60x365: Compositions For the Internet

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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Abstract

From July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, I composed a new one-minute work every day for my podcast/blog project 60x365. My goals for this project were to compose more music more often and to compose music specifically for Internet. The use of a blog form, with one new post every day and the cataloging of posts with tags, was ideal for meeting these goals.

Throughout the year I would say that I was composing “for the Internet” without a clear idea of what that meant. I thought that composing for the Internet was somehow different than the composing I had done before, that it was different than composing for other venues. Throughout the project year I had a sense that there was a real difference, but I was never able to articulate what that was. My assumption was that the Internet was having an effect on the process of composition. The process was different—I worked faster and experimented more—and it was easy to attribute that difference and its effects to the Internet. On reflection it is more complicated than that. What does it mean to say I was composing for the Internet? What effect does the Internet have on music composed for it?

This document investigates these questions and highlights some of the ways that composing for the Internet differs from other kinds of composition.
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1. Introduction – Composing For the Internet

60x365 is a podcast composition that I created during the period from July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008. Every day I composed a new one-minute piece and posted it online, creating over 6 hours of new music by the end of the year. The initial reasons for undertaking this project were simple: I wanted to compose more music more often, and I wanted to explore the possibilities for Web-based music.

At the time I had already built a website that hosted samples of my work—a digital portfolio that surrounded the music with my bio, vitae, photos, and works list. I wanted this project to be different than that. This music was to be composed especially for dissemination on the Web, rather than for concert hall performance or CD release. This idea became one of the things I would talk about during the project. I would say that I was “composing for the Internet.”

This is a statement I made often during and after the project. I meant “for the Internet” as for a venue, a space for people to hear my music—like composing for a concert hall or theater or club. A concert venue and the Internet are quite dissimilar. One exists physically, built from materials and occupying space. The other is a network of computers, experienced only through the interfaces of computers connected to that network. People go to the concert hall by moving their bodies through space to a
particular location for a performance at a particular time. People ‘go online’ by accessing the network from their computer then downloading files from a remote computer somewhere else on the network.

I thought that composing for the Internet was somehow different than the composing I had done before, that it was different than composing for other venues. Throughout the project year I had a sense that there was a real difference, but I was never able to articulate what that was. My assumption was that the Internet was having an effect on the process of composition. The process was different—I worked faster and experimented more—and it was easy to attribute that difference and its effects to the Internet. On reflection it is more complicated than that. What does it mean to say I was composing for the Internet? What effect does the Internet have on music composed for it?

This paper will investigate these questions in more detail, and examine the realities of composing for Internet distribution via a blog and how this shaped my work. My goal is to find answers within the context of my own work, a self-analysis rather than a comprehensive theory. Chapter 2 will examine the ways in which the tools of creation and distribution have affected music composition. Seeing the effect of these tools will help us to see what effect (if any) the Internet has on music composition. Chris Cutler’s essay *Necessity and Choice in Musical Forms* will provide the context for this examination. Chapter 3 will look at how the Internet shapes music and other media distributed through it. Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* will provide the framework for this discussion. Chapter 4 will analyze my experience of composing 60x365 and define a set of considerations that need to be addressed while composing for
the Internet. By examining my own experience I hope to provide a document that will be useful to some future researcher interested in the broader influence of the Internet and more comprehensive answers.

Defining terms

60x365

60x365 is a series of one-minute music compositions, each of which is accompanied by text (notes, attributions, and hyperlinks to related material.) The entire collection is hosted on a website, where each composition has its own page. When informally referring to the project I use 60x365 to mean either the music from the project, the website hosting the project, or the full project (music and hypertext.) In these cases careful distinction is either not necessary or the context of the comments reveals the meaning. For this paper I will use 60x365 to refer to the full project. In those cases where I mean only the music or the website it will be noted.

Blog and podcast

Blog and podcast are terms that overlap while generally referring to similar kinds of activities. A blog is a series of individual entries or articles (called posts ) on any subject, usually displayed in reverse-chronological order. Posts will often include photos, audio, video, or other media. The term blog is an elision of “web log”, the original descriptor of this kind of website.
While very similar to a blog, a podcast is an online broadcast (or webcast) of audio content. The term podcast comes from “iPod webcast” since the iPod was the preferred listening device for many early podcasts. Podcast listeners can subscribe to content so that it is delivered automatically to their iPod, computer, or smart-phone. Increasingly there are video webcasts that are essentially podcasts. Since many blogs also include audio content as embedded files, it is easy to confuse the two. The principle difference is that, like any other broadcast, the media content of a podcast is delivered to listeners automatically.

The increased use of blog reading software to subscribe to blog content on phones and other portable computers is blurring the line between podcasts and blogs. The distinction is being further blurred by the number of blogs that host media content as part of their posts. In many of these cases, the projects are hybrids and both terms can apply.  

60x365 featured daily audio content that was available for subscription via RSS (Really Simple Syndication). Listeners had the option of subscribing through a number of services, including iTunes, which could deliver 60x365’s content directly to their iPod. I also posted text-based content each day as well (program notes, sample citations, etc). This content was available on the project website, along with a link to manually download each day’s audio file. Throughout the project I referred to 60x365 as a podcast. Since the emphasis of the project was on the composition and distribution of music in audio format, I felt that podcast was the better term. For this paper I will favor the term blog since I will most often be referring to the project as a website. Like many other web projects, 60x365 is a hybrid at its heart.
2. Context – A History of Music as a History of Media

Marshall McLuhan famously wrote that the medium is the message. “This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium…result from the scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.”¹ The Internet extends our capacity for communication and interaction. The Internet is a global network of computers. Each computer on the network can be used to create content either locally (on the computer being physically used) or remotely (on a different computer across the network). This content can then be shared across the network to users connected anywhere. The Internet, as a tool for the exchange of ideas and media, is a new medium. McLuhan’s idea that each new medium shapes both its content and audience is relevant here. What role does the internet have in shaping the music composed for and distributed on it?

Writing of music since 1900 Alex Ross observes that histories are often “goal-obsessed narrative[s] full of giant leaps forward.”² Greg Sandow calls these histories ones “of compositional technique,” that focus principally on new methods of composition (12-tone, Neo-Classicism, Minimalism, etc) and the composers who pioneered these

This kind of narrative omits detailed examinations of the effects of culture and technology on the music being created. It is a tale about the music told in relative isolation. There is some use in this, particularly its ability to show the development of music composition over time, to demonstrate the succession of ideas and techniques that shape contemporary music, and to create a succinct narrative that draws together many disparate people and pieces.

Critic Chris Cutler proposes an outline of music history that focuses on the media used to create and distribute music, an idea inspired by McLuhan. Cutler’s proposal breaks music history into three modes (or media), each of which reflects the technologies available for music production and distribution. The movement from one mode to another is the result of a qualitative technological change that negates the current mode, and which is an aspect of “a revolutionary transformation in society itself.”

Cutler’s first mode is the *Folk Mode*. Music is made collectively by groups, transmission of music is via human, or biological, memory. The introduction of notation marks the second mode: the *Classical or Art Music Mode*. The transmission of music becomes external to human memory. By being able to work out the music on paper separately from the performance, new ideas and techniques are developed. This mode also allowed for specialization, separating the disciplines of composition and performance. Cutler labels his third mode *Recording—Direct Transcription of Sound: A New Mode*. This mode moves the creation and transmission of music to electric technology, which

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“remembers not mechanics or schemes but actual performances. More important than this, perhaps, it can remember—and reproduce—*any sound that can be made*. From the moment of the first recording, the actual performances of musicians on the one hand, and all possible sound on the other, had become the proper matter of music creation.”

