The Self-Made Musician

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

May, 2012

Expected Date of Graduation

May, 2012
Abstract

Music is a powerful tool, capable of expressing emotion in a way that sometimes words alone cannot. The ability to manipulate this tool in ways that can accomplish such expression is a goal of all songwriters, though it is no easy task. Doing so requires much practice, persistence, and the ability to receive help from others. This is especially true when turning written songs into a complete music production, usually in the form of a recording. The author of this paper wrote, arranged, produced, and recorded a full-length album; this paper describes the processes that took place from start to finish. Also included are details about setbacks and surprises that changed elements of the album. Additionally, the paper briefly describes some of the research undertaken by the author as well as the inspiration and events that led to the creation of the songs.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Keith Kothman for advising me through this project. His guidance provided me with the ability to put my time to best use and complete such an ambitious project.

I would also like to thank those who played a part in recording this project; particularly Nick Walters, Aaron Hadley, and Sterlyng Powell. The musical talent of these men were essential to making the album all that it has become. I also am appreciative of the Ball State University School of Music and Paul Witkamp for letting me use their instruments.

Additionally, I would like to thank Allie Fouts, Sarah Steams, and Graeme Wilson for providing auxiliary elements to the project. Allie’s photos, combined with Sarah’s artwork and Graeme’s music video, added so much to this project.

Finally, I would like to thank Kevin, Christine, Kat, Rich, Erin, Jess, Anastasia, and everyone else who provided emotional support, encouragement, and/or inspiration for me during the creation of this album.
Author’s Statement (loosely written in the form of a song)

Intro: Getting the audience engaged in the song

Purpose

I began writing songs when I was sixteen. I had just bought my first guitar, and unlike my peers, I wanted to use the instrument to make songs, not just play covers of “Smoke on the Water” or “Stairway to Heaven.” I was terrible at writing songs. My lyrics were meaningless and elementary, and I could barely complete a musical sentence. I practiced writing and playing almost every day, learning all I could through books, the internet, and from friends who had more experience than me.

Fast-forwarding six years, I found myself faced with the Honors College capstone project. I decided that it was time to see if my writing skills had improved. I felt that I had grown significantly as a musician and songwriter, and I also thought I had learned enough to compete with the professionals. I was going to write, arrange, produce, and record a full-length album. I felt that this was a very ambitious project, but one that would be very rewarding and would showcase everything I learned at Ball State University.

The 2011-2012 school year was the most difficult one of my life to date. During this time, I went through a heart-wrenching breakup, a cancer scare, a DUI charge, and a scandal that ruined a relationship and several friendships. I spent a night in jail, lost my job, and had to find a new place to live. My license was suspended, and I was put on probation. I had reached an all-time low in my life. Rather than sit around and feel sorry for myself, I decided to turn my mishaps and mistakes into art. The suffering I had gone through gave me a voice that I had been missing up to this point. I now had the ability to write songs about love and life, and I could
safely say that they came from the heart. Six years of practice and research had made me a better
writer, but it took the aforementioned incidents to give me a new perspective on life; a
perspective that would give me the ability to write songs to which people could relate. My
motivation for writing songs was more about self-expression than it had ever been before, and I
found songwriting to be a way to explain or clarify the events in my life. The most rewarding
aspect to it was seeing the power it had on others; watching a friend tear up after reading some of
my lyrics made me realize I was capable of making great a contribution to the world of art. This
was a second reason to record an album; it would make sharing the songs much easier than if I
were to just play them live. People would be able to listen to my songs on their computers or
iPods. With this in mind, I knew completion of an album would be the best possible way to end
my college career.

Verse 1: Setting up the story

*Songwriting and pre-production*

The songs were already in the process of being written when I decided to make the
creation of a full-length album my creative project. I had plenty of ideas, both musically and
lyrically. For the songs that were more difficult to complete, I discussed concepts with our band’s
bassist, Aaron, who provided a different point of view that sometimes steered the song in a new
direction. Lyrics were often difficult to complete, because I used tight rhyme schemes and strict
metrical phrases. I also refused to compromise when writing, avoiding using words like “just” as
a desperate attempt to fill a syllable. This refusal to compromise meant every word in every song
was significant. This accomplishment alone was something in which I have taken great pride.
Because of this, I have included all of the lyrics for the album in a separate document. This document also briefly discusses my interpretation of these lyrics, as well as some anecdotes.

