Generative.fm – Generative Music in the Browser

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ABSTRACT

Generative.fm is an open-source platform for playing generative music in the browser that features a collection of browser-based generative music systems. The Web Audio API is an essential component of this project.

1. LINK TO ARTWORK

The artwork is accessible at https://generative.fm, and the code is available at https://github.com/generative-music/generative.fm.
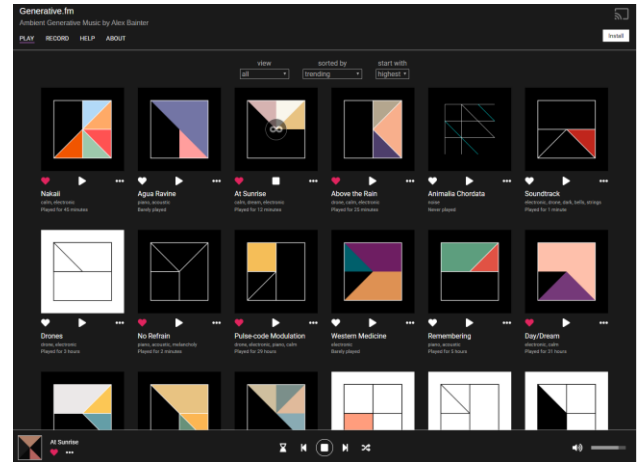
2. DESCRIPTION

Generative.fm is a platform for generative music in the browser. It currently features a variety of ambient music pieces that neither end nor repeat. Each performance is unique and lasts as long as a user chooses to listen. In addition, users can generate recordings of the music on the site, and these recordings are typically created faster than real time. Recordings from Generative.fm are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC BY 4.0).

Generative.fm uses the Web Audio API and Tone.js for all sound production and scheduling. A majority of the sounds are created by loading and manipulating audio sample files client-side. Generative.fm is also a progressive web app with offline capabilities, and supports installation on mobile and desktop devices.

"Generative music" is a term popularized by Brian Eno to describe music that changes continuously and is created by a system. Eno has experimented with generative music beginning as early as the 1970s through today with the albums Discreet Music, Music for Airports, Neroli, Reflection, and several others. For decades, Eno merely recorded the output of generative music systems to create these albums, and in a 1993 essay on the subject, he wrote how he wished he could "sell the system itself, so that a listener would know that the music was always unique."

Today, the Web Audio API makes the production and distribution of generative music systems more feasible than ever. Generative.fm is a celebration of the accessibility of generative music systems finally afforded by the Web Audio API.

3. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Bainter is a web developer and musician from the United States who enjoys creating audio/visual experiences both digital and not. His other work is available at alexbainter.com.