Each new mode co-exists with, rather than replaces, previous modes. By examining the differences between any mode and its predecessor the differences between modes can be clearly seen. This allows us to highlight the effects of each mode more effectively. All three of these modes now coexist. It is possible for a composer to move between these modes at will, depending on the demands of the moment.

Cutler wrote this essay in 1993, before the Internet was widely used to disseminate music. Does the Internet represent a new mode in his schema? If so, how does it effect music? It is best to begin by looking at each mode in more detail.

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The Folk Mode

This mode is based entirely in human memory and performance, requiring no additional technology. Music is created and performed as part of the each society’s day-to-day routine and ritual, as “an expressive attribute of a whole community, which adapts and changes as the concerns and realities it expresses—or as the vocabulary of the collective aesthetic—adapt and change.” It only exists as sound (or memory of sound), and is primarily a function of the ear.

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5 Cutler 33.
6 Cutler 25.
Cutler points to two distinguishing characteristics of the Folk Mode that are important in retrospect when examining subsequent modes. First, since the music exists in an aural tradition within a collective society, there is no such thing as a finished or definitive piece of music, and, consequently, no element of music that exists as property. If it only exists in human memory, there is no externalization of music that transforms it into property. The other distinguishing characteristic is the lack of productive distinction between the roles of composer and performer. “The generation and production of music is a socially seamless and single process, and one in which improvisation plays or has played a central part.”

All composing is done by performing musicians who gradually alter and adapt the music they learn to create new music. Transformation of music also occurs as each generation teaches it to the next.

*The Notation Mode*

This mode marks the beginning of most histories of Western music and is responsible for shaping much of the music and the thinking about music for the last 400 years. Early notation was little more than a mnemonic aid for the medieval church. It served as a “sketchy adjunct to biological memory.” The potential and power of notation remained invisible at first, “yet a whole new mode of music production was innate, implicit, in it, for notation is an objectified, schematic form of memory, with qualities quite opposite to those of biological memory.” Notation allowed for the development of new and different...
techniques. Tonal counterpoint, a major cornerstone of Western music, is a result of being able to compose through notation, as is the development of the orchestra as a performing ensemble, as well as all of the forms and innovations resulting from the popularity and availability of orchestras.

It is in the summer of notation that we can see most clearly the negation of the Folk mode: internal or biological Memory has given way to external, notated memory; the primacy of the ear has given way to the primacy of the eye; a sense of the whole has become a concentration on the particular…

Music is ultimately about sound and hearing, so the ear is never completely divorced from the creation process. Notation is a visual representation of music. Composing within a system of notation imposes a set of conventions and limitations, similar to any graphic system. This gives the eye a more prominent role in the conception and composition of music as composers begin to think in terms of notation while creating.

“Melody and the division of time into equal parts for instance are horizontal, harmony is vertical.” Melodic inversion and retrograde are both visual transformations of notated elements, essentially flipping the melody horizontally or vertically on the page. The horizontal division of space into time as notated meter is a visual representation that imposes a certain order and hierarchy onto rhythm. Equal divisions of time (quarter notes into eighth notes into sixteenth notes) and regular patterns are favored. Unequal divisions and irregular patterns are possible within the system, but require additional symbols that can give a more complex visual appearance than the sounding music would indicate.

10 Cutler 29-30.
11 Cutler 28.
In the twentieth century composers experimented with notation, pushing it to extremes. John Cage used the imperfections on a sheet of paper to place notes on the staff for *Music for Piano*. George Crumb bent staves into various shapes and designs in his *Makrokosmos*. Cornelius Cardew was one of several composers to push notation into a new visual form: the graphic score. His *Treatise*, a 193 page score that extrapolates shapes and designs from conventional notation symbols, is the quintessential example of this style. In each of these cases the composer was conceiving of his music in visual terms within the conventions of a prescribed visual system, even though they were all pushing the boundaries of that system.

The development of printing technologies increased the circulation of notated music. A composer could create music in one part of the world, and performers in another part could use his notated score to recreate it. The transmission of music was sped up.

*The Recording Mode*

Cutler’s third mode is the recording mode. Cutler contends that the recording mode moves the creation of music “back onto the ear.” Rather than needing to rely on performers to realize the notated music, transforming it to sounding music, the composer is now directly responsible for the final sound of the music, without requiring performers to realize it in concert. This shift brought with it new possibilities and conceptions of what music is and how to make it.

Memory, first externalized by notation, is now externalized by recorded media. It remembers actual performances. “More important than this, perhaps, it can remember—
and reproduce—*any sound that can be made.*”¹² As John Cage predicted in his Credo, music can be produced “through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard.”¹³ This increased sonic palette, the ability to “musicalize” any sound, offered new concepts and techniques not possible (or simply not evident) through notation.

The tools of recorded music (microphones, loudspeakers, audio tape, phonographs, mixers, multi-track recorders, etc) shaped composers’ ideas and offered new possibilities. Pierre Schaeffer’s *Études aux chemins de fer* layered recordings of trains using phonographs. Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Hymnen* layered synthesized sounds with recordings of various national anthems and, at one point, a conversation Stockhausen had with his engineer. He injected himself and his creative process directly into the finished work. Steve Reich’s *It’s Gonna Rain* exploited small motor variations in different tape-players to create layers of phasing speech. DJ’s use phonographs as instruments, dragging them back and forth under a phonograph needle to convert the recording of one music into the foundation of another.

More than that, the ability of the technology to record a performance and then transform it into a new composition offered fresh possibilities and directions. This ability to transform performance, to incorporate improvisation in a direct way, as a part of the finished composition is a powerful concept. “The ease of overdubbing, selective addition, erasure and electronic alteration of sound—both before and after registration—has

¹² Cutler 33.
encouraged the use of the studio as an *instrument* rather than merely as a documentary device.”

Brian Eno recognized this potential when he wrote of the recording studio as an instrument of composition: it makes repeatable what was otherwise transient and ephemeral.

> In a compositional sense this takes the making of music away from any traditional way that composers worked, as far as I’m concerned, and one becomes empirical in a way that the classical composer never was. You’re working directly with sound, and there’s no transmission loss between you and the sound—you handle it.

This direct handling of sound shapes the ideas of composers who work this way, partly because they have access to new sounds and partly because of the tools used to work with those sounds. Each piece of hardware and software has its own strengths and weaknesses, and its own particular way of representing the sounds to the user. These differences influence how the composer works, which in turn helps to shape his music. As a result, there is music made that would not have been imagined under the notation mode. Certain concepts, like minimalism, are rooted in the recorded mode (the phasing effect which resulted from simultaneous use of different tape players is at the heart of its conception), even though there still exists a considerable array of this music in notated form.

The new possibilities offered by the recording mode are not indicative of a difference of quality in the music produced. Eno notes that “It doesn’t mean that suddenly the world is

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14 Cutler, Pg 35.
open, and we’re going to do much better music, because we’re not constrained in certain ways. We’re going to do different music because we’re not constrained in certain ways—we operate under a different set of constraints.”

