

IN THE MOOD FOR...

TALKING TO PETER BERG STEFFENSEN,
FOUNDER AND CEO OF SYNTONETIC

The Danish company Syntonetic has developed a mood-matching tool: The "Moodagent" uses artificial intelligence and music science to generate playlists that are based on emotions. The parameters – Sensual, Tender, Happy, Angry and Tempo – let the listener communicate his or her feelings to the agent so it "knows" which music to choose. It runs on the iPhone as well as on Nokia and Android systems, recently, a Winamp version was launched, too. We've talked to the Peter Berg Steffensen, who has co-founded Syntonetic together with Mikael Henderson.

Mr. Steffensen, when you switched on your Moodagent this morning - what mood were you in and what song did your agent choose for you?

STEFFENSEN: My mood setting this morning looked like this.....▶

Basically, I chose an Iron & Wine track as a warm-up to their forthcoming concert here in Copenhagen. "Carousel" is the kind of track that sharpens my mood and heightens my spirit.



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How did you come up with the idea to generate a "mood assistant" in the first place?

STEFFENSEN: We established Syntonetic back in 2000, as we were concerned the advent of MP3 software and hardware and the dismantling of albums into individual tracks would destroy the "album experience." In response, we invented and patented a solution to bring it back together.

Without diving too deep into the sea of algorithms - how does it work?

STEFFENSEN: The Moodagent engine is a sophisticated music-profiling environment that measures song qualities to create instantaneous mood-based playlists. It is born out of the marriage of state of the art digital signal processing and A.I. with genuine music science – a union constantly calibrated by the sharp minds and trained ears of our team of expert human musicologists, and their software services colleagues. We are the only brand capable of precisely cracking the emotional codes found in music. And as such, we believe Moodagent delivers the most truly musical playlist and recommendations to mobile devices, PCs and online services.

Your goal is to become the default way of using and consuming music, we read. How do you want to achieve that?

STEFFENSEN: Moodagent started out

10 years ago with future-proof genes: a very adaptable data-model and a global data capture and distribution mechanism. In short, the right music data for every track and every device. But the future arrives faster every day, so we invest heavily in adaptation – sometimes by trial-and-error like a blind watchmaker, but mostly by sticking to our main principle that it's the music that matters: If we take good care of the music experience, the music business takes care of itself.

By now, I have to tell the agent how I feel. Do you also experience with interfaces that let the app know it by body data delivery?

STEFFENSEN: One very interesting trend that we are seeing is sentiment tracking and, together with the University of Glasgow and mobile hardware manufacturers, we're currently working on a couple of prototypes for sentiment tracking and control for both in-

dividuals and groups, but you'll have to wait for the details until we get them out of the lab.

Moodagent reacts to one's mood or the way I set up the way I feel. But very often, it's vice versa: It's the music that puts me into a certain mood. How do you deal with that?

STEFFENSEN: The beauty of Moodagent is that it enables you to not only rediscover music in your library that you may have forgotten about, but our latest feature of recommendation will help you to discover artists and music you may not yet be aware of. Our unique combination of technology and science ensures you always receive a high quality music experience that perfectly matches or sets your mood.

How is the Danish mood?

STEFFENSEN: Although statistically the happiest of all people, Danes are as musically diverse as most other, but I'd like to believe there's a certain spring in

our step, a measured lightness of being, thus up tempo but never fast, happy but never ecstatic, sensual but never quite sexy... actually, the sexy part of the Danish pop-group Aqua is Norwegian, and the sexy curves of the half-Dane Scarlett Johansson surely stem from the Bronx...

Mobile players are probably not the only devices you've been creating the product for. What else is there, what is next?

STEFFENSEN: As you can imagine we are constantly developing new innovations and enhancing the features and user experience of Moodagent. Our newest innovation was launched just a few weeks ago together with AOL's Winamp – this was a brand new high quality music recommendation service. Moodagent for Winamp is a completely integrated online service within Winamp.com that leverages the power of users' own music libraries together with the extensive 7digital online music catalogue to create and deliver highly personalized and deadly accurate mu-

sic recommendations. In general, we are working on numerous options for the future including: multiple cloud integration solutions, cross-platform support (convergence), sensor-coupling, Near Field Communications and Location Based Services.

Talking of Location Based Services, how much is place and my current location related to mood?

STEFFENSEN: Location is certainly an interesting and exciting space and something we can see lots of potential in. The Moodagent team is always looking to build even more engaging experiences by bridging in relevant media assets in novel ways – how about an Emotional Weather Forecast (as Tom Waits suggests), based on your current location?

What about social connections? Can I compare my current mood with the way other users feel by now?

STEFFENSEN: Absolutely, several months ago we added social features to Moodagent that enabled users to either Tweet the current track they are listening to, or share their entire playlist on Facebook. On the long run, we see some very exciting and interesting changes coming from a social perspective that will be made possible by cloud technologies. In particular blended modes where access to multiple libraries and music collections (mine vs. friend vs. master) will unlock phenomenal and almost ubiquitous access to music and thereby enable music enjoyment, discovery and exploration on levels never seen before.

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BUT NEVER FAST,
HAPPY BUT
NEVER ECSTATIC,
SENSUAL BUT
NEVER QUITE SEXY.

