



Analysis of the Fusion Application of Rock Music and Video Games

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Abstract. Rock music, as a vibrant and rebellious art form, has been exerting a profound influence on global culture since the mid-20th century. As an important part of the modern entertainment industry, video games have also shown strong cultural influence and creative potential in recent years. This paper aims to discuss the application of rock music in video games. In this paper, the author will analyze the influence of rock elements on video games and their future development trends from the three levels of musicality, visual artistry and philosophy, and analyze its enhancement of the gaming experience, as well as the common enhancement of the cultural values of the two by this cross-border fusion.

Keywords: rock music; video games; integration.

1 Introduction

With the continuous progress and development of the times, the game industry is also advancing by leaps and bounds. New-zo0 released the “2020 global game industry market research report” in the forecast pointed out that by the end of 2023 the global game industry revenue will exceed 200 billion U.S. dollars, and the game players will be more than 3 billion people [1]. Meanwhile, according to the age distribution of game users in 2018 released by China Industry Information, the vast majority of game players are under 22 years old, 23-29 years old, and 30-39 years old, indicating that games have a great influence on young adults, the backbone of society [2]. Nowadays, with the popularization of electronic devices and the Internet, people begin to have more contact with the medium of video games. The interactivity and diversity of video games have attracted more and more people to become game players and participate in the work of game creation, which makes this medium more and more inclusive and rich. Music has always been a very important element in video games, taking on the task of mobilizing players' emotions, enhancing gameplay, and even portraying characters. Some music in the game also needs to take into account the overall tone and atmosphere of the game while conforming to the environment of the map, which is the lubricant and propeller between the important elements of the game [3]. Many journals try to analyze the important function of music in the visual communication. Just as the Dhariwal and Kim mentioned in their paper “music heavily relies on patterns and repetition in the form of

recurring melodic themes and chord progressions” [4]. A game's soundtrack usually covers many different musical styles, which enrich the player's experience and also make the artificially constructed virtual world more natural and vivid. Just as what has been mentioned by Begel that “A variety of music-related games and applications are available on the web and mobile platforms[5]ranging from music training, to gamified exercises, rehabilitation and well-being [6]. Rock often stands out among these styles, as its rebellious music and eye-catching visuals always make a game more unique and appealing. What’s more, the drum beat in rock music is usually very strong and provides the basic rhythmic framework for the music. Rock musicians often use the strumming or picking technique to play rhythm guitar parts, which adds a rich rhythmic layer to the song. In a rock song, there may be changes in tempo, such as *accelerando*, *ritardando*, or sudden changes in tempo that can increase the dynamics and appeal of the song. At the same time, as a subculture born in the last century, rock has its own unique charm. The combination of rock music and video games can be traced back to the 1980s, when, with the rise of the video game industry, game developers began to try to incorporate music into their games to enhance the immersion and emotional expression of the game. Rock music, with its distinctive rhythms and emotional power, quickly became an important source of game music.

2 Rock Music's Emotional Leadership in Games

The development of rock music was a journey that spanned several decades, originating in the 1940s and rapidly evolving into a number of different styles in the United States and the United Kingdom during the 1950s and 1960s. Rock music was born in the United States in the 1940s and evolved from blues and blues music. The term "Rock and Roll" was first used by American musician Alan Freed in 1951 and has since become more widely used. It reached its peak in the 1960s. The song “Rocket 88” by Kings of Rhythm is widely considered to be the first rock and roll song ever written. On the band's way to record the song, guitarist Willie Kizart's tube stereo was damaged by a rain shower, causing it to give the guitar a raspy, low sound that has come to be known as distortion. It is also the most common tone in rock music. Since then, rock music has become increasingly popular, with countless superstars being born, and rock has branched out from a simple “blues variant” into different sub-genres such as punk, metal, etc. In musical terms, rock music is usually characterized by a "bluesy" sound. Musically, rock is usually composed of a guitar, bass and drum kit. It uses aggressive distorted tones and blues-based melodies. These elements are very effective in stimulating the listener's emotions and giving them a strong sense of passion and motivation.

