

# UI for *The Show Must go On*

# Context

*The Show Must Go On* is a narrative-driven rhythm game where you play as the protagonist Andrew, who after their father's death tries to pick up his legacy of music. The game has two major aspects to it; In-Universe storytelling and a separated system for playing music by clicking buttons in rhythm (á la Guitar Hero with quirks) and seeing the audience react in real-time to your successes or failures.

The game has a purposefully monochrome visual style to suit the narrative with colours only used to highlight important elements and story beats.

## Main Menu



The main menu sets the tone for the rest of the game. This particular main menu sets both the colour, music and story themes up for the player right from the get-go. The screen features almost only blacks and whites with two exceptions; the polaroid pictures and any hovered button. The menu can be dissected into 4 major elements:

1. The Title
2. The Polaroid Picture
3. The Buttons
4. The Background

The Title is “The Show Must Go On”, written in white text in the font *Brush Script Std* with font size 48. Behind the text is a solid black banner. It is located on the top-left corner of the screen with some distance to the edges.

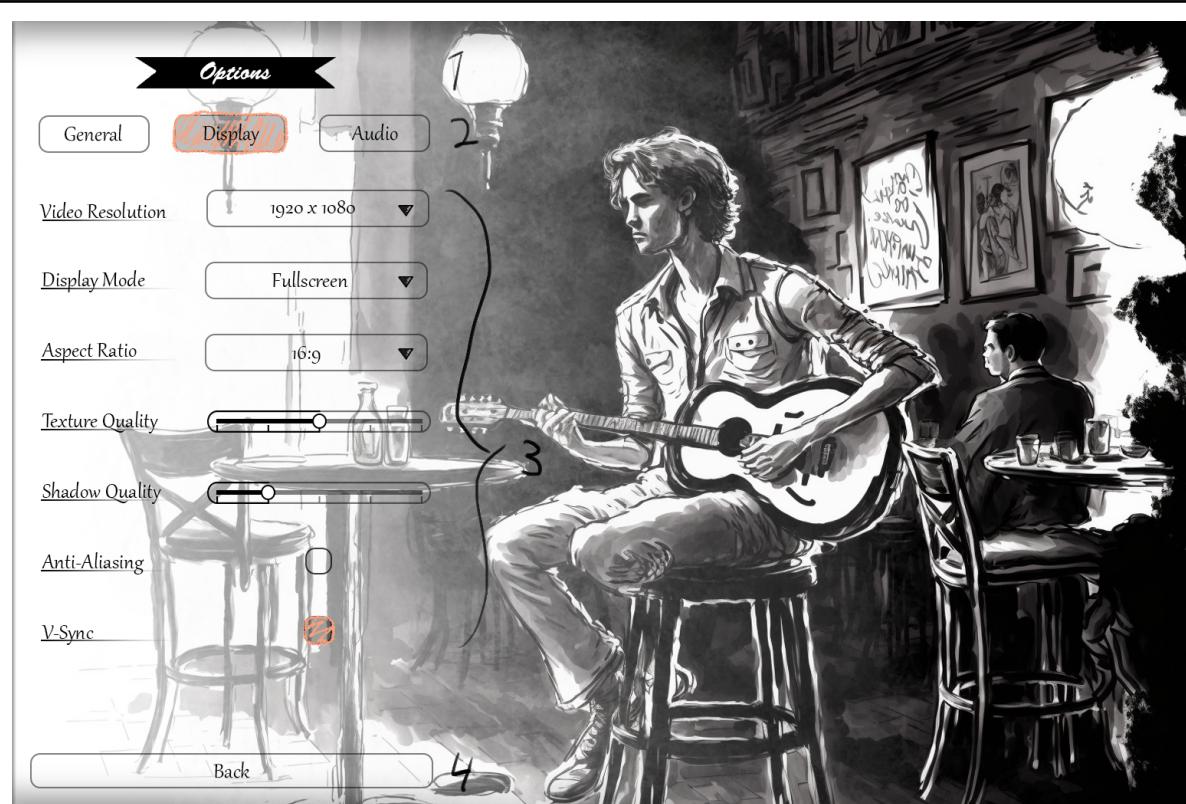
The polaroid pictures are located on the left-hand side under the title and add the first splash of non-black colour into the scene, with a yellowish-white as if faded. The first polaroid the player will encounter is that of a man and a child, they are sitting by the piano and looking into the camera. As the game progresses new polaroids will be put on top of this one in a stack, acting as a symbol for moving on and making new memories while also being a memento for the player as to what they did last time they played.

