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**Music Education and Entertainment Simulation System:**

**A Digital Guitar Instrument Controller**

**with an Integrated Web Application**

**ICON College of Technology and Management**

**Department of Information Technology**

**Bachelor's Degree Dissertation Project | BSc Hons**

**Accredited by Falmouth University**

**Academic Supervisor: Dr. Mohammed Jaffer Hasan**

**Tivadar Debnar**

**17663** | **2022-2023**

*A person playing a guitar

Description automatically generated with low confidence*

***Playing Alone on the Road***

*"*I long for instruments ob*e*dient to my thought and which, with their contribution of a whole new world of unsuspected sounds, will lend themselves to the exigencies of my inner rhythm.*"*

*Edgard Varese, 1917*

*Cover Image by* Eclectic Music Atlanta

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# 1. | Introduction

We, Earthly creatures, are very fortunate. Extremely few places in the vast vacuum-filled Universe have a suitable medium that supports audio signals to travel. However, here on Earth, sound vibrations can move through the atmosphere, providing information about our environment. As a result, mammalian evolution adapted to transform soundwaves into electrical signals, genetically engineering us to detect sounds. Hearing sounds increased our survival chances by identifying danger outside our visual zone and extending our communication channels.

Even though humans are not the only species communicating by creating sounds, we discovered a way of self-expression that conveyed a broader spectrum of emotional range beyond mere spoken words: music. And from as early as 40000 years ago, music has played an essential part in our everyday life. Our innate musicality drove us to experiment with new ranges of sounds, inventing the primary types of instruments. Ideophones (clapping and bells), membranophones (drums), aerophones (flute), and most importantly, chordophones (harp and guitar).

Although the exact origin of the modern guitar is debated, the instrument is already mentioned in the Bible, and it can be traced back to the Greek kithara κιθάρα and Arabic qitharah قيثارة words. By the 17th century, it became popular among amateurs. With the advent of the jazz age, the electric guitar's success elevated its status to become the instrument of virtuosos and rock stars. However, this is not the final step on the guitar's evolution ladder. The modern digital era opened opportunities to combine the latest technology with musical skills. This project's goal is to bring digital technology, musical entertainment, and education under the same roof.

## 1.1 | Inspiration

I hold in my hand my old buddy, Gabriel's Guitar Hero. Again, I am ready for the next round, and this time determined to overdo his performance somehow. Little did I suspect that years of sketchy guitar practices on my side would not score against a seasoned hero like him. After several failed attempts to show off my talent, he concluded that even though I had guitar experience, rhythm sense, and some music theory in my pocket, my chances of winning against him were astronomical as a first-timer.

How about him, I asked myself, what type of guitarist would he make, with all those hours of playing the virtual guitar console? The answer came weeks later when he visited me, and I handed him my electric guitar and taught him the intro of a song I knew he liked. Soon enough, he could play the simple melody surprisingly well, though. So, I asked him.

- Why do you waste your time practising an imaginary instrument? You'd become a great guitarist by this time.

- You'll see me playing when they invent real guitars for game consoles. – He answered with a smirk on his face.

Since then, I have been thinking about how many talented people waste their time playing on unauthentic consoles with merely five plastic buttons and a strum bar. If I could create a lightweight device that resembles an actual guitar, I could develop an online interface that is free, available for everyone, vendor-independent, and educational. I am confident it would be at least as attractive an entertainment option as playing Guitar Hero. Well, the time has come to wipe off the sneer from Gabriel's face; he will be the first to play it.

## 1.2. | Project Aim and Objectives

**Aim**

RiffMaster aims to offer a comprehensive and unique simulated music experience, providing a hardware component with a naturalistic guitar layout and software to learn and play the instrument. The controller device should have a minimalistic design to be affordable to a broader range of players. Apart from the actual device, the users are not required to own or buy any software licence; therefore, the software application will be written for the browser. Users should be able to connect the device to any computer via a USB cable and use the application through the internet. The software will support the requirements of learning the instrument from the basics, and users should be able to track their progress after creating an account.

**Objectives**

**Objective 1**: Design and develop a digital guitar controller with a layout that accurately simulates the instrument's mechanism. The controller's look, dimensions, and operability must be of a guitar, while the materials used may differ and be similar to a mock guitar. However, the guitar controller's neck and the frets' distances must translate to a real guitar's exact proportions to enhance the players' precision in muscle memory and help them gain an easily transferable skill.

**Objective 2**: Ideally, six strings, alternatively six strum bars, may be used to activate a note, and follow-up research and experimentations will be included in the document regarding the design decision. Guitars are polyphonic instruments; consequently, one or more strings may be played simultaneously. If string activity is detected, the device should communicate the uppermost active frets position on the respective strings. The activated note must be transmitted through a USB port using a well-defined, simple protocol. The hardware must be safe to use and in accordance with safety regulations.

**Objective 3**: Design and develop a software application that accepts, detects and listens to user inputs from the device through a USB port without interrupting fundamental keyboard events and functionalities. Integrate these inputs into the web app similarly to DOM key event states, such as note started, playing, and stopped. Optimise the application to accept and process simultaneous input information asynchronously.

**Objective 4**: Build a user-friendly frontend web application with a home page with sign-up and login options. Validate user login, and after successful sign-in or login, the following options should be available:

* **Jam Option**: the user can freely play the RiffMaster device and listen to the generated music,
* **Compose option**: the user can record the device, and the produced piece is translated into tablature notation, which can be manually edited, saved, played, or deleted.
* **Practice Option**: the user can load a tablature or follow a tutorial, play along with a song, and practice at different speeds. Different sections of the music may be selected for repeated practice.
* **Play Option**: the user can play a piece of selected music. The application will score the performance according to accurate real-time feedback, considering the player's number of mistakes in note accuracy or rhythm precision.
* **Chords Explorer**: chords will be clickable throughout the application. When pausing a running session, the player may check chords.

Finally, create a restricted number of demo songs and tablatures to test the prototype and the application.

**Objective 5**: Build and deploy a backend application that reflects a simple startup's real-world business model for prototyping the web application. The business model must be limited to functionality constraints, as the project focuses on technical solutions and prototyping rather than business implementations. The backend should communicate to a database and store user information, such as user name, songs, tablatures and scores.

