



The What, How, and Why of Chiptune

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What exactly *is* chiptune you ask?



- Chiptune is music created using soundchips such as **programmable sound generator (PSG)**
- Really basic synthesizers
- Can only produce 3-4 notes simultaneously (INCLUDING SFX)
- often melody, harmony, bass, percussion- NES chip has:
 - channels 1 & 2 designated to square waves
 - 3 for triangle
 - 4 for noise
 - 5 (rarely ever used) for small audio samples

What chiptune
isn't



What chiptune
isn't

**IT'S NOT A GENRE
OR STYLE!**

What chiptune
isn't

IT'S NOT A GENRE
OR STYLE!

It's a texture

What chiptune isn't

Between **melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture**, chiptune affects texture and harmony

(specific waveforms and limited number of channels)

But it doesn't define genre (jazz, rock, baroque, etc)

What it does mean is that it is very melody focused

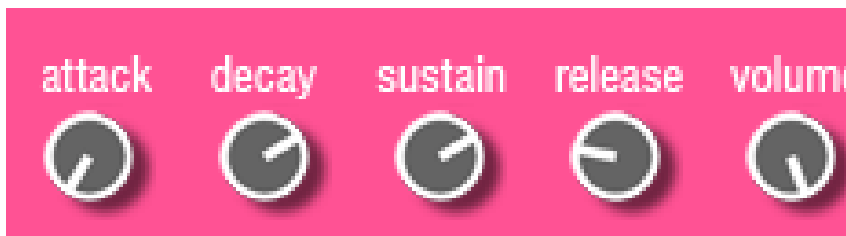
The image shows a musical score for piano in 3/4 time, marked Adagio. The score is written for a grand piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the melody and a bass clef staff for the harmony. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a simple, stepwise fashion, starting on C4 and moving up to G4. The harmony is written in a simple, stepwise fashion, starting on C3 and moving up to G3. The score is marked with a piano dynamic (Piano) and a fortissimo dynamic (ff). The tempo is marked Adagio. The score is annotated with labels: 'Texture' is written on the left side of the bass staff, 'Melody' is written on the right side of the treble staff, and 'Harmony' is written on the right side of the bass staff. Above the treble staff, the notes C, F, A, F, A, G are written above the notes. Below the bass staff, three vertical lines are drawn, labeled 'Rhythm', indicating the rhythmic pattern of the bass line.

ONG	PUI	PU2	WAV	NOI
0	00	10	--	43
1	--	11	--	43
2	--	12	20	42
3	--	12	--	44
4	00	10	--	40
5	--	11	--	43
6	--	12	--	42
7	--	12	20	42
8	--	12	21	41
9	00	10	--	44
A	00	11	--	45
B	00	11	--	43
C	02	12	20	43
D	03	12	20	43
E	01	10	--	42
F	03	11	--	41
G	02	12	20	41
H	04	12	21	44



How do I write chiptune?

- Any synthesizer plugin such as Massive, Absynth, TAL noisemaker, or HELM
- Tweakbench's VSTs: Peach, Toad, Triforce, Minerva
- Trackers (Little Sound DJ, famitracker, milkytracker, pico8)
- Plogue Chipcrusher



PROJECT (EMPTY). 0?	PHRASE 01	PU1
TEMPO 128	NOTE	CPO
TRANSPOSE 00	INSTR	128
SYNC OFF		NEW
CLONE DEEP	G#5	
LOOK MR10/AMI	#	
KEY DELAY/REPEAT 7/2	#	
PRELISTEN ON	#	
HELP	#	
CLEAN SONG DATA	#	
CLEAN INSTR DATA	#	
LOAD/SAVE SONG	#	
WORK TIME 0: 01	#	
TOTAL 1: 9: 54	#	

oh no

ptn34=*

byt \$03,\$4a,\$03,\$4a,\$a3,\$f8,\$48,\$03

byt \$4a,\$03,\$4a,\$03,\$4a,\$a3,\$f8,\$48

byt \$03,\$4a,\$ff'

When/why should you write with
chiptune in the modern era?

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chiptune in the modern era?



Evoking RETRO

But just because something is pixel art, doesn't mean it needs chiptune

AND

Just because something ISN'T pixel art, doesn't mean it CAN'T have chiptune



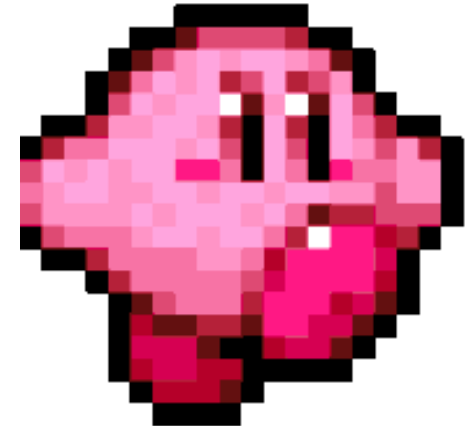
An Evolution of a “Genre”



- Like all forms of music, chiptune has evolved
- Some forms of music have chiptune “flair” but may not strictly be chiptune

Takeaways I guess?

- Experiment with composing it and find a tool that fits you. If you want to use a tracker go for it!
- Though chiptune isn't a genre or a style, its restrictions in texture and harmonic depth put a major emphasis on expert melody writing
- Chiptune is not necessary for all pixel art games, but it's definitely a good pair
- Chiptune can be used for non pixel art games if you want to evoke a retro feel



Thanks!

Got more questions? Need my links and junk?

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