After completion of the lyrics, I created prototypes of the songs, which were MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) arrangements made with a program called GarageBand. I programmed in musical notes and drum parts to give the other musicians an idea of what I wanted to songs to sound like. I would be getting help from the members of my band, Famous Last Words. These members consisted of Nick Walters on lead vocals (for about half of the songs), Aaron Hadley on bass, and Sterlyng Powell on drums. All were talented musicians, but none had heard these new songs before. Therefore, I had to create the prototypes to give the musicians an idea of what they would be playing. This process took several hours in and of itself, but it solidified ideas I had come up with for songs. It also allowed me to best decide how to produce each song, including what instruments to use at what time. I have included these arrangements on a separate CD.

Chorus: The selling point of the song

Making the songs marketable

The songs were complete from a compositional standpoint. Lyrics were finished and ready to be sung. Chords and bass parts had been hashed out, as were basic sketches of drum grooves. I was ready to bring the album to life. However, I wanted to make the songs stand out from those that my peers were creating. I knew people listening to my songs for the first time wouldn’t be able to pick out all the lyrics, and even a catchy melody over the right chords wouldn’t necessarily hook audiences. Therefore, I undertook extensive research on arranging
techniques for popular music. My goal was to create a musical tour-de-force, something that nobody at my level was doing. I wanted to take a four-piece band and turn it into an orchestra, having songs with numerous parts that, when added together, made for a very intricate and full production. I was going to follow the Gestalt idea that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” By listening to songs from all different genres, I was able to better grasp this concept. I noticed it was commonplace in old Motown recordings, and I tried to copy certain elements from this music into my own. This aspect would hold listener attention better, because there would always be something going on the background (though not in a way that was distracting or obnoxious). This, in combination with a catchy melody, vocal harmonies, beats that one could dance to, and relatable lyrics, would be what it took to make my songs stand above the rest. I found the creation of these parts to be the most fun segment of the project, because I got the opportunity to play around on various instruments and see how different parts added to the songs.

Verse 2: Expanding upon the story, moving the plot forward

*Recording and mixing*

The next step in creating the album was the recording process. This was perhaps the most daunting task, considering I was playing most of the parts myself. This meant pushing the “record” button in the control room, running into the studio to play the guitar/keyboard part, then running back into the control room to hit “stop.” Considering the fact that there were probably over 100 parts that needed to be recorded from me alone, it was clear that this process would take months to complete. This, combined with the fact that I was working with three other
musicians who had their own course load to deal with, required me to make a schedule and carefully follow it. I had to coordinate with others and having faith that they would be able to commit themselves to the project when I needed them to.

Much of the album was recorded late at night or early in the morning on weekdays. The recording studios are shared by all Music Technology majors, so times must be reserved in advance; students are also limited to so many hours per month. As a 400-level student, I was allowed up to 20 hours a month. Since recording began in February, this meant I would be given a total of 80 hours to record, edit, and mix the album. I couldn’t play by these rules, because the amount of hours I needed exceeded the amount I was given. This was due to my ambitious pre-production and the fact that I would be recording most parts myself (which likely doubled the amount of time it took to lay down a track). To overcome studio limitations, I developed a system where I chose unusual times to record. For example, I would book a studio from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. with the expectation that no other student would be staying up late enough to record after me that night. I could then stay in the studio until up to noon or so the next day, meaning I was in the studio for 14 hours when I had only reserved four hours. This method, while physically and emotionally draining, was the only way I was able to complete the album.

The first day of recording was February 25, 2012. Up to this point, I had been finishing writing the songs and rehearsing them with the band. The other band members had been given the prototype versions of the songs to listen to, but I wanted them to actually practice at least some of their parts so they would be more comfortable in the studio. This would lead to better performances. We ended up recording until early April. I was immensely relieved to have completed this part, but I was not finished yet; I now had to edit and mix the songs. This meant
correcting any musical errors, whether the timing of something had been slightly off, or whether a vocal or instrument was slightly out of tune. I often took the best of several takes and combined them into one final take. With this complete, I then had to adjust volume levels and make sure everything could be clearly heard. It would have been a tremendous waste to record all those parts if they had gotten buried in the mix! Fortunately, I had learned enough in my recording classes to be able to create a final mix that allowed for every instrument to come through.