## 1.3. | Requirements and Specifications

Requirements are as crucial for large-scale projects as for smaller or individual ones because they concisely and unambiguously capture the project's parameters. "*Understanding user requirements is an integral part of information systems design and is critical to the success of interactive systems"* (Maguire, 2002)*.* In our scenario, the most important ones are user and system requirements, which will specify in detail how the user interacts with the system and can be used for the testing of the project.

1. **Prerequisites**
   1. The user must have access to a RiffMaster console.
   2. The user must have a desktop or laptop with an available USB-A socket.
   3. A USB-A/B cable connects the host to the console.
   4. The user must have internet access.
   5. The application will be publicly accessible at http:\\www.tschiboka.co.uk\projects\riffmaster\index.html web domain address.

Diagram

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Figure | RiffMaster's Fundamental Concept Diagram (Appendix/Concept.drawio)

1. **Hardware**
   1. There are 20 fret buttons in six rows, six strum bar switches, and a power switch allocated on the guitar console.
   2. The user interacts with the website with traditional mouse and keyboard inputs.
   3. The user interacts with game functionalities with the guitar console.
   4. A 5V USB connection powers the console, and no batteries are required to operate the hardware.
   5. Interacting with the strum bar does not affect the application unless the user is in the practice, compose, jam, or play options (options to turn communication off).
2. **Software**
   1. The application is a web-based Graphic User Interface.
   2. The application is a supporting software for the RiffMaster guitar console.
   3. The software runs on all major vendor browsers (Edge, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Explorer).
   4. The application uses a dark theme and bright buttons for better accessibility.
   5. Upon reaching the landing page, there is a sign-up and a login option.

Line chart

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Figure | Landing Page (Appendix/Wire Frames Landing Page.drawio)

1. **Authentication**
   1. The user must sign in to access the application functionality.
   2. If the user has no account, they need to create one:
      1. Pressing the sign-up button redirects the user to a registration form.
      2. The registration form has a first name, last name, avatar, email, password, confirm fields, and a submit button.
      3. The registration form's submit button is disabled until all fields are filled in.
      4. The registration page does not submit invalid forms.
      5. Invalid form fields are highlighted, and error messages specify the reason for the invalidity.
      6. A first and last name field is invalid if empty or non-alphabetic values are provided.
      7. An email address is invalid if it does not match the standard email format requirements.
      8. A password is invalid if less than eight characters or more than 32 characters.
      9. A password requires lowercase, capital letters, and numbers to pass validation.
      10. A confirm password field must completely match the password input to be valid.
      11. The terms and conditions check box must be checked to submit the form.
      12. The check box label has a link to the terms and conditions page.

Diagram

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Figure | Wireframes Registration (Appendix/Wireframes – Registration.drawio)

* 1. If the user submits the registration form, the submit button will immediately turn disabled again, preventing submitting multiple forms.
  2. The user will see a notification informing them that an activation email will be sent to the email address.
  3. When the user clicks on the email link, it will activate their account and redirects them to the login.
  4. If the user has an account, they need to sign in.
     1. The login form has email and password fields, and a submit button.
     2. The submit button is disabled until both the email and password input fields contain content.
     3. Upon submission, the server will match the email with the password and sends a response to the website.
     4. If the email has no matching password, a message will be provided.
     5. After the fifth unsuccessful login attempt, the form will lock down for five minutes, and the user must wait.
     6. If the password matches the one provided for the email address, the user will be signed in and redirected to the home page.

A picture containing graphical user interface

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Figure | Login Wireframe (Appendix/Wireframe – Login.drawio)

1. **Home Page**
   1. The home page displays Profile Information, a Playlist, and a menu with six items: Practice, Jam Session, Play, Compose, Chords Explorer and Sign out.
   2. **Profile Information**
      1. The Profile includes the user's chosen avatar and name.
      2. The Profile displays the total scores achieved by the user and the user's ranking.
      3. The Profile displays a list of the last played songs in chronological order.
      4. The last played songs' information includes the author, title and the scores achieved on a particular piece.
      5. If there are more songs than the available screen real estate, a scrollbar is shown.
   3. **Playlist**
      1. The Playlist consists of Album cards.
      2. An Album card consists of the album cover, author and title.
      3. By clicking an Album cover, the user is directed to the Play page of the chosen song.
      4. If the albums run out of available space, a scrollbar appears.
   4. **Main Menu**
      1. The main menu's colour sequence will follow the same sequence as the string colour codes: yellow, orange, pink, purple, azure, and aquamarine.
   5. The footer displays copyright information with the current year.

Diagram

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Figure | Home Wireframe (Appendix/Wireframes – Home.drawio)

1. **Play Menu Option**
   1. The Play menu option lets the players compete with others.
   2. The player hits start, and the application counts from three to one.
   3. The music starts after the countdown.
   4. The player can pause, resume and stop the game by pressing the corresponding buttons.
   5. In the header, the author and title are displayed.
   6. **Tablature**
   7. One or two tablature lines will represent the music that is playing, and it has the following elements:
      1. Base Chord: the base chord is clickable when the game is paused and shows the fret and finger positions.
      2. Finger Positions: Each line represents a string, and the numbers represent fret numbers.
      3. Rhythm Notation: standard notation assuming 4/4 at this development phase.
   8. The Guitar Animation is the screen representation of the console:
      1. It shows frets, finger positions and strum bars.
      2. The active finger positions and strums are displayed alongside the music.
      3. If the player fails to hit the appropriate fret buttons and the strum bars at the precise timing, a "missed" message is displayed.

A picture containing table

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Figure | Play Wireframe (Appendix/Wireframes – Play.drawio)

1. **Scoring and Saving**
   1. The user can see the current score while playing.
   2. If ten, twenty or thirty consecutive notes are correctly strummed in a streak, a multiplier is given to the points.
   3. Time precision will add another multiplier depending on the player's timing.

