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Scott Snibbe's latest app, Synthetica, lets you make damn good electronica on your phone.

The interaction design is key. To remix a song in Synthetica, all you do is tap or draw with your fingertip along a 3-D grid.

Snibbe created the app in partnership with the electronica band Metric.

He has previously collaborated on [interactive music apps with Bjork](#) and others.

Given intuitive, game-like, visually rich interactive tools, people who normally might not label themselves as musicians become engaged and empowered to be creative with music, engaging with music actively and over longer periods the ways that DJs or remixers do," Ahna Girshick, the app's producer, says.

Snibbe's interaction design creates constraints that are strict enough to ensure simplicity without hamstringing the results.

Metric's Emily Haines and Jimmy Shaw





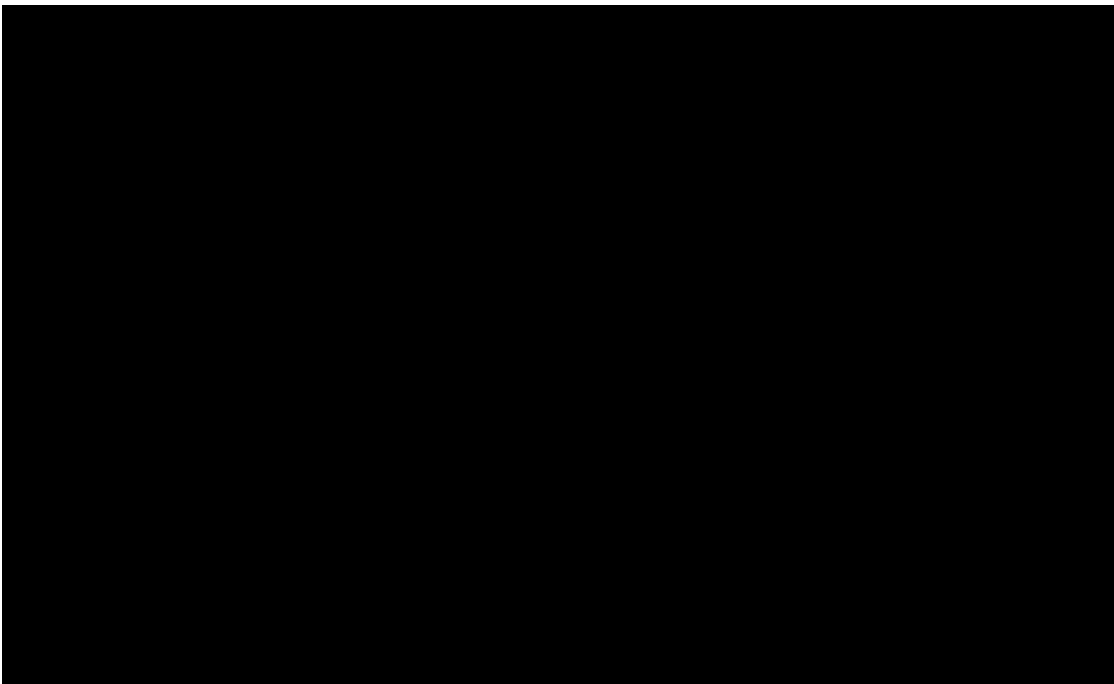
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It's Almost Impossible To Make Bad Music With This App

The Synthetica app lets you make damn good electronica on your phone, thanks to stellar interaction design.

I find a lot of "interactive music apps" intimidating, because while they may have clever interfaces, the limiting factor on their output is always my own complete lack of musical intuition. I wouldn't expect that jangling on the keys of a piano would sound decent if I didn't know what I was doing; why should a music app be any different? That's what makes [Scott Snibbe](#)'s latest app, [Synthetica](#) (made in collaboration with the independent rock and roll band Metric), so delightfully surprising. It really is pretty hard to make sucky music with this thing.



[Snibbe](#), who has previously collaborated on [interactive music apps with Bjork](#) and others, took inspiration for Synthetica's blocky, isomorphic graphics from Superstudio, a late-1960s Italian architecture collective "known for its monumental futuristic white grid worlds superimposed into natural and figurative landscapes," says Ahna Girshick, the app's producer. To remix one of Metric's songs in Synthetica, all you do is tap or draw with your fingertip along one of the 3-D grids. These interactions introduce changes to tempo or instrumentation, but because they're all synchronized to Metric's underlying beat (which visually marches along the gridlines), the variations can't help but sound at least half-decent. (Mine actually sounded damn good.)

"It's really hard to make sucky music with this thing. "

"Given intuitive, game-like, visually rich interactive tools, people who normally might not label themselves as

musicians become engaged and empowered to be creative with music, engaging with music actively and over longer periods the ways that DJs or remixers do," Girshick adds. This isn't just cheap talk. Snibbe's interaction design creates constraints that are strict enough to ensure simplicity without hamstringing the results. Not only does it make you appreciate Metric's music — and the app invites you to buy that music right from your phone — it makes you feel good about *making* music yourself. What could be a better promotional tool for a band than that?

[\[Read more about Metric Synthetical\]](#)



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John Pavlus is a writer and filmmaker focusing on science, tech, and design topics. [Continued](#)

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