

# boards of canada music is math

**Boards of Canada music is math**—a phrase that encapsulates the intricate relationship between the Scottish electronic duo's soundscapes and mathematical concepts. Formed in the early 1990s, Boards of Canada, consisting of brothers Michael Sandison and Marcus Eoin, has garnered a dedicated following due to their unique approach to music production, characterized by a blend of nostalgic melodies, atmospheric textures, and an underlying mathematical structure that permeates their work. This article delves into the mathematical aspects of their music, exploring how it influences their compositions, the emotional response it elicits, and its broader implications in the realm of electronic music.

## Understanding the Mathematical Foundations of Boards of Canada's Music

At first glance, the connection between music and mathematics might not be immediately apparent. However, as one dives deeper into the nuances of Boards of Canada's discography, it becomes clear that math plays a significant role in shaping their sound. Here are some key mathematical concepts that can be observed in their music:

### 1. Patterns and Repetition

One of the most recognizable elements of Boards of Canada's music is the use of patterns. The duo often employs repetitive motifs that create a sense of familiarity and comfort. Patterns can be found in various forms:

- **Melodic Patterns:** Repeating sequences of notes that create a sense of cohesion within a track.
- **Rhythmic Patterns:** Consistent beats and time signatures that give structure to the music.
- **Textural Patterns:** Layering of sounds that create a tapestry of auditory experiences.

The repetition of these patterns can evoke a hypnotic state, drawing listeners into a contemplative space. This technique mirrors mathematical sequences, where repetition and symmetry are fundamental.

### 2. Fractals and Self-Similarity

Fractals, mathematical sets that exhibit a repeating pattern at every scale, can be likened to the sound design in Boards of Canada's tracks. The duo

often utilizes self-similar structures in their compositions. Just as fractals create complex images from simple mathematical rules, Boards of Canada constructs intricate soundscapes using relatively simple melodic and harmonic ideas.

For instance, their track "Dayvan Cowboy" features soaring melodies that evolve and transform throughout the piece, creating a sense of depth and complexity. The listener can identify familiar motifs appearing in different contexts, akin to how fractals reveal the same pattern at varying scales.

### **3. The Golden Ratio**

The Golden Ratio, a mathematical ratio commonly found in nature and art, represents an ideal balance and harmony. Boards of Canada often incorporates this principle in their music, leading to a pleasing aesthetic experience.

Key applications of the Golden Ratio in their work include:

- Structural Balance: Tracks often feature sections that adhere to this ratio, providing a sense of proportion and flow.
- Harmonic Relationships: The intervallic relationships between notes can reflect this mathematical ratio, contributing to a sense of beauty and resolution.

The use of the Golden Ratio not only enhances the musical experience but also aligns with the duo's overarching themes of nature and nostalgia.

## **The Emotional Resonance of Mathematical Principles in Music**

While the connection between mathematics and music may seem abstract, the emotional response elicited by Boards of Canada's music is palpable. The duo's ability to intertwine complex mathematical ideas with evocative soundscapes creates a rich listening experience that resonates deeply with their audience.

### **1. Nostalgia Through Mathematical Composition**

Boards of Canada's music often evokes a sense of nostalgia, drawing listeners back to memories of childhood and simpler times. This emotional response can be attributed to the mathematical structure of their compositions. The repetitive patterns and self-similar motifs create an environment that feels safe and familiar.

Additionally, the duo employs analog synthesizers and tape manipulation techniques that imbue their music with warmth and character. This combination of mathematical precision and emotional depth creates a powerful juxtaposition, making their music both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant.

## **2. The Role of Ambiguity and Complexity**

Another emotional dimension of Boards of Canada's music lies in its inherent ambiguity and complexity. The duo often shrouds their soundscapes in layers of reverb and distortion, creating an ethereal, dream-like quality. This complexity invites listeners to engage with the music on multiple levels, allowing for a personalized interpretation.

The mathematical concepts of chaos theory and complexity can be observed in their work. Just as chaotic systems can yield unpredictable outcomes, the interplay of various elements in their tracks can evoke a wide range of emotions. This unpredictability is a hallmark of their style, making each listening experience unique.