Graphical user interface

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Figure | Pointing System (Appendix/Pointing.drawio)

* 1. The user can see the correct notes consecutively played as the streak in the footer.
  2. Every missed note will reset the streak to zero, and the streak multipliers to one.
  3. Every strum stroke resets the precision according to the accuracy of the last played note.
  4. The user can see their highest score on a particular song. The top score by the user community is shown in the bottom right corner.
  5. **Score meters**
     1. The top score meter represents the user's best general accuracy ever achieved on the song.
     2. The middle score meter gives a general value to the average score on the current performance.
     3. The bottom score meter has the accuracy of the last ten strums on the background and the last strum on the front.
     4. The general score is the product of note accuracy (binary) and the time precision percentage.
  6. **Saving Performance**
     1. Performance and score information is saved on the database when the game is over.
     2. The date, general score and performance are saved to the list of scores for the album.
     3. The score is rewritten if the score is higher than the personal best.
     4. The all-time best score is rewritten if the user breaks the record.

1. **Practice, Jam, Compose Menu Options (similar features)**
   1. **The practice** option is identical to the Play option but does not save the performance.
   2. A warning is placed to notify the user of audio nuisance with an optional "Don't show again" checkbox.
   3. **Jam Session** has only the guitar animation that responds to strums and keynote presses.
   4. Strums produce the corresponding guitar sounds.
   5. **Compose Menu** option records the console input and produces sound.
   6. The notes are translated on the tablature when the player presses the record button.
   7. The notes are cleared when pressing the delete button.
2. **The Chord Explorer**
   1. List an extended list of chords (1000+).
   2. Display an accurate finger positioning for the selected chord.
   3. Draw a guitar neck chord representation (SVG) from the lowest non-zero pressed fret.
   4. Barre chords (when one finger interacts with multiple strings) should be displayed in a standard way.
   5. Users may select root note, chord type and base note for filtering.
   6. Clicking on a chord should display its composition and play out individual notes.

### 1.3.2 | Constraints

**Scope**

"*The scope of the study refers to the parameters under which the study will be operating*" (Simon, 2013). This project's scope is to conceptualise and prototype hardware and software components; therefore, the research study extensively focuses on technical exploration, design and delivery of requirements. Consequently, some exciting topics, such as refining the target audience, possible business models, brand design, marketability, mass manufacturing, industrial design, patent collision and litigation, will be investigated briefly but will lack in-depth research.

**Limitations**

"*Limitations are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher's control*" (Simon, 2013). This project is a simplified version of a complete video game system with a strict timeframe; therefore, several features will be limited or omitted.

* The console will have a coarse functional design lacking the polished sophistication of an industrial end product.
* Similarly, the console is restricted to wired communication, as developing Wi-Fi solutions would introduce a strain on the timeframe.
* The game application will be designed for desktop screen sizes, and the development of mobile and tablet sizes is entirely out of the prototype's scope.
* Some nuances of user stories are intentionally omitted, such as:
  + Retrieval of forgotten passwords,
  + Deleting a user account (deactivation option may be provided),
  + Social features: multiplayer mode, messaging, following players, seeing other players' performance,
  + Statistics and data visualisation of users' performance,
  + Sophisticated high-resolution gameplay animations.
* A limited number of sample songs translated (maximum five),
* The tabular notation format may lack standards or details to conform to the gaming environment.

Finally, the hardware and software prototypes are unsuitable or intended for industrial or commercial use, and their sole purpose is to present a proof of concept.

### 1.3.2 | Cost, Marketability and Target Users

**Cost**

The project's cost details will refer to the prototype model rather than a merchantable end product. Unlike the hardware components, the software solution requires no additional costs (such as acquiring new software licences). However, building the game console requires several items to be purchased.

Table

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Figure | Cost Estimation (Appendix/Cost-Table.xlsx)

The total estimated cost of the prototype will be around £240; however, this price includes buying tools, for instance. This price would be significantly lower in mass production. Depending on the materials' quality, it would cost between £40 to £100, mainly because cheaper task-specific microchip solutions may replace the Arduino microcontroller in large-scale production. Furthermore, our chosen Arduino board will be underutilised because we use only a fraction of the microcontroller's wide range of functionality and capability.

**Target Users**

If the project was commercialised, the following group of people might turn out to be a prosperous focus target for this product:

* Guitar Hero players who want to extend the difficulty and authenticity of the currently available game system,
* Guitar Hero players who would like to take on some real-world instrument skills while being entertained,
* Novice guitarist in need of guided instructions or up-to-date musical translations,
* Students and game-oriented hidden talents wanting to explore music while having fun,
* Guitarists that might need a silent instrument while practising at night,
* Beginner composers or upcoming bands with a lack of standard music notation and knowledge of chords,
* People who want to improve their fine motor skills, rhythm-sense, and overall musical skills.

**Marketability**

Consequently, the target audience may be a good indicator of the device's success in the market. For instance, MI Digital Guitar raised over £360.000 in funds for product development from their future target community (14.10.2022). This success is promising because our target audience intersects with MI's community. Another relevant market intersection is music gaming. Even though comparing the project to giants like Guitar Hero or Rock Band would seem overly ambitious, it is worth understanding that this branch of the industry has been on the decline for a decade.

Chart, line chart, scatter chart

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Figure | Guitar Hero Trendline (www.engadget.com, 2009)

The oversaturation of the simplified simulation game instruments on the market caused a severe decline in the industry. Unfortunately, this means that relying solely on gaming features would leave a narrow margin of opportunity for success. Therefore, RiffMaster needs to emphasise authentic instrument digitalisation and build a social community rather than jump on the train of the existing gaming schemas.

### 1.3.1 | Feasibility

"*A feasibility study evaluates the project's potential for success; therefore, perceived objectivity is an important factor in the credibility of the study for potential investors and lending institutions*" (Ibrahim Rihan, 2022). And sticking to the gaming industry would navigate the project towards dangerously thin ice. Therefore, the more intriguing and promising aspects of RiffMaster would be to build it around a community of users that appreciate the educational and social impact of games. As digital interactions and education become ever more convenient and natural for our modern society, it opens unchartered territories. Such territory is the online fandom of music enthusiasts, composers and amateur players. Therefore, a feature-rich social web platform that integrates the product would increase the feasibility of the entire project and be a novelty. Players could organise online competitions, play simultaneously, publish compositions, like others' compositions, follow each other, group in bands, communicate, version and fork band music, teach, or post music instructions.

