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# About This Issue

The interdisciplinary field of music information retrieval (MIR) has blossomed in recent years. Its generic parent discipline, information retrieval, originally focused on textual content but later broadened to encompass multimedia, including audio recordings and symbolic representations of music. (MIR practitioners generally classify MIDI as a symbolic representation.) Once the exclusive province of academics, MIR has received increasing commercial attention, owing mainly to the large numbers of music files now accessible online. The field's growth was reflected in the establishment in 2000 of the annual International Symposium on Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR, an acronym that persisted even after the symposium was renamed as a conference).

For some time, we have felt that music information retrieval warranted a special issue of *Computer Music Journal*. The organizers of ISMIR agreed, and you are looking

at the results. We are grateful to the two co-chairs of ISMIR 2003's program committee, Holger Hoos and David Bainbridge, who served as guest editors for the articles in this issue. Through an iterative process, the ISMIR program committee selected some of the most interesting papers from ISMIR 2003, and the guest editors invited the authors of those papers to submit extended versions to *Computer Music Journal*. We also thank the original ISMIR referees who carefully re-examined the extended versions. In the Editors' Notes, the guest editors list the selected articles and provide descriptions of those that were able to fit within this issue. Three others are forthcoming.

In keeping with the issue's theme, the Reviews section includes an examination of ISMIR 2003, which was held in October in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. The reviewer presents an overview of the conference, touching upon some of the work presented

elsewhere in this issue but also other topics. As reflected in three of the current issue's articles, a central concern of the field is how to assess and compare the performance of different MIR systems—a complex matter made more difficult by legal impediments to a publicly accessible corpus of audio recordings for use as test material.

The Reviews section, edited as usual by James Harley, similarly takes a look at the 2003 International Computer Music Conference (ICMC) in Singapore. The ICMC, which has existed even longer than *Computer Music Journal*, has always been the conference most relevant to this publication, and two different reviewers report on the Singapore event herein. The other reviews critique a number of new books and compact discs, as well as some reverberation plug-in software. Mr. Harley, who also serves as the *Journal's* products editor, is capably assisted by Margaret Cahill and Tae Hong Park.

*Front cover.* This tool, available at [www.oefai.at/~elias/aligned-soms/mozart](http://www.oefai.at/~elias/aligned-soms/mozart), compares expressive piano performances in terms of loudness and tempo variations, using data from six different interpretations of Mozart sonatas. Details can be found in "Visualizing Changes in the Structure of Data for Exploratory Feature Selection" by Elias Pampalk, Werner Goebel, and Gerhard Widmer, in the

ACM publication *Proceedings of the Ninth SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining*, pp. 157–166.

*Back cover.* The user interface shown here, available at [www.oefai.at/~elias/aligned-soms/IoMv2](http://www.oefai.at/~elias/aligned-soms/IoMv2), demonstrates one approach to music information retrieval. A self-organizing map (SOM) trained on 77 pieces of music arranges them into "islands"

where pieces considered more similar are clustered together more closely. The display changes as the user navigates in a triangular control (not illustrated here), interpolating between three similarity measures based respectively on metadata, periodicity, and spectrum. See the article by Elias Pampalk, Simon Dixon, and Gerhard Widmer in this issue for a detailed explanation.