

Josh Simmons

What Postmodal Processes Can Teach Us about Existing Mediums

In game design there exists a hegemony of visuals over audio. This hierarchy has been in place since as early as *Pong*. The recent commercial resurgence in virtual reality suggests that this iteration of devices, or perhaps the next will enter the digital entertainment mainstream. This radical upset in medium exposes a vulnerability or breaking point in the lineage of game design paradigms. Individuals developing at present for the virtual reality platform are faced with a choice: port existing paradigms into the virtual world or subvert expectations and create something unique. Major game studios have already ported many titles from non-VR platforms into the virtual world with little modification. One such example of this is the RPG *Fallout 4 VR*. These ports of existing games are successful with mainstream gamers, with *Fallout 4 VR* occupying the top sales spot for VR games on the Steam gaming store for several weeks. It is the responsibility of artists and indie developers to search for novel ways to use the platform.

My work over the past several years has focused on various methods of subverting existing gaming paradigms. The most recent project I worked on in this line of inquiry is a virtual simulation named *Spektra*. *Spektra* is a VR simulation that is primarily audio generative. Although the project initially began as a novel curiosity, approaching musical information retrieval and musical aesthetic through the lens of virtual reality has revealed unique insights into music that otherwise may have not been easily discovered.

My presentation will detail the audio to visual mappings I employed in *Spektra*, and insight into music perception that *Spektra* has brought to light. In addition to speaking on these topics, I will run a prerelease version of *Spektra* at the demo session. Workshop attendees can then experience the simulation as generated by the music of their choosing.