**DEFENSE SPEECH**

Discovering and listening to music has always been my biggest passion in life and my primary way of coping with my emotions. I think its main appeal to me since childhood has been the comfort it brings in knowing that at some point in time, another human felt the same thing as me and was able to survive and express it by making something beautiful.

For my project, I recorded a 9 track album called *Strange Machines* while I was on leave of absence last year. This term, I created a 20 minute extended music video to accompany it. All of this lives on a page I coded on my personal website with some fun bonus content that I'll scroll through at the end of this presentation. I'll put the link in the comments so anyone who's interested can check it out at their own pace.

I have so much fun making music and feel proud when I have a cohesive finished product at the end. I'm not interested in becoming a virtuoso musician or a professional producer. A lot of trained musicians gatekeep, intimidate, and discourage amateurs. People mystify and mythologize the creative process as if it's the product of some elusive, innate genius rather than practice, experimentation, and a simple love of music.

As someone who's work exists entirely as digital recordings, there's no inherent reason for me to be an amazing guitar player who can play a song perfectly all the way through, as mistakes can be easily cut out and re-recorded. My songs aren't really suited for live performance. I try to create a convincing simulation by piecing together sounds, panning them, and adding reverb and other effects to give the listener the illusion of a setting. If I lack the skill to play a part, my style is very forgiving and I can switch instruments or insert a heavily edited sample and the band-aid sounds like a

deliberate creative choice. As someone who enjoys having complete creative control over my projects, there's no way I could master all the required roles. I consider myself a decent songwriter, but as far as everything else goes, I teach myself the bare minimum to achieve the sound I want.

I still discover a lot of the music I listen to through old Blogspot pages - a surprising number of Mediafire links are still live, and even more surprisingly, many of these blogs are still being updated. Most are unlisted in search engines and can only be found through links from other blogs. This is one of the few remaining areas of the web that retains the anarchic DIY ethics of its early days. I find it very comforting that there are still file sharing communities on the internet despite the move toward slick, corporate social media and sponsored advertising.

This community dynamic and the free sharing of information and media between users has informed my own work and how I choose to distribute it. It's very important to me that everything I make is available for free digitally on social media and my website. I've noticed that this has influenced the way I think when I'm making it and the mediums I use. When I'm creating something, I'm not really concerned with the physical object. My mind is focused on how I will film, photograph, or scan it. Once my art is digitally documented, I feel little interest in or attachment to the physical piece and will usually give it away.

When I'm working on a big project, my ego sometimes makes it feel like this grand, important piece of work. After I finished recording this album in November, I took a break from listening to it so I could revisit it later with a new perspective. When I did, my view of the project was unraveled. What I heard took me back to when I first started

making music nearly a decade ago. I actually ended up laughing through most of it. While I've obviously improved, or at least found ways to hide my shortcomings, I haven't changed as much as I thought I had since I started recording as a teenager. It was so funny to hear the album for what it is: a kid with a lifelong obsession with pop music naively thinking he could emulate the sound of his favorite albums with no formal training using Audacity, a free program. I disregarded, or honestly didn't even really consider, the fact that my inspirations were the work of an entire team of professional musicians and producers. After I was able to get past the initial embarrassment of hearing it, I found something very endearing about the sincere ambition of the project and its meticulous care and perfectionism. I think the attempt and failure to imitate familiar music has created its own genre that could only exist with the accessibility of modern technology. The ability to hear pretty much all of 20th century music history at your immediate whim while sitting alone in your room offers a completely different context than what its creators intended. It yields a much different creative response.

I love a lot of different genres and my music is informed by a wide variety of artists.  For this particular album, a few of my musical inspirations sound- and lyric-wise were Devo, David Bowie, Five or Six, Bjork, Talking Heads, Nick Cave, Simon Finn, Klaus Nomi, Clouddead, PJ Harvey, and Daniel Johnston.

The style of Laurie Anderson's music videos, with her idiosyncratic performances and colorful, surreal visuals, were of particular influence to the project.

Simon Finn's 1970 album *Pass the Distance* has also been very inspirational to my music, songwriting, and performance. His work is technically considered folk, but I think the instrumentation he uses and the offbeat structure of his songs create their own

unique style. I love how Finn's voice isn't conventionally "good" or easy to listen to; it makes the raw emotion he sings with feel even more authentic. I don't have a "good" voice either, so hearing stuff like this makes me feel more comfortable with it.

Lyrically, I was also influenced by Nick Cave's 2013 album *Push the Sky Away*. Thematically, it explores belief and mystery, with lyrics alluding to how technological progress has failed to give us concrete, fulfilling answers to life's questions. I'm especially interested in the album's cryptic references to modern pop culture and the internet: in "We Real Cool," Cave compares Wikipedia to heaven, and in "Higgs Boson Blues" he makes multiple references to pop star Miley Cyrus.

I think the biggest influence on both my music and the videos I created are 80s new wave band the Talking Heads. I've always been mesmerized by the way David Byrne dances in the band's performances and videos. As a fellow awkward and decidedly uncool person, his odd, twitchy motions feel much more authentic and attainable to me than if I tried to imitate the style of more conventional artists. The Talking Heads, along with Bowie's early stuff, were some of the first artists whose lyrics I really connected to. As a teenager I felt very lost and the world seemed unreal and often dangerous. *Fear of Music*, my favorite Talking Heads album, was the perfect soundtrack. I found it comforting to know that this group of weirdos seemed to feel a similar anxiety thirty years before me.

I'd describe the visual style of the videos as digital-kitsch. I love the work of queer directors like John Waters and Gregg Araki and I let kitsch's celebration of imperfection and bad taste inform my work. My cluttered, maximalist style lends itself well to online

viewing, as the viewer can pause it and skip around at their own pace if they'd like to see the details.

I felt very different using the internet in my childhood than I do now. With Google's algorithm you really have to dig to find anything but corporate websites. Search results used to be very unpredictable. You'd usually be sent to weird blog posts and obscure forums on the first page. Though I was born in 1998 and my internet use began around 2005, a lot of the pages I explored were from much earlier. I read teenager's LiveJournal posts and Myspace pages and was so excited to be old enough to have my own accounts, not realizing the sites would be a complete joke by the time I was in high school. I felt so much wonder and excitement about what I would discover every time I went online.

My internet use was pretty much unmonitored as a child. Somehow I avoided seeing anything too emotionally scarring, although I did infect our desktop computer with malware at least weekly. Pretty much all I did was play browser games and read Wikipedia articles. I think that's what first sparked my love of research.

Many of the stories I tell in my lyrics are fragmented amalgamations of real people and events that I've read about but have never experienced. Many kids, including myself, grew up reading about fringe topics on the internet - cults, classified government experiments, unsolved mysteries, psychic phenomena, alien abduction stories, every strange event in history. Trying to contextualize the pop culture I enjoy within the web of 20th century history has always fascinated me. Like a lot of people my age, as a kid, I thought that my love of media from previous decades meant I was born in "the wrong generation," but I realize now that the 21st century suits me perfectly.

There's no way I realistically could have had time to read about all of my interests at the library or afford to buy thousands of albums in physical form (and real-life theft seems to be much more frowned upon than internet piracy). Internet research is pure chaos. You can read a Wikipedia article and end up with dozens of barely-related tabs open within minutes.