In video games, sound designers often use rock music to mobilize players' emotions. Rock music's fast-changing melodies and rhythms, as well as its ripping sounds, can stimulate the players' sense of hearing and make them become excited. In rivalry games, rock music gives players a strong desire to compete with others and win. This desire allows the player to take more aggressive action in the game and gain a greater sense of accomplishment and control. Take the fighting game *Guilty Gear* for example. *Guilty Gear* is a 2D side-scrolling fighting game developed by Arc System Works. Its story

background and plot are very rich. Here's a brief synopsis and history of the series: In the early 21st century, humans discovered that "magic" could be used as an energy source, which marked the end of the scientific era. Because of the destruction of the environment by science, people began to prohibit the production and preservation of all weapons. In one experiment, an unknown cell tissue called the "GEAR cell" was discovered, which can parasitize organisms, improve the host's abilities, and give the host the adaptability to use magic. In 2014, a secret program called "GEAR Project" was launched to "strengthen the human race", but one of the subjects, Freddick (later Saul Bardekai), escaped during the experiment. By 2073, a fully human GEAR was created, but then the leader of the GEAR, Gasti, declared war on humanity. In order to survive, mankind formed the "Holy Knights" and began a century-long "holy war". In 2175 Thor defeated Gasti, the Holy War ended, and peace returned.

Given such a deep and rich background story, the choice of music for the game had its own considerations. All of the music in the game is metal, which is a subcategory of rock and roll, and has more distorted guitar tones and hissing vocals than rock. Also metal focuses more on the rhythm of the song than the melody. At the same time, Guilty Gear is a fighting game that encourages players to be aggressive, and players who are more proactive in the game usually get a bigger advantage, making for a more exciting matchup. The heavy tones and rhythms of metal music inadvertently motivate players to attack their opponents more aggressively. But at the same time, Guilty Gear adds many different styles and elements to traditional metal music based on different characters. These elements have a lot to do with the backstories, fighting styles, and personalities of the different characters. For example, there is a character named Happy Chaos, who uses a revolver as his weapon, and his fighting style is based on long-range hold-ups. At the same time, he has a unique personality of being crazy and not caring about anything. Therefore, his character's single combines the traditional metal sound with the jazz melody and piano, which makes the whole song exciting and full of jazz's unique joy and versatility, which is exactly in line with Happy Chaos's character and fighting style. This shows that rock music is not only a catalyst for players' emotions, but also an important tool for characterization. Another video game shows the spirit of rock is Shin Sangokumusou online, which is a action competitive game. The heroes of Shin Sangokumusou online have always given people the concept of a ride when thousands of thousands of enemies, the game also reappears this feeling, you will fight with thousands of enemy troops, completely rely on their own power to survive in the battle. The combination of powerful rock music and classical Chinese folk music, with a unique soundtrack that makes people motivated, plays the role of rock in the game just right, so that players can naturally integrate into the scene of the game atmosphere. The Chinese version of Jay Chou's theme song "Incomparable" created for "Shin Sangokumusou online" also echoes the game, using rock music to interpret its feeling of a hearty battle.

3 The Role of Rock Music in Shaping the Environment of the Game

Although rock music was born in the soil of Europe and America, it has been widely existed all over the world [7]. Rock music is not only a music style, but also carries many cultural and artistic elements. In its long history of development countless art plus and creators have used different symbols, images or signs to visualize it, and these works have formed the visual representation of rock music, which is also the way many people first come into contact with rock music. For example, the once popular Killmart was born out of the rock culture, which originated from the earlier punk wave started by the band Sex pistol, with its studs, leather jackets, and exaggerated mohawk. These recognizable elements are part of rock music, and not only that, many album covers and posters show the visual art value of rock. In video games, these visual elements are even more diverse.