Naturally, this completeness is way out of the scope of a one-person project. Hence, we can state that RiffMaster as a video game would most likely fade into the giants' shadows. RiffMaster is not designed to succeed only to be a stand-alone digital instrument but also as an educational system and social platform; therefore, it has the potential to be impactful. Moreover, as a comprehensive social and educational gaming platform, it would stand out of the crowd, with a high promise to become successful.

Diagram

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Figure | Feasibility Diagram (Appendix/Feasibility-Diagram.drawio)

### 1.3.3 | Risk Management and Analysis

Every hardware or software project is inherently risky, and those risks must be identified and addressed. "*To identify risks, the following techniques can be used: brainstorming, work breakdown analysis, risk breakdown structure, checklists, among others*" (Menezes Jr, 2013.). Hence, we will collect, identify and propose actions for the project in the following table:

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

Description automatically generated Figure | Risk Assessment (Appendix/Risk-Assessment.xlsx)

For this project, scheduling is the risk with the highest probability and severity; therefore, the design, experimentation and development phase will start as early as possible to avoid delays in delivering the hardware or any software features.

# 2. | Project Management

We can approach the workflow of our project tasks in several ways; hence, if we examine the relevant software development methodologies (SDM), we can select the best solution that suits our needs. After identifying the chosen method, we can create a detailed timeline of the project development steps.

## 2.1. | Relevant Methodologies

Software or other technical developments, such as hardware development, can be divided into linear and iterative categories. However, both linear and iterative approaches have distinct benefits and limitations, which can determine the project's outcome. Additionally, when selecting our development method, we must remember that this project consists of hardware and software components and their integration, and there might be a need to use a mixed methodology.

### 2.1.1. | Linear Methodologies

When engineers discuss sequential or linear software development mode, they essentially refer to the Waterfall model. The Waterfall is one of the oldest engineering models dating back to the 1960s. "*Waterfall Model predominately emphasises on the freezing of requirement specifications or the high-level design very early in the development life-cycle, prior to engaging in more thorough design and implementation work*" (Van Casteren, 2017). However, this inflexibility is often problematic because Waterfall may proceed towards only one direction, and the project cannot be further modified after the specification and design.

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Figure | Waterfall (https://www.softwaretestinghelp.com/what-is-sdlc-waterfall-model, 2022)

This method assumes that the project requirements are accurate, permanent and fully complete before the actual development starts. Current software development companies tend to lean towards more agile solutions; however, as this method is traditionally rooted in manufacturing, this approach might be needed for the hardware components.

### 2.1.2. | Iterative Methodologies

#### 2.1.2.1. | Agile

Agile is not a methodology, as it does not stipulate the exact steps of the development phases. It, instead, can be considered a philosophical background for writing successful software. The agile manifesto is mere 68 words, yet its values and principles completely revolutionised traditional software development. For example, one principle states that "*our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software*" (Fowler, 2001). This continuous delivery, however, cannot be achieved through sequential approaches. Additionally, Agile lacks the solid documentation of traditional development.

Chart

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Figure | Agile Manifesto (https://agilemanifesto.org, 2022)

As soon as Agile solidified in the developer community's collective awareness, several methodologies came to light based on its principles, such as Scrum, Extreme Programming (XP), Lean, Feature-Driven Development (FDD), Spiral, or DevOps. Even though many of these methods may be tailored or trivialised to suit a one-person project, they essentially revolve around managing processes for a team of developers and departments. For instance, Scrum requires Scrum Master, Product Owner and Developers, or XP increases quality by pair programming. Therefore, we must discover methodologies more aligned with a single-developer project scenario.

#### 2.1.2.2. | Test-Driven Development

Waterfall methodology tests code and business functionality retroactively, which carries a potential risk of failing to mitigate problems early. TDD, an agile practice, "*requires writing automated tests prior to developing functional code in small, rapid iterations*" (Janzen, 2005). The functions must be granulated into individual testable units to achieve such automation.

A picture containing shape

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Figure | TDD Algorithm (https://developer.ibm.com/articles/5-steps-of-test-driven-development, 2022)

As we can see, TDD is a test-first approach. Units and functions are tested deterministically, avoiding any side effects.

#### 2.1.2.3. | Kanban

The Japanese company Toyota introduced the Kanban system in the 1950s to help visualise development work. "*Kanban means card, literally, a visible record used as a means of communication, of conveying ideas and information*" (Esparrago Jr, 1988). And soon, the software development industry introduced this method to improve efficiency, where the workflow is divided into requested, in-progress and done categories in a board system. One fundamental characteristic of the methodology is that it limits the number of in-progress cards to ensure manageability by reducing multitasking.

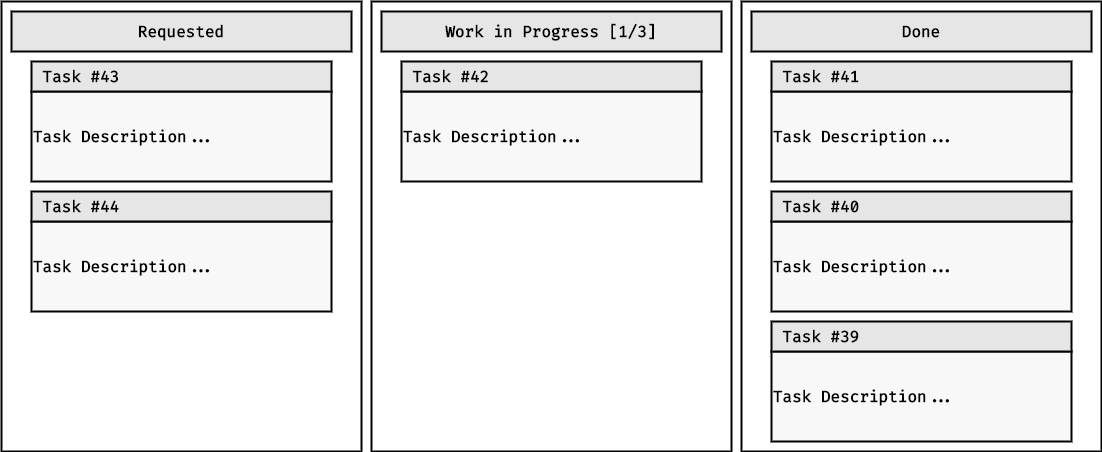


Figure | Kanban (https://kanbanize.com, 2022)