One of my biggest inspirations and one of the reasons I began making art in the first place was the virtual pet site Neopets. This was where I first learned to code and got feedback on my drawings. I think the bright colors, cute-but-weird artwork, and early-internet aesthetic had a big effect on my own artistic style. As one might imagine, my design choices at the time were not the most subtle or tasteful, but I remember being so proud of the heinous layouts I created and pulling them up in the school computer lab to show my friends and teachers. For years, I was mortified by the neon webpages and the smudgy pencil drawings I made in elementary and middle school. I wouldn't have imagined letting anyone see them. I thought that to be a real artist, I had to have always had talent and good taste - no one could know that in 2008, I was drawing the same monstrously proportioned anime cat girls as every other dorky ten-year-old.

One video is modeled after Youtube lyric videos people made in the 2000s. It seemed as if the creators didn't even bother to watch them after they were finished editing - you'd rarely find one without typos and misheard lyrics. The font choices were illegible and instrumental breaks were marked with encouragements for the viewer to "get hyped" for the next verse of the song. Any pictures added were either extremely low res photos of the band or watermarked stock images of things referenced in the

lyrics. The videos always ended with a disclaimer that they didn't intend copyright infringement as if this would grant some kind of immunity.

I also wrote my own chainmail for the project in the spirit of the ones kids used to email between friends and classmates. Before the internet, physical chainmail letters were generally pyramid schemes intended to scam vulnerable people and take their money. In the 2000s, they became something more innocent and playful. They claimed to grant the reader good luck if they passed the email along or curse them if they deleted it. The original writer was anonymous and received no personal gain. Kids shared these the same way they shared horror stories at a slumber party.

I see the project as a time capsule of both the decade that inspired it and the decade I made it in. It's as much about 2000s digital aesthetics as it is my generation's obsession with that era in the 2010s and '20s. It clearly wasn't actually created in the early days of the internet - I'm guessing in a few years it'll be pretty obvious to people that it was made by a Gen Z member in 2021. We cringe at the things young people post online, but I think there's something beautiful about creating media you know will become very dated. There's such a pressure to be "original" and "ahead of your time" when really, I don't think there's anything wrong with taking inspiration from the pop culture you love. In the same way I feel about the art I made in the 2000s, I like the idea of looking back at what I was doing in 2021 and feeling a little embarrassed by my creative decisions.

My project, *Strange Machines*, is comprised of nine songs, six with lyrics and three modular synth instrumentals. Two were written specifically for the project. The other four I wrote years ago but hadn't yet finished recordings of that I was happy with.

Because I didn't anticipate the songs would end up together, I struggled for a while deciding how I'd make a cohesive video to unite them. I noticed that there were some clear threads running through. Instead of trying to come up with a linear plot, I decided to create three characters that I could use to represent the themes I identified in the lyrics.

The overarching subjects of the project are simulation and nostalgia and the way they deeply affect your sense of self and reality. The title track, "Strange Machines", is about a lonely girl using the internet as a form of escapism. This was the last song I finished writing and it inspired the concept and appearance of the whole film.

The project is illustrated through the three characters, all portrayed by me. The previously mentioned girl in the title track is named "Lucky". She wears a blonde wig and various skirts and dresses. In addition to their costumes, I tried to differentiate the characters and portray their personalities through my posture and the way I moved. "Lucky" alternates between being very careful in her movements and clumsily stumbling around

"The Arsonist" is the album's unreliable narrator and is the focus of the tracks "Uranium-1" and "Uranium-2". He also lip syncs to the song "Ghost". The song is narrated in the third person, but I see all three characters in the project as facets of one identity. I think of the narration as a distancing from or perhaps disowning of a helpless past self, describing and acting out an emotional experience without actually feeling anything. The character constantly fidgets and changes positions. He tries to disguise his unease with grandiosity, attempting to turn the confusing experience of living into neatly-packaged, most likely imaginary stories.

The third character, "The Creature", represents the parts of the self that can't be controlled or understood. It moves as if it's possessed, contorting unnaturally and tensing in physical pain. In the videos, I wear a balaclava-like mask that I made, which had the added benefit of making me feel less inhibited while performing since my face was partially covered. My goal was to look like I'm repeatedly losing control and regaining it, almost as if I'm fighting off demonic possession.

All of the characters make me think of uncanny video game avatars like the ones in *The Sims* series. I'm sure the hours I spent playing simulation games like this have impacted my sense of self and reality. In the final track's end sequence, there are flashes of the characters crouched in unnatural positions laid over the video. This was inspired by the way the game glitches up and your Sims start twisting grotesquely when you download user-made custom content from sketchy blogs.

Another big influence for all the characters is my favorite anime, *Serial Experiments Lain*. It tells the story of a shy girl in a semi-futuristic world where the boundaries between life and the internet are becoming less and less distinct. This confusion leads her to develop vastly different identities. It explores the concepts of reality and identity in a quiet, surreal way. Its predictions become more hauntingly relevant every year since its release in 1999.

With my characters, I portray aspects of myself that make me uncomfortable and leave the viewer to trust my intentions and level of self-awareness. The performances are deliberately weird and awkward, but not intentionally bad. Rather, I allowed them to fall short when I was unable to achieve the effect I wanted. This was my approach towards the whole project and my art in general.

While technically an extended music video, the film lacks the polished effects and cool, confident performers of a conventional one. Some of my lyrical themes are more serious, but I want it to have an offbeat humor. I think there's a very specific place of vulnerability I'm aiming for with the project. When you claim a piece of art is ironic and purposely bad, it automatically puts up a wall of defense between you and your audience that makes the work untouchable and removed from critique. It's tempting to spare yourself from the humiliation you risk every time you express yourself through art, but I tried to honor the things I liked and the emotions I had as a twelve-year-old without satire or judgement.  I think using stock photos, garish fonts, and giving uncomfortably awkward performances could easily veer the project into a jaded irony, but I intend it to be very sincere, even if that could subject me to some embarrassment. Instead of a disparaging parody of my past selves, it's an empathetic celebration of my childhood fantasies of emulating the musicians I idolized and the curiosity and fun I had as a kid using the early internet.

**2019 PROPOSAL**

For my thesis project, I will create a half-hour long album of songs, accompanied by a music video and a zine of illustrated lyrics. Thematically, I will be exploring nostalgia, alienation, and our desire for transcendence. In Marxist theory, alienation is caused by the estrangement of individuals from the whole due to the unnatural class structure of capitalism.[1] Both nature and society become alien, which in turn alienates humans from each other and themselves. Class structure plays a huge role, but I also believe there is something innately human about this longing for the unknown that can be seen across time. In an anonymous online survey I conducted of roughly a hundred participants, nearly everyone reported fantasizing as children about returning "home" to somewhere unknown yet familiar (eg. secretly being an alien from outer space).[2] I'm very interested in the collective nostalgia we share for a place we don't even know exists. To investigate this, I'm researching this idea in science, politics, belief systems, philosophy, and pop culture. Through songwriting and an eclectic musical style, I hope to integrate what I find in my research with my own experiences to create music that expresses these concepts through a personal lens that others can enjoy and relate to.

