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**Will Wright, Brian Eno Share Dialog On 'Time'**

by Jason Dobson

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June 28, 2006

During last night's event entitled "Playing with Time" at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco, famed game developer Will Wright (*SimCity*, *The Sims*, *Spore*) and musical artist and longtime fan Brian Eno gave a clinic on what they called the techniques of "generative" creation.

According to event sponsor and Long Now Foundation co-founder Stewart Brand, who provided a [synopsis of the conversation](#) in a post on the organization's forum: "Back in the 1970s, both speakers got hooked by cellular automata such as Conway's "Game of Life," where just a few simple rules could unleash profoundly unpredictable and infinitely varied dynamic patterns."



He continued, noting that Wright "observed that science is all about compressing reality to minimal rule sets, but generative creation goes the opposite direction. You look for a combination of the fewest rules that can generate a whole complex world which will always surprise you, yet within a framework that stays recognizable."

"It's not engineering and design," Wright said, "so much as it is gardening. You plant seeds. Richard Dawkins says that a willow seed has only about 800K of data in it."

Brand's synopsis continued: "Eno noted that ambient music, unlike "narrative" music with a beginning, middle, and end, presents a steady state. "It's more like watching a river." Wright said he often uses Eno's music to work to because it gets him in a productive trancelike state."

Next, with Eno providing live background music, Will Wright gave a demo *Spore*, and Brand's synopsis of the event continued: "Building models, said Wright, is what we do in computer games, and it's what we do in life. First it's models of how the world works, then it's models of how other humans work. A significant new element in computer games is the profound command, "Restart." You get to explore other paths to take in the same situation."

The Long Now co-founder ended his analysis of the dialog between both Wright and Eno on an interesting note, indicating that "it's interesting that just one verb is used both for music and for games: "play."

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