

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

HONORS THESIS

DIY Supercube

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*A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelors of Software Engineering
in the*

Fulton Schools of Engineering
Barrett, The Honors College

August 31, 2021

Declaration of Authorship

I, Joseph HALE, declare that this thesis titled, “DIY Supercube” and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed:

Date:

"Thanks to my solid academic training, today I can write hundreds of words on virtually any topic without possessing a shred of information, which is how I got a good job in journalism."

Dave Barry

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract

Dr. Robert Heinrichs

Barrett, The Honors College

Bachelors of Software Engineering

DIY Supercube

by Joseph HALE

The Thesis Abstract is written here (and usually kept to just this page). The page is kept centered vertically so can expand into the blank space above the title too...

Acknowledgements

The acknowledgments and the people to thank go here, don't forget to include your project advisor...

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List of Abbreviations

LAH List Abbreviations **Here**
WSF What (it) **Stands For**

Physical Constants

Speed of Light $c_0 = 2.997\,924\,58 \times 10^8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ (exact)

List of Symbols

a	distance	m
P	power	W (J s ⁻¹)
ω	angular frequency	rad

For/Dedicated to/To my...

Chapter 1

Introduction

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What are we looking at? What will be shown? State general research questions to answer.

I am trying to persuade someone that a sound-based smart cube is viable on consumer grade hardware.

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 A Brief History of the Rubik's Cube

In 1974, Erno Rubik, a Hungarian professor of architecture, sought to help his students visualize space in three dimensions. To that end, he created a special cube whose faces could independently rotate around all three physical axes [1]. When he added colored stickers to further aid in visualizing the movements, Mr. Rubik realized he had created a new puzzle. He patented his cube in 1975, [2] and since then over 450 million units have been sold [3], allowing an estimated 1 in 7 humans on earth to try their hand at solving it [4].

Since then, the cube has been the subject of academic research, competition, leisure, and cultural iconography.

2.2 Rubik's Cube Mechanics

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2.2.1 Algorithm Notation

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2.2.2 The Laws of the Cube

Describe the basic concepts of group theory that stipulate what positions are and aren't legal.

It might also be fun to discuss the derivation of the 43 quintillion possible positions on the cube.

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2.3 The World Cube Association

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2.3.1 Competition Regulations

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Chapter 3

State of the Art

3.1 Introduction

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3.2 Rotary Encoders + Bluetooth

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TODO make sure to discuss the difference between absolute/relative rotary encoders.

3.2.1 Giiker Cube

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3.2.2 Go Cube

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3.2.3 Gans 356i

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3.3 Sound

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3.3.1 Google's "Data Over Sound" Project

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3.4 Computer Vision

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3.4.1 OpenAI

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3.4.2 Various GitHub Projects

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3.5 Other Approaches

TODO In this section I'm laying out a structure for discussing several of the options I looked into but ultimately disregarded. Should that go in the State of the Art chapter? or would it fit better in the Evaluation chapter to contrast against the potential of the sound-based implementation?

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3.5.1 RFID

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3.5.2 Magnetic Resonance

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3.5.3 Muscle-Tracking Armband

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Chapter 4

Protocol Design

4.1 Requirements

Sound is an easily accessible, and therefore noisy medium of communication. As a result, any data transmission protocol must be resilient to the presence of additional noise.

4.1.1 Signal to Noise Ratio

Each selected tone must be easily distinguished from background noise in a quiet room.

- Lower frequency tones (e.g. $< 100\text{Hz}$) are more prominent in background noise.
- Analysis based on this criterion should also consider the background noise generated by the rotation of the Rubik's Cube itself.
- Most of the concerns involved in this criteria are solved by increasing the volume of the generated tone.
- Contrast with the WCA regulation. Perhaps a protocol that is weaker in noisy environments is more likely to be permissible.

4.1.2 Tone Distinctiveness

Each selected tone must be easily distinguished from each other tone.

- Our testing with smartphone microphones suggested that tones needed to be separated by at least 100Hz to be uniquely detected from each other.
- We can also exploit the fact that only one of each faces four positions will be active at a time.