I define nostalgia as a desire to return to the familiar comfort of the past. It represents a desperate need to escape the alienation we feel as adults and return to a time where all possibilities seemed open. However, I think our preoccupation with nostalgia can prevent us from imagining a better future. It acts as a way to suppress feelings of alienation, which can be useful in inciting social change. In his article, "Space Oddities," author Ken McLeod writes about how participants in rave culture and the earlier funk, glam rock, and punk subcultures used imagery of outer space and the

"alien Other" to create community among young people who feel alienated by mainstream society due to race, gender, or sexuality.[3] In recent years, it seems we feel alienated even further. Grafton Tanner's *Babbling Corpse* discusses the emergence of vaporwave, a niche music genre that gained underground popularity in the early 2010s, and its relationship to pop culture, capitalism, and hauntology.[4] Vaporwave appropriates the soulless corporate background music ever present in our lives to reveal the disturbing strangeness of modern advertising and consumer culture.

While nostalgic themes are prevalent across human culture, feeling estranged from others and one's environment seems ubiquitous in post-industrial, capitalist societies. Kathleen Skott-Myhre's *Feminist Spirituality Under Capitalism* addresses the ways that scientific thought, particularly historical psychology, is used to affirm patriarchal, imperialist capitalism and dismiss all other ways of existing.[5] Much of my research so far is in science and white, European philosophy, but Skott-Myhre has led me to reconsider power structures and the flawed idea of "objectivity" that only furthers alienation.

I am looking into all of these for inspiration as I begin working on my album. In my practice, research is ongoing and happens alongside my creative process. I start by reading Wikipedia articles and proceed to books and databases like JSTOR to find more in-depth information. For example, to make my video, "Telepathy Machine," I began by looking through declassified CIA research on the internet and found an account of an experiment done on magician Uri Geller in the 1970s that claimed to prove his psychic abilities.[6] Using techniques inspired by the document, I put my friend under sensory deprivation and conducted an interview, condensed the audio, created a

soundtrack with my synthesizer, and filmed an accompanying video in front of a green screen.

I consider music, video, and written zines my favorite ways to express my ideas because they may be viewed alone, outside of a gallery setting, creating an intimate connection between artist and viewer. Through my lyrics, I aim to tell abstracted stories, drawing from imagination and personal experience. Focusing on nostalgia and the struggle between objective, reductionist science and modern philosophy with our innate desire for spiritual transcendence, I will explore the topics I'm interested in thematically rather than didactically.

As far as musical style and songwriting, my influences include Nick Cave, Suicide, Kate Bush, Soko, Brian Eno, Björk, Massive Attack, and many others. I'm also inspired by electronic music pioneers Mort Garson, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Isao Tomita, and the seminal 1968 compilation *Cybernetic Serendipity Music*. Vaporwave and other internet microgenres are of interest to me as well. Aesthetically, I would like to move away from rock music towards a more varied, electronic sound, combining hi-fi digital with lo-fi analog techniques and sampling public domain music from previous eras. Having free access to the media of previous generations is what I believe defines the digital age. By combining the generic inoffensiveness of elevator music and clichéd classical compositions with my own idiosyncratic sound, I will make the background music we hear every day sound unfamiliar.

The finished album will be available for free on Bandcamp with my other music, in addition to a limited edition of CDs. There will be a small installation in a quiet area of the school with a comfortable place to sit and a single pair of headphones playing my

album on a loop, where people can sit and listen to it alone for as long as they wish. I will also create a small zine of illustrated song lyrics. This will be included with the CDs, for sale separately online, and accessible for free on social media and my website. To accompany the album, I will make a short music video, combining green screen footage shot with my Hi8 camcorder and digitally rendered imagery to reflect our obsessive nostalgia for obsolete technologies. I love the idea of someone coming across my songs on the internet and listening to them alone in their room, as this is how I first discovered and related to most of my favorite music.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Abbott, Edwin A. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. New York: Dover Publications, 1992.

Anderson, Laurie. *Big Science*. Album. Warner Bros, 1982.

Apostles. *Punk Obituary*. Album. Mortarhate Records, 1986.

Armando. "Confusion's Revenge," track # 3 on *Acid House* compilation. Song. Jack Trax, 1988.

It's been a goal my whole life to expose myself to as many genres of music as possible and find at least one artist, album, or song that I enjoy. Sometimes it takes a few tries and I have to keep revisiting them, but the feeling when it finally "clicks" in my mind is euphoric. It gives me a door to a whole area of culture I would have missed out on. Electronic dance music was one I struggled with for a while. I was definitely biased: in my early teens, the daughter of my mom's boyfriend at the time loved 2000s dubstep and I found her music torturous. A few years later, I became interested in the early history of house music and rave culture as the bridge from 70s funk and disco to 90s hip hop. The fashion was great and its community-based, anarchist ethos appealed to me. However, I couldn't quite "get" the music itself. It seems ridiculous in retrospect - I loved funk and early synth-pop. After downloading a bunch of acid house one day, I put on Armando's 1988 single, "Confusion's Revenge," while I was cleaning, and I finally "got" it. Placing music within its historical and political moment is very satisfying to me and makes the music itself more moving when I think of its creators and the setting where they intended it to be listened to. Sometimes, though, it still takes me a while to figure out how to relate to it - in this case, the sound is meant to be experienced very physically and I had to be standing up and moving around.  I feel a little depressed thinking about what followed Chicago house when white consumer culture turned yet another innovative, queer, black, working-class art form into utter shit.

Ayers, Kevin. *Joy of a Toy*. Album. Harvest Records, 1969.

Bacon, Redmond. "The Vaporwave Aesthetic: Ironic Nostalgia." Soundontime, Oct 14, 2018. https://www.soundontime.com/vaporwave-aesthetic/

Beatles. *Magical Mystery Tour (LP)*. Album. Capitol, 1967.

I think The Beatles are a little like *The Catcher in the Rye*: a generation loves a piece of counterculture so much that, when they get older and become authority figures, they force it on young people for decades until it isn't edgy or revolutionary anymore and we all resent it. But sometimes, things are classic because they're pretty good. The Beatles were the first band I ever became completely obsessed with in elementary school, and I think their weirder stuff primed me to enjoy experimental music as I got older. Even if they weren't the first to use the experimental techniques they utilized, they've helped bring them to a mainstream audience. This album in particular had a huge effect on me as a child and inspired me to start obsessively reading and trying to understand the meanings of song lyrics. I'm sure that, considering my lack of life experience, my interpretations were completely off from what the band intended, but I think the passtime was a great exercise for me to understand songwriting and the use of figurative language. I'd always loved drawing, but this was what made me realize I could express myself through music as well.

Bickers, Patricia and Andrew Wilson. "Ilya Kabakov interviewed by William Furlong: The Unofficial Line" In *Talking Art: Interviews With Artists Since 1976*, 307-311. London: Ridinghouse, 2007.

