My interface revolves around the technology news website: Gizmodo (http://www.gizmodo.com). Numerous news articles are posted daily and viewers of the site are allowed to login and comment on the articles. To start off with, in my interface a user is taken to a screen displaying the articles posted during a week.

In this example, I display the articles between Sunday, August 31st and Saturday, September 6th. The interface is supposed to play off the night sky. Each article is represented by a star. The size of the star depends on how many comments have been posted about that article. An article with 0-19 comments will get a small (10 pixel) star. Articles with 20-49 comments get a small-medium (20 pixel) star. Then articles with 50-99 comments receive a medium-large (30 pixel) star. And finally, articles with 100 comments or more get a large (40 pixel) star.

The stars are arranged in obscured columns. Each column is a day (Sunday through Saturday). The bottom of a column represents 12:00am and the top of the column represents 11:59pm. Using this information, the user of the interface can get an idea of what stories are getting more attention from general users of the website and when those stories are posted.

Figure 1: This is the week view of the interface. In this view the user can see what day an article was posted (x-axis), what time (y-axis), and how many comments the article got (size of the star).
The idea is that a user can get a roundabout idea of times and dates. For example, a star at the center of a column is an article that was posted around noon. But if a user wants a better idea of dates and times instead of just estimating, under the “Options” menu (in the lower left), a user can choose to view grid over the interface.

The user can also move between weeks with the arrows around the dates at the bottom center.

Figure 2: This image displays the grid overlay that can help a user discern the different days of articles and the times at which an article was posted.
The user can also go into the “Options” menu and choose to view a month of articles instead of just a week. The size of the stars have also been scaled to support this. In this view, articles with 0-19 comments are 5 pixels, articles with 20-49 comments are 10 pixels, articles with 50-99 comments are 15 pixels, and articles with 100 comments or more are 20 pixels.

Columns still represent a day, starting from the first of the month to the last of the month. In this example, the first column is Friday, August 1st, and the last column is Sunday, August 31st. There are arrows at the bottom to allow users to switch between months.

![Figure 3: This view is similar to the week view, except in this case, users can view a whole month of articles.](image-url)
With the month view as well, there is a grid that can assist the user in discerning days and times.

Figure 4: The month view of the interface also has a grid under the “Options” menu.
Going back to the week view, we have a way for the user to be able to figure out what a star in this view is. With the mouse, a user can scroll over a star and a popup will appear with the article title, the author, and the number of comments the article has received.

Figure 5: In this view, the user can mouse over a star to get further information about it. The user can get the title, author and number of comments for that article.
If a user clicks a star, the user is taken into the second part of the interface. We start out with a simple article. The article is represented in white and is placed in the center. If the user scrolled over the center star, he would see some keywords from the article.

Spiraling outwards from the article star, are the comments on the article. The star closest to the article is the first comment, and then the farther out in the spiral, the later the comment.

The spiraling effect is meant to represent a galaxy. The article is the center of the galaxy, holding the galaxy together. While there are stars spiraling around it. Different stars were chosen here than the simple 5-pointed star because, in this view, brightness/intensity is given meaning. Also, the background is a darker version of the blue in the week/month view, to allow for further play with colors.

The article star is bigger than the comment star because it represents the whole point of the comment stars. Without this article these comments would not exist. This gives the article some significance.

The comment stars are for the most part the same color. Each star is a post. In this example, the one less-bright (the second comment) star was meant to be de-emphasized. This comment was only a few words long. A few words most likely is not the most meaningful of posts. It may not bring anything of interest to the floor. But for the rest of the comments, the posts have equal weight, so they have equal brightness.

Also, notice that the bottom left corner has a star that was use in the Month/Week view. If the user scrolls over the star, a popup will appear with the word “back” in it. This star is clickable and will take the user out of article view and back to the month or week view (which ever they were in last). The point of using the star from the other half of the interface is to represent it.

Figure 6: Here we have an article (the center white star) with a few comments spiraling around it.
This next example shows an article with a few more comments. We still have the central star representing the article. We also still have the smaller comment stars spiraling around the central star. In this example, all the stars are the same brightness, so there are no seemingly “unimportant” comments.

However, we do see a new effect here. There are smaller stars “spiraling” out from comment stars. These smaller comments represent off-topic comments. These users have responded directly to a certain user. Since these comments were not directed towards the content of the actual article, they were considered less important, but still worth noting their existence.

Figure 7: The article view of a moderately commented story. Here we see there are a few side discussions.
This last image shows a highly commented article. One can see that there are numerous side discussions going on here. There are three word or less comments, so those stars are less bright. The two red smaller stars represent flame comments. They are small because they occurred in a side discussion. The last noteworthy comment here is the grayed-out star at the top center. This comment has been declared spam and leaving this star “burntout”. There is no glow/intensity to this comment.

Figure 8: An example of an article that caused a large amount of discussion.

Overall, the idea behind this interface is to encourage exploration and interaction. Just by scrolling over a star, the user will find out what article a star represents in the Month/Week view. The user can then click to get to the article view of that star. Here, by scrolling over stars a user can get keywords of the article and see how many comments of the article stayed on topic, how many were spam, flames, or simply insignificant to the discussion.