4.1.3 Ease of Deployment on Consumer Hardware

Each selected tone must be easily produced by a consumer grade speaker and consumed by a consumer grade microphone.

- A typical smartphone can produce and consume tones in the human auditory range of $10\text{Hz} - 20\text{kHz}$ (TODO source).

4.1.4 Human Auditory Range

Tone selection shall be biased in favor of tones beyond the typical human auditory range; however, in initial prototypes, this criterion is subordinate to all other criteria.

- Many humans are unable to hear tones above 17kHz (TODO how many? source?)

4.2 Absolute Sound Positioning

Each of the Rubik's Cube's six faces has four possible positions, for a total of 24 unique tones required for our protocol.

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4.3 Relative Sound Positioning

This strategy seeks to minimize the number of discrete frequencies required to communicate changes in the cube's state. Since the cube consists of 6 faces, and each face can be turned either clockwise or counterclockwise, one could design a two-tone protocol using only 8 discrete audio frequencies to build the smart cube. The first tone would come from one of six predefined audio bands, one for each face of the cube. The second tone would come from one of two separately predefined audio bands, one for each possible direction of rotation. From this, an audio processing model could be designed to process a sequence of these two-tone pairs and reconstruct the sequence of face rotations by recording the rotated face followed by its direction of rotation.

However this model presents challenges. Take for example, a speedcuber averaging 5 turns per second (common for a 12-15 second solver) with bursts up to 10 TPS. The burst TPS would require the successful transmission of 20 sequential tones within a single second - only 50ms per tone, all in the midst of additional noise from the cube's pieces hitting each other harder at the higher turn speed. And, to cap it all off, since each tone is only ever transmitted once, the audio detection model must achieve 100% tone recognition to be able to accurately reconstruct the originating move sequence. As a result, this model fails to support any sort of error correction that would make it resistant to the common challenges to data transmission through sound.

However this model inherently precludes robust error checking procedures. Each tone that is not accurately detected any of the tones are not accurately detected, the data of that particular rotation cannot be reconstructed, it becomes impossible to entirely reconstruct the executed move sequence.

Chapter 5

Audio Decoding Algorithm Design

5.1 Synthetic Audio Generation

Prior to investing significant resources in PCB design, we found it prudent to develop a synthetic model of the ideal audio output of the DIY Supercube. This model consists of a synthetic audio generator that, when given a specific move sequence, generates a '.wav' file consisting of the distinct time series tones that the DIY Supercube would theoretically produce. The synthetic data produced by this model then served as the first test cases for the final audio decoding model.

5.1.1 Representing the Audio Protocol

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5.1.2 Representing the Rubik's Cube

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5.1.3 Generating the Audio for an Arbitrary Algorithm

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ornare odio. Proin accumsan, massa viverra cursus pharetra, ipsum nisi lobortis velit, a malesuada dolor lorem eu neque.

TODO show a spectrogram of the generated audio here

5.2 Decoding the Synthetic Audio

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5.2.1 Examining the Waveform

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5.2.2 Conversion to Strength of Individual Frequencies

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5.3 Adding Realistic Noise to the Synthetic Audio

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5.4 Decoding the Noisy Synthetic Audio

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5.4.1 Optimizing algorithm parameters

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Chapter 6

PCB Design

6.1 Requirements

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6.1.1 Accuracy of Tone Generation

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6.1.2 Tone Response to Cube Rotations

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6.1.3 Signal-to-Noise Ratio

Discuss the dampening effect of the plastic enclosure.

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6.1.4 Prospects of Miniaturization

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6.2 Hardware Selection

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6.2.1 Minimizing Sound Obstruction

Discuss the "tupperware" tests -> design of various center caps.

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6.3 Prototyping

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Chapter 7

Evaluation

TODO review the core goals outlined in the introduction, and methodically review how well my final prototypes stack up against those goals.

7.1 Main Section 1

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7.1.1 Subsection 1

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7.1.2 Subsection 2

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7.2 Main Section 2

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Chapter 8

Conclusion

TODO summarize the goals from the Introduction and broadly describe what techniques were most helpful in reaching them. Also detail a summary of exactly how effective they were.

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8.1 Limitations

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8.2 Ideas for Future Research

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