Kabakov's piece "The Untalented Artist and Other Characters" is an installation of a series of rooms in a communal apartment, each showing the distinct personality of each inhabitant in contrast with the loss of individual identity that comes with living with strangers in a communal space. Each character's room represents "an attempt to escape from what is an overbearing structure into a more private real world by analysing and making manifest every aspect of one's existence." (pg. 308) Kabakov explains, "every room is always, in a way, like a prison to a person. If you live in a room, to get to the outside world seems to be the ultimate desire." (pg. 308) In the most well-known of these rooms, "The Man Who Flew Into Outer Space From His Apartment", we see the aftermath of a man who has built a catapult to launch himself into "some kind of other world, some heaven, some wonderful place or some paradise." (pg. 308). He seeks transcendence through his own means, relying on no outside help to build his machine.

Björk. *Debut*. Album. Elektra Records, 1993.

Björk's experimental, eclectic sound inspires me, drawing from many disparate influences and integrating them into catchy, fun pop songs.

Bowie, David. *The Man Who Sold the World*. Album. Mercury Records, 1970.

Bowie, David. *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*. Album. RCA Records, 1972.

Brel, Jaques. *Marieke*. Album. Philips, 1961.

"Marieke," this album's title track, is one of the most beautiful songs I've ever heard. I don't understand French, but somehow, I almost always tear up by its crescendo. My experience with the song has been very personal. I almost always listen to it wearing headphones. After my terabyte hard drive crashed a couple years ago, it was one of about a hundred songs that were salvaged because I'd had them uploaded to my iPod and they were pretty much all I listened to for about a year. Once I finally accepted that the drive couldn't be recovered and started trying to collect everything again, those songs were still too emotionally overwhelming to hear for a while. Thankfully I've been able to listen to Jacques Brel again recently! I love watching old footage of his performances on Youtube, he's very theatrical and fully assumes the role of each song.

Bull, Michael. "The Auditory Nostalgia of iPod Culture." In Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices, edited by Bijsterveld Karin and Van Dijck José, 83-93. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

Listening to music through headphones while you're out in public is a relatively new experience. Bull discusses his research into this and its effects on listeners: "Their world becomes one with their "sound tracked" movements, moving to the rhythm of their music rather than to the rhythm of the street. In tune with their thoughts, their chosen music enables them to focus on their feelings, desires, and auditory memories." (85) He has a somewhat pessimistic view that I don't fully agree with, claiming that this is just a way for consumer culture to infiltrate as much of our daily lives as possible.

Byrne, David. *How Music Works*. Audiobook. Recorded Books Inc, 2012.

This book was a huge help in so many ways - the technical info, deep analysis of the Talking Heads' creative decisions, and little-known stories of music history he shared were both entertaining and relevant to the project. I've always been fascinated by the way Byrne dances in his performances. As a fellow awkward

and decidedly uncool person, his odd, twitchy motions feel much more authentic and attainable to me than if I tried to imitate the style of more conventional artists. I really enjoyed hearing his own thoughts on this and other aspects of his unique stage persona. Later in the book (I wish I could cite the chapter and exact page, but unfortunately I was listening to the audiobook), he talks about how humans are born enchanted by the absurdity of reality, but as our brains mature and our neural connections become more solidified, we are forced to lose that overwhelming awe to function. However, this feeling re-emerges later as an interest in fantasy, horror, uncanniness, and transcendence of the self, themes he says are prevalent in music today.

Byrne, David and Brian Eno. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. Album. Sire Records, 1981.

Cave, Nick. *Push the Sky Away*. Album. Bad Seed Ltd, 2013.

My favorite Nick Cave album. I love the heavy, minimalist arrangements that move away from the band's previous rock-oriented sound. Thematically, it explores belief and mystery, with some lyrics alluding to how scientific progress has failed to give us concrete, fulfilling answers to life's questions. I'm especially interested in the album's cryptic references to modern pop culture and the internet: in "We Real Cool," Cave compares Wikipedia to heaven, and in "Higgs Boson Blues" he makes multiple references to pop star Miley Cyrus.

Chytilová, Věra. *Daisies*. Film. Sigma III, Corp., 1967.

CIA. "Appendix I, Experiments - Uri Geller at SRI" in *STARGATE Collection*, 1973. Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, 2000. CIA-RDP96-00791R000100480003-3.

Whether any evidence is true or not, I love learning about pseudoscience. The experiments that the CIA performed with Uri Geller in the 1970s are fascinating - even the American government and institutions of science, always imagining themselves as the objective, rational gatekeepers of truth, want to believe in something beyond our physical limitations.

cLOUDDEAD. *Ten*. Album. Mush Records, 2004.

Cohen, Leonard. *Death of a Ladies' Man*. Album. Warner Bros, 1977.

*Death of a Ladies' Man* received poor reviews compared to Cohen's other work, but I think the songwriting is some of his best and actually enjoy Spectre's cheesy arrangements.

Cohen, Leonard. *I'm Your Man*. Album. Columbia, 1988.

> The album's first track, "First We Take Manhattan," is an obvious inspiration for my own songs, "Uranium-1" and "Uranium-2." The song's vague, enigmatic story of a man planning an act of insurrection is grounded with very concrete and specific lyrical details.

Crowded House. *Woodface*. Album. Capitol Records, 1991.

> I grew up in a parallel universe where Neil Finn was John Lennon. My parents were obsessive fans of Australian alternative rock band Crowded House and I was under the impression that they were the most popular and beloved group of all time. But when I sang their songs at school, I was astonished that the other kids had no idea who the fuck I was talking about. A few of my teachers knew "Don't Dream it's Over" and I think one time someone's dad owned *Woodface*, but for the most part, they're regarded in the US as a one-hit wonder. I rebelled against my parents' taste in junior high and despised the band, but upon reevaluation, I've changed my mind. I love the jangle-pop weirdness of their early stuff and have realized what an influence it's had over my own songwriting. Some of their music videos, "Four Seasons in One Day" and "Chocolate Cake" come to mind, are a lot of fun (Funny enough, my dad doesn't get the deliberately kitschy aesthetic and hates them.) When I'm able to set aside my natural abhorrence for soft rock, I can even appreciate their later albums' thoughtful lyrics and melodies. Don't tell anyone - I once made the mistake of playing *Intriguer* while hanging out with a friend and, unsurprisingly, they made fun of me.

Cruikshank, Sally. "Make Me Psychic" and "*Quasi and the Quackadero*" from *Sally Cruikshank Films*. DVD. Julie Rico Gallery, n.d. (original animations released 1978 and 1975 respectively).

> I love animator Sally Cruikshank's use of bright colors and surreal, fantastical plots, often involving phenomena like telekinesis and time travel.

Demme, Jonathan. *Stop Making Sense*. Film. Cinecom Pictures, 1984.

> Byrne writes extensively about what influenced his idiosyncratic style of dancing in his 2012 book, *How Music Works* - see my annotation above.

The Deep Freeze Mice. *My Geraniums are Bulletproof*. Album. Mole Embalming Records, 1979.

Deskee. "Let There Be House," single. Song. Black Out, 1989.

Devo. *Duty Now for the Future*. Album. Warner Bros, 1979.

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: Doubleday, 1968.

