The Generator

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The Sound of eBay is an UBERMORGEN.COM project

THE HISTORY (& SUPERCOLLIDER)

The eBay-Generator is an application that translates data from arbitrary eBay user-accounts into little music pieces. A first prototype - using the South American eBay - clone Merca-dolibre - has already been presented in September 2007. Experiences with this first version have led to this current version of the eBay-Generator, which produces "songs" on request which are then published at http://www.Sound-of-eBay.com. Each generator (there can be an unlimited number of them working in parallel) is running on a normal Apple/Mac (this is currently the only platform that supports the software due the use of Apple's built-in Speech synthesis).

I have chosen this concept for several reasons: The eBay-Generator is mainly made in SuperCollider, a programming-environment for audio, designed to run on local workstations that can send commands (OSC) to other SuperCollider-Servers (e.g. set parameters in synths running on a remote engine).

Although this net-based concept makes working in a network convenient, it is not set up to function like a webserver. It simply seemed more convenient having easy control over processes running on my local machine rather than running a remote server.

BUBBLING EBAY USER GROOVES

eBay's concept is based on transactions between buyers and sellers – transactions between human beings, not consumers and companies. The eBay-Generator reflects this concept in a way that it does not only generate your free personal song, even the generator itself shall become a free application that any (Macuser) can install freely on her/his Computer to produce an endless stream of bubbling eBay-grooves.

HASH

Not only that this may reflect the buyer-seller relation in a way, this concept of a distributed generation also offers a few other interesting options like: every generator owns its own history (rememberance), meaning from the first time it is run it constantly collects usernames and calculates its occurrencies in all transactions. Every username is considered for any new generation. The generator calculates a simple hashsum for a given username. The sum of all hashes, divided by the number of occurrences (average), results in a final sum that determines the sound. Specific hashes like the hashes of users whose comments get sampled and played in the track are treated separatly.

Hashes are useful as they can e.g. be anlyzed like this: a given hash gets analyzed for its charastics by dividing it by all values from 1 to itself. Each time the result is whole-numbered, the divisor gets added to an array. This simple mechanisms allows the generation of charcteristic patterns that may be used for rythm, harmonics and and other parameters.

HARMONY AND RHYTHM

However the musical structure is not merely determined by userdata. Rather than generating scales and harmonics, the data (resp. patches gained from it) is used to cut out a sub-spectrum out of a 11 different scales that are hardcoded into each generator. The predefined scales are a selection out of a scheme invented by Max Meyer resp. Harry Partch called „Diamond Tonality" (I borrowed the SC-concept for generating this structure from James McCartney, the original author of SuperCollider).

Although there is an underlying harmonic structure and a rather conventional rhythmic structure, not every generated song will be a 'hit' – it's a bubbling sea of eBay-userdata. Some songs may have surprising changes in their melodies, some may remind of other existing popmelodies for a moment, some may result in a funky jazz-improvisation ... play around with it. Generate more than one song from a given username. Generate songs also from users that have had a transaction with an already queried user. This all has an influence on the sound ...

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Tech-documentation Online: http://basislager.5tefan.org/
Generate your personal Ebay-Song: http://www.Sound-of-eBay.com
UBERMORGEN.COM: http://www.ubermorgen.com
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