

PLAY THE GAME: MUSIC VIDEOGAMES

FarGame
Conference
Bologna

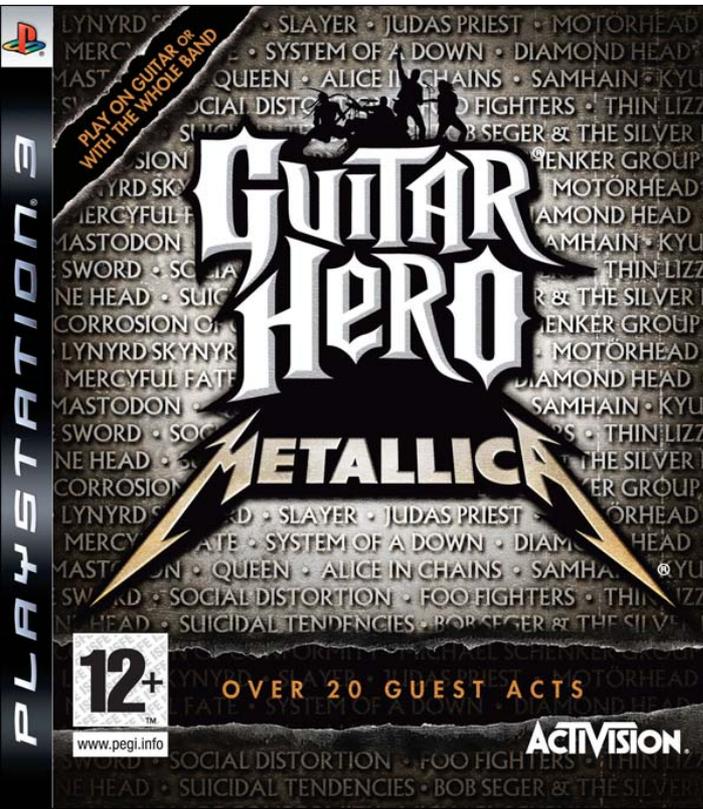
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Rhythm Games

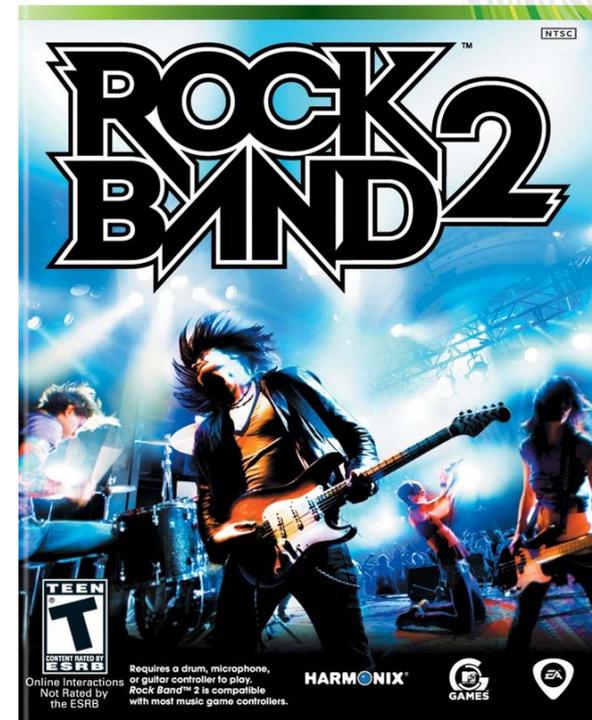
Guitar Hero Activision



Rock Band
MTV Games /
Electronic Arts

XBOX 360

LIVE



Wide dissemination
and commercial
success (mostly in
USA)

Development of
communities of fans-
followers-players and
forums

“Musical” Games?

Actually based on simple rhythmic sensorimotor coordination.

Paradoxically they can be played even taking the TV volume to zero.

> See Tap Tap Revenge (iPhone app.)





Why do you play?

Music Games promise of allowing players “to step onto the stage and into the **shoes of Green Day**”

Sharing the experience of playing “with them”

Simulating the experience of playing

Kurt Cobain, Nirvana

Guitar Hero 5

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbIBdok11Bw>

How to Play

There are controllers (guitar, bass, drums...)

Graphic interface shows a Virtual Reality where musicians are represented by avatars .

The player “becomes” one of them performing a sequence of actions on the controller (ex. the guitar neck), pushing buttons with his hands in time.



> Play

Score: player wins by performing the required actions without errors, with different levels of difficulty.

During the game playing, there are affirmative (applauses) and negative(boos) feedbacks, also based on stage performimng skills (moving the guitar as a rockstar).

... some time ago

Simon



Dance
Dance
Revolution



Into the music

Beyond sensorimotor skills,
the game is proposed for
inclusion in a musical
performative world, in a
world of identity and
listening experience.

Play means: to listen and
listen again, to decompose
parts of a song, to discover
never heard repertoires.

The
Beatles
Rock Band

Green Day
Rock Band

Guitar
Hero Van
Halen

Guitar
Hero
Metallica

Guitar
Hero
Aerosmith

+ single tunes
to download

Game titles
(bands)



Experiences of shared playing

Single player or Internet multiplayer

On YouTube there are many players which capture and share their performance.

People (and game firms) organize events and live contests.

There are many shows of music-videogame bands playing, in local karaoke bars too.

Such bands have their own name, look and style, as a “real” band.



Player?

Game-Player is not a Music-Player, almost in a traditional meaning.

He or she performs nothing but a part already written, without any possibility of change, except for mistakes.

You cannot create or compose music.

Probably you are not able to, and this is not a problem.

Games and Media

Music Videogames show, condensed, many of current media trends.

Convergence: not only technological but between the universes of discourse.

Fiction/Reality simulation: these are continuously exceeded thresholds.

Reality degrees

Song recording

Graphic animation
of band musicians.

Player
performance

Possible shared
collectively
performance, with
score display
vision.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foFF-J63v1o>

Aesthetics of imitation

“Let’s pretend we’re...”.

To pretend to be, to act as if, to repeat as, are all logics underlying the game.

They are also related to the karaoke but also to TV talent shows.

For instance, in *X Factor* beginners sing other’s tunes, in front of an audience.

By means of imitating they become celebrities

Amateur-Identity aesthetics

The stakes in *X Factor*: the race and the challenge.

Ordinary people succeed to match the idols.

In music videogames everyone should become a performer as much as an established artist.

Videogame bands performances actually are a mixture of mimicry, theatricality and game skills, but they look like a real concert.

To play an
instrument?
To play a
game?

Duality: the player pretends to play, knowing well that he is not really playing.

Though aware of non-reality of the situation, he or she plays the same because he enjoys pretending to be someone else.

Questions:

It's better to play games or play musical instruments? Probably it's a false question

Musical videogames are only pushing buttons?

Games, Media and Music
promise new theoretical
paths

References

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