the Coast claimed that the album was the first official Dungeons & Dragons soundtrack , one that was mirrored by other groups , including Metropolis Mail Order , GamingReport.com and Skirmisher Game Store . It was not , however , the first official Dungeons & Dragons music . Years earlier another album , First Quest : The Music , was released by Filmtrax and licensed by TSR , then owners of Dungeons and Dragons , for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons . The album was released both as a cassette and a record and came with a pre @-@ printed module . Both formats proved unpopular and are difficult to find today . The music on First Quest was keyed specifically to the module that came with it , rather than as a soundtrack to the game in general .

= = Musical style = =

According to Mario Mesquita Borges of Allmusic , Midnight Syndicate typically create " darkly blended compositions " , described both as " gloomy " and " brooding " . Leonard Pickel of Haunted Attraction Magazine stated that " each year , the band 's music becomes more a part of America 's Halloween culture " , and stated that the band had " literally formed their own musical genre " . For Douglas , however , Dungeons & Dragons was a different style of music from other albums and soundtracks that the band had produced . Originally , he had described Midnight Syndicate 's music as " Gothic Nightmare Soundtracks " , but claimed that Dungeons & Dragons had a more fantasy feel than previous releases which focused more on horror , meaning that he now describes the band 's music as " Gothic Fantasy Nightmare Soundtracks " . Chris Harvey of Movement Magazine ? a magazine supporting " underground " music and arts ? described the album as being symphonic , which he claimed added to the feel of the album . Sounds were also sampled , including the sounds of battle on " Final Confrontation " , and spoken words in " Craft of the Wizard " .

Peter @-@ Jan Van Damme , owner of the alternative music ezine Darker than the Bat , described Dungeons & Dragons as going more in the direction of contemporary classical composers such as Trevor Jones , while still retaining the horror sound typical of Midnight Syndicate . The album has been categorized into many genres by various reviewers , including neoclassical , Gothic ambient , ethereal , and Gothic rock .

= = Reception = =

Wizards of the Coast were happy with the resulting album with Anthony Valterra , RPG category manager , saying that Midnight Syndicate " have succeeded at capturing the magic of D & D through music " . Numerous critics picked up on the idea that new subject matter had resulted in a new feel for the music , with reviewers claiming that the fantasy influence had given the album a different sound to Midnight Syndicate 's classic Gothic horror soundtracks . An unnamed writer for the now defunct Living Dead Girls ezine said that Dungeons & Dragons " brings a wider range of songs than Midnight Syndicate produces for their Gothic horror soundtracks " , meaning the album " displays for the first time the diversity and musical craft [of which] Midnight Syndicate is capable " . GamingReport.com claimed that the album " furthered the band 's establishment as the leading producer / supplier of music to the hobby game industry " . The band became the best @-@ selling role @-@ playing game soundtrack ever in its first month of release , and Leonard Pickel of Haunted Attraction Magazine claimed that the album helped spread the band 's popularity to Europe where " Halloween and Haunted Attractions are just beginning to take hold " .

The album was criticized by Marc Shayed , of hobby gaming news site GamingReport.com , for focusing too much on combat and ambiance . He explained that there was only one track that felt triumphant and no tracks suitable for traveling or character " down time " , which are standards in

fantasy gaming . Despite these perceived gaps , he did call it the " ultimate " gaming soundtrack . The album was further criticized by Gene Vogal of the National Gamers Guild who said that it lacked a lot of the " oomph " that Vampyre had , and thought Wizards of the Coast may have been to blame for it . He did think its being composed explicitly for D & D made it superior to music not specifically composed for games (e.g. film soundtracks) as a gaming aid . He criticized the soundtrack for being less original than Vampyre , and sounding much like The Lord of the Rings soundtracks .

= = Personnel = =

The album was written and produced by Edward Douglas and Gavin Goszka , the only two members of Midnight Syndicate . The album 's graphical design was executed by Mark Rakocy and Jeff Visgaitis , with " additional design " credited to " Stan ! " The album heralded a change in production in that it was the first album in which the band hired a professional writer to write the descriptions in the album booklet and the blurb . Before this point the descriptions had been written by Douglas or by Joseph Vargo , who had been responsible for artwork in some earlier albums . Artwork for the album was taken from Dungeons & Dragons role @-@ playing sourcebooks . Douglas said that he was " a huge fan of Dungeons & Dragons artwork , so having free reign [sic] on that material was fun " . This artwork was praised by Gene Vogal who described it as " one plus to the possible Wizards of the Coast interference " and said that the " CD jacket was done very nicely and has some cool artwork throughout " . The album contains artwork by game designers Todd Lockwood and Skip Williams , as well as from artists Scott Fischer , Brian Snoddy , Lars Grant @-@ West , Wayne Reynolds , Mark Tedin , and Sam Wood .

= = Track listing = =

There is a final 36 @-@ second bonus track , which sometimes receives no title , and sometimes is named " BOTCH ! " The Midnight Syndicate website does not mention the track at all . It is a joke track in which a hapless D & D player summons something from the game into the real world . Chris Harvey of Movement Magazine found the dice @-@ rolling sound effects " hilarious " .