Thanks to the dynamic graphics of video games, the art of rock is no longer limited to freeze-frames, but has evolved into different ways of portraying characters, decorating environments, or matching clothing, etc. These more modern forms of expression have brought rock culture to more people who don't know much about it. Final Fantasy VII Remake is a perfect example of this. As a complete remake of Final Fantasy VII, in addition to re-creating the original characters, scenes, and screen innovations, the game's combat style was changed from the original turn-based to a more "action" focused semi-real-time encounter combat. Based on the plot of the original work until the escape from Midgar, the new original content is added, which tells a series of stories about Claude, a former Shenluo warrior with a destruction sword, who stepped into the magic city of Midgar to help members of the "Avalanche" organization fight against the giant enterprise "Shenluo" that draws the essence of life on the planet as energy and has great power. As an extremely popular game in the gaming world, Final Fantasy VII doesn't take rock as its main form of expression, but it does insert rock elements in many different places. In the game's ghetto map, many of the NPC characters are modeled in washed jeans, studded jackets, and punk-style clothing such as metal chains. For example, the character in the game named Erika Lynn Harlacher (See Figure 1), who is a girl who lives in the slums of the Fifth, stealing and cheating for a living. She call herself information peddlers, pass on all kinds of information to people, but generally spread false information. The newborn calf is not afraid of doing bad things like tigers, so it often encounters danger. Besides, Fred Tatasciore, a male character in the Final Fantasy VII Remake, is also a vivid example. He runs the slums of the Second quarter, Joy Street, Wall Street, Shop Street. He was very lustful and collected women through three agents to select wives. Extreme indecency, mastery of candy and whips, mastery of the underlings, remarkable ability to control the hearts of men. Although he had earned some fortune, his clothes still had rivets on them, which can be seen in the picture (See Figure 2). This is because the ghetto itself has a very suitable environment for the development of punk culture, and its dilapidated and busy environment is the best stage for punk, which is a very personalized style. Final Fantasy utilizes the "stereotype" of rock in people's minds and uses a little bit of rock elements to make the map of the ghetto more vivid and realistic. In this case, rock is not in the form of music

to guide the player's emotions, but in the visual content of the game to become more vivid, these details of the changes will not be directly found by the players, but in the subconscious mind of the players implanted a concept, so that they are more into the game.



Fig. 1. Erika Lynn Harlacher



Fig. 2. Fred Tatasciore

4 The Role of Rock Music in Shaping the Environment of the Game

One of the main reasons why rock culture continues to attract followers to this day is that rock is not only a style of music or art, but also carries a deep philosophical reflection in itself. The "spirit of rock" consists of many different concepts, such as "rebellion, pioneering, authenticity and individuality" [8]. Rock was born from blues music, which is a typical black music, rhythmic and varied but at the same time was discriminated against by white people in the seventies. White people gave the name "rock" to this music, which means a loud, earth-shattering sound. Since then, rock has gradually taken on its original meaning, which is a rebellion against sovereignty and a struggle for the right to live freely [9]. By the 1980s, with the outbreak of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, anti-war sentiments within the United States gradually rose. It was difficult for people to get a job, and their education became less valuable. In order to face the confusion of life and political turmoil, American young people grew long hair and began to vent their discontent in the form of rock and roll and wandering. They called themselves the "Beat Generation" and took the spirit of the Drunken God as their way of life, opposing war and harm and hoping for peace in the world. Their wanderings made the "spirit of rock and roll" more hesitant and angry, but also more romantic and idealistic. Since then, the spirit of rock and roll has been constantly deconstructed and reorganized, interpreted in different ways by countless people, but the words "rebellion, independence, peace, critical thinking" have remained unchanged in the process. If we had to find a definition for the spirit of rock 'n' roll, it would be "the rebellion of the right mind."

Many video games have also covered their own interpretation of the spirit of rock and roll, such as the episodic game *Road 96*. In this game, the player takes on the role of a young runaway who travels along Route 96 until he leaves his tyrannical country. Along the way, the player encounters a number of different people and events, talking to them and getting involved in their stories. One of the most interesting aspects of the game is that if the player's character dies during the game, the character does not resurge like in other games, but is instead transported into another young man with the same experience, who also travels down Route 96 and goes through many of the same events that the previous character went through. The ultimate goal of these young people is to escape the decaying country they live in. It's easy to see how the game is almost modeled after the Beat Generation, with the young people embarking on a journey of wanderlust and redemption. One of the endings of the game is that the young people who succeed in escaping return to their home country and overthrow the corrupt rulers with their own power, a romanticized spirit of rebellion that is a very important part of rock culture.

5 Conclusion

The combination of rock music and video games is a kind of cross-border fusion of art and technology, which not only enriches the expression form of the game, but also

expands the dissemination channels of rock music. Through this fusion, players are able to experience a more authentic and profound rock culture in the game, and at the same time, it also promotes the extension of video game culture to a wider social and cultural field. In the future, with the advancement of technology and the continuous emergence of creativity, we have reason to believe that the combination of rock music and video games will bring more exciting cultural phenomena and art works.

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