Distribution of physical recordings and broadcast of recordings on the radio and television allows musicians to have their compositions and performances heard by people with access to these technologies anywhere in the world. Where notated music required the ability to read and perform the notation in order to hear the music, recordings do not make this demand. The audience does not need a performer with them to listen to recorded music. The recording mode speeds up the transmission of music again.

Each of Cutler’s modes describes technologies that change both the creation and distribution of music. The Internet does not offer any new conceptions for composing music. Music is still be created using notated and recorded techniques. The Internet changes the distribution of music in ways similar to what notation and recording did previously. A composer no longer needs to render his music in a physical format to distribute it. Digital versions of either notation or recordings can be transmitted over the Internet quickly to any other connected computer. There is a new scale and scope of transmission allowing more people to access more music than ever before. There is also a new context around music.

Music on the Internet is placed within the context of everything else online. This context is another way that the Internet differs from conventional concert halls. Not only do you

\(^{16}\) Eno 130.
go to the Internet venue by logging onto your computer, when you arrive online
everything around the music is different too. A song may be hosted on a page that
includes some background and commentary about it, and maybe an image of the
performer. Any of these can be linked to other music by the same artist or similar songs
by different artists or remixes of the song or non-music material that relates to the
concept or program of the song. This linked material may be created by the artists, the
label, a critic, or a fan.
As one example, Soundcloud’s music player allows listeners to make comments about
specific moments in the music. These comments will appear when that moment arrives in
the music and then disappear when the moment passes. The player can be embedded in
any web page (so a fan can host their favorite song on their website or blog), taking all of

Because the Internet does not change the composition of music I do not think that it
represents a new mode under Cutler’s schema. At best it is half a mode. The changes to
music distribution (increased speed, increased access, and new contexts) are significant
however, and did have effects on 60x365. These effects can be best understood by
looking at the transformation that happens to music and other media that is digitized and
placed online.
3. Traits of Online Media

New Media is a media studies term that is used to cover a range of media that are digital and interactive. Some common examples of New Media are CD-ROMs, computer multimedia, and the Internet. By extension, media that are distributed via the Internet, or Online Media, fall under the general heading of New Media. General traits of New Media apply to Online Media as well. These traits can help illuminate differences between music that is online and music that is offline. Understanding the differences will help us to contemplate the effects of the Internet on the composition process.

In 2001, media theorist Lev Manovich wrote The Language of New Media, in which he seeks to define and explain New Media. His view of the subject was broad, defining New Media by its inherent traits rather than its forma and presentation. Manovich outlines five principles that he uses to define New Media: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding. He points out that unlike previous revolutions in media (the printing press and the photograph) the computer as catalyst of a media revolution provides both a means to create and distribute media. Also, unlike previous media revolutions, the computer affects all types of media.18

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Numerical Representation

All information created, processed and stored by a computer is digital. It consists of a series of discreet states (pixels in an image, samples in and audio file, etc) that are represented numerically. For example, a digital audio file is not stored as a single, continuous sound wave. Rather it has been broken into a number of discrete samples per second (44,100 for “CD quality.”) Each of these samples is stored as a single 16-digit binary number (0 – 65,536 in conventional base-10). Manovich points out two consequences of numerical representation:

1. A new media object can be described formally (mathematically). For instance, an image or a shape can be described using a mathematical function.

2. A new media object is subject to algorithmic manipulation. For instance, by applying appropriate algorithms, we can automatically remove “noise” from a photograph, improve its contrast, locate the edges of the shapes, or change its proportions. In short, new media becomes programmable.19

In order to be distributed via the Internet, each piece in 60x365 had to be digitized—converted to a computer file. Indeed, most of the compositions exist only as computer files. 60x365 is computer music. Most of the pieces used some kind of algorithmic processing (from the complex creation and manipulation of sounds to the simpler addition of reverb). All pieces were converted to MP3s, a process which removes inaudible pieces of the sound according to an algorithmic manipulation. These are examples of the media being programmable.

19 Manovich 27.
**Modularity**

Manovich describes his second principle, modularity, as “the fractal structure of new media.” Fractals maintain the same structure on different scales, in the same way Online Media objects maintain a modular structure throughout. As described above, Online Media objects are digital, built from collections of discrete samples. “These elements are assembled into larger-scale objects but continue to maintain their separate identities. These objects can be combined into even larger objects—again, without losing their independence.”

Modularity is an integral component of 60x365. Each composition is separate and also part of the larger set. Each composition occupies its own webpage with its title, notes, category labels, and hyperlinks to lists of other pieces in the same categories. There also pages that include multiple compositions, grouped by date of posting or tag. The World Wide Web as a whole is also modular. “It consists of numerous Web pages, each in turn consisting of separate media elements. Every element can be accessed on its own.” The pages can be accessed without listening to the corresponding music, and the music files can be accessed without reading the corresponding hypertext.

**Automation**

Automation is Manovich’s third principle. The first two principles “allow for the automation of many operations involved in media creation, manipulation, and access.” He goes on to provide examples including Photoshop filters for automatically adjusting
scanned images, database driven websites that generate individual pages dynamically, software bots that find and catalog web pages for search engines, and higher-level automation seen in AI applications and video games.  

For 60x365 I took advantage of automated processes in the creation of project web pages and distribution of sound and text to subscribers. All of the HTML files were generated automatically and uploaded by Google’s free blogging service: Blogger. Each composition requires its own page, as well as listings on the blog’s front page (index), monthly archive pages, and the category pages. Rather than creating each new page from scratch and then editing the archive pages by hand each day, I used Blogger to automate that for me. After composing each piece, converting it to the proper format, and uploading it to my server, I logged into my Blogger account to create the text for that piece. The interface is very simple, consisting of one field for a title, one field for the main text, and one field for category labels (fig.1). Once I had entered the text, including the URL of the audio file, and selected tags for the post, I simply clicked the “Publish Post” button and Blogger automatically created the new page and updated any other pages that were impacted. 

Blogger uses a pre-formatted, user-defined template to create each page, a template that I was able to revise at any time. I adjusted the template several times throughout the year to clarify the color scheme, adjust the images, and change the list of items included in the sidebar. Every time I did this Blogger would republish every webpage on the site to reflect my updates. Though possible to build a web project like 60x365 entirely by hand,

22 Manovich 32-33.  
automating the HTML generation with a tool like Blogger makes it incredibly simple to update the site thoroughly every day.

RSS (for Really Simple Syndication) is one standard format used to distribute media files and other online content automatically. Atom is another standard feed format. There are other specialized feed formats as well; all are based in XML.\(^{24}\) Blogger provides feeds in both formats for its blogs. A user will use a feed reader (aggregator) to download new

\(^{24}\) Extensible Markup Language (XML) is in the same family of markup languages as HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and is used to create labeling systems for text content. For example, iTunes creates an XML file listing the contents of a user’s music library. In this file will be listed every song, its album, artist, composer, user rating, etc. Each piece of information is labeled with a human-readable tag (“title” “artist” etc). When iTunes is starts up, it will load this XML file to generate the list of songs in its library.
content from a website or blog as it is published. A single aggregator can handle many feeds simultaneously, making it easy to keep track of different websites without having to load each one in a web-browser. However, not all aggregators work with all feed formats. I used a free service from Feedburner to generate, convert, promote, and track my site feed. This allowed me to make RSS and Atom feeds available for user subscription. Feedburner also handled the creation of a feed for iTunes users. By using one service to generate and maintain these different feed formats I could easily keep track of how many subscribers I had throughout the year.

