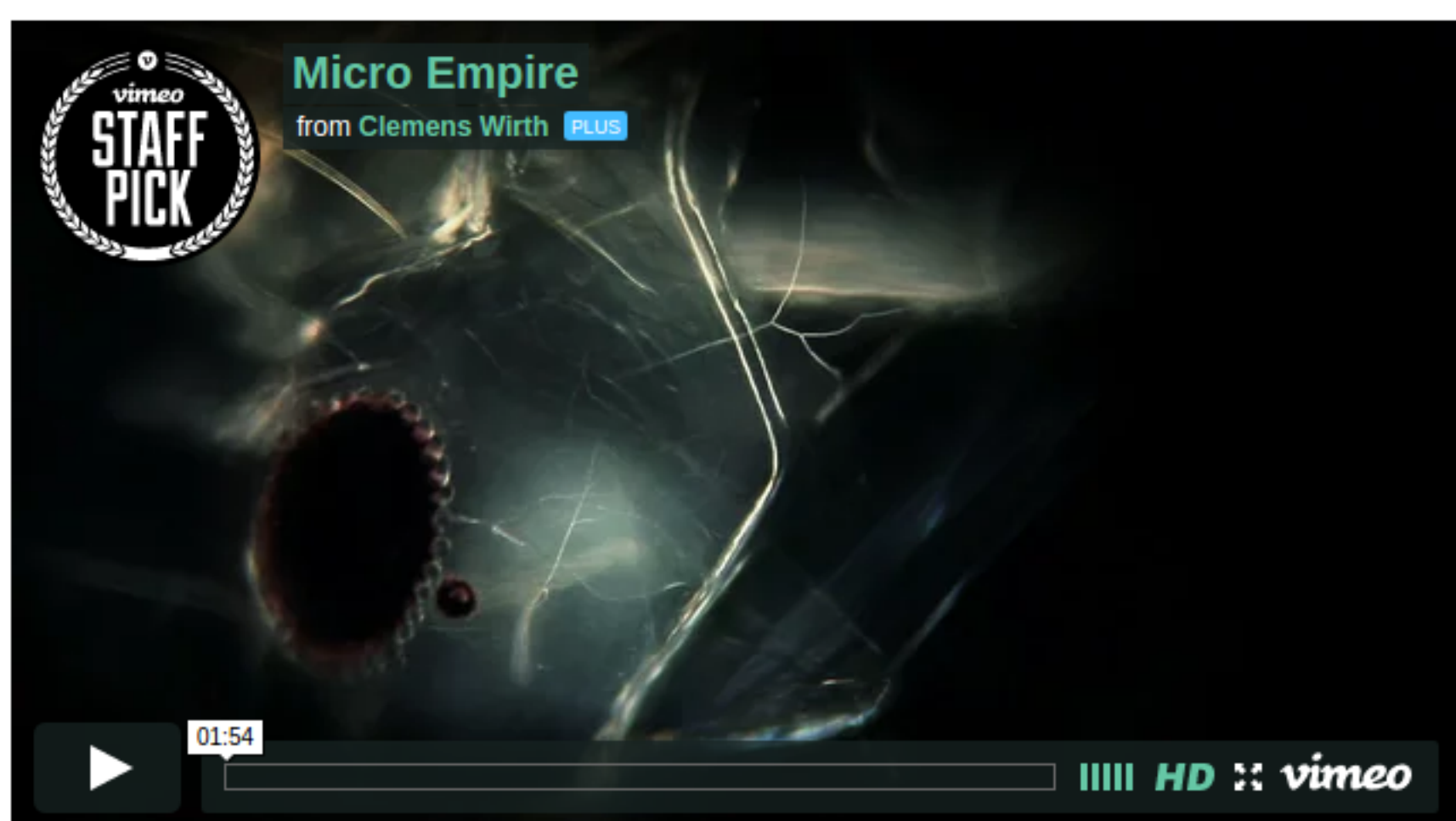


Scoring The Bizarre World Of *Micro Empire* With Dark Electro [Q&A]

By [Kevin Holmes](#) — Apr 11 2012



Nothing grips the eye and mind quite like nature footage of unseen worlds, whether that be the deep blue sea, the icy tundras, or the microscopic world that's going about its business right under our feet. Using a technique he calls "dark field microscopy" filmmaker [Clemens Wirth](#) went deep into the strange microbe-riddled environment of the subcellular to create *Micro Empire*, a collaboration with sound studio [Radium Audio](#).

The video, above, shows warring organisms battling each other for survival, the "molecular conflict and mitochondrial warfare" that can exist inside a drop of water. Radium Audio provided a "gritty, dark, electronic score" to heighten and underpin this alien experience.

The video proved a big hit online and we emailed Radium Audio over some questions to find out how they went about soundtracking this bizarre, beguiling footage.