The Buttons are all under the polaroid pictures and consist of semi-transparent black border boxes with rounded corners and no filling. They are aligned vertically and are labelled “Resume Game”, “New Game”, “Options”, “Credits”, and “Exit” respectively. Upon hovering a button it will appear to be scribbled on in pencil, colour: #f6e740. Pressing any button will lead to an animation where wind blows sheet music across the screen after which the player is in the new menu.

The final element is the background, the background covers all of the right side of the screen. It features an animated guitar on a pile of sheet music, all black and white. The strings of the guitar are moving in sync with the main theme music and musical notes appear to materialise from the guitar body.

All of the buttons are clearly labelled to what they do and the flow of the scene follows pre-established set standards in the industry with the left-aligned top-to-bottom approach to a main menu. The menu innovates by using the polaroid pictures to give a snapshot of progress to the player as well as acting as a reminder of the last play session. The Assets could take a while to produce between the animated background and the polaroids but as they are all monochrome it should be evened out slightly.

# Options Menu



All of the options menu takes place on the left-hand side of the screen. If the options are reached from the main menu it is accompanied by a simplistically animated background. If it is reached from in-game the background will be darkened but the game plays behind it.

The style of the options menu remains simplistic with mostly blacks and whites, and a splash of colour on certain selections, keeping the theme of the game and all other menus intact.

The Options menu can be divided into 4 main elements:

1. The Options Title
2. The Options Category
3. The Options themselves
4. And the back button.

The buttons are separated with clear distinction between them, and clear labels. The Options title is a white text on a black banner on the left-topside of the screen in the font *Brush Script Std* and 32pt font size.

The Options categories are just below the banner with the *Gabriola* font but same size; they are put within rounded boxes with no fill colour, and semi-transparent black borders. The three of them are aligned horizontally and are labelled “General”, “Display”, and “Audio” respectively. Upon clicking one its background will darken and a charcoal pencil will draw over the button (but not its label) in salmon to simulate a sketch, colour: #fffa17c.

The Options change depending on the category chosen. In this example Display options are chosen as they have the most different elements. On the left-hand side is the label for the option, in font *Gabriola* and 32pt size. They are underlined by a fading black line. Slightly right of the label is the option. There are three types;

1. Drop-Down Menu
2. Slider
3. Checkbox

The Drop-down menu has an elongated box with no filling and semi-transparent black border. In the box is the currently selected option, to the right of it is a black arrow to indicate the menu. Upon clicking the menu the other options will appear underneath to be clicked. Upon being clicked the new option will replace the old one and the menu will instantly close.

The sliders are rounded boxes with semi-transparent black borders, a similarly fashioned bar in the middle and a circle with a solid black border and white filling. The slider also has pegs on the underside of the middlebar to indicate where the sliderball can stop. All the semi-transparency to the left of the ball in the bar will be filled in with solid black to further show how much of the slider is selected. The ball will snap to the pegs.

The checkbox is a box with rounded corners and semi-transparent black borders. Upon selection it will get a semi-transparent black background and be filled in with pencil scribbles in the colour: #ffa17c.

Finally, the back button is located at the bottom left side of the page, it is an elongated box with rounded corners and semi-transparent borders. The box is labelled “Back” upon clicking it, the player is put back into the main menu, or if options were reached from within the game, they will return to the stage of the game they were in.

All of the options stand out enough to make themselves visible, follow a top-to-bottom flow and are clearly labelled as to what they do. They do not really innovate on any previously established rules of menu design but it does make the assets easier to produce while still being in theme of the game as a whole.

