

IMPOSSIBLE ALONE

An interactive sound installation exploring the space between musical improvisation, creative movement and games

IMPOSSIBLE ALONE was created to explore how constraining the interaction design within an interactive music system would affect participants' engagement and sense of creative control.

Using Kinects to track the pose and movement of two individuals, the installation hides a myriad of sonic interactions – invisible instruments that both provoke and demand creative movement. However, this interactive soundscape may only be explored by the participants whilst they mirror each other's movements exactly. Responding to both each other and what is heard, they inevitably provoke each other to move in unfamiliar ways. How long can they persist in the uncharted journey of shared creation?

In this work, the tech out of sight and intended to be forgotten. The participants stand a metre or so apart facing each other. No additional visual feedback is provided, nor any instructions of use beyond the need to mirror each other. What happens next varies between individuals and how their personalities interact. Sometimes there will naturally be a leader and a follower, but the truly special moments happen when both individuals maintain eye contact, responding to each other's tiny movements. These occasions can create a positive feedback loop creating movements and sounds with no clear originator.

Communicating creative control

The work was evaluated qualitatively following a formal Discourse Analysis procedure. This provided an in-depth understanding of how a group of individuals made sense of their experiences with the work.

Whilst participants were often happy to relinquish some creative control to both their partner and the installation itself, we found that once expectations have formed as to who is responsible for what, a failure by the work to facilitate this can lead to dissatisfaction. We argue that designers of creative systems should consider carefully how a participant forms an understanding of their role whilst interacting with their work.



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