

To That Sect and Other Short Games

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Abstract. *To That Sect* is a simple but atmospheric exploration game created by a piece of software called ANGELINA. The creation process relies heavily on computational evolution, as well as employing the use of web resources and linguistic tools to try and interpret a theme and express it in the resulting game. This functionality allowed ANGELINA to enter a game design contest, for which it designed *To That Sect*. This is the first time a piece of software has entered such a contest.

1 ANGELINA-5 and Ludum Dare

Ludum Dare is a thrice-yearly game jam organised by a small group of game developers. In game jams people try to develop games within a fixed time limit, normally making all the content for the game from scratch during that period. Often these events have themes attached - Ludum Dare's theme is voted on by the participants in the week leading up to the event. In the latest Ludum Dare, LD28, over two thousand people entered games for the theme *You Only Get One*.

ANGELINA is an automated game design system, used as a tool for investigating Computational Creativity in the context of videogames. The latest version of the software, ANGELINA-5, was designed with game jams in mind. That is, it has the ability to take a simple word or phrase, and use that as the input to a videogame. This demonstration features two games made for the theme of LD28, and entered in the 72-hour variant of Ludum Dare, known as the *jam version*². Figure 1 shows title screenshots from both games.

In the 48-hour competition, entrants must make all of their own content, including artwork and music, as well as working alone and not using any pre-existing code libraries. In the 72-hour version of the contest, rules are relaxed. This allows group entries, as well as entries which use assets from other sources. Since ANGELINA-5 retrieves media from the web for use in its games, it could not reasonably enter the 48-hour version of the contest, and as a result we entered its games in the 72-hour jam instead.

When submitting an entry to Ludum Dare, entrants typically provide a commentary or piece of text instructing people about the game. Sometimes this includes information about design decisions, evaluation of what went well, or a tutorial. In line with our previous work, ANGELINA-5 generates small commentaries using templates filled in with real decisions made during the game's design. We give an example of one game's commentary in Figure 2.

Both games are simple 3D first-person exploration games, where the player must locate an exit. They vary greatly in visual and audio theming, and there are some small differences in rulesets (although ANGELINA-5 currently has little expressive capacity in this regard, so the lack of variety is unsurprising). They represent a first step on the road to human-competitive game design, however, and regular

entries to game jams will offer a good way of viewing the system's progress through time.

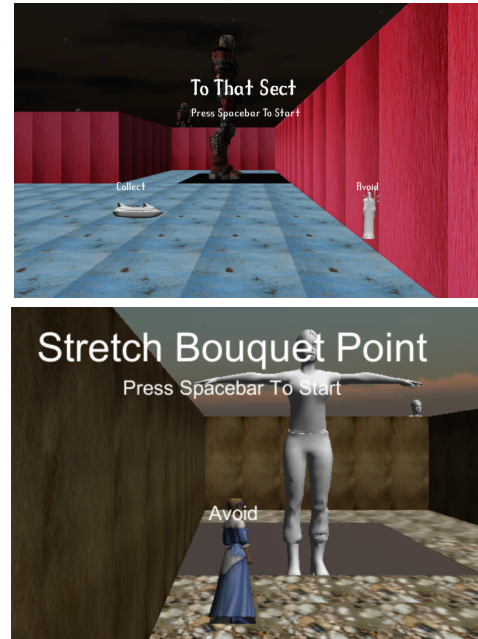


Figure 1. Two games made by ANGELINA entered into Ludum Dare. Top: *To That Sect*, a game entered into the contest with full public disclosure in the game's description. Bottom: *Stretch Bouquet Point*, a second game entered under a pseudonym without disclosure about the game's origin.

This is a game about a disgruntled child. A Founder. The game only has one level, and the objective is to reach the exit (the yellow cylinder). Along the way, you must avoid the Tomb as they kill you, and collect the Ship. I use some sound effects from FreeSound, like the sound of Ship. Using Google and a tool called Metaphor Magnet, I discovered that people feel charmed by Founder sometimes. So I chose a unnerving piece of music from Kevin Macleod's Incompetech website to complement the game's mood. Let me know what you think. In future I'll put more levels into my games, and also make the mechanics more interesting.

Figure 2. Descriptive text for the game *To That Sect*, submitted as part of the entry on the Ludum Dare page. This text was generated by ANGELINA using some pre-made templates.

To That Sect can be played at <http://www.tinyurl.com/tothatsect>, and *Stretch Bouquet Point* at <http://www.tinyurl.com/stretchpoint>.

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² The 48-hour contest is referred to as the *compo version*