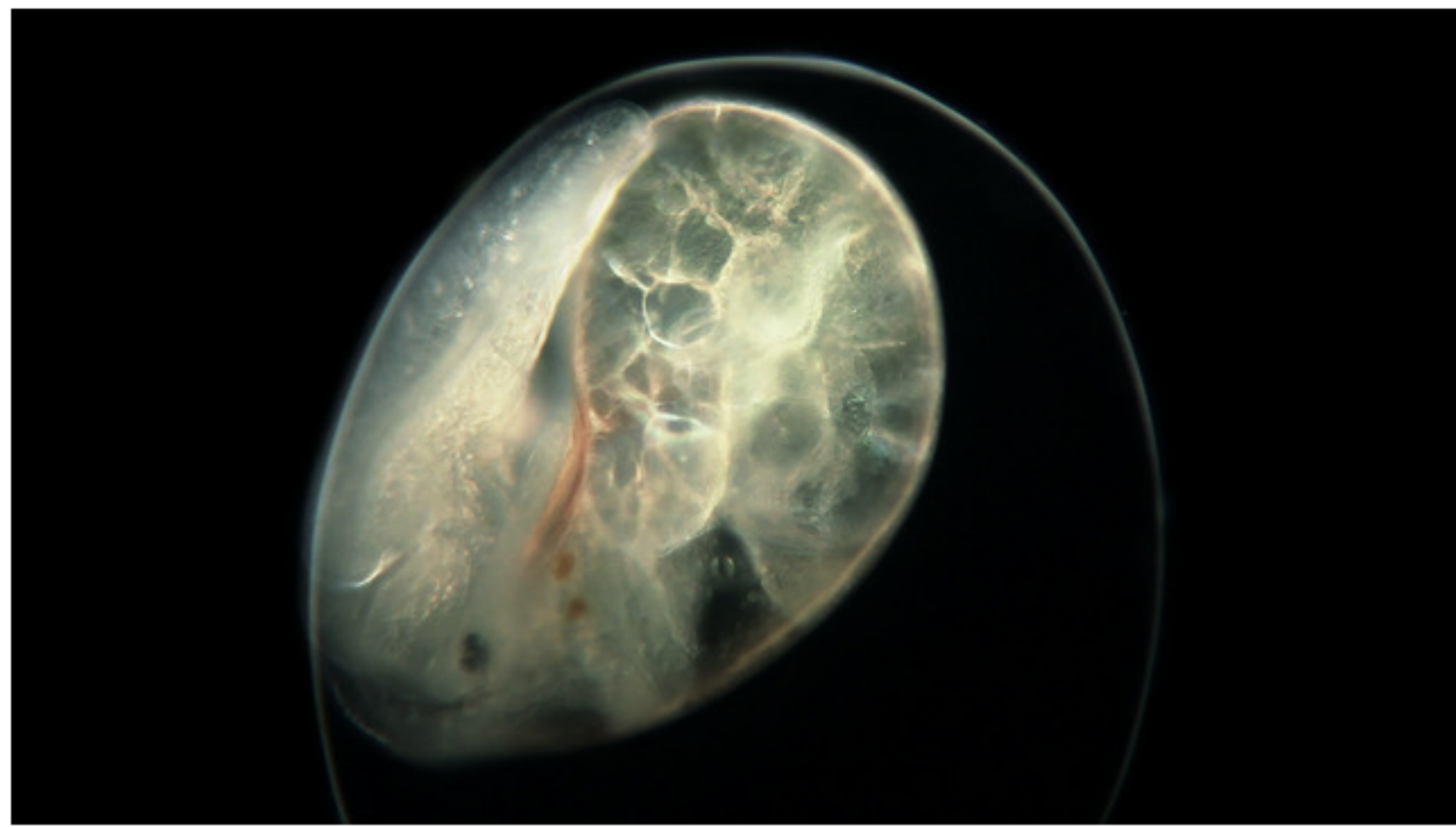
You worked with Clemens Wirth before on *Macro Kingdom III*, and the sound design for that was dream-like and ethereal. In this new vid we go even deeper into the micro worlds and the music changes to more of an industrial-type beat. Why is that?

We were really blown away by Clem's initial footage when he showed it to us, and there was a completely different story taking place in the *Micro Empire* compared to what we were seeing in *Macro Kingdom III*, which was a world that tended to unfold and open up to us very gently and delicately as we watched. The *Micro Empire* universe was alive with organisms that seemed to be in a kind of battle with each other to manipulate and dominate their environment—at times it was like watching a subtly maneuvered clandestine cold war, then we would see an escalation into an all out open battle. Our soundtrack had to reflect and enhance that, it would have been completely against the natural narrative in Clem's film to have gone in any other direction.



I know you have all sorts of microphones and recording equipment at your lab. Did you use any of these to record any unusual audio that features in the video, that we might not be aware of?

We create our own internal sound banks from organic recordings as an ongoing process, and in this case a couple of key elements in the sound design were some [live insect recordings](#) in studio, which we did last November, and some [live lion recordings](#) which we captured on a recording trip to South Africa in March last year. Key to the insect recordings was the Japanese engineered Sanken MO64, which was originally designed to be able to capture the heartbeat of a snail. For the lion recordings we used the DPA 4017 which was brand new at the time. It gives a very natural, transparent sound and is perfect for recording nature. Additionally, we had a couple of bespoke internal [recording sessions for *Micro Empire*](#), which included deploying a custom-built waterproof contact mike to elicit some wonderful squelchy gooey sounds from various hair gels and waxes we picked up from the local supermarket.



How does the collaborative process work with you and Clemens. Is it a case of him giving you the video and letting you get on with it or is it more of a complicated process?

One of the things we really love about working with Clem is that he has such a keen appreciation of how sound and music can be used to really enhance and amplify his visual stories—and we tend to share the visual and audio assets back and forwards with each other as we develop the project together. So at different stages of the collaborative process we work in both ways, sometimes we are creating our soundtrack to work with Clem's images, and other times Clem will edit his images to work with our sound and music. Of course there are many different ways to work, however this is one which has worked very well on the *Micro Empire* project.

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