> A classic science fiction book with themes of alienation, empathy, and loneliness in capitalist society. I'm especially interested in Mercerism, a fictional, technology-based religion centered around the empathy of communal suffering. Mercerists use "empathy boxes" to collectively share the experience of founder Wilbur Mercer and his eternal journey up a mountain while being struck by stones, followed by his death and resurrection. In this case, community and self-transcendence serve as ways to hold onto the human ideals of hope, empathy, and community in a post-apocalyptic, consumerist world where androids are a commodity and the humanity of every individual is constantly in question. While modern virtual reality technology affects only our visual and auditory perception, unlike the complete conscious experience created by Mercerism's empathy boxes, much has been theorized about its potential to produce empathy and an altered experience of self.

Eagleman, David. *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009.

> A collection of short fiction written by neuroscientist David Eagleman speculating on different possible afterlives. One story, "Ineffable ," is of particular interest to me. It proposes that groups of individuals (such as a platoon or the cast of a show) make up conscious entities greater than the sum of their parts with their own experience of "self ," similar to how a human is made up of trillions of individual cells that come together in a way we don't yet understand to form consciousness.

Eno, Brian. *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*. Album. Island Records, 1974.

> With its pioneering experimental sound and dadaist lyrics, this album has been a huge influence on my musical practice. I find it much more inspiring, enjoyable, and accessible than his later ambient music, but I think that says more about my short attention span than the work itself.

Eshun, Kodwo. *Dan Graham: Rock My Religion*. London: Afterall Books. 2012.

Ferraro, James. "A Conversation With James Ferraro, Critical Futurist." Interview by Anna Gaca. *Spin*, August 18, 2016.
https://www.spin.com/2016/08/james-ferraro-human-story-3-interview/

Finn, Simon. *Pass the Distance*. Album. London: Mushroom, 1970.

> *Pass The Distance* is one of my favorite albums of all time and I don't understand why it isn't considered a classic in the psychedelic folk genre. It's wild that he was only a teenager when he recorded it. I love how Finn's voice isn't conventionally "good" or easy to listen to; it makes the raw emotion he sings with feel even more authentic. I don't have a "good" voice either, so hearing stuff like this makes me feel more comfortable with it. The album's centerpiece, "Jerusalem," is so moving that it usually makes me cry.

Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures*. Winchester: Zero Books, 2013.

Fisher, Mark. "What Is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2012): 16-24. doi:10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16.

FKA twigs. *Magdalene*. Album. Young Turks, 2019.

> A major flaw of mine is my fear of listening to any music less than a decade old, preferably two or three. I think a big part of my interest in music is everything that surrounds it. Inserting an album into its context in the web of musical and political history ingrained in my brain is very satisfying to me and I like being able to trace the roots of an album's influences and then see the future artists and genres it led to, which isn't really possible when an album is first released. But unfortunately that means I usually miss out on a lot of great stuff. Thanks to the persistent efforts of my roommate, I took a chance with FKA twigs' *Magdalene* and now it's one of my favorite albums ever. It has the perfect mix of eclectic experimentation with mainstream pop appeal. I love every track, but I think "Fallen Alien" is my favorite. As with much of the album, she alternates between a simple melody in the verses and heavier, glitchy, electronic sections. All of her songs keep the basic elements of conventional pop structure, but the variations and the plain weirdness of it all is completely unique. I first listened to this shortly before I started recording *Strange Machines* and took a lot of inspiration from its electronic sounds and alternations between very full instrumental backings and more minimalist sections.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ace, 1984.

Hoeller, Stephen A. *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*. Wheaton: Quest Books, 2013.

Graham, Dan. *Rock My Religion*. Film. Directed by Dan Graham, 1984.

Dan Graham's 1984 experimental documentary *Rock My Religion* draws comparisons between the ecstatic, trance-like dancing engaged in at punk shows in the 1970s and that of the Shakers, an 18th century Christian sect focused on simplicity, purity, and communal living. Rather than achieving unity among a group through synchrony of movement, shaking is an individual act of communion with a higher power, allowing a person to rid themselves of sin and desire so that they may continue living peacefully and communally.

Green, Sam and Bill Siegel. *The Weather Underground*. Film. PBS, 2002.

Both parts of "Uranium" were inspired in part by this documentary I saw on the Weather Underground, a far left militant organization active in the 1960s and 70s with the goal of overthrowing capitalism and American imperialism. I purposely shot the video for the first part of the song in a similar format, with alternating talking head and full body shots as if the character is being interviewed. In the song's second part, the cryptic narrative is reminiscent of the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion in 1970, when three Weather Underground members were killed while creating a homemade bomb in a townhouse basement.

Hagen, Nina. *NunSexMonkRock*. Album. CBS Records, 1982.

I love the combination of Hagen's punk-inspired electronic dance music with her cryptic, often outer space-themed lyrics.

Harvey, PJ. *Is This Desire?* Album. Island Records, 1998.

Hassan, Ihab. "The New Gnosticism: Speculations on an Aspect of the Postmodern Mind." *Boundary 2,* vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 547-70. Durham: Duke University Press, 1973.

I was influenced by Egypt-born American theorist Ihab Hassan's essay, "The New Gnosticism", and the way he relates modern technology with spirituality. Hassan identifies alienation as the root of the Gnostic impulse and speculates on how a utopia of universal communication could have functioned before the mythical Tower of Babel fell. Suffering, competition, and isolation are seen as the result of a flawed universe rather than the sin of humanity, who are inherently good. Contrasting with the traditional Christian idea of seeking knowledge as the original sin, the Gnostics believed that a person can only be liberated through gnosis, insight into humanity's true nature as divine and whole. He argues that

technology has brought us closer than ever to the Gnostic ideals of knowledge and convergence. Hassan wrote his essay in 1973 before the rise of the internet, but I believe it was very fortelling. In an ideal world, where everyone could access and contribute to it, the internet would perfectly embody the gnostic ideal of complete knowledge and communication transcending the mind, body, and self. In a way, I think it's a close attempt at humanity's age-old dream of telepathy and the ability to transmit ideas mind-to-mind at a distance. But other aspects of the writing make it seem pretty dated - very few women are referenced, and the author claims that the land is "feminine" and grounded while the sky is "masculine" and relates to intellect and technology. The idea that the physical world is something to be transcended, as if the mind is seperate from and somehow operating at a higher level than the body, is rooted in European philosophy and ignores many other perspectives.

Hoffman, Donald D. "The Evolutionary Argument Against Reality." Interview by Amanda Gefter. Quanta Magazine, April 21, 2016.

Quantitative psychologist Donald Hoffman has popularized the "Multimodal User Interface" theory of reality, claiming that the human brain's perception of reality could not have evolved to perceive things objectively. He compares an individual's experience of the external world to a desktop interface, where an icon's color, shape, and position are a symbol to help the user understand its nature and contents rather than an accurate representation of the code composing them. In this scenario, conscious agents, or 'selves', could take the form of an individual organism in the traditional sense, but they could also emerge from multiple individuals or communities.

Hofstadter, Douglas and Daniel Dennett. *The Mind's I*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

A collection of philosophical essays and creative writing about our conceptions of self, consciousness, and individuality.

Howard, Roland S. *Teenage Snuff Film*. Album. London: Cooking Vinyl, 1999.

Johnston, Daniel. *Hi, How Are You*. Album. Self-released, 1983.