### 2.1.3. | Justification of Applied Methodologies

"*When an organisation states that it uses a particular methodology, it often applies a combination of smaller, finer-grained methodologies on a project scale instead*" (Janzen, 2005). Similarly, this project will not be an exception. The project's design and development will be distinguished into hardware and software development and handled separately. The hardware development will follow a linear progression, similar to the Waterfall method, because our requirements are fixed, no changes will be expected, and the manufacturing has well-defined stages. However, most software development will be halted until the fully-functional console is ready and tested. The software engineering will follow TDD principles to ensure quality, and tests will be automated with Jest. The software features will be divided and developed iteratively. Both software and hardware will apply Kanban because its simple and practical approach is well-suited for a single-developer project and can support the level of organisation required in a small-scale environment. The maximum number of in-progress cards will be set to two to mitigate the accumulation of unfinished tasks.

## 2.3. | Work Breakdown Structure

The Work Breakdown Structure is split into console and application development phases and does not include preliminary research and documentation. The console prototyping will follow a linear, manufacturer-like, step-by-step development style where each task is started when the last one ends. One of the most significant risk factors is the late finalisation of this part of the development because failing to engineer a working prototype would compromise the entire project.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Figure | Console WBS

On the other hand, the application can be built more simultaneously, where many of the features may be developed in parallel, more or less independently. Therefore, play and practice options or chord tutorial features may be started after creating our landing page. The order of the tasks, on the other hand not arbitrary. Some functionalities like tablature translation or the game environment may require extensive development time, and their program units are reusable. These software components precede miscellaneous, less vital functionality, like tutorials, social elements, and administrative sections.

Diagram, engineering drawing

Description automatically generated

Figure | Application WBS

## 2.4. | Project Phases and Schedule

The project console development phase follows a sequential order, and the software development is iterative. However, the subtasks are dependent on one another. Additionally, the schedule is based on a pessimistic scenario, leaving plenty of time to feature development, where the final user acceptance tests are scheduled at the end of March 2023.

Chart

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Figure | Gantt Chart (Appendix/RiffMaster.pod)

## 2.5. | Tools

The following tools, programs and languages will be used throughout the development phases:

* **Hardware**:
  + Arduino Microcontroller: C++,
  + Physical Tools for wiring and housing,
  + TinkerCad: electrical simulations,
  + Additional Calculations: Python.
* **Software**:
  + VsCode Editor,
  + Frontend: JavaScript (TypeScript), HTML, CSS (Sass),
  + Backend: NodeJS (Express), MongoDB (Mongoose),
  + Testing: Jest,
  + Visual and Audio Design: Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Audacity.
* **Documentation**:
  + GitHub, Excel, ProjectLibre, Microsoft Word,
  + Diagrams: DrawIO.

# 3. | Literature Review

## 3.1. | Terminology

**Parts of a Guitar:** Our controller has similar characteristics to an actual guitar. The following diagram will refer to the matching components, such as frets, bridge, and neck (Figure 23).

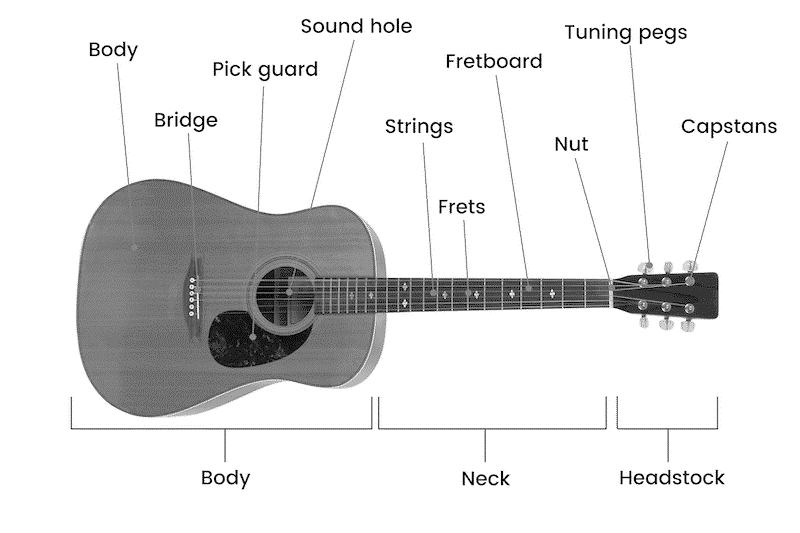


Figure | Parts of a Guitar (https://hellomusictheory.com, 2022)

**Audio and Sound:" *The key difference between sound and audio is their form of energy. Sound is mechanical wave energy (longitudinal sound waves) that propagates through a medium, causing variation in pressure within the medium*"** (Arthur, 2022)**. On the other hand, audio is made of electrical energy (analogue or digital signals) that represents sound electrically.**

**Chord:** "*A chord is three or more notes sounding simultaneously. It can be played on one instrument, like a guitar, or by many instruments at once, like a brass quartet or a choir*" (Eriksson, 2016)

**Riff:** The riff's etymology is unclear; however, it was first used in the 1930-s, probably to shorten the refrain. After that, the term stayed in pop music and now, it refers to short, repeated melody patterns. Similarly to other literature, this project and the application will reference these patterns as riffs.

**Monophony and Polyphony:** We address monophony because some of the matrix keyboards are wired, so only one keypress can be recognised at a given time. This limitation would result in a monophonic instrument. However, the guitar is a polyphonic instrument, and strings can be strummed simultaneously. Therefore, to create a complete experience, we need to make the input device polyphonic.

**Hammer-On Pull-Off (HOPO):** This guitar technic allows the player to produce sound without strumming by hammering or pulling off fingers from a given string. A pseudo-HOPO is built in the major simulation games, and this function will also be introduced to RiffMaster in a simplified solution to mimic the original instrument better.

## 3.2. | Music Notations

Guitar literature uses two basic notations: standard music notation and tablature notation. Both have similar characteristics; however, standard notation is primarily used in classical music, while tablatures are more common for novice guitar players. Even though the standard notation is the lingua-franca of music, as it has no boundaries for the instrument it interprets, it might emerge as a hurdle for gameplayers because of its steep learning curve.