## In-Game

The In-Game HUD and UI are separated into three different categories due to the nature of the game. As the player is traversing the game world they are presented with the “World” UI. In set pieces where the character is static and can interact with their general environment (like when they are sitting in their room) the player is presented with the “Local” UI, and when performing the Rhythm game, they are presented with the “Rhythm” UI. The World and Local UI are very similar with the Rhythm UI having drastic changes. All is explained in-detail below.

# World



The World UI has several elements which are of importance.

In the Right-hand corner is a banner with a gradient from light grey to transparent. In the Banner are three boxes drawn in pencil, rotated 45° and pushed together. The left-most of the icons have a cog, it opens the Options menu, the middle one has the pause icon and will pause the game. The right one has a bag icon and opens the player's inventory.

Under the three icons, still on the banner, a label saying "Objectives" is written in the font *Gabriola* and font size 64. Under is the objectives the player has been given; written in the same font but size 48, and may contain colour-coding in accordance with the rest of the scene. An objective can be clicked which makes it "tracked". A tracked objective gets a black outline to indicate it being tracked.

The Inventory is a Box with rounded corners on the left-hand side of the screen. It has a semi-transparent grey colour with smaller boxes with rounded corners of similar coloration inside to indicate the slots in the inventory. On the top of the Inventory is a banner and a label saying "Inventory" in font *Gabriola* and font size 64. In the top-right of the Inventory is a button with an X-label. Clicking this closes the Inventory.

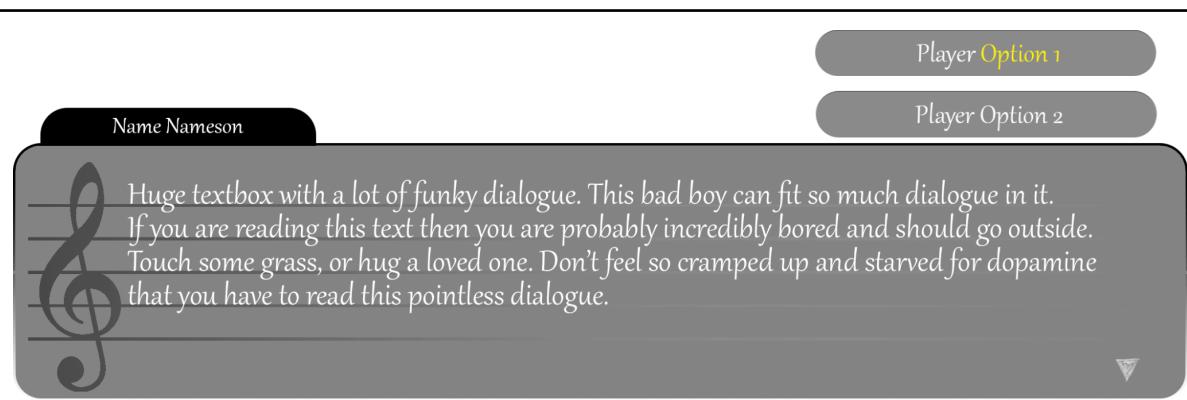
In the World UI there are also spatial elements. The main of which is the highlight of different objects. These highlights indicate interactivity. They outline the said objects and look as if they have been scribbled on with charcoal pencil. The colour of the object indicates importance. With the salmon indicators being fluff which invoke thoughts in the player avatar, the yellow, more full indicators are important to one or more of the player's objectives; and or worldbuilding. Once the player interacts with an indicated object it will only keep an outline of the indication should they wish to revisit the interaction. Upon hovering these objects the indicator goes from 50% opacity to 80% to clearly show that they are hovered.

If the player has a tracked objective a trail of musical notes will lead them to where they are

going, the notes originating from the object they are supposed to interact with and moving towards the player avatar where they merge into their shadow.

The player avatar themselves also have a guitar with them, this guitar will always display a bright blue to help the player find themselves on the screen should it be cluttered in the black and white landscape.

