
Senior Projects Fall 2017

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Fall 2017

13

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Bard College

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Recommended Citation

Panek, Charles Julian, "13" (2017). *Senior Projects Fall 2017*. 11.
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Electronic Music
12/11/17

Senior Project Artist Statement

For my senior project I have completed an album. A performance would have been something to learn from and fun to do, but the majority of the music I've made is seemingly impossible to perform on the spot as there are so many details and off kiltered timings to play along with. Anyways, an album is something I have previously strived for and hoped to accomplish but have been reserved about doing. Electronic music is seen as easy to some and has been labeled as a medium that anybody could do (which they could!) But in reality there are a few levels to it as it is relative to the work one wishes to make. I have been hindered in my career due to a lack of a firm grasp on music theory/song structure. Perhaps more so, I have been struggling to understanding mixing, as it is respectively an art form in itself. I have spent years now using Ableton, a digital audio workstation, and feel like while I have a firm grasp on the in's and out's of the program, I am still acquiring new ways to achieve my desired result. This is mainly done through experimentation and going against what I have been told are "rules."

A conflict I faced during the process was how to juggle what I knew worked and what I wanted to learn. Making art for me is cathartic bliss and simultaneously a rather frightening deceptive process. There are so many times when I had to reevaluate what I had made after I was confident it was "done." Being able to accept that there is work to do is really the crux of what makes it so daunting, I believe. It is far easier to concede and just do what you know and like.

I wouldn't say that this is a concept album, which implies a theme and main idea, but I would say that there are running motifs and sounds that hopefully tie together. I have struggled with anxiety for a long time now and I think that this album has been a way to express this experience. I wanted to build environments that could be both tense and placid, possibly without notice, as these switches convey the unpredictable nature of how my disorder may manifest itself.

While I included less 'inspired' digital synths, keys and stock drums, there are also copious amounts of homemade sounds that I have crafted-both by focusing on their timbre and pitches. If it were up to me I would make all my sounds, but this is laborious and beyond my skills at the moment. I spent a lot of time this semester recording sounds and funny noises, such as my coffee grinder for the synth in "Don't Interrupt." There is arguably an advantage to doing this because there are artifacts and special qualities that emerge. On the flip side, making your own sounds creates more problems as these sounds were not meant to be "pleasing" or musical. In order to utilize them properly it takes time to equalize and tweak the noise to work within the context. Most of the vocals were recorded without using headphones with music playing from my speakers simultaneously, which inexcusably kills the mix. This leads to the beat or song playing in background of the tracks with the vocals. Sometimes it was negative-but other times I found that there were elements of the song which bled into the vocal track in such a way that (when transposing or playing with the vocals) something magical would slip in. I think every piece is unified by their details or moments which repurpose the surrounding world.