Variability

Like automation, Manovich also describes variability (his fourth principle) as a “consequence of the numerical coding of media (principle 1) and the modular structure of a media object (principle 2).” Variability refers to the ease with which multiple versions of the same media can be created. Prior to the computerization of media objects, one sequence of text, images, and/or audio elements would be created and fixed in some material form. “Many copies could be run off from the master, and, in perfect correspondence with the logic of an industrial society, they were all identical.” This is still true of physical copies of digital formats like CDs and DVDs. The physical object is replicated from a physical master, stamping the digital code into the plastic surface. This physical master is made using a computer with the original file, or a copy of the original. Copies of digital files are identical to the original, meaning that any copy can be used as a master for additional copies. These files can be quickly converted to a
number of other file formats (mp3, ogg-vorbis, Real Audio, etc), rearranged in other orderings, and put onto other media formats (DVD-audio, for example). DVDs often allow the viewer to select from multiple audio tracks while watching the video file (multiple languages, commentary tracks, etc).

“Variability would also not be possible without modularity. Stored digitally, rather than in a fixed medium, media elements maintain their separate identities and can be assembled into numerous sequences under program control.”

One particular case of variability that interests Manovich is the media database. His use of this term is broader than the computer science idea of what a database is—a structured collection of data that has been designed for the quick retrieval of data through searches and data filters. In this context Manovich defines it as any simple collection of individual items. This broader definition works here because many Online Media projects present the user/viewer with an experience similar to a database and different than “reading a narrative or watching a film or navigating an architectural site. Similarly, a literary or cinematic narrative, an architectural plan, and a database each present a different model of what a world is like.”

This experience of a database model is more inclusive than a technical definition of a database.

60x365 did not conform to a narrative model at any point. Each piece was composed to be autonomous, even in those few cases where multiple pieces were part of a particular series (Joyful Noise 1-3, One Inch:1-9, Simple Sin(e) 1-9). Listeners who first experienced the project in chronological order were not treated to a narrative structure; no

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25 Manovich 36.
26 Manovich 218-19.
cause and effect or other cumulative logic governed the sequence of the pieces. Each was determined on the day of its creation according to my time and inspiration.

The blog format is a great example of Lev Manovich’s principle of variability. Each post—each composition—was tagged with one or more keywords and a date-stamp. The resulting media database transformed a sequence of compositions into a free-form archive, available to be experienced in a variety of ways, depending on the listeners’ preferences. Many of these experiences are shaped by the database interfaces.

Two, searching by date and by tag, area built in part of the blog structure. Creators use tags to help visitors find similar content. The tags I used were mostly stylistic descriptors, though some were used to designate sound sources or events like holidays. Clicking on a tag brings a listener to a list of every piece with that tag, some separated by several months within the project, creating relationships between pieces I couldn’t anticipate in the day-to-day composing process.

Manovich continues:

“The database becomes the center of the creative process in the computer age. Historically, the artist made a unique work within a particular medium. Therefore the interface and the work were the same; in other words the level of an interface did not exist. With new media, the content of the work and the interface are separated. It is therefore possible to create different interfaces to the same material…. This is one of the ways in which the principle of variability of new media manifests itself. But now we can give this principle a new formulation. The new media object consists of one or more interfaces to a database of multimedia material. If only one interface is constructed, the
result will be similar to a traditional art object, but this is an exception rather than the norm.27

The primary interface for 60x365 is the web site archive. Each composition, along with it’s accompanying text, may be accessed in several ways. There is the option to browse pieces chronologically using a calendar image I created specially for this project. In addition to being able to jump immediately to a date of interest (birthdays are a common choice), interested listeners may proceed through the collection in its original chronology. There is also the option to browse through pieces by title. An alphabetical list of all 365 titles has been created for this purpose. Using this, listeners may choose those titles that pique their imagination. They may also use this list to locate pieces from a previous listening session. Since they are sorted alphabetically, the pieces next to each other in the list very often have little to do with each other in terms of date or tags. For example, Bulldan [September 29] and Bull-Man [February 6] appear next to each other in the list due to their very similar titles. Bulldan is a birthday tribute for my brother built from pop music samples. Bull-Man is a piece in honor of Jay C Batzner’s Unsafe Bull podcast built from recordings of Mancala game components. The first is mashup and the second is musique-concrete.

The third option is to browse the collection by category. Each composition has been assigned one or more category tag (e.g. ambient, collage, musique-concrete, etc). They are listed at the end of the text entry for each piece. These tags are links that point to a

27 Manovich 227.
separate page where the entire text for each piece in that category appears. There is also a page listing all of the tags used.

A temporary interface, now unavailable, was the RSS feed that delivered each new piece to the listener on the day of its posting. The mechanics of this have been detailed elsewhere. This interface defined the period during which 60x365 was a podcast. Now that it is solely a database this interface is unnecessary.

Secondary interfaces include other web pages that link directly to individual pages and compositions from the project. The nature of hyperlinks allow for specific pieces of hypertext and other media to be linked to directly while disregarding the surrounding context. Examples of this include the sidebar on a profile page hosted on Vox Novus’s website,28 an article on the blog a blind flaneur,29 and an interview about the Electronic Music Midwest festival on Computer Music Blog.30

This kind of linking allows one to experience part of the project without navigating through the project website. It also illuminates the inter-linking of media online. A listener can begin their experience elsewhere, find and follow a link to project, read and listen, navigate within the project website if desired, and then navigate away to another webpage (using a hyperlink within the project, using their browser’s back button, or manually typing a new URL.)

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**Transcoding**

Manovich’s final principle is transcoding, “the most substantial consequence of the computerization of media.” Transcoding is the process of turning media into computer data. “While from one point of view, computerized media still displays structural organization that makes sense to its human users…from another point of view, its structure now follows the established conventions of the computer’s organization of data.”

Computerized media objects consist of two layers: the cultural layer (music, song, motif, sample) and the computer layer (file, process, data packet). These layers effect each other in Online Media. They are being composited together. “The result of this composite is a new computer culture—a blend of human and computer meanings, of traditional ways in which human culture modeled the world and the computer’s own means of representing it.”

In new media lingo, to “transcode” something is to translate it into another format. The computerization of culture gradually accomplishes similar transcoding in relation to all cultural categories and concepts. That is, cultural categories and concepts are substituted, on the level of meaning and/or language, by new ones that derive from the computer’s ontology, epistemology, and pragmatics. New media thus acts as a forerunner of this more general process of cultural reconceptualization.

Manovich wrote this in 2001. As I contemplated composing 60x365 in 2007 this cultural reconceptualization was well underway. The rise of blogs, wikis, social-networks, and user driven content (the so called Web 2.0) has changed the ways in which people interact.

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31 Manovich 45.
32 Manovich 46.
33 Manovich 47.
with each other, their culture, and the world around them. Music, movies, television, literature, poetry, dance, theater, and every other old media art has made the transition to Online Media—even if only as a means of cataloging, promotion, and distribution. Anyone can create and post media content, and anyone else can comment, review, criticize, or link to that work.

The notion of simply putting my music online was not a motivating factor behind the genesis of 60x365—indeed I’ve been placing my music on my website for years. It was the idea of composing for a blog that appealed to me. Without realizing it at the time I wanted to use the blog form to explore Manovich’s notion of transcoding, allowing the computerized level of the internet to guide the cultural level of my music in this creation of an Online Media work.