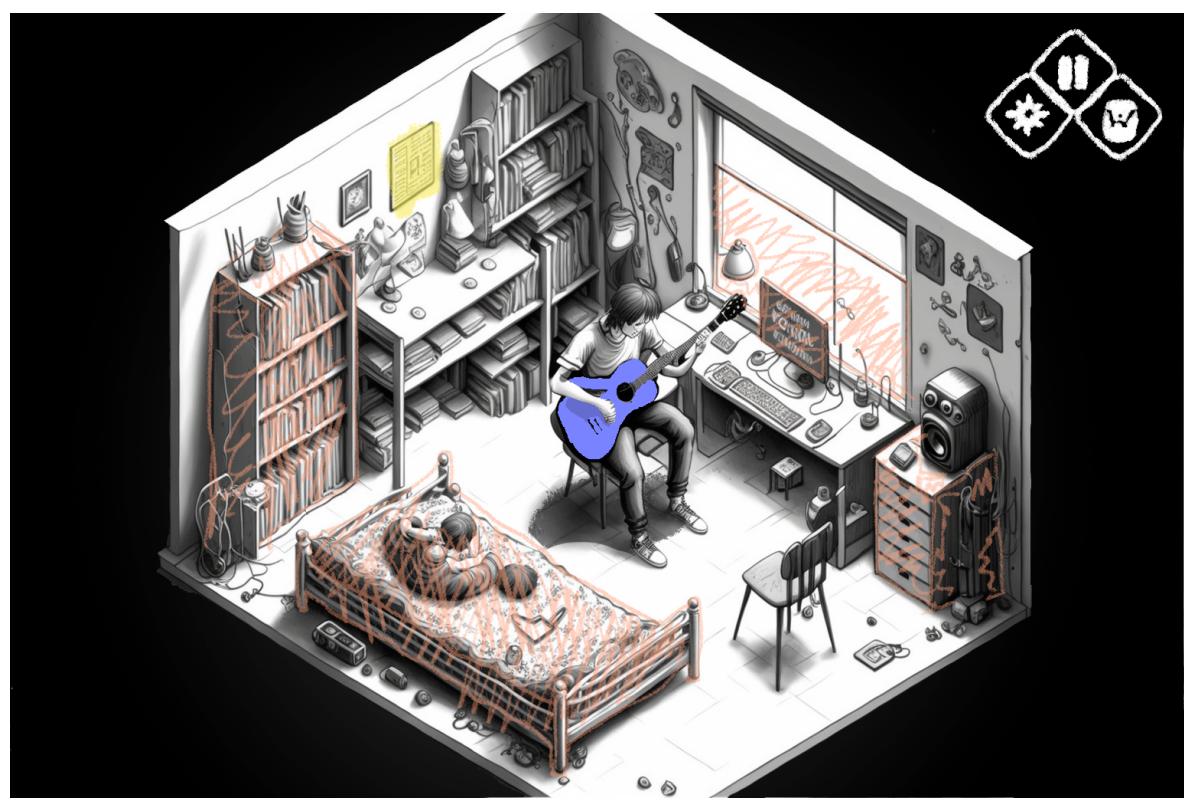
The UI is overall very minimalistic with a focus on spatial UI to really allow the player to envelop themselves in the scene and its happenings. It is minimalistic and tries to not draw too much attention to itself. When asking other people they have expressed understanding and delight for the UI. While it does not innovate in any significant way it does utilise proven role-playing practices and a bit of colour theory. The simplicity of the elements also makes it so that the production of them would be efficient and easy to build upon should further elements be needed.



Another part of the World UI is the text box. When interacting with the people and/or objects of the world the Text box element will show up. It is a rounded semi-transparent grey text box. On the top-left there is an elongated square with rounded corners and solid black background with the person's name (if it is a person being interacted with) In the box itself is a Treble Clef with fading lines from it, acting as lines for the text to rest on. On the bottom right hand of the box is a white arrow to indicate more text or a continuation to the text box. If the arrow is yellow that means the text box will close after continuing. On the top right side there are X boxes with the same coloration as the main text box and text implying what options in the dialogue the player has, where X is the number of choices for that particular situation. The first option will always be on top, followed by the 2nd, 3rd, etc.

