

THE SOUND OF TERROR

Harmo Nick vs Diss O'Nant



Welcome to Performing Arts Summer Camp, the place where teens have dreams and nobody screams...

well, not these days...

Lemme show you around. My name is Kirby, activities supervisor at the camp, and I never curb my enthusiasm for anything, haha.

The kids can get into some fantastic activities here – dance, singing, theatre – and right over there is our very own recording studio. Looks pretty spanky, huh? Wasn't always like that. **Lemme tell you a story...**

It was a few summers back: hairstyles were big, flares were wide, and we wanted to make our first Summer Camp video to showcase what a great place this was. You see, business was on the slide and we were trying to do everything we could to keep the camp up and running.

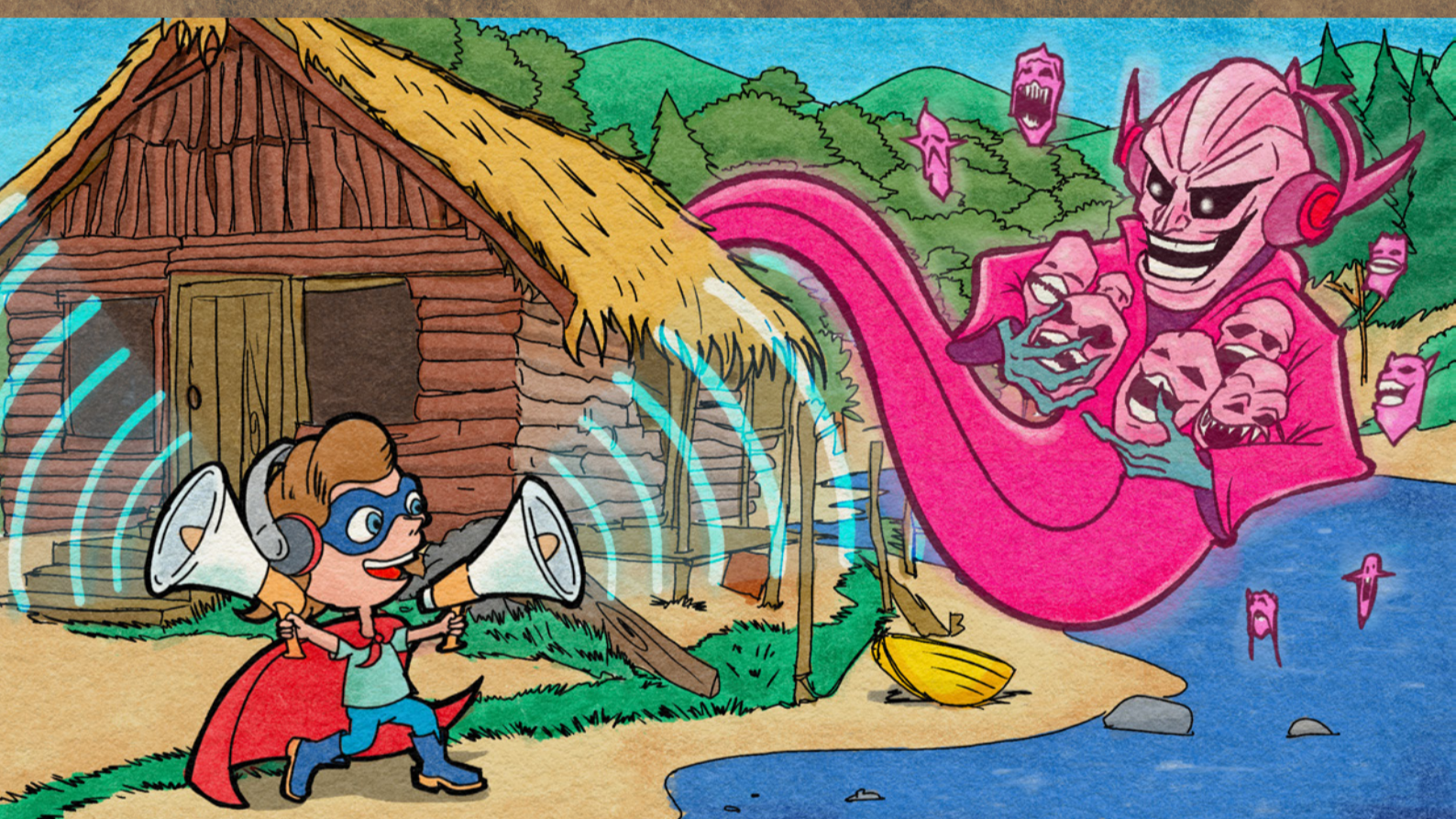
The kids at the camp were just terrific and filmed a bunch of dance routines and theatre rehearsals, and some great b-roll footage of the camp looking totally awesome tucked away in the woods here.

I edited together the 60-second film and it looked kickass, I'm talking totally Kubrick. But

while we were feeling pretty smug, some kid at the back of the room pipes up asking about the sound. Smartass. But he was right – we'd forgotten. Once I'd got past all the dust and cobwebs in the recording studio, the gear looked kinda old-fashioned, but I was feeling pretty confident. Then that smartass voice piped up again: 'Need some help? I got a knack for these things.' 'Nah', I said.

I got to work, sorting out my vox pops, foley and soundscapes but in truth I was in a real mess. Then, as midnight struck, things started to get weird. There was a hissing noise I couldn't get rid of, my voiceover was getting constantly distorted, and my subtitles were total nonsense. Then the laughter started – it wasn't my laughter, and it wasn't the funny kind. It was coming out of the speakers and I couldn't stop it... there was a ghost in the machine. Like for real!

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The voice said it was gonna make the Performing Arts Summer Camp its next victim. Now I was getting freaked out. I tried to shut the machines down, but the voice was in control, so I ran out of the studio, slamming the door behind me, and prayed that that thing hadn't somehow followed me out.

The next morning, the word had gone round about what had happened and the mood was super-low. My eggs were sunny side up, but I was on a total downer. Then, to make things worse, I heard that smartass voice behind me: 'How'd it go?'

'I can't do it, I can't go back in there!' I shouted. Everyone in the canteen turned round and stared at me like I was King Loser. They were right. The owner of the smartass voice sat down in front of me. He was just a scrawny-looking kid, but somehow, he had this edge, this confidence, like he knew stuff. 'Tell me what happened,' he said calmly.

As I went through my story, he nodded. 'Yep, that's Diss O Nant. I've come to blows with that sneaky pain-in-the-ass before when I did some AV work during vacation time. Doesn't matter what he gets his hands on – gaming soundtracks, character voices, soundscapes – he'll wreck every project you got.'

'But the Summer Camp really needs this video – we've got a presentation in 2 hours!' I wailed.

'It's okay. I'll handle it,' he said, as he got up and headed to the recording studio.

What that kid did in there was nothing short of magic, making sure that every voiceover was crystal clear, every caption was in its place and the soundscape was epic. I was pacing a hole in the carpet but with 5 minutes to go, he burst out of the recording studio and just about flew to the auditorium where the kids, the parents, business people and bankers were waiting for the big show.

He even got us global reach by implementing agile audio and video localization solutions (as they say in the business world).

It was only after the show that I thought of asking his name. 'I'm Harmo Nick,' he replied, 'Don't you forget it.'

'I certainly won't, kiddo. You're a bona fide superhero.'

Story by Originia,

Alpha Games' narrative writer.

Original illustrations: **Andres Alegria**