The basic blog form is simple: a series of posts over time. They are connected to the day and date of their creation, reflecting holidays, current events, and day-to-day goings on in the creator’s life. A music project adopting a blog form shares this relationship to date. This is a key difference between a series of pieces created for a blog and concert music consisting of multiple movements or recorded music consisting of a series of tracks. The use of blogs for personal expression has expanded rapidly in the last decade. Not only are there blogs for news and opinion, there are many how-to guides, diaries, and journals dedicated to specific and sometimes obscure subject matter. Many of these are written in a personal style that reveals more of the writer than just the subject at hand and their opinion on it. This phenomena is bolstered by the ability of readers to comment on each

article and potentially engage the author in further discussion. An art or music blog, especially one that posts daily, becomes more personalized, revealing more of the creator. There are numerous examples of online projects that create new work everyday (and many of these do so for a single year). Boris Willis’s Dance-A-Day\(^35\), Noah Kalina’s Noah K Everyday\(^36\), Dan Waber’s 40x365\(^37\), and Duane Keiser’s A Painting a Day\(^38\) are all examples of this kind of project as well as being inspirations for 60x365.

4. Compositions for the Internet

The effects of increased distribution and the transformation of my music to Online Media manifested themselves as three kinds of considerations that I needed to deal with while composing 60x365. The practical considerations of bandwidth and unforeseeable listening conditions, the formal considerations imposed by being online, and the social (audience) considerations of online “performance”, interaction, and listener community all need to be considered. Similar considerations exist in all composing. Being able to address them successfully in this context is key to composing for the Internet.

Practical considerations

These considerations are the closest that we get to seeing a tangible effect on the music of the type that Cutler wrote about. The effect is the result of limitations found in the tools of distribution. Although these limitations did, on occasion, alter the music being composed, they did not fundamentally alter the composition process. One analogy would be to say that when composing notated music for a marching band, that ensemble places restrictions on the music that guide its composition, but does not change the ways the using notation shapes the composition.
The technology we use to go online and upload/download files place limitations on online media. The user’s computer, the modem, and the type of cable transmitting the data all determine the rate at which data moves back and forth. This is the bandwidth. The larger the bandwidth, the faster files can be downloaded for use, making large files more easily accessible. A user’s Internet Service Provider (ISP) can manually place limitations on bandwidth (very often dedicating more to downloading than to uploading). The number of people connected via the same ISP at one time can also affect bandwidth, since there is a finite amount that everyone must share.

A composer working online needs to be aware of potential bandwidth limitations and plan for it in his work. It’s no good to have music online that takes so long to load that only a very few people will be patient enough to wait for it. It becomes important to find ways to make the files as small as possible. There are two simple ways to reduce file size: make short compositions and compress the audio files. Choosing to make the pieces in 60x365 one-minute each was primarily a conceptual choice, but also resulted in small audio files. I compressed all of the pieces using the MP3 format.

The MP3 file format was develop by the Moving Picture Experts Group (MPEG) as an audio extension of their MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 formats. MP3 stands for MPEG-1 Layer 3, and is a compression scheme that uses both lossless and lossy processes. Lossless is a compression mechanism that finds ways to abbreviate data without removing any of it so that when the file is uncompressed it is exactly the same as it was before the process. Lossy compression deletes parts of the original file to make it smaller. In MP3 compression the encoder uses complex algorithms to delete parts of the audio file that
most listeners can’t comprehend—such as a very soft sound that occurs almost simultaneously with a very loud sound. The resulting file is then compressed using a lossless algorithm.

Even though the particular bits of audio being removed through the lossy process are inaudible, the cumulative process of removing many little bits will change the sound qualities of the audio. These differences are more or less noticeable depending on the speakers or headphones used by the listener and the acuteness of his awareness to such differences. When converting audio to MP3 format there are a variety of settings to determine how aggressive the codec\(^{39}\) is with deleting parts of the file. The more aggressive the settings, the smaller the final file.

I chose settings that resulted in less compression, and higher quality files. In fact, I used the highest quality settings available in iTunes at the time. This allowed me to retain as much of the original sound quality as possible. Because my compositions were short, this compression choice meant that the files would still be small enough to download quickly. Listeners could access each day’s music easily and without too much wait. I believe that this enticed new listeners because they could check out the project quickly.

Another advantage of using the MP3 format is the automatic inclusion of ID tags (in a format known as ID3) within each MP3 file. ID3 tags are embedded in each mp3 file so that the music player can display information like title and artist to the user. ID3 tags also allow files to be searched and sorted. I developed a thorough system to name and catalog each piece. In addition to song title, I included tags for the album title (60x365), artist,

\(^{39}\) The term codec is derived from compressor-decompressor and refers to software that compresses and decompresses files.
composer, year, track # (which corresponded to the day of the month), disc #
(corresponding to the month—July was 1, August 2, and so on until June, month 12),
genre (http://5of4.com, rather than one of the standard categories), and grouping (month
and year—e.g. “June 2008”.) Because these tags are consistent throughout the set it easy
for any user to find and sort any of the files loaded into their music player. Figure 2
shows the tags for *At Last*, the final composition in the project. Figure 3 shows the tracks
sorted by date in the iTunes browser window, with the other tags visible.

![iTunes tagging window for *At Last*]

Figure 2: iTunes tagging window for *At Last*
Finally, the fact that one cannot predict the quality or kind of playback hardware that listeners will use, or the spaces in which they will listen has a shaping effect on the music. In a controlled setting, like a concert, the composer can have a reasonable expectation of the quality of the loudspeakers and the acoustic integrity of the space. In many cases the composer will be present at the event to help tune the eq and make sure that the sound playback is as close to the original intention as possible. This allows for many subtle effects in the music: delicate timbral shifts, sophisticated spatialization, and wide dynamic ranges.

If, instead of sitting in a concert hall with a quality PA, the listener is using the internal or external speakers on a computer at home, or the earbud headphones of an iPod while out
for a walk, or the speaker in their phone while at work these kinds of subtleties are lost. Since people choose to experience their online media in such a variety of ways, music composed for this manner of consumption should rely on bolder, more obvious devices in order to be effective. These concerns are also present for music composed for CD, radio, or other offline distribution.

For 60x365 I was acutely aware of these kinds of listening differences and would often preview my pieces through different speakers and headphones I had around my studio. Rather than being restrictive, I found this particular imposition stimulating and liberating. Computer music composed for a controlled performance setting can (and usually should) be crafted with a great deal of attention to the subtle details of the sounds qualities. This kind of detail requires time and patience. The necessity of compressing the audio files through a lossy codec for an unknown playback system meant that I could not compose the same kind of grand subtle music here that is expected in a concert hall setting. I was able to focus more attention on the larger details of composition’s conceptualization, structure, and development.

Many pieces became motivated by rhythms and/or samples sources. For example, Rush [August 20] is built from samples of Rush Limbaugh’s voice. I found these samples online, which, because of how they were recorded, varied widely in quality. My composition focused on the words and the rhythms in his voice. It did not matter that the recordings were of varying quality, nor that the final audio was not carefully mastered. The central essence of the idea is conveyed perfectly, no matter the quality of the playback system.
**Formal considerations**

Based on the restrictions above I might still have composed a suite of songs or an electronic symphony or an album or any number of other conventional music forms. To me this would felt a little like using the Internet as a digital portfolio rather than composing for it. Using a blog was a way to give the music a formal structure commonly found on the Internet. Since many blogs publish on a regular schedule it was natural to designate such a schedule for my project as well. I chose a daily deadline that ended up forcing action and choices every day to get music done. This led to experimentation, creative shortcuts, and the occasional presentation of incomplete ideas as finished pieces. The daily deadline was the single biggest motivator for starting this project. I wanted to compose more music more quickly and having to make something new and complete every day was a way to do that.