A close-up of a musical instrument

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Figure | Standard Music Notation (https://pegheadnation.com/string-school/music-notation-guide, 2022)

"*Because it is meant to be used by any instrument, common notation is not written to tell how to play notes on a specific instrument. Instead, common notation simply tells you what each note should sound like … Tablature focuses on telling how to play the notes on the instrument. A note is presented in terms of which string to play, and where to hold the string down on the fretboard*" (Schmidt-Jones, 2016). Because of its simplicity and descriptive feature, the application will use tabular (***tab***) notation in the gameplay. The prototype will follow 4/4 common time, standard fret and note numbering, traditional chord name shortenings, and well-known rhythm signs as per convention. Potentially other tabular components may be added in later versions, such as optional lyrics, play instructions, side notes and musical notation walkthrough tutorials. Lastly, tablatures files are often saved in a TXT or TAB plain ASCII text format. We will opt for the TAB extension name throughout the application because of its explicit meaning.

![Diagram

Description automatically generated](data:image/jpeg;base64,/9j/4AAQSkZJRgABAQEAYABgAAD/4RDgRXhpZgAATU0AKgAAAAgABAE7AAIAAAAHAAAISodpAAQAAAABAAAIUpydAAEAAAAOAAAQyuocAAcAAAgMAAAAPgAAAAAc6gAAAAgAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAFN0ZXZlbgAAAAWQAwACAAAAFAAAEKCQBAACAAAAFAAAELSSkQACAAAAAzY2AACSkgACAAAAAzY2AADqHAAHAAAIDAAACJQAAAAAHOoAAAAIAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA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Figure | Tab Notation (https://www.ultimate-guitar.com, 2022)

## 3.3. | Research for Supporting the Aim and Objectives

To create a bespoke and successful entertainment or educational product which is unique and not yet invented, one must set themselves apart from the crowd and clarify the aim and objectives of the project in reflection of the existing market. Hence, before proceeding to any project design, we must explore the current gaming and musical entertainment devices that might be relevant to our project. Brief precautionary research will prevent us from reinventing the wheel and will refine the project's outline more accurately.

### 3.3.1. | Existing Technologies

**Guitar Hero**

As this pop culture phenomenon was the initial inspiration behind the project's idea, it might as well serve as a perfect starting point. Harmonix Music System, the former owner of Guitar Hero, defined the project in its patent as "*a simulated musical instrument that may be used to alter the audio of a video game*" (Chrzanowski, 2015). It was first released in 2005 and has seen several iterations since then. The product features five fret buttons, a strum bar, a whammy bar, and some additional control buttons relevant to Xbox's console interface. One of the main limitations of this console is the restricted number of fret buttons and the single strum bar, which prevents it from being used as an authentic educational device. However, the product shows several similarities to RiffMaster; some parts may be the perfect blueprints for our hardware prototype, such as its strum bar OFF-ON-OFF momentary switch button component.

**Diagram

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Figure | Guitar Hero Controller Layout (https://fccid.io/VFIBW95123805/User-Manual/Users-Manual-814804, 2022)

**MI Digital Guitar**

Numerous products have attempted to bring this acoustic instrument closer to the digital world; thus, our project is not a unique invention in this aspect. One of the most prominent and promising technologically-enhanced instruments is the MI Digital Guitars from Magic Instruments, which is currently in the prototyping phase. MI will have an excellently smooth, modern design and will be a stand-alone instrument rather than an entertainment console because it can be run on an amplifier. Among the digital devices on the market, the MI's layout resembles the most to an actual guitar because of its fret design and built-in digital strings. Unfortunately, the device is only meant to teach rhythm and fundamental chord progressions and lacks features of finger-style playing or riffs. Although the instrument is not in the premium price category, it will cost as much as a decent acoustic or electronic instrument.



Figure | MI Digital Guitar Series (https://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2016/08/01/mi-guitar-easy-to-learn, 2022)

**RockSmith**

A video game developed by Ubisoft brought music education to the next level. The game teaches acoustic, electric or bass guitar, adjusting its difficulty to the player. It utilises accurate, real-time play feedback and is currently one of the leading software technologies focusing on musical autodidactic training. However, RockSmith is exclusively a software solution, and the player must own a guitar that can be connected to the game through a real tone cable. Therefore, RockSmith can be considered a specialised training software rather than just a video game. Some of its characteristics resemble the iconic Guitar Hero, such as the practice play or riffs drills, while others, like tuning and uploading the players' music, are unique features.

