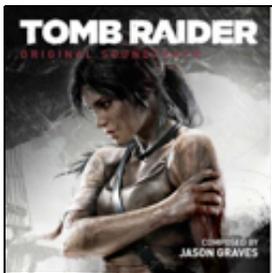


Tomb Raider ***** [VIDEO GAME]



JASON GRAVES

Sumthing Else Music Works/Square Enix BOBFVPWX8

20 tracks - 74:48

Lara Croft is back for a reboot of the *Tomb Raider* gaming franchise. This time around, a young (and considerably less buxom) Lara is shipwrecked on a perilous island and has to use all her wits and guile to escape. After several ho-hum sequels, the franchise strikes gold with a gritty and engaging story, married to slick visuals and a full score. And what a score! I listen to a lot of video game scores and the action titles almost universally focus on discordant brass and pounding percussion. *Tomb Raider* is different. Renowned video game composer Jason Graves has completely overhauled the music, ignoring the series' previously familiar motifs and reinventing a language all his own. The many themes weaving their way through the cues show that Graves isn't afraid of a melody or two. A five-note figure serves as the theme for Lara, and the very first cue, "Adventure Found Me," sets the tone of innocence and loneliness. Having such a simple theme is a bold move from the composer, but one that pays off, as throughout the score it's twisted into increasingly complex structures to add tension and surprise.

The ensemble sounds expressive, with the dynamics reaching higher heights and lower lows than many other game scores. Solos are both restrained and bold in equal measure, especially the French horn, which shines in cues such as "Reaching Roth." The string work is also stunningly detailed, with gorgeous separation between the sections allowing the cellos to proudly carry the emotional weight of many of the cues like "Paying Respect."

The album takes a turn for the strange about two thirds of the way through as some unique sounds take over. Many of these come from an instrument created especially for the project called, rather unimaginatively, "The Instrument." After sampling all the scrap metal he could find, Graves employed a metalwork sculptor to create a complex beast of metal and glass purely for the job of providing some twisted textures for the soundtrack. Cues like "The Oni" showcase these warped metallic and hollow tones, which lend an eerie unease to the score.

The entire collection of music from the game has a run time of over three hours, so it must've been difficult for Graves to choose which pieces to include in this 74-minute edition. Fans may be interested in an additional two tracks available via the official *Tomb Raider* Facebook page, but that's not enough for me. I can only hope that Graves will be savvy enough to release all of the leftover tracks as an expanded version in the future. It's only March, but if I hear a greater video game score in 2013 I'll be very surprised. —**Reuben Cornell** @reutunes