Going in I thought I understood the difficulties of this commitment. It turned out the actual composing was not the most difficult part of this commitment. Each day I also needed an idea for a composition. Finding the idea was often much more difficult than executing it. This difficulty pushed me to experiment, which had two profound effects on 60x365. There are a wide variety of styles and techniques used and many pieces are not realized at the level of sophistication and mastery I normally insist on in my work. 60x365 ended up being a kind of audio diary of my year. Good days and bad days were reflected by well-made and mediocre music. The complete project has a more intimate and personal tone than any other music I’ve composed.
The range of compositional ideas ended up being quite wide. Many times through the year I would experiment with approaches to writing that were previously of no interest to me, particularly process pieces and improvisation. When faced with a deadline and no ideas it was helpful to turn to new approaches, things previously untried, and/or unfamiliar tools to get the creative juices flowing.

Not every experiment was a success. Often I had to post incomplete or mediocre pieces. Having to compose something new every day meant finding time in between other commitments. There were also the days that I had to struggle to find an idea. These pressures (and the inability to come back and revise in a couple of days, like I normally would) meant that some pieces were not completed in a way that I was happy with. The structure I had chosen for this project was unforgiving. I needed to compose and post every day.

Taken individually, many of these rushed pieces are a little embarrassing, like *Lebowski’s Rent* [November 27] or *Rhymes with Trucker* [June 16]. Taken as part of the complete project though, these are isolated moments here and there throughout a year. They help to personalize the project, making it a kind of audio diary, a daily self-portrait in sound.

This personalization of content is a part of many blogs, which put the author’s point-of-view, personality, and day-to-day life front and center, no matter the subject or content. Jay C Batzner, who had a weekly composition podcast, had a similar experience, choosing to treat his podcasts as *episodes* instead of *compositions*. “The podcast is an ongoing narrative of my compositional process and emotional states. The episodes are
parts of a larger whole, a kind of artistic and personal audio diary.” This personalization of content is, I think, one thing that blogs can do better than other formats. I chose to embrace this personalization for 60x365. Doing this meant showing the mediocre ideas, the incomplete efforts, and the awkward experiments that are part of the complete, personalized whole.

I further embraced this personalization by composing pieces that marked particular occasions in my life. These included birthdays, holidays, my move to New York City, a family trip to California, and other small events and encounters. Everyone in my family received a custom birthday greeting, tailored to a particular trait or interest of theirs. For my sister-in-law, Jainie, I composed Hello, Satan? [August 2] by twisting a message she had left on our answering machine out of context. For my sister, Anna, I composed Floating [August 11], an ambient synthesizer melody over samples of a fish tank pump, a tribute to her many goldfish. For Christmas I composed 12 pieces a la The Twelve Days of Christmas.

Social considerations

Blogs are part of an internet trend toward user generated content and social interaction. This trend is a part of the re-conceptualization of culture that Manovich writes about as a result of transcoding. A network of computers is also a network of computer users. The interactions of these users is shaped by the Internet and its representation of cultural meaning. Anyone can create new content and publish it. Anyone else can react to this

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creation, expressing an opinion publicly. New works can be made that incorporate someone else’s creation. Dialogs and discussions can grow around these works. Blogs have comment sections (usually for each post) where readers can respond to the author and each other. At their best, these comments sections can become a conversation that extends the original post. Blogs can become a two-way exchange of ideas, a dialog around a given topic.\textsuperscript{41} For a composer, the blog presents a different kind of composer-audience relationship.

From the beginning, I thought of \textit{60x365} as an asynchronous performance. I would create and perform the music for each day, and then upload it for people to listen at their convenience. Even though each minute was created in private, each was posted (performed) before the next was begun. A listener who tuned in every day would be experiencing the music at the same rate it was being created. Multiple listeners doing this would most likely not be listening at the exact same time each day, making the performance asynchronous.

There is also the opportunity for immediate feedback from the audience, essentially offering comments, criticism, and encouragement \textit{during} the composition-performance process. The audience could become part of the creation process for \textit{60x365}. During the project year I received only a handful of publically posted comments. Many listeners (particularly friends and colleagues) would either comment via email or in person. Nevertheless, all feedback I received impacted my work in two ways: they influenced

\textsuperscript{41} For example, see this discussion of \textit{60x365} by Dennis Bathory-Kitsz, J.C. Combs, Lanier Sammons, Rusty Banks, Mr. Bacon, Jeff Harrington, and Samuel Andreyev that follows a post by Lanier Sammons on the Sequenza 21 website: http://www.sequenza21.com/forum/2008/06/mini-music/
decisions about the kind of pieces to compose and they encouraged me to keep the project going.

For the month of November each piece was composed based on suggestions from listeners. I solicited suggestions as a way to combat the daily struggle to find ideas discussed earlier. This worked pretty well. I received many interesting suggestions that yielded pieces I probably would not have made otherwise. A suggestion from Edward Morneau (my uncle) to incorporate Mark Twain’s *War Prayer* lead to a three-part series of pieces: *War Prayer I-III* [November 12-14]. Listener Esther Palmer asked “How about a minute dedicated to acute and inexplicable pain?”, for which I composed *Inexplicable Pain* [November 20]. A suggestion from composer Alex Shapiro to create an updated version of the moment in Charles Ives’s *Three Places in New England* that layers different marches (as if hearing different marching bands at once) led to *Xma$$ale* [November 23]. Each suggestion became like a mini-commission, bringing listeners into the process of making the music.

As I detailed above, the daily deadline for *60x365* shaped the project. The deadline was also a constant source of frustration. Many days I simply did not want to make another one-minute piece. I thought several times about packing it in and letting the project slip away. Listener comments helped combat this. Knowing that people were listening every day, people I knew, who would know if I missed a day, kept me accountable. Some days I composed because I knew it was easier to struggle with the work and risk putting out a mediocre composition than it would be to face everybody and admit defeat.

Batzner again had a similar experience with his project:
Podcasting would put my music “out there” on a regular basis. I would create an audience of listeners who want their weekly composition. If I missed a week, I envisioned my inbox choking on “Where is the new piece?” emails. That might sound egotistical, even delusional, but it plays on one of my foundational principles of composition: the symbiosis of the composer and the listener. Through podcasting, this relationship comes full circle. My imaginary audience is demanding music and I must supply it.42

Of course the audience is not imaginary. Each of us received comments either on the blog or through email that played an important part in motivating us to keep composing and posting. The very public aspect of working in a blog form contributed heavily to my being able to see the year through to completion.

The other social implication for composers working in a blog format is the ability to interact, collaborate, and respond to other online projects. Offline compositions can reference each other too, but the dynamic online is different. The ability to simply provide a link to something else within the body of the project, allowing the audience to quickly check out the referenced project, is available only online.

During the year, 60x365 made references and provided links to several other websites and online projects. Four are simple repositories for sound files. The Freesound Project is a collection of recorded audio uploaded and tagged by users of the site.43 Anyone can make an account and then download these sounds, the majority of which are unaltered field recordings, and use them according to the licensing terms designated by the file’s creator.