This album and *Yip/Jump Music* are probably Johnston's two most popular releases and my personal favorites. The limited sounds he uses, usually just a chord organ or piano, his voice, and the occasional snippet of a noise-making children's toy, create his own immersive little universe. "Keep Punching Joe"

really stands out to me, though. He plays an instrumental jazz record in the background and makes up his own lyrics to the song, imagining himself as the frontman of a big band ensemble. I find the label of "outsider art" condescending. Johnston is a prime example of a songwriter who I feel has been deemed an "outsider" inappropriately. His clear influences and love of pop music make it obvious that he was aware of and engaging with the culture surrounding him. He took piano lessons as a child, attended art school, went to great lengths to distribute his music, and stated throughout his life that he wanted to be a famous "rock star". Many artists start off self-releasing their music, and I think it's patronizing that people champion his work's unconventional sound as somehow more "pure" simply because he struggled with mental illness.

Joy Division. *Warsaw*. Album. MPG, 1994.

Kabakov, Ilya. *The Man Who Flew Into Outer Space From His Apartment*. Installation. Feldman Fine Arts, New York, 1988. Photograph by D. James Dee.

Kon, Satoshi. *Paprika*. Anime. Madhouse, 2006.

Kraftwerk. *Trans-Europe Express*. Album. Kling Klang, 1976.

When I first encountered Kraftwerk, I was listening almost exclusively to punk, new wave, and glam rock. Teachers, friends' parents, and self-righteous old men I chatted with at shows who shared my taste tended to be rock purists and had somehow convinced me that electronic music was "soulless" and took less skill to make, which is pretty hilarious to me now - for some reason, old people like to make kids who like the things they did when they were fourteen feel like they're cooler and smarter than their peers. If I remember correctly, this was the first album I heard that warmed me up to the genre. The group's technical skill is obvious, and the apparent "soullessness" of the robotic vocals and sequenced synth parts becomes beautiful in it's own way, a divergence from the raw emotion of rock that reflects what it means to be a human alive today from a completely different angle.

Lanthimos, Yorgos. *Dogtooth*. Film. Boo Productions, 2009.

My favorite part is the scene where the older sister performs her own bizarre rendition of the choreography from the film *Flashdance*.

lewdie, "Midwest Rave Footage 1998," YouTube video, 1:29:46, July 3rd, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFre1TEGExQ.

Great footage, I love the cheesy effects like the mirroring at 13:45 and the color inversion at 40:00.

lildog.co. Instagram account.

This artist's work inspired much of the film's costume design, especially the mask in "Godwhistles".

Magazine. *Real Life*. Album. Virgin Records, 1978.

Mars, Roman. "Ways of Hearing." 99% Invisible. Podcast audio, August 1st, 2017.

I like the band Galaxie 500, but this interview with their drummer, Damon Krukowski, really makes him sound like a bitter, arrogant old fart. He shares some interesting stuff about the history of audio recording, but his basic gist is that the kids these days are lazy and digital technology has taken the soul out of music and eliminated the need for talent. It's much easier to create a semi-convincing guitar solo using software than actually learn to play an instrument. To quote my father when I made him go a hike with me, "This is stupid, I could do this at the gym on a treadmill." While this man's thought process often baffles me, he raises an interesting question here: What makes the real thing inherently better than a simulation? In this scenario, where your choices are Tahoe National Forest or listening to Eminem in a sweaty hellscape, the answer seems obvious. However, I do think that in the context of recording and producing music, it's something worth thinking about. Someone who couldn't realistically plan a trip to a state park might be able to fit a 20-minute run at a cheap gym into their schedule. Insisting there's something inherently wrong with the more accessible option feels elitist. I also sense some implied racism in Krukowski's good-old-fashioned-rock-n-roll elitism as well, considering that many current artists using digital interfaces are young POC producing hip hop and electronic work.

Massive Attack. *Blue Lines*. Album. Wild Bunch, 1991.

Massive Attack. *Heligoland*. Album. Virgin Records, 2010.

Maxis, *The Sims 2*. Video game. Electronic Arts, PC, 2004.

Aside from a couple early DS games, the first game in the franchise I owned was actually 2009's *The Sims 3*. But for years before that, I wanted *The Sims 2* so fucking badly. I played it at friends' houses, and if I remember correctly, I managed to download an extremely glitchy version of the game's Create-A-Sim

editor. However, most of my exposure was through reading message boards, browning user-created custom content sites, and watching horrible music videos users made by pairing unnerving screen recordings of their sims striking suggestive poses with early 2000s pop songs. No one talks about that lost art anymore, but I just checked YouTube and these terrifying videos live on. The community surrounding *The Sims* series is really cool; people put so much creativity into making mods and custom content for the game, and most share their work with other players for free. Lots of gravity-defying anime hair and stone-washed ultra-low-rise jeans.

Maxis, Spore. Video game. Electronic Arts, PC, 2008.

I was surprised to find out recently that my absolute favorite video game when I was ten received pretty mediocre reviews. I also found out that this was probably my first exposure to Brian Eno - he co-created the game's generative musical score with Peter Chilvers. Looking back, I think the sound design in particular is a big part of what made *Spore* feel so immersive to me. For context, the player starts off as a cell in the game and evolves through various stages of development until their species achieves space travel, and eventually there are no required objectives to fulfill and the player is free to explore a pretty much unlimited number of procedurally-generated planets populated by other species and civilizations. Though the graphics and gameplay are limited by today's standards, the game's simulated universe gave me a similar feeling of beauty, transcendence, and awe that I felt in the real world looking at the stars. Reading that will likely be met with an indignant groan from older generations, but I imagine children watching the original *Star Trek* series felt the same. There's always been this alarmist, obviously untrue notion that Gen Z didn't play outside. Those of us born in the late 90s experienced a pretty unsophisticated version of the web and no one really had a cell phone before their teens. As the first generation born after the launch of the modern internet, however, the blurring we experience between the digital and physical world is significant. I don't think this holds any of the moral implications or tragedy that our parents believe it does, but we undoubtedly share a common fascination with nostalgia. It makes sense considering the fast shifts of technology and obsolescence we experienced throughout our childhoods.

MacLeod, Ken. "Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism and Meaning in Popular Music" In *Popular Music*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Oct., 2003), pp. 337-355. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nakamura, Ryūtarō and Chiaki J. Konaka. *Serial Experiments Lain*. Anime series. TV Tokyo, 1999.

One of my favorite pieces of media of all time. *Lain* tells the story of a shy girl in a semi-futuristic world where the boundaries between life and the internet are becoming less and less distinct. It explores the concepts of reality and identity in a deep but quiet, surreal way, and its predictions become more hauntingly relevant every year since its release in 1999. Lain, the anime's main character, inspired my character "Lucky" and the lyrical content of the album as a whole, particularly its title track.

Niblett, Scout. *I Am*. Album. Secretly Canadian, 2003.

Nomi, Klaus. *Klaus Nomi*. Album. Electric Lady Studios, 1981.

Oshii, Mamoru. *Ghost in the Shell*. Anime. Palm Pictures, 1995.

Pamela, Lucia. *Into Outer Space With Lucia Pamela.* Album. Gulfstream Records, 1969.

Parliament. *Mothership Connection*. Album. Casablanca Records, 1975.

