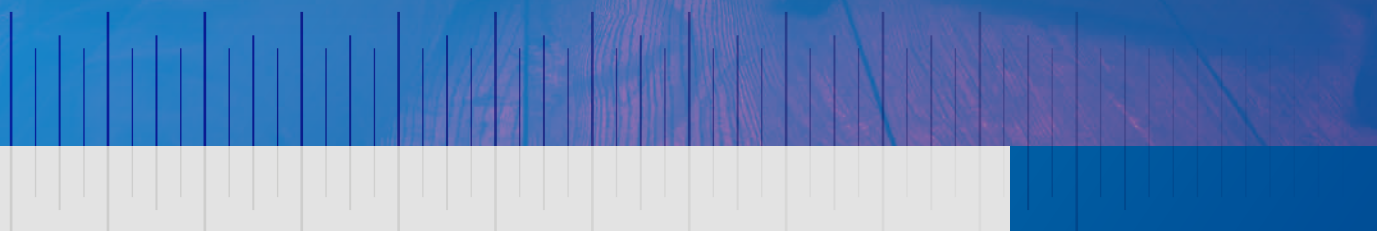




THE RIGHT NOTES

How Frettable Writes Real Music with Artificial Intelligence

BY LISA SADACH



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WAS 2003 WHEN, AFTER ALMOST A YEAR OF PHYSICALLY MAILING RECORDINGS TO EACH OTHER, the duo of musicians that made

up the band The Postal Service released their one and only studio album which earned a platinum certification. Taking their name from the arduous process used to send recordings back and forth, their story has become a part of common lore.

While it can be easy to point to this struggle as an example of artistic tenacity and “authentic” musicianship, difficulties like this are also what keep many would-be musicians from creating and collaborating.

Enter Frettable. Frettable, at its most basic, is a music transcription service that also allows for collaboration between users. However, the AI-powered application which can write sheet music directly from an instrument or voice recording, also breaks down the barriers that exist for many musicians who are able to play by ear but have not had the formal training necessary to write out their own music.

“A lot of people that pick up a guitar, they just want to play their favorite rock songs and they don’t necessarily learn any of the sheet music or how to read it,” explains founder Greg Burlet. “For these people, Frettable levels the playing field. They don’t need to have any knowledge of music theory or how things fit in measures and bars.”

NEXT GENERATION COLLABORATION

This ability to write sheet music opens greater possibilities, both for those who cannot read it themselves and those who simply want an easier way to collaborate. With Frettable, users “just play what they play, and we

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analyze it and write up the sheet music,” Burlet says. “Then they can take that sheet music and share it online for people that do read it. So, they can send it to session musicians or band members and say, ‘here’s what I played.’”

Frettable, which allows users to post their work publicly or privately, also has a collaboration function which ensures each musician receives credit for their part. Burlet describes the feature saying collaboration “will chain all previous versions, so if two people collaborate it in two different directions, it’ll keep track of that whole tree of information about who touched what. We’ll log that in a digital format so it’s all right there if there is a dispute. It’s all stamped and documented.”

CREATING REAL MUSIC WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

“My thought is that machine learning will always be a tool to help musicians,” Burlet says when considering the effects of technology on creativity and potential

disruption to the industry and jobs within it. He dismantles the idea that an app like Frettable could put professional copyists, those who write sheet music, out of business, saying “they are so proficient, our technology almost slows them down.”

Frettable, at this stage, is intended more for amateur musicians who are looking to start their careers and copyists, who are excellent resources to composers, are not likely to be replaced anytime soon. Technology is here to help people get to be more creative faster by taking away the more mundane aspects of creation like writing out sheet music. When it comes to using that tech, Burlet says artists can use it to generate music based on other music, splicing together different pieces and adding personal style or manipulate it, turning it into an “inspiration machine.” “Ultimately, it is still up to the artist to produce the final piece of art.”