42 Batzner 7.
I visited the Freesound Project many times throughout the year, so much so that I created a tag for my pieces that used these sounds.\footnote{David Morneau, “60x365, freesound,” 10 Oct. 2011 <http://60x365.com/labels/freesound.html>.} \textit{Scanner} [October 30], which uses the sounds made by a document scanner, and \textit{Tube Go Boom} [January 24], which uses sounds made by a cardboard tube, are two of these pieces.

The George W. Bush Public Domain Audio Archive\footnote{“The George W. Bush Public Domain Audio Archive,” 10 Oct. 2011 <http://www.thebots.net/GWBushSampleArchive.htm>.} is a sample collection built and maintained by a group called The Bots, self-described as the world’s first virtual band.\footnote{“The Bots,” 10 Oct. 2011 <http://www.thebots.net/>.} This sample archive collects various public speeches made by President Bush, chops the speeches into phrases, and uploads each phrase as a separate file. This archive is available for free to anyone. I used samples from this collection for several pieces in 60x365. There was something interesting to me about his speaking style that I wanted to explore. \textit{Ashley Pearson Believes} [July 24] is a looping meditation on a single phrase. \textit{GWB} [January 28] marks Bush’s final State of the Union address with a comic reordering of earlier speeches. I also used his voice in a supportive role to comment on other things happening in the music, \textit{Buldan} [September 29] for example.

The University of Iowa Electronic Music Studios created a public domain collection of instrument samples.\footnote{“Music Instrument Samples,” 10 Oct. 2011 <http://theremin.music.uiowa.edu/MIS.html>.} These were recorded in an anechoic chamber and then posted online for download. I used a couple of these to create \textit{Stasis} [September 17].

The final sound file hosting site is a parody site called The Rush Limbaugh Excellence in Babbling Audio Theatre.\footnote{“The Rush Limbaugh Excellence in Babbling Audio Theatre,” 10 Oct. 2011 <http://www.thebots.net/therushlimbaughexcellenceinbabblingaudiotheatre.htm>.} This is a collection of vocal gaffs, misspeaks, and other
sounds culled from Rush Limbaugh’s radio show and cataloged online. I used this archive to make a parody piece of my own, called *Rush* [August 20].

There are three other internet art projects that I interacted with during 60x365. Boris Willis’s *Dance-a-Day* is a daily dance project for which Willis uploaded a new dance video that he made every day for a year (May 11, 2007–May 11, 2008). Jay C Batzner’s *Unsafe Bull* is another new music podcast, updated once weekly beginning on February 28, 2007, and running for about 14 months. Peter Traub’s *Itspace* is a network of miniature electronic music pieces that lives inside of the Myspace web architecture.

*Dance-a-day*

Boris Willis’s *Dance-A-Day* podcast was one of the inspirations for my blog. For his podcast Willis would make a video dance every day for a year (May 11, 2007 – May 11, 2008). Every Friday during the period that both projects were live (July 1 2007 – May 11 2008) we would collaborate on our posting. I would create music that he would use for his dance video and then place the music on my site as well. We would alternate taking the lead so that one week he would send me video to score first and the next I would make the music for him to dance to first. Each Friday our posts would link to each other, while explaining the collaborative nature of the day’s piece.

This kind of overlap is particular to the internet. We were each working on our own projects, with our own audiences and visions. These existed on different sites, with different conceptual rules and aesthetics. Willis posted his videos to a number of different

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places, including Youtube, Blip.tv, and Yahoo Video, while I only posted on my blog page. The 43 pieces that we made together had to fit seamlessly into our respective projects as well as work collaboratively. This meant making sure that each of our creative voices was adequately represented by the collaborative piece. I held strictly to a one-minute duration while the length of his pieces varied.

During our podcast years we each made little series or collections of pieces based on our own needs and interests. The ongoing nature of this collaboration meant that sometimes these series intersected the shared works. At Christmas time I made a set of 12 Christmas-themed pieces. For our December 21 collaboration Willis sent me a video that reminded me of old 35mm movie footage. Even though there was nothing explicitly holiday-related in it, I chose to compose an arrangement of Winter Wonderland in order to fill out my holiday series. The result is Holiday Movie [December 21]. February is Black History Month, which Boris chose to celebrate in all of his pieces for the month. Each of our collaborations ended up relating to this theme: SQ [February 1], Fight [February 8], Riots [February 15], and Blue [February 22], which I probably would not have done otherwise.

Unsafe Bull

Composer Jay C Batzner had his own new music podcast called Unsafe Bull. Every week Batzner composed a new electro-acoustic piece and “shoves it onto the internet and into your ears.” I met Batzner through the Society of Composers, Inc. (SCI) listserv. During the early stages of my project I promoted it on the listserv and Batzner replied to point
me towards his project (which began in February 2007). His motivations were similar to mine: he wanted to compose more music and work on his “compositional chops.”

Early in our relationship I made a minute mixing his voice with Alvin Lucier’s. In his posting that week he had made a reference to Lucier’s *I am Sitting In a Room*, so I modeled this minute on that piece, except instead of using successive layers of room reverb I ran the same audio through a compression algorithm over and over. The result is *Unsafe Bull* [July 30]. In February 2008 Batzner celebrated the anniversary of his project with a series of variations using sounds recorded from a Mancala board game. He invited listeners to make and submit their own variations, which he would collect and post. I made two variations for him *Bull-Man* [February 6] and *Man-Bull* [February 4]. He posted these on his site on February 28, 2008.

*Itspace*

Created by Peter Traub and constructed inside of the Myspace architecture, *Itspace* is a social network for inanimate household objects. Briefly, Myspace users create a profile when they join. For this profile they provide some personal info (name, age, gender, religion, etc), some interests (favorite books, TV shows, movies, music), and a photo. Once they’re setup they can search the database of Myspace users for others with similar interests or backgrounds or whatever. When they find someone they’re interested in, they

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49 Jay C. Batzner, “Unsafe Bull Podcast,” 28 Feb. 2008 <http://unsafepodcast.thecollected.org/>. (This site no longer exists. According to Batzner, there was a server error that corrupted the site. Rather than re-upload everything, he abandoned the project, which was nearing an end anyway.)

50 Batzner “The Composer as Podcaster” 1.

send that user a “friend request”. When that user accepts this request, each will appear in the other’s list of friends on their profile pages. Through these new friends, more friends can be found, until a virtual community exists for people to share pictures, comments, messages, and more. Myspace also has a feature for bands (or any musician really) to create a specialized profile that eliminates some of the personal data in exchange for the ability to upload audio files. Band profiles link to each other and to regular user profiles in the same way.

Traub wanted to exploit and subvert this architecture, thus Itspace. For this he created nine separate profiles, each for a single inanimate object from around his house. He photographed each object, recorded audio samples of that object, and composed a one minute piece using those samples. Each object has a band profile and was initially linked to the other eight original objects. Anyone who wants to can create their own object profile in one of two ways. The music for an existing object can be downloaded, remixed and posted as a new object, or an entirely new object profile can be built. Peter has a detailed list of instructions on the main Itspace page. I am pleased to point out the my pieces were the first added to this musique-concrete social network. I made two pieces for him. The first downloaded and remixed two of his original objects (Banister and Pillow) making a mashup titled Banillow [November 18]. I also added a new object, Musicbook [November 19], using a photo and samples of my Kotska-Payne Harmony textbook.

