MUSIC IN THE STUDENT FORUM

MAKING MUSIC FROM MOVEMENT

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BACKGROUND

Max MSP is a visual programming language that is capable of building complex interactive programmes without any prior experience of computer languages. During this project I learned this software so I could use it to develop a programme to track the location of a person within a zone, which could then be translated into musical sounds.

Project Aim: In creating this *new instrument*, I wanted to explore whether users with musical experience were more able than people with no, or little musical training, to use the instrument to create melodies.

I also wanted to investigate what effects exploring the zone had on people's moods.

THE ZONE

Figure 1a

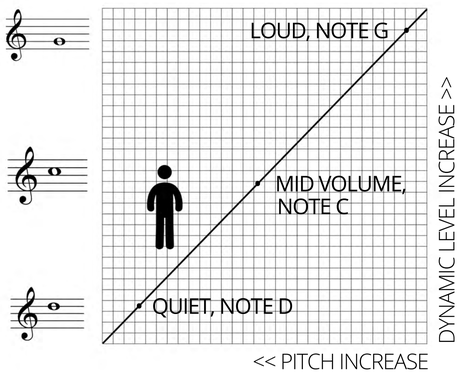
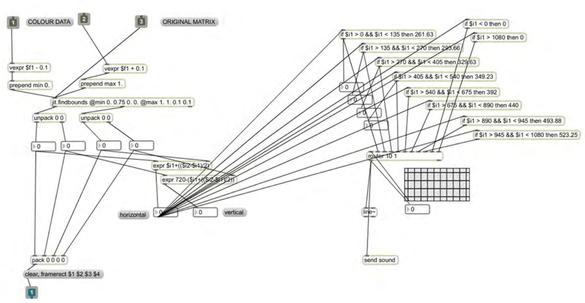


Figure 1a is a bird's eye view of the zone.

Figure 1b is a screenshot of Max MSP code patch. The code shown in this picture controls the different sounds within the zone.

Figure 1b



METHODOLOGY

The nature of the instrument means the user is required to move around the zone in order to create sound. Because of this I wanted to investigate whether movement can have a calming effect on people's moods. Volunteers to test the instrument were recruited from the student forum.

When the user entered the zone (Figures 2a & 2b), a drone (a continuous low humming sound) started and was present until they left the zone. When the user moved further along the ***y*** axis the dynamic level increased, and moving along the ***x*** axis changed the pitch (Figure 1a).

Once the user had explored the zone they were invited to complete a questionnaire about their experience playing the digital instrument.

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was designed to find out whether the user fully understood the instrument. There were three main questions:

1. Did you understand how the instrument works?
2. Could you produce a melody?
3. Did the instrument respond to your request?

The questionnaire also asked the users to record their mood before they entered and left the zone. Their mood was recorded as either positive (e.g. happy), negative (stressed) or neutral.

RESULTS

The results are shown in Figure 3a and 3b are based on data from 20 users in the age range 19 to 64. 10 users had an average of 11 years musical training and 10 users who had no musical training and do not actively practice music.

Figure 3a

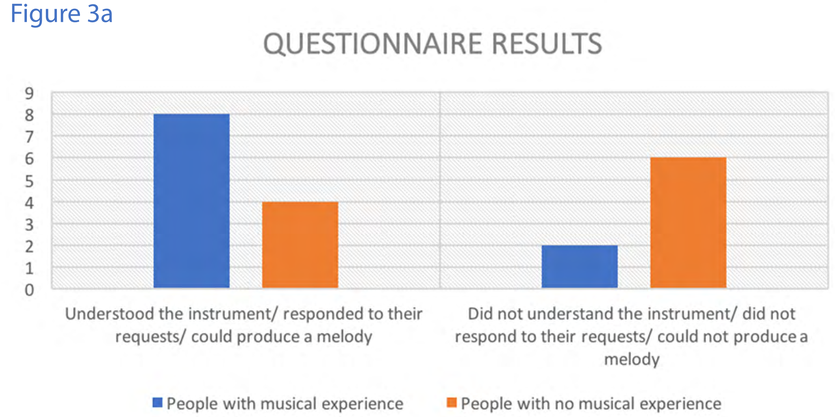
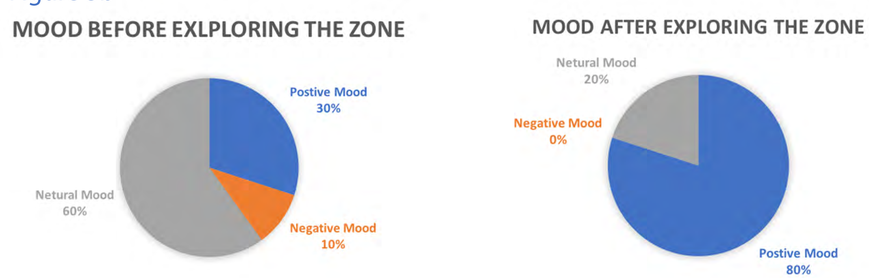


Figure 3b



CONCLUSION

From these findings, although further research is needed due to the small group size, it can be concluded:

1. That more people with musical experience understood how the instrument worked and produced a melody.
2. That people with no musical experience were still able to workout how the instrument worked.
3. That the instrument had a positive effect on people's mood.

Further Work: I would like to develop a greater understanding into the effects of different music on people's moods and how this may then be used in developing movement based music therapy.