

CHARLES FOSTER

SIGN

SIFT THE SANDS OF SPACE-TIME



TRANSIENT

Sign (2019) is a social experiment in the creation of sound landscapes using human movement. It exploits the fact that virtual reality provides interfaces that readily afford natural, continuous gestures in order to empower players to make, share, and remix musical experiences.

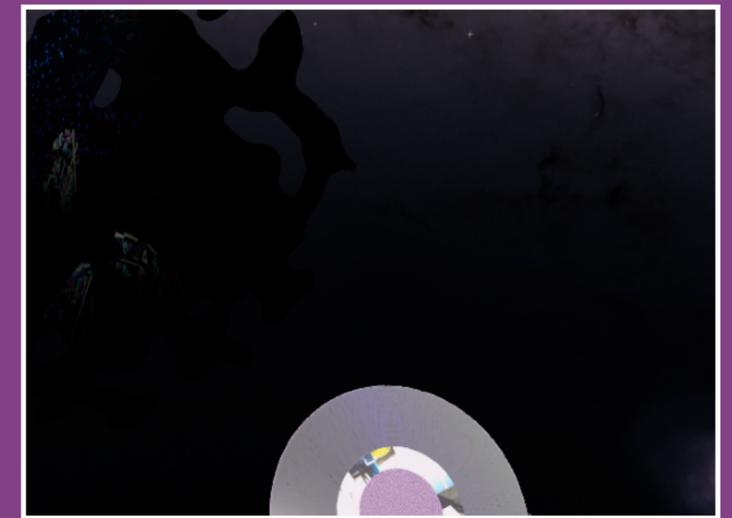
The core roles of *Sign* are as instrument and as viral social experience. First, it is an instrument in that it provides a mapping between actions—sweeping through space, spawning clouds of particles in turbulent paths—to audible parameters for granular



RECURRENT

synthesis such as volume, pitch, randomness, and spatial spread. The user also has the ability to conjure up the ghosts of past users, who then inhabit the same space as the present player and re-enact their musical expressions. In this way, *Sign* continues to evolve as new users contribute their unique statements, creating a persistent archive and exhaustive repertoire for the instrument.

In *Sign*, the player steps into the role of a celestial being, with the power to create on a galactic scale. Those creations simultaneously inhabit three different timescales: transient, recurrent, and permanent. On the transient scale, particles are spawned, travel their course and disappear. Their granules of sound play, warp, and dissipate into a long tail of reverberation. On the recurrent scale, bits of musical expression recur between users as one user re-discovers



PERMANENT

and re-interprets the gestures of other players. On the permanent scale, the world of *Sign* includes a more familiar and more durable form of material presence: floating compact disks, containing the original audio samples used for granular remixing.

Sign is built for exploration, for sharing, and for curiosity. The author hopes that, by showing players of all levels of musical skill that they can express themselves through sound synthesis, this virtual place will facilitate newer, more diverse, and deeper engagements with music making.