Further interactions
At the conclusion of 60x365 I was very fortunate to receive some attention from the press—including an interview with Molly Sheridan for NewMusicBox⁵² and an interview with Robert Segal for NPR’s All Things Considered⁵³. This led to further online interactions. I was contacted by several people attempting their own one-year projects, giving me the chance to support and encourage their work. These included 365 day composition projects: Kerrith Livengood’s Clang Jingle Clang⁵⁴ and Brian Ledwidge Flynn’s Abraxas⁵⁵. There were other projects that people wrote me about, but none of them got very far (a couple of weeks was the average) so I won’t list those by name.

After hearing my interview on NPR, a high school teacher in California contacted me about using music from this project as part of an assignment for his video production class. He had his students choose one piece and make a video (which he called a visual poem) to go along with it. This led to the creation of the 60x365: Re-Imaginings⁵⁶ project, which asks people to make new pieces using music from the 60x365 archive. The results are collected on the Re-Imaginings website. These kinds of interactions keep the project vibrant and active, even though I finished making music for it in June 2008.

V. Conclusions

60x365 is a project that I undertook for several reasons: to compose more music, to compose more often, to experiment with a range of styles and ideas, and to compose music for the Internet. What does it mean to claim that I was composing for the Internet? What effect did the Internet have on the music I composed for this project?

At the outset of the project I expected that the Internet would be a major shaping influence on my music. After examining the ideas put forth by Chris Cutler it becomes clear that any effects from the Internet on this project are the result of the expanded distributive power of the Internet. It does not play a role in the composition process beyond setting up certain requirements for media distributed on its network (limitations of bandwidth, for example.)

The changes in distribution offered by the Internet are speed of transmission and ease of access. Anyone can create and upload their work to an online server. They can do this more quickly and less expensively than with previous methods. Before the Internet, if I had wanted to compose music and send it to 100 people I would have needed to pay the costs of materials and shipping to have 100 CDs pressed and mailed. Now, all I need to pay is the cost of access to the Internet (or find a free connection). This cost is the same no matter how many people access my music files.
To better understand how online music differs from offline music we looked at Lev Manovich’s five defining principles of New Media, which can be reasonably applied to Online Media. Two of these, numerical representation (the digitalization of information) and modularity (separate objects at one scale join to create new objects at larger scales while maintaining their separate identities) describe differences in the construction of media objects. Automation—the use of computer algorithms to automatically create, manipulate and access media objects—shows another way that the Internet changes the distribution of media. Creating the various HTML files needed for 60x365 and managing listener subscriptions through syndication were both made easier because of automated processes.

Variability—multiple versions of the same media created for different contexts—allows different interfaces to access the same media. In 60x365 there are different interfaces on the project website, each offering a different configuration of the individual compositions. There are also secondary interfaces created when links to the music are made from other websites. Together these offer listeners ways to interact with the music allow them to be more active in the shaping of their experience of the project. One case of variability that interests Manovich is what he terms the new media database. Put simply, this is a collection of media files (audio and hypertext files in the case of 60x365.) The listener’s experience of these files is more like using a database than the experience of a narrative common in offline listening. The listener is making choices (guided by the interface) about which part of music to experience next and when to be done. In a concert setting, both of these are predetermined by the composer. This is
another way in which online media makes the listeners an active participant, changing the
dynamic of the composer-audience relationship.
This change is contributes to Manovich’s final principle, transcoding—the process of
converting media to computer data. He writes that the transcoding of media is the first
part of a larger cultural re-conceptualization. The change in composer-audience
relationship is part of this cultural transformation. There is also increased interaction
between the composer and audience, especially during the process of composing in the
case of 60x365 and projects like it. I think it’s fair to say that this interaction is partly
responsible for the increased personalization of media online. That is to say, more of the
writing and music and art online reveals more of its creator than is typical of offline
counterparts.
We should now be in a position to answer my original questions. What does it mean to
say that this music is composed “for the Internet”? As it turns out, the meaning of that
phrase is straightforward. The music I composed is intended for Internet distribution.
It is uploaded to a server on the network so that an audience can find it and download it
for listening. Of course this is true of any other music online, including the vast libraries
at places like the Internet Archive57, UbuWeb58, and the iTunes Music Store.59 The
important difference here is the intent. A lot of the music on these kinds of sites was
created for some other venue or means of delivery (via CD, for example). It is available


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online as an additional means of distribution. My project was created specifically for Internet distribution.

This difference of intent had a negligible effect, if any, on the outcome. Encapsulating the music in a blog form is a demonstration of this intent on my part. The shape of the project is a shape that evolved online, due in part to the re-conceptualization of culture resulting from the transcoding of media.

The answer to the second question, what effect did the Internet have on my music, is more complicated. The substantial effects are not on the compositional process itself. The tools I used did shape my working process, but this shaping effect would be there regardless of where the music was presented or published or performed. It was all created offline and simply distributed online.

The Internet is different from other venues and means of distribution, seen in Manovich’s defining characteristics of automation, variability, and transcoding. Blogs and other user created content are part of online culture. Anyone who wants to can create and distribute content in any form (text, image, audio, video, software, etc.) Anyone else can react to this content, creating new content of their own. These interactions occur with more speed and efficiency similar interactions offline.

Internet culture is suited to projects that create new things everyday over a period of time. I think that this is because the creator can publish each day’s piece so easily. These projects are public, which provides a support from and accountability to the community around the creator. There are many of these projects. I detailed Boris Willis’s Dance-a-Day earlier, and made reference to others like Noah K Everyday and 40x365. There are
also multiple groups of people doing photo-a-day projects on photo sharing sites like Flickr60 and Picassa.61

The idea to attempt a daily composition project was inspired directly by some of these other 365 day projects. For me, the Internet made this project possible. I would not have wanted to do a daily composition that I did not share, and the logistics of trying to share a new piece everyday without the benefit of the Internet would be too cumbersome. In fact, the idea to compose a new piece every day for a year would probably have not occurred to me had I not been immersed in the culture of the Internet. The possibility for this project, and the relative ease of undertaking it, was the biggest effect of the Internet on my music. Without it, 60x365 would not have happened at all.

The effects on my music and my composition that followed are secondary. They are more directly the result of composing every day. These include the inevitable unevenness of quality that gave the project an audio-diary feel, the personalization of different pieces to reflect things happening in my life, and the push to experiment with new ideas.

The Internet also affected the project through its change in the composer-audience dynamic. This change is another result of the efficiency of distribution and interaction. The audience became a part of the process, witnessing the day-to-day realities of composing, offering feedback, suggestions, and encouragement, and keeping me accountable. I have noted elsewhere that these interactions and this accountability are largely responsible for the completion of the project.

The conclusion is that the Internet, as a distributed network of computers and users, had two principle effects on 60x365. Its efficient distribution and automated processes made the undertaking of a daily composition project conceivable, and its culture and social structure guided the completion of the project by providing feedback and accountability. Without the Internet, and the culture that has grown up around it, 60x365 would not have happened at all. Composing for the Internet meant nothing more than composing for an Internet project, a project that would have been difficult to realize without it.

Further questions can now be raised. How do these effects manifest themselves in other Internet art projects? What can the accumulated experiences of many different Internet projects teach us about creating and consuming art? What effects do these projects have on subsequent offline projects by the same creators? These questions will require further study and the work of other researchers to answer.
References


