Call for proposals

Music and Hacking:
Instruments, communities, values

International Conference

Quai Branly Museum – Jacques Chirac
Ircam – Centre Pompidou

8-10 November, 2017

Presentation

Since the turn of the last century, computer coding and digital instruments continue to transform the aesthetic, ergonomic, communicational, and ethical dimensions of musical practices. These shifts are taking place in part under the banner of hacking, a notion which is primarily associated with the IT world. However, it has progressively infiltrated and structured a number of other fields, such as that of artistic creation. Hacker values include re-appropriation of mass-produced technical products and a focus on freely accessible communal know-how, as well as the pleasure of serendipity, subversion, and manipulation. In sum, hacking is the foundation of a disparate, discreet form of social protest: a reaction to a normalized, globalized commercial and industrial culture.

The "Music and Hacking" conference intends to look at (professional or amateur) musicians and technicians' practices which – explicitly or implicitly – could be seen as musical hacking activities. We wish to study closely the role musical hackers have played within digital culture and its innovation processes. It is also imperative that we discuss analytical methodologies for these practices, as they will likely gain importance in the coming decades. At the end of the conference, a Music Hack Day will be organized on the premises of IRCAM, which will give us a chance to extend and test our reflections on musical hacking. More specifically, the multifold influence of the relationship between music and hacking leads us to give priority to three general themes: organological hacking, creation and federation of musical communities through hacking, and the influence of hacker ethics on musical practices.

1. Organology. Music is intrinsically depending on instruments, and therefore our first task is to look at the material dimensions of musical hacking and the consequences that this creative stance may have on musical instruments. A number of instrumental practices, from preparing acoustic instruments, subversion of electronic devices, or the creation of recycled instruments, could be looked at through the lens of hacking. Beyond simply re-naming practices which, in large part, precede any theorization of hacking, our goal is to see how different uses of musical instruments might be better understood – or have been better understood – thanks to the notion of hacking, perhaps due to the environment in which these practices exist, the types of knowledge they require, or the actors involved.

2. Communities. These transgressive attitudes toward the musicians' material surroundings (instruments or listening and media sharing devices, for example) have

had a number of effects, one of the most profound being the more or less spontaneous creation of autonomous social communities, whether online or by appropriating spaces (from illegal occupation to the institutionalization of fab labs). The circulation of information – information which is by nature malleable – is at the core of these diverse communities. This observation calls us to conduct a close study of the trajectory and transformation of this information, as it contributes actively to the social structure of these communities and to the re-creation (albeit in new forms) of networks linked to the information economy.

3. Ethics. Hacking attitudes are intrinsically linked to a more or less explicit axiological corpus. It is thus possible to delineate a veritable hacker ethic, which would include irreverently creative attitudes toward the material world and intellectual property rights. By subverting the properties of an object or bypassing laws which regulate ownership rights for creative works, hackers display a latent allegiance to heterodox values. These values go from a critique of the traditional capitalist ethic to an adherence to the new spirit of capitalism: work as a passion rather than a duty, sharing rather than market exchange, community rather than the individual, recognition from peers rather than monetization, and a free circulation of information rather than its private ownership. As the hacker culture has spread outside the world of information technology, other values have latched onto it: the "making" culture, a desire for innovation (or even creativity as an imperative), and a focus on recycling (or even an anti-consumerist stance). Scholars have not yet devoted adequate attention to these values, even less so in the context of musical practices, and that is why we hope to highlight them and show their role in regulating these practices.

Beyond these three general themes, papers which deal more generally with the relationship between music and hacking are welcome. The following topics may thus be addressed, bearing in mind that this list is far from exhaustive:

- Invention and subversion of instruments
- Non-conformist instrumental practices
- Hacking, organology, museology
- DIY, circuit bending, and making
- Squats, fab labs, and makerspaces
- Hacking and socializations
- Opportunity, serendipity, and innovation
- Music and open source
- Musical hacking and intellectual property
- Hacker ethics and axiology
- Coding and transcoding music
- Musical hacking and the emergence of digital culture
- Musical hacking and the history of information technologies
- Musical hacking and digital art forms
- Cultural industries and counter-cultures
- Music Hack Days, tech providers, and web audio
- Demoscene and derivations of hacking

Proposals for demos, workshops or performances will be taken into consideration for inclusion in the concluding Music Hack Day.

Calendar

Proposals (either in English or French) are due on **May 15th, 2017**, and should be sent to musiquehacking2017@gmail.com. Authors will be notified of their participation on **July 1st, 2017** at the latest. Proposals, in .doc format, should include a title and an abstract of approximately 500 words, the author's name and institutional affiliation, as well as a brief biography.
Further information on the conference and the *Music Hack Day* will be available at http://hacking2017.ircam.fr.

Scientific committee

Paul ADENOT (Mozilla), Sébastien BROCA (CEMTI, Université Paris 8), Nicolas COLLINS (School of the Art Institute of Chicago), Joanna DEMERS (University of Southern California, Thorton School of Music), Nicolas DONIN (APM, IRCAM), Christine GUILLEBAUD (CREM, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre), Michel LALLEMENT (LISE, CNAM), Paul LAMERE (Spotify), Camille PALOQUE-BERGÈS (HT2S, CNAM), Norbert SCHNELL (ISMM, IRCAM), Jimena ROYO-LETELIER (Deezer)

Organizing committee

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Partners