Pärn, Priit. *...And Plays Tricks*. Short film. Tallinn: Tallinnfilm, 1978.

Pärn, Priit. *Night of the Carrots*. Tallinn: Tallinnfilm, 1998.

PNKSLM, "ShitKid - "Sugar Town" (Official Video)," YouTube video, 2:48, July 14th, 2007. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceyb0K3YO1s.

I haven't seen many "official" music videos in this style - it's purposely made to look like some kind of amateur fan piece. The title cards, terrible effects, and confusing anime-inspired fight at the end are fantastic. I messaged ShitKid once and she left me on read. :(

Põldma, Janno. *Sünnipäev*. Short film. Tallinn: Tallinnfilm, 1994.

A huge influence on my artistic style is Estonian animator Janno Põldma's 1994 short film, *Sünnipäev*, which translates to *Birthday* in English. Animated in a colorful, childish style, with strange and disturbing sound effects, it tells a loose, disorienting story of a birthday party that quickly becomes violent and surreal. It's been almost impossible to find any reliable information on this film, but from what I was able to gather from Youtube comments, the drawings were created by children and made into paper puppets by Põldma. I interpret *Sünnipäev* as a

depiction of senseless violence, often used for comical effect in Western animation but a very disturbing reality in Estonia during the time this was made.

Powell, Adam and Donna Williams. Neopets. Website. Independently published, 1999 (acquired by Viacom in 2005). http://www.neopets.com/

Created by college students in 1999, Neopets was the first online virtual pet site. I signed up using my mom's birthday so they would think I was in my 30s and I could post on the forums and customize my Neopets' pages, started a covert business making shitty html layouts, and was eventually banned for charging people real money through Paypal. This marked the rise and fall of my ventures into capitalism and the tech industry. I think what interests me most about Neopets is how young children are able to conceptualize how you're supposed to play and relate to the game. For a virtual pet simulation, it bore very little semblance to owning a pet. You could pay to paint your Neopet different colors and its icon would change when it was sick or hungry, but they were otherwise static and there were no consequences for your actions on their wellbeing. They didn't move and you couldn't interact with them in any meaningful way, but I remember feeling such a pure joy and fondness towards my Neopets.

Redjeb, Samy Ben and various artists. *Space Echo: The Mystery Behind the Cosmic Sound of Cabo Verde Finally Revealed!* Analog Africa: 2016.

Reichardt, Jasia. *Cybernetic Serendipity: The Computer and the Arts*. London, UK and New York, NY: Studio International, 1968.

Rottenberg, Mika. *Mary's Cherries*. Single channel video installation. FRAC Languedoc, 2012.

Sainte-Marie, Buffy. *Illuminations*. Album. Vanguard, 1969.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine. *The Little Prince*. Translated by Richard Howard. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2000.

A huge influence on my practice that I recently rediscovered. This was one of my favorites as a child that I hadn't thought much about until I found an old copy at a thrift store. One of the best selling and most translated books ever published, it tells the story of an aviator who crashes in the Sahara desert, where he meets a young boy who claims to be from a tiny asteroid with no other people living on it. The boy recounts lessons he has learned from his travels to various planets in the solar system and his eventual landing on Earth. Rereading childhood

favorites is often disappointing, but for the most part, it was how I remembered and still very poignant. The idea that one should face the absurdity of the universe with kindness and responsibility feels much much truer to me than moral nihilism and existential angst. I'm bothered by the pressure in art school to exclusively consume edgy, obscure media and to only enjoy heartfelt stories ironically.

Savage, Steve. "Integration or(Dis)integration?" from *Bytes and Backbeats: Repurposing Music in the Digital Age*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2011.

In "Integration or (Dis)integration?", Savage writes about public perceptions of live performance versus recording, arguing that neither is superior or more "authentic"; they are simply different art forms. Though historically, many people have viewed recording technology as an excuse to put less effort into practice and mastery over an instrument, this ignores the creativity involved in mixing and sampling. Many musicians simply prefer higher production quality and more control over the final product. The author goes on to discuss the issue of cultural appropriation and recontextualization in music in both Western and non-Western music, citing examples of where this is inappropriate and where it is creative and can lead to exciting new material. Artists in privileged positions simply stealing from cultures outside of their own with no acknowledgement or understanding of the source material is obviously unethical and disrespectful. However, the author argues, modern artists recontextualizing their own culture's traditional music and collaborating with artists of a different background can be innovative and spark new interest in older music that might be otherwise unknown and inaccessible to listeners, a method Savage calls "interpretive repurposing." (179) Adding a dance beat to to an older song or a sampled spoken word piece might attract an audience who would otherwise have little interest in the original work and expose them to culturally significant media in a new way.

Scott, Ridley. *Blade Runner*. Film. The Ladd Company, 1982.

The Shaggs. *Philosophy of the World*. Album. Third Word, 1969.

I've spoken previously about how I don't believe that "outsider art" exists, but if there's one exception, it's The Shaggs. The three socially isolated sisters were forced by their disciplinarian father to start a rock band in the late 1960s because their deceased grandmother had a premonition that they would become a

popular musical act. Their lack of interest in and understanding of music is very obvious. It legitimately sounds like they've never heard a pop song first-hand and were just given a vague description of what garage rock sounds like to go off. What I find most intriguing about the group is that, though they sound horribly sloppy at first, if you listen for a while, you'll realize that their music is meticulously rehearsed and complex. When the sisters sing backing vocals, they line up perfectly in spite of the chaotic rhythms. The drummer switches metres at random with no apparent regard to the rest of the group. If someone told me this was a Captain Beefheart collaboration, I would believe it. In most of the album, the lead guitar follows the exact same melody as the vocals, which actually creates a really interesting and unique sound. The anarchic musical accompaniment to the innocent, often melancholy lyrics is unsettling, but genuinely moving in its earnestness.

Shapiro, Peter. *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music*. New York, NY: Caipirinha Productions Inc., 2000.

Spears, Britney. "Toxic," track #1 on *In the Zone*. Jive, 2003.

I feel no shame admitting that I think this is one of the most perfectly crafted pop songs I've ever listened to. I hear "Toxic" dismissed by "real" music fans (straight men) as manufactured, soulless, garbage. The usual accusation is that "She didn't even write it!" The notion that a song must be written and performed by a singular "genius" to be valid as art goes back to classical composers and the upper classes' effort to discourage the traditional, community-based folk music of the lower classes. And the other common accusation that modern pop isn't "real" because many producers are in the business for the money seems irrelevant; this has been the case since well before the 21st century. Pop music can be incredibly artistic and innovative. An arrangement like this, perfectly catchy without being annoying, appealing to mainstream audiences without being riskless or cliche, is rare in any genre. I'd never imagine samples lifted from a Bollywood soundtrack would work so well, but they do, adding an unexpected atonality to the conventional Western scale used in the song's melody. While I love experimental music, I love it even more when it keeps a pop sensibility. In my own music, I tend to stick to basic pop structures.

Spielberg, Steven. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Film. Directed by Steven
Spielberg. Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1977.

This was one of my favorite movies as a child. I've always been fascinated by the
main character's obsession with and eventual journey to the site of the UFO
landing, where he finds others who have been having the same mysterious vision
and compulsion to visit this place.