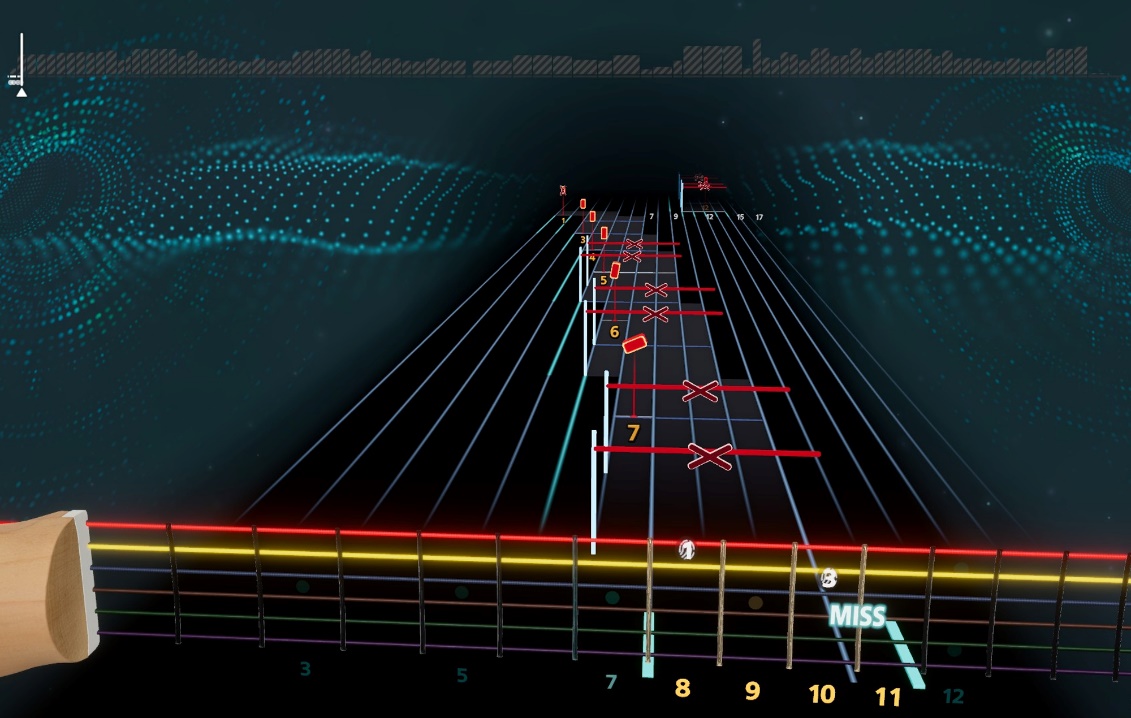


Figure | RockSmith Screenshot (https://www.pushsquare.com/games/ps4/rocksmith\_2014\_edition/screenshots, 2022)

### 3.3.2. | Comparison

Even though the examples mentioned above are only a fraction of the myriad of applications and devices currently available on the market, we can see that they all serve different purposes and have a specific user target. And because our project will mainly focus on playfully learning guitar riffs, chords and songs, it will be referred to RiffMaster from this point forward. The following table concludes the assessment of our findings and some further specifications.

Table

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Figure | Technology Comparison (Appendix/Comparision.drawio)

### 3.3.3. | Gap in Current Technologies

As we can see, the presented options have decent coverage of usability and functionality that a novice guitarist would require. But unfortunately, they are sparsely isolated throughout several projects and products with distinct merits and limitations. Ideally, these features should be consolidated into one comprehensive product.

Firstly, while Guitar Hero has outstanding gameplay, its unrealistic controller layout lacks a realistic user experience. On the other hand, MI's Digital Guitar has an excellent practical and artistic design and a more natural interface but inaccurate fret distances. Unfortunately, it cannot play notes, only limited chords through approximate button presses. Therefore, it is an artificially invented music system, not unlike Guitar Hero. Thirdly, while RockSmith offers an exceptionally realistic application that teaches fundamental music skills, the user must buy a decent-quality instrument to start to play.

Finally, all these systems are vendor-specific, proprietary, or licenced. As a software developer, I want to be able to write applications around a digital guitar instrument free from licences or the concern of litigations. Additionally, the device should have specifications, protocols and documentation available for every software developer in the community to produce a range of competition and further innovation. Most open-source projects enjoy eager crowds of professional and amateur developers' contributions; therefore, after the finalisation of the project, the GitHub repository will be publicly shared for non-commercial use.

## 3.4. | Console Design Research

### 3.4.1. | Calculating Fret Distances

As outlined in the specifications, the console layout must simulate the guitar experience as authentically as possible. Current devices, such as the MI Digital Guitar, do not account for the distances between the frets and button cap sizes. Therefore, we need to calibrate the console neck to a natural proportion where the 12th fret is halfway to the scale length between the nut and the saddle. The fret positions may be calculated by dividing the remainder of a fret-saddle distance by 17.817 recursively and by basing our measurements on a Guitar Hero console for our experimental calculations.

**Text

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Table

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Figure | Fret Distances (Appendix/Fret-Distance-Table.drawio)

These distance values can be used to create the first approximate diagram of the interface's physical layout. However, this layout does not yet consider a wiggle room between the buttons, which should ideally be at least one millimetre.

A picture containing shoji

Description automatically generated

Figure | Fret Distances on The Console Guitar's Neck (Appendix/Fret-Distance-Neck-Diagram.drawio)

### 3.4.2. | **Key Switch Interface Design Concepts**

To build a successful guitar system based on time precision, we need to be able to detect inputs from the user interface accurately and efficiently. From an electrical engineer's perspective, our console can be abstracted down as an intricate keyboard input that consists of an array of key switches, similar to a conventional computer keyboard. "*Depending on how individual switches are connected, mechanical keypads are commonly available in two forms – matrix and common bus*" (Dave, n.d.).

#### 3.4.2.1. | Keyboard Buses

In our scenario, we need six times 20 fret buttons and six strum switches, totalling 126 switches. Unfortunately, connecting switches directly to pins would be inelegant even if we could find a microcontroller with 126 digital pins. The fundamental way of sequential wiring design is to use a common bus.

Calendar

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Figure | Common Bus Console Interface Wiring Schema (Appendix/CommonBus.draw.io)

This solution in the above form is not ideal for our console; however, other linear solutions will be discussed in the following chapters.

#### 3.4.2.2. | Keyboard Matrix

User interfaces, such as keyboards and keypads, often use a keyboard matrix to consolidate a greater number of input switches to a limited number of microcontroller pins. "*When a key is pressed, a column wire makes contact with a row wire and completes a circuit. The keyboard controller detects this closed circuit and registers it as a key press*" (Dribin, 2000). For example, PC keyboards usually range from 63 to 105 keys, depending on the layout and the existence of a numerical pad. In the same way as conventional keyboards, the guitar interface can be arranged in a matrix. Meshing the switch wires would result in a drastically reduced digital pin requirement.

Matrix keyboards use scanning algorithms to detect button presses, where rows and columns are individually read.

Diagram

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Figure | Keyboard Scanning Flowchart (Appendix/Keyboard-Scanning.drawio)

Unfortunately, keyboard matrices introduce problems with simultaneous key presses, such as keyboard ghosting (unrecognised strokes) and masking (unpressed strokes mistakenly registered). These problems are well-known in the gaming community, and anti-ghosting keyboards are sold for professional gamers.

A picture containing text, crossword puzzle

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Figure | Indistinguishable Keystrokes (https://www.microsoft.com/applied-sciences/projects/anti-ghosting, 2022)

Similarly, ghosting and masking may cause problems when the player simultaneously interacts with the controller's fret buttons, playing triads or chords. Although these problems may be corrected using diodes, our scenario may have better wiring alternatives.

