

Habitat

Olly Farshi
Goldsmiths College
Electronic Music Studios
Department of Music, Goldsmiths,
University of London, New Cross,
London SE14 6NW
+44 (0) 7725 413 088
olly@ollyandjeremy.com

Biographical information

Olly Farshi is a British Sound Artist and Composer, currently residing in Jyväskylä, Finland. He is currently completing his debut album for Anglo-Canadian record/media-label CocoSolidCiti, due for release in late 2008. As a Sound Artist, Farshi's explorations concern playful interaction, digital communication and, in an ongoing piece of research entitled *iRedux*, notions of intangible property and connected life-styles. Farshi has been involved with a variety of festivals, venues, exhibitions, conferences and collaborative projects, including: Resfest Austria, Foldback, Mediaterra Greece, FutureSonic, Commonwealth Film Festival, Defunktion.net, Shunt Gallery London, Salone Internazionale del Mobile, CocoSolidCiti, KunstForum.

Description of Piece

Habitat is an ambient sound installation designed to be exhibited within a public city-space. The installation generates a sonic landscape – a generative wildlife habitat – based upon how populated the installation space is. The objective of Habitat is to encourage those who experience it to consider the installation space and, by association, the city-space differently; considering the impact of commercialisation, gentrification and industrialisation on these public spaces which, at one point in time, were not so densely populated.

Habitat displaces the default sonic landscape – pedestrians traversing the city-space, commercial ambience etc. - overlaying a generative ambience constructed entirely out of wildlife and field-recordings. As the population shifts within the physical installation space – transient individuals enter and leave – the sonic landscape generated by Habitat reflects these changes: various animals and exotic wildlife emerge, flock and interact with each other, resulting in a vibrant and enchanting ambience.

Using Bluetooth, the Habitat software polls the space every 30 seconds, counting the number of mobile devices carried by individuals in the installation space. The more devices the system counts, the fewer wildlife sounds will be heard, implying that to encourage wildlife to return to the space, the individuals with those devices must eschew their technology – switch off their mobile devices – to re-enliven the Habitat.

As fewer devices are counted, more animals and insects flock to the sonic landscape. When the installation space is empty, in terms of bluetooth devices counted, the wildlife habitat is vibrant, all possible sounds are playing (see *fig1* and *fig2* for examples of empty installation spaces). Thus users with bluetooth mobile devices can leave the space, knowing that in doing so they are having a positive impact on the sonic landscape, or, as a more compelling course of action, encourage others within the space to switch off their mobile devices and instigate a mass change on the installation's sonic landscape.

The aim is to heighten awareness and consideration of the city-space that one occupies, utilises and traverses. In experiencing Habitat, one is given the opportunity to build a new relationship with the city-space, to consider our impact as pedestrians, users and consumers on this space and to consider its natural origins. As each individual within the space contributes to the juxtaposition of familiar wildlife sounds alongside the city ambience, Habitat invites the *flâneur* to stop, observe and listen, in order to experience the true impact that those traversing the installation space have on the sonic environment.



fig1

Empty space - all sounds playing

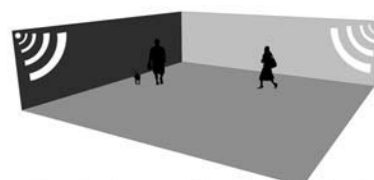


fig2

No devices - all sounds playing

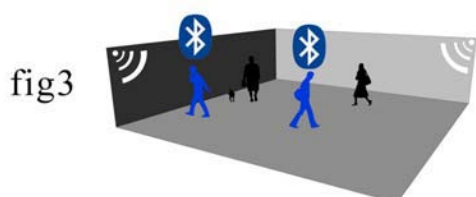


fig3

Few devices - some sounds playing



fig4

Maximum devices - no sounds playing

 Denotes user with Bluetooth Device