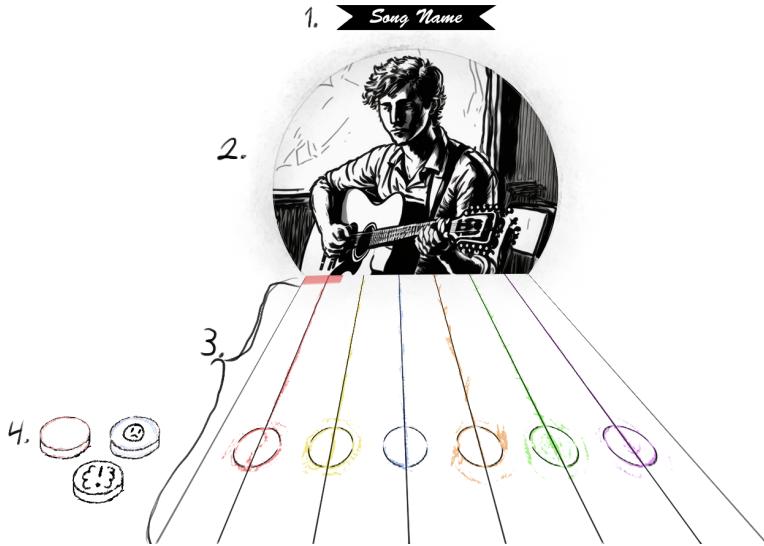
The text will sometimes be colour-coded to indicate objectives or important knowledge.

## Local



The Local UI uses many of the same elements from the World UI but removes the banner and objectives in favour of showing all the important elements directly in the scene. As the player avatar usually is at the centre of areas where the Local UI is used the bright blue on the guitar gives a clear baseline from which the player can interact with the world. No other assets are used to produce this UI over the World variant.

# Rhythm



The Rhythm UI is used when the player performs music. It keeps the same simplistic black and white style as the rest of the game. The UI is centralised to the screen and can be divided into 5 different elements.

1. The Song Name
2. The Player Avatar
3. The Fretboard
4. The Notes
5. The Background

The Song name is written in white with the *Gabriola* font in font size 64 and on a black banner similar to other UI titles. The banner is located in the top-middle of the screen.

Just under the Banner is a large semi-circle in which the animated player avatar sits playing their guitar. Around the circle is a faint shadow to differentiate it further from the background. The avatar will sometimes glow in different colours to indicate different changes in mood which in turn affect what notes are being played onto the Fretboard. These colours are explained via tutorial boxes as the player first experiences them.

The Fretboard is the main contender for the player's attention. It is a skewed rectangle with 6 lines within it, located just under the player avatar, and extending towards the screen. About 3/4ths of the way to the screen are circles around each of these lines (strings). Each string has a colour associated with it, going from Red, Yellow, Blue, Orange, Green and Purple. The strings and the circles have smudges of these colours but not too much as to keep the general aesthetic. Across the fretboard there will travel notes with the same colour as the string. Before a note appears on a string there will be a vague shine from the player avatar to indicate the note. On the right side of the fretboard is a reminder of what key corresponds to what string.

The notes are thin cylinders with colours similar to the strings. As they slide down the string

they bring with them a faint glow of the same colour. When they are within the circle on the string their outline becomes thick solid black. Some of the notes have icons on them to show what they are caused by and/or if they are special in any way. Currently there are two such icons: The Saddened note and the Important note. The saddened note has a sad face on it to indicate that its source is the player avatar's current emotional state being sad. The Important note will cause a positive reaction in the audience if it is hit correctly.

The background of the Rhythm scenes are filled with an animated audience. These act as a form of diegetic HUD element as they will react to the player's inputs to the fretboard and missed or hit notes. If the audience gets too upset they will get up and leave, or if the player is really good there might be a crowd joining to see. While this does cause a lot of visual noise it leans into the experience of being an actual musician on stage.

These elements take some innovative approaches by combining the diegetic and non-diegetic elements to "gamify" the experience of a musician. This also makes it so that these elements would be harder to produce.