### 3.4.3. | Analog Voltage Dividers

Traditionally buttons are registered through one of the digital pins because of the momentary press input's binary nature. However, with an ingenious trick, we may capture keypresses on analog pins, similar to how potentiometers work with microcontrollers or how values are read from a sensor. "*To get the value from the sensor, call analogRead() that takes one argument: what pin it should take a voltage reading on. The value, which is between 0 and 1023, is the representation of the voltage on the pin*" (Fitzgerald, 2012).

#### 3.4.3.1 | Logarithmic Resistor Ladders

This analog design could eliminate the ghosting and masking problems because, on each row (string), only the topmost button press should be registered, similarly to the real-world instrument. An additional benefit of this design is the reduced number of pins used: six analog pins for strings and six digital pins for strums. One way of creating analog voltage dividers is to use sequential wiring of switches and identical resistors, often called resistor ladders.

Graphical user interface

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Figure | Resistor Ladder Solution (Appendix/Resistance-Ladder.drawio)

Graphical user interface, application, table, Excel

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Figure | ACD Logarithmic Value Readings

Unfortunately, even though this solution is straightforward and might work for projects with fewer switches, it is problematic. Even if we assume perfect resistors, we must interpret our voltage divider values on the ADC by hard-coding a logarithmic range. Given that each string consists of twenty buttons, the reading would be inaccurate. Therefore, we need to extend our research for a more elegant solution that can precisely read button interactions and cannot be compromised by the short distances between the upper values of the logarithmic curve.

**3.4.3.2. | Linear Resistor Ladders**

We can equalise the distance between the ADC readings by calculating the resistance for each button switch.

Finding twenty resistor values require more than a handful of calculations. Therefore, writing a small algorithm to give us the resistance values is more straightforward. Additionally, we can later adjust the values in the program if we need any changes in the electrical design.

Text, letter

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Figure | Linear Resistance Ladder (Appendix/linear\_ladder.py)

### 3.4.4. | Debounce Mechanism

"*The physical action of pushing a button might require a half-second or so, so we tend to think in those terms. On the other hand, a digital circuit can react to a million of events in the same time frame*" (Warren, 2015). Because of the switch mechanisms, when a push button is pressed, it may register multiple interactions with the input device in a relatively short interval. In the case of a game console interface, it would result in a disastrous user experience. Various electrical solutions, such as flip-flops and Schmitt triggers, have been used to solve this problem. A "S*chmitt trigger circuit relies on changing the voltage or current threshold levels by means of positive feedback in the analogue loop*" (Kader, 2012), improving the immunity to analogue disturbances.

Diagram, engineering drawing

Description automatically generated

Figure | Schmitt Trigger (https://www.watelectronics.com, 2022)

However, we can solve debouncing using software engineering by measuring oscillation time. For example, Arduino microcontrollers have a millis function that "*returns the number of milliseconds passed since the Arduino board began running the current program. This number will overflow (go back to zero) after approximately 50 days*" (Arduino.cc, 2022). Therefore, we can prevent debouncing by measuring switch state changes. The time of the state changes should be recorded, and an intentional debounce delay should be applied to compensate for the noise. The change should be ignored when low-state changes happen in unreasonably short intervals.

Graphical user interface, text

Description automatically generated

Figure | Compensating Debouncing on Arduino (based on: https://docs.arduino.cc/built-in-examples, Appendix/debounce.cpp)

**3.5. Human Input Device Protocol**

We need a protocol that works through the USB connection to establish efficient communication between the console and the computer. The Human Interface Device Protocol "(*HID) is designed for common PC interface devices such as keyboard and mouse, but can be adapted for many custom applications*" (Murphy, 2017). Arduino uses HID communication through Serial class, a built-in method for simple I/O actions using ASCII characters. However, even though a USB cable powers most Arduinos, bidirectional USB communication is only possible on Arduino Leonardo, Mega and Due.

Table

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Figure | Protocol Example: Playing F#min7 Chord on Console (Appendix/Serial-Protocol.drawio)

ASCII keyboard communication seems the most straightforward solution because characters may be easily interpreted into corresponding user actions. However, a significant drawback is that if we use our console device as a keyboard, it might interfere with the user's PC keyboard, and the user will not be able to use it properly while playing the game. Fortunately, some Arduino libraries let us connect our device to the PC as a joystick, similar to Xbox controllers.

## 3.6 | Audio in the Browser

One of the fundamental elements of the application is to engage the player through music and seamless game interaction. "*Well-designed games create engagement by promoting a low state, a total absorption that makes the player gratifyingly oblivious to anything else. Good musical experiences also involve low states, and music classes are most effective when they foster flow*"**.** (Csíkszentmihályi, 2009)However, to create the right conditions for flow, the players need audio feedback of several kinds.

The most apparent audio experience is the chosen piece of music that the player will follow with the game controller. Nevertheless, there may be a need for additional audio feedback, such as a sound simulation the guitar controller generates. This generated sound may be a template guitar audio stock that can be distinguishable from the original music. An additional benefit is that the player can hear the generated music, which is immediate feedback for errors. On the other hand, some inexperienced players may not hear out errors in their performance. Therefore there may be a need for audio and visual feedback for mistakenly played or missed music notes.

Fortunately, web browsers support audio interactions, and there can be multiple audio files playing simultaneously, but the implementation is a costly business. Media files are typically larger than text-based files, and the application might need to preload some data to the cache. "*Web caching is the temporary storage of Web objects (such as HTML documents) for later retrieval. There are three significant advantages to Web caching: reduced bandwidth consumption (fewer requests and responses that need to go over the network), reduced server load (fewer requests for a server to handle), and reduced latency*" (Sulaiman, 2008). However, browsers do not handle caching uniformly, which might cause browser vendor compatibility problems, and users may also have different browser settings that prevent caching.

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# Appendices

**Logbook, Gantt, Ethical Form and Risk Assessment**

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**Diagrams**



**Code**



# Links

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A close-up of a fetus  Description automatically generated with low confidence | GitHub | <https://github.com/tschiboka/RiffMaster> |
| Shape  Description automatically generated with low confidence | Project | <https://tschiboka.co.uk/projects/riffmaster/index.html> |