Motion Picture Moods

For

Geeks and Non-Musicians

An Automated, Intelligent Music-Generation System

Proposed By

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Abstract

A soundtrack-generation program (nicknamed "Al") is to be designed for an idealized customer named "Steve." Given Steve's interests and skills, this paper looks at a number of the questions—practical, personal, psychological, musical, technological, and cultural—that should be addressed before the soundtrack-generation software can be written. Three methodologies are employed to determine how users who have received little or no musical training might best respond to the opportunity to create their own soundtracks for their home videos.

The answers to these questions may contain implications that are applicable to a broad spectrum of interaction design problems.
Introduction: Video Moods and Self-Organizing Soundtracks

The title of this thesis is derived from a sheet-music recipe book called *Motion Picture Moods For Pianists and Organists: A Rapid-Reference Collection of Selected Pieces, Adapted to Fifty-Two Moods and Situations* (Davis 1999, 19). It was arranged by Erno Rapée and published by G. Schirmer in 1924. Rapée’s tome was one of a number of “fake books” that provided musical raw materials from which silent-movie pianists and organists could assemble accompaniments for the picture-only projections of the day.

Fifty years later, electronic musician Brian Eno seemed to be willing to let the fake books play themselves.

   Since I have always preferred making plans to executing them, I have gravitated towards situations and systems that, once set into operation, could create music with little or no intervention on my part.

   That is to say, I tend towards the roles of the planner and programmer, and then become an audience to the results. (Eno 1975)

The short-term goal of this project is to take the musical wisdom contained in contemporary “fake books” and inject that wisdom into a digital system that is able to intelligently assemble those musical pieces into soundtracks. The question is this: What sort of music-generation system would encourage a user with no formal training in music to express his or her musical thoughts in the context of composing a soundtrack for a video?
References


