

Is Jimi Hendrix a Good Level Designer?

(yes, here's why)

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Who we are.

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Key Aspects of a Beat-Matching Game

- Each song is a game level
- Player follows visual cues that follow musical content
- Completely linear experience

Who Cares?

- If the song is your game level, your audio team is your level design team. Why?
- Sound designers have the skill set to understand and manipulate the musical content

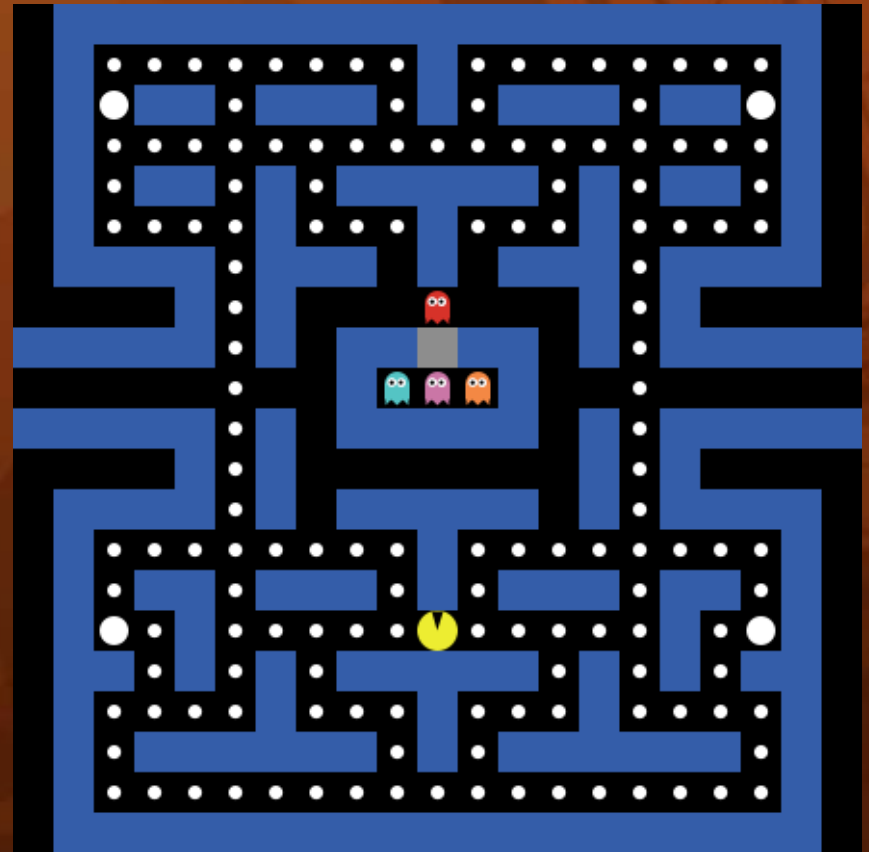
Modern Level Design Rules Apply

- Variation vs. Repetition
- Tension vs. Release
- Pacing & Progression



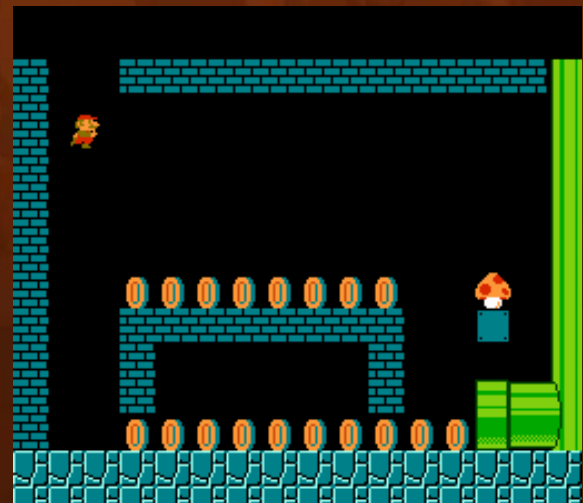
Variation VS Repetition

- Repetition builds skills
- Variation teaches new skills
- Variation keeps you from being bored stiff



Tension VS Release

- Tension and Release are inherent aspects of music that lend themselves to very compelling game play
- Guitar Solos are generally followed by a chorus or verse – classic tension and release