Sundays, The. *Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic*. Album. Rough Trade, 1990.

The Sylvers. *The Sylvers*. Album. Pride Records, 1972.

I think family bands tend to be dismissed nowadays since there have been so
many cheesy ones, but The Sylvers are an exception. Once its very, very 70s
sound grows on you, it's clear that this album is genius. Leon Sylvers III, who
wrote nearly the entire work alone, was only nineteen when it was produced and
already shows an exceptional talent for melody, harmony, and instrumental
arrangements. Along with Britney Spears' "Toxic", the first track, "Wish That I
Could Talk To You," wins a Max's Completely Subjective Best Pop Song Award. I
have no idea how such a hooky, repetitive chorus avoids becoming annoying.
(The little "yeah!" after the bridge halfway through the song always makes me
laugh.)

Talking Heads. *Fear of Music*. Album. Sire Records, 1979.

The Talking Heads, along with Bowie's early stuff, were some of the first artists
whose lyrics I really connected to. As a teenager I felt very lost and the world
seemed unreal and often dangerous. *Fear of Music*, my favorite Talking Heads
album, was the perfect soundtrack. I found it comforting to know that this group
of weirdos seemed to feel a similar anxiety thirty years before me.

Tanner, Grafton. *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*.
Winchester: Zero Books, 2016.

Tanner discusses the emergence of vaporwave, a music genre that gained
underground popularity in the early 2010s, and its relationship to pop culture,
capitalism, postmodernism, phenomenology, and Derrida's concept of
hauntology. Vaporwave reveals the strangeness of capitalism, pop culture, and
the soulless corporate background music we've been conditioned to think is a
normal part of life. It appropriates the advertising technique of taking advantage
of consumers' empathy and nostalgia for profit and makes it eerie and unsettling.

Tuxedomoon. *Half-Mute*. Album. Ralph Records, 1980.

Wales, Jim and Larry Sanger. *Wikipedia*. Website. Wikimedia Foundation, 2001.

> Am I allowed to cite the entirety of Wikipedia?

The Walker Brothers. *Nite Flights*. Album. GTO, 1978.

> The most acclaimed track of the album, Scott Walker's "The Electrician," gives a eerie depiction of a CIA torturer. I think I accidentally ripped off the structure of my song "Uranium-2" on it - two short verses of abstract lines that read more like small poems than traditional lyrics. I love the song's combination of grand orchestral arrangements with atonal soundscapes. It's hard to believe it was made in the 70s.

Walker, Scott. *Tilt*. Album. Fontana Records, 1995.

> Brian Eno called Walker's solo work "a future of music not taken." But I think the most fitting review I've read is a Youtube comment from some guy named Tuan Jim: "Probably the ballsiest karaoke request imaginable. lol"

Waits, Tom. *Frank's Wild Years*. Album. Island Records, 1987.

> I love the unique, unsettling sound and lyrics of Waits' trilogy of albums from the 1980s, especially this one, which tells the story of a delusional Sinatra-wannabe who travels to New York to become a star and fails tragically.

Weir, Peter. *The Truman Show*. Film. Scott Rudin Productions, 1998.

Wickstrom, Max. "Nostalgia Survey." Unpublished, March 2019.

> https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zJFM1EOuX-GF84hO0IbI0LWE3_xi7Z GWRBhU1eFJUfY
>
> As fieldwork, I conducted an anonymous survey on nostalgia, homesickness, and belief. I shared the link on homeroom and social media and ended up getting almost a hundred responses as of 3/10/19, which is more than I anticipated. After much consideration, these are the questions I decided to ask:
>
> 1. How old are you?
> 2. How do you define nostalgia?
> 3. Why do you think Millenials and Gen Z are so nostalgic for the recent past?
> 4. How do you define homesickness?
> 5. Do you ever feel homesick, even when you're at home?

6. As a child, did you fantasize about returning "home" to something you'd never actually experienced? (eg. secretly being an alien from outer space, a princess from a royal family, switched at birth, etc.)
7. Regardless of religious beliefs (or lack of), do you personally believe in some form of life after death?
8. How do you feel about the paranormal? Do you believe that some mysteries cannot be explained by science?
9. Have you ever had a strange experience that you cannot explain logically? If you'd like, describe.
10. Do you feel connected to a community or larger whole? Please explain.
11. If you feel it is relevant, share your identity, cultural background, religious or philosophical views, etc.

When choosing the questions, I tried to leave most of them open-ended for people to respond with long answers, with the exception of 1, 5, 6, and 7, which I wanted statistics on. I found people's responses to question 3 interesting, with most agreeing that our culture of nostalgia stems from the rapidity of technological development and our desire to return to a simpler time with fewer responsibilities. This is exaggerated in our age group simply because society is changing faster than ever before, at an exponential rate. Most people defined homesickness as a longing for familiarity and belonging over a physical place. I found the results of question 6 particularly fascinating. I'd assumed the poll would be roughly split half and half, but it turns out that over 75% of participants fantasized about returning to an abstract conception of "home" that they had never experienced. I was also slightly surprised by question 7, which asked about religious belief. As with the last question, just over 75% had some belief in an afterlife. I had assumed that since most of my participants were college-aged art students, there would be a higher number of atheists, so this was really interesting. More people than I expected also reported that they believed in the paranormal. My favorite responses to read were to question 9, where I asked people about their own paranormal experiences. They ranged from pretty mundane to incredibly bizarre. The answers to question 10 were close to what I expected, with pretty even distribution between people who felt connected to humanity and life as a whole, people who felt connected to smaller communities

and subcultures, and people who felt completely alienated in spite of their desire to feel like a part of something larger than themselves. Overall, the responses to this survey were very helpful to my research and helped me gain a better understanding of public perceptions about the topics I'm investigating. I received a few messages from participants saying they enjoyed the survey and were interested in the same things, which I found to be encouraging proof that this is an area that should be more fully explored. It confirms my theory that it is natural and very human to want to return to an ambiguous "home" and feel like part of a larger whole.

Xavier, Ramona. "Vectors of Vektroid and Vaporwave." Interview by Simon Chandler. *Bandcamp Daily*, June 21, 2016.
https://daily.bandcamp.com/2016/06/21/vektroid-interview/

Whyman, Tom. "Oh, They Have the Internet on Computers Now? The Online Art of The Simpsons." In *Post Memes: Seizing the Memes of Production*, edited by Bown Alfie and Bristow Dan, 183-232. Punctum Books, 2019. doi:10.2307/j.ctv11hptdx.11.

Super interesting article on the history of vaporwave, specifically the weird and very specific microgenre of Simpsonwave. He offers a theory about the popularity of ironic internet art: "The answer, as far as I can tell, hinges on an important generational difference. We millennials have come of age in an increasingly precarious world, for the most part unable to aspire to any of the things that we have been brought up to think would make us 'real' people, like our parents: a stable professional job, home ownership, a family. Correlatively, this has produced in us a sense that our proper comportment toward the world — and toward ourselves, including I suppose our own memories — is one of disassociation, of disinvestment. If you're not 'really' trying, and you don't 'really' care, then you can't 'really' fail, can't "really" be hurt by your various inevitable disappointments" (199).