

Music as Speech: How Video Game Musical Motifs Drive the Story

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Poster Abstract

The inclusion of spoken dialogue in video games is common in current video game systems. However, this has not always been the case. For games that do not include such dialogue, music becomes incredibly important in the games narrative. This is significant in role-playing games (RPGs). These games rely heavily on the story, and often employ multiple characters. The specific character that the story line is focusing on can be confusing, as there are many characters that occupy a scene. The use of musical motifs for certain characters is crucial to make an informed storyline. Such motifs are also employed as a device to foreshadow certain events. For example, walking up a staircase can be a very basic action, but if accompanied by a theme associated with a villain, it informs the player that a battle is forthcoming, or that something important is about to occur in the story's narrative. Video games also employ the use of sound effects or melodies to draw the player's attention to important events. Certain actions in a story line may involve finding something hidden. To avoid frustration, games employ these musical cues to guide players. An examination of *Final Fantasy* and *The Legend of Zelda* will reveal that musical motifs and cues are crucial for story-driven games. Video games are an important part of popular culture, and understanding how game makers manipulate the music to drive the story is a necessary step to understand the cultural benefit of these games.