Pacing and Progression

- Moment to moment:
Pacing in song
- Song to song: Pacing
in campaign



Song Content is Important

- Duh.
- Song structure has huge role in experience

Sinner Blues

Intro: || D | B^b A | D |

Verse: ||: D | F[#] | G | B^b |

| D | A | D | A⁷ |

| D | F[#] | G | B^b |

| D | A | D | A⁷ |

Chorus: | D | F[#] | G | B^b ||

| D | B^b A | D⁷ |

| D | B^b A | D⁷ :||

Choosing songs is important, here are some things to look for:

- Inherent difficulty
- Pacing
- Playability
- Musicality



The Importance of Tools

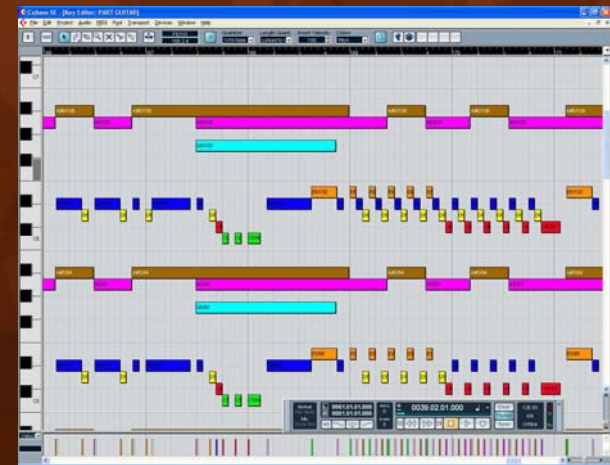
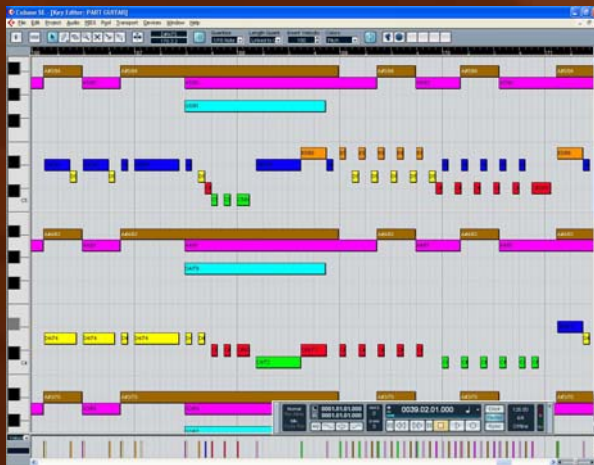
- Note Authoring
- Chords
- Sustains
- Star Power



A note about difficulty tuning

- Inherent tie to song data – in expert modes, you often have one to one correlation of notes to cues
- You need to maintain musical integrity, even on easy modes
- Structure is good. You want rules that clearly differentiate easy from expert

Easy is easier than Expert



Why Star Power is important

- GDC word from 2003: Orthogonal
 - Gives you health
 - OR
 - Gives you points
- Allows for level balancing without taking away notes


Different songs yield different types of experience

- Unrelenting Assault
- Mixed Encounters
- Death Match
- Boss
- Set Piece



Unrelenting Assault

- Helmet: Unsung
- Butthole Surfers: Who Was In My Room Last Night?
- Foo Fighters: Monkey Wrench




QuickTime™ and a
H.264 decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Unrelenting Assault

- Lots of persistent rhythms
- Very physical gameplay
- Endurance is a factor

Mixed Encounters

- Blue Öyster Cult: Godzilla
- Matthew Sweet: Girlfriend
- Cream: Crossroads




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Mixed Encounters

- Noodley bits between verse and chorus bits
- Short cycles of repetition and variation

Death Match

- Suicidal Tendencies: Institutionalized
- Stevie Ray Vaughan: Texas Flood




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Death Match

- Tons of wankery
- Few repetitive themes
- Lots of sight reading / “instinctive” play

Boss Song

- Megadeth: Hangar 18
- Ozzy: Bark at the Moon




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Boss Song

- Song has inherent ramp to difficulty (starts less hard, ends wicked hard)
- Ass-kicking solo at end of song

Set Piece

- Hendrix: Spanish Castle Magic
- Boston: More than a Feeling
- The Police: Message in a Bottle



