Synthetic Sounds And The Hitmaker
By Thomas Park

When I was offered a volunteer DJ position at 88.1 KDHX-FM, Saint Louis, MO, I was very pleased. I had been a freeform DJ back in my college days. My current show, "Synthetic Sounds", would focus on electronic music. It would air in the wee hours— 3-5 am every Tuesday.

So, electronic music, that’s easy. I love electronic music. But what to play? 2 hours a week is a lot of time— several dozens of tracks. I decided to use my coding skills to create an application to help me find the right music.

I developed 2 apps, actually. The main one, "The Hitmaker", searches the Internet Archive for songs based on 1-2 keywords. I fed The Hitmaker about 10 possible keywords, let it combine them differently, and sent it on searches to the archive.

Another thing The Hitmaker did was it created playlists, using ID-tag information from the MP3s. It became automatic and easy to find and generate entire 2-hour playlists of cc-licensed underground electronic music, by topic.

Lightning quickly struck again, and I created "Hybrid". Hybrid is an app that simply recombines tracks that exist in pre-collected and curated playlists. I could use Hybrid, and the hundreds of mp3s I had already downloaded with Hitmaker, to create new shows that crossed genres, and therefore had more diversity.

With these two applications, I launched into a new direction with radio, which I call “Curated Automation”. The code automatically harvests and compiles the tracks. I sort through them to ensure that topicality and quality are maintained. In the end, thanks to technology, there is a much broader range of tracks available for my show. I can reach out and find music in the dusty corners of the Internet Archive, bringing new and interesting sounds to listeners and giving deserving artists a fair spin.