
Tweetris: Play With Me

Dustin Freeman

Dept. of Computer Science
University of Toronto
dustin@cs.toronto.edu

Fanny Chevalier

Digital Futures Initiative
OCAD University
Toronto, ON
fchevalier@faculty.ocad.ca

Emma Westecott

Digital Futures Initiative
OCAD University
Toronto, ON
ewestecott@faculty.ocad.ca

Kyle Duffield

Independent Artist
Toronto, ON
kyleduffield@gmail.com

Kate Hartman

Digital Futures Initiative
OCAD University
Toronto, ON
khartman@faculty.ocad.ca

Derek Reilly

Faculty of Computer Science
Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS
reilly@cs.dal.ca

Abstract

We present Tweetris, a full-body interactive Tetris game with extended audience participation. Snapshots of players making correct tetrominos are tweeted, and this feed is used by a mobile and web-based Tetris game, which can be played from anywhere in real-time.

Keywords

Tetris, Kinect, NUI, Twitter, installation

Introduction

We invite conference attendees to play a friendly game of full body Tetris brick (tetromino) making. When the shape of a requested tetromino is successfully formed and held by a player, a video snapshot of the player is tweeted to @TweetrisTEI, with a semi-random but descriptive shape-related caption (e.g. "Here comes another ANTI-LIGHTNING"). The tweeted tetromino snapshots are then used in a game of Tetris that attendees can play in real-time using their mobile devices or laptops, or at a wall-projected kiosk beside the main exhibit.

At its core, Tweetris is a highly interactive, engaging and enjoyable embodied competitive game. Tetromino-making players are rewarded viscerally with lights and sounds indicating that shapes are being made successfully. By attaching this game to the underlying mechanics of Tweetris, we contrast the visceral

experience of embodied play with more meditative questions about what it means to engage in a public game.

First, the separation of tetromino-making and Tetris playing highlights a difference in prioritization on the act of play (in tetromino-making) and on the cultural frame of game (in the modified game of Tetris). Second, Tweetris probes our comfort with gameplay as public spectacle, as brick-making players not only play in front of an audience, but their images are simultaneously made “playable” by the conference attendees, and become persistent and accessible to the public at large via Twitter. Third, by using Twitter as the mechanism for communicating tetrominos and requesting tetrominos, we conflate the notion of social network as a way to share and communicate gaming experiences with social network as communication platform over which the game itself operates. Finally, the game-within-a-game structure of Tweetris plays with the boundary between player and game, by using the accomplishments of tetromino-making players as literal building blocks for the Tetris game, and by allowing Tetris players to request tetrominos.

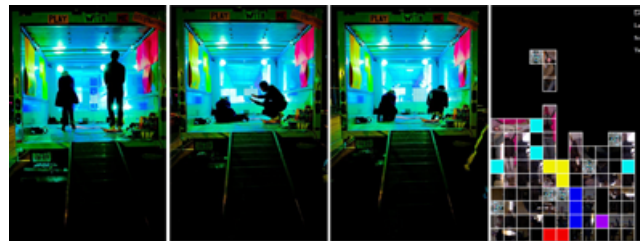


Figure 1. Tweetris players during Nuit Blanche, Toronto, October 2011. Right: Tetris game using snapshots of players successfully making shapes.

Nuit Blanche Exhibit

We presented Tweetris at Nuit Blanche (Toronto, Oct 1 2011, see Figure 1), as part of the Parkdale LEITMOTIF series of exhibits. Titled “Play With Me”, two simultaneous installations were run, one in a parked van on a city street, another in the graduate gallery of OCAD University. Real-time gameplay (of both the Tetris game and the brick-making game) was projected onto city streets, and the two installations were linked via an AV channel. Tweetris proved to be a fun and engaging participatory spectacle, that has since been showcased at other venues including Digifest and GamerCamp.

Logistics

Successfully exhibiting Tweetris requires wall space for projection, totaling 14’ wide, and a clear area about 15’ in front of the wall. Visitors are given instructions on how to install the Tetris app onto their mobile devices or access it from their laptops. Two exhibitors will be with the installation at all times to provide support and explanation.

Acknowledgments

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