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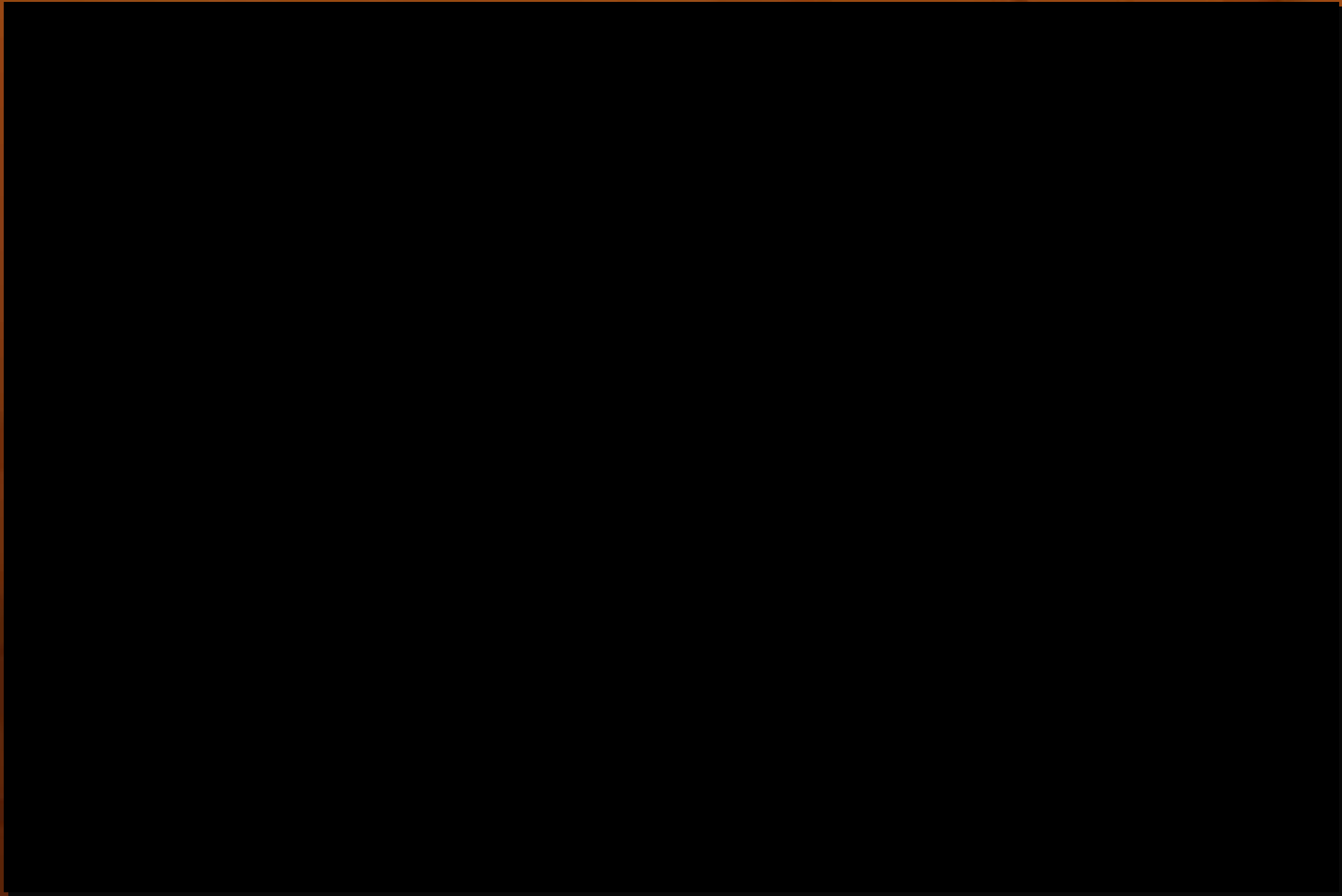
Set Piece

- Lots of variety and different parts
- Musically visceral – translates well to little plastic guitar
- Include lots of different types of gameplay

Us being jerks (i.e. how to mess with your fans)

- The Sword: Freya





Why Freya is a pain in the butt

- Very physical, repetitive gameplay coupled with patterns that are physically difficult to complete
- Subtle differences in note authoring and rhythm of song

What else does our audio team do?

- Set animation cues
- Set lighting cues



Questions

- Eric likes Deep Purple, a lot . . . still
- Daniel was a metalhead in high school
- We can't tell you what Harmonix is working on (hint: it's not Accordion Hero)

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