## **Boards of Canada's Influence on Electronic Music**

Boards of Canada's innovative approach to music has left an indelible mark on the electronic music landscape. Their unique blend of mathematical composition and emotive sound has inspired countless artists and producers across genres.

### **1. Pioneering Ambient and IDM Genres**

The duo is often credited with pioneering the ambient and intelligent dance music (IDM) genres. Their work has influenced a generation of artists seeking to create music that transcends traditional boundaries. The mathematical underpinnings of their compositions have encouraged others to explore similar concepts, leading to a proliferation of experimental sounds in electronic music.

Notable artists who have cited Boards of Canada as an influence include:

- Aphex Twin: Known for his innovative approach to electronic music, Aphex Twin shares a similar affinity for complex rhythms and emotive melodies.
- Tycho: This project embodies the ambient qualities and nostalgic elements reminiscent of Boards of Canada's sound.
- Autechre: This duo explores abstract soundscapes and complex rhythms,

echoing the mathematical intricacies found in Boards of Canada's work.

## 2. The Rise of Nostalgic Electronic Music

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in nostalgic themes within electronic music. Boards of Canada's ability to evoke memories and emotions through their sound has paved the way for other artists to explore similar concepts. This trend has led to the emergence of a new wave of electronic music characterized by:

- Sampled Sounds: The incorporation of vintage samples and recordings to create a nostalgic atmosphere.
- Lo-Fi Aesthetics: Embracing imperfections in sound quality to evoke a sense of warmth and familiarity.
- Ambient Soundscapes: Creating immersive environments that invite introspection and contemplation.

As artists continue to draw inspiration from Boards of Canada, the connection between mathematics and music remains a fertile ground for exploration and innovation.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the assertion that **Boards of Canada music is math** serves as a gateway to understanding the profound relationship between mathematics and music. Through the use of patterns, fractals, and the Golden Ratio, the duo crafts intricate compositions that resonate emotionally with listeners. Their innovative approach has not only influenced a generation of electronic musicians but has also opened up new avenues for exploring the intersection of mathematical principles and artistic expression. As we continue to delve into the world of Boards of Canada, we uncover the beauty that lies at the confluence of sound and mathematics, inviting us to reflect on the deeper meanings woven into their timeless music.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the primary theme of Boards of Canada's 'Music Is Math'?

The primary theme of 'Music Is Math' revolves around the idea of patterns, cycles, and the mathematical structures embedded in nature and music.

## **How does 'Music Is Math' reflect Boards of Canada's unique soundscapes?**

The track showcases their signature blend of ambient soundscapes, nostalgic samples, and intricate melodies, creating a sonic experience that feels both organic and mathematical.

## **What instruments are prominently featured in 'Music Is Math'?**

The track features synthesizers, drum machines, and manipulated samples, contributing to its rich, layered texture.

## **How does the use of samples contribute to the atmosphere in 'Music Is Math'?**

Samples in 'Music Is Math' evoke a sense of nostalgia and familiarity, enhancing the track's emotional depth and connection to childhood memories.

## **What mathematical concepts are referenced in 'Music Is Math'?**

The title itself suggests a connection between music and mathematics, potentially referencing concepts like rhythm, harmony, and Fibonacci sequences.

## **In what ways does 'Music Is Math' reflect the duo's philosophy on music creation?**

It embodies their belief in the interconnectedness of art and science, demonstrating how mathematical principles can influence musical composition.

## **How does the visual aesthetic of 'Music Is Math' complement the music?**

The accompanying visuals often feature abstract patterns and geometric shapes, which mirror the mathematical themes in the music and create a cohesive sensory experience.

## **What impact did 'Music Is Math' have on the electronic music genre?**

The track has been influential in the ambient and IDM (Intelligent Dance Music) scenes, inspiring many artists to explore the integration of complex textures and mathematical concepts in their work.

## What emotions does 'Music Is Math' evoke in listeners?

Listeners often report feelings of nostalgia, contemplation, and a sense of wonder, reflecting the track's ability to connect deeply on an emotional level.

## How does 'Music Is Math' fit within the larger context of Boards of Canada's discography?

It is a defining track on the album 'Geogaddi', showcasing their trademark style and thematic preoccupations with nature, memory, and the passage of time.

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