The best part about working in the studio was when musical parts that were not initially planned came about. Sometimes our singer would try a variation on a pre-created melody, yielding great results. Other times, I would realize a song needed a little something extra (perhaps a prototype was not working out as planned), and I would grab my guitar and play whatever came to mind, improving the song significantly. One particularly memorable moment was when I was given access to a Hammond organ. I had written a few parts for this instrument and asked the studio technicians if I could use the one they kept at the studio. After realizing how beautiful the organ sounded, I immediately tried to use it on whatever song I could, which ended up changing the feel of the album as a whole. This same thing happened when I was able to use a Rhodes electric piano that had been left in the studio. These two instruments augmented or replaced some guitar parts, giving the songs more depth and variety of textures.

Bridge: Adding a twist to the song

Setbacks

Creation of this album was no smooth sailing. Between technical difficulties, scheduling conflicts, logistical issues, and a fair amount of arguing among band members, the last few
months were riddled with complications. One of the most difficult aspects to deal with, as mentioned before, was the limited schedule we were given in the studio. This, combined with the fact that I was working with three very busy people (two were music majors; the third was working on his thesis for an MBA), meant that we had to use every hour in the studio wisely. Of course, this was difficult when things went wrong in the studio. One particular session where this happened was when we were recording drums. We had about four hours to record drums on five songs; we then had to record vocals on two songs. About midway through recording the first song, the mouse for the studio computer froze up. Restarting the studio computer did nothing to fix this, and we spent the better part of an hour trying to figure out what was wrong. This took place on a Saturday, so no studio technicians were around to help. I consulted the studio manual, which pointed me in the direction of a USB hub whose connection had become loose. After fixing this, we were back on track; still, we lost an hour and had to rush through the vocals of the last song.

Another memorable moment took place on the day of the record release party (which will be discussed in the next section). We had to burn about 50 CDs, which we were to hand out to people that night. However, the hard-drive of my computer had chosen that day to have difficulties, and I was forced to use a friend’s computer to burn the CDs. I also realized I didn’t have CD cases, which meant having to pick some up at the last minute. Having a suspended license forced me to rely on a friend to get these cases for me. These small things added up and created a lot of unnecessary stress.

In addition to that, there were arguments in the studio. Sometimes the prototypes were not mixed well, and our singer couldn’t quite make out what melody he was supposed to be
singing. Other times, the musicians became frustrated with having to learn and play a part in such little time. The whole process was very rushed, and tension levels were high. Some of the most memorable arguments were between me and Aaron when it came to lyric writing. These were usually due to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. For example, a line in “Light Up the World” goes as follows: “We’re the big dreamers: outrageous, contagious, and bold / Or maybe just drunk.” I thought these two lines were great, because I’ve frequently witnessed this kind of talk at the bars. I felt it was relatable. However, Aaron thought the second line ruined the song. He said the “maybe just drunk” part made it impossible to take the song seriously, and that the optimistic nature of the song was now ruined. We argued for almost two hours, but there was no budging from either party. The argument was resolved when Aaron realized there were two more lines after these; he had been under the impression the whole time that we were ending the song with this idea of a drunk narrator who doesn’t know what he’s talking about. In the end, we all had some laughs, but the arguments showed that we were all passionate about the project. Everybody wanted it to be the best it could be.

Solo: Showing off

Public presentation and more

To publicize this album, I gave a lecture recital on April 25, 2012. I also held a record release party on May 2, 2012. The lecture recital was given in Soundhouse C of the Music Instruction Building here at Ball State, partially to fulfill requirements for MMP 495. However, the lecture also gave me an excuse to showcase some of the songs on the album and discuss songwriting elements used to make the songs have hit potential. I played four songs and
discussed lyrical and musical tactics, as well as arranging techniques, that would make my songs appealing to mass audiences. The presentation lasted about an hour, and was attended by both music majors and non-music majors.

The record release party was created to generate hype about the album as well as allow for it to be played in front of an audience. We held the event at a friend’s house, handing out about 30 CDs for free and discussing the music. We had a bonfire and several games to keep guests entertained. Overall, the party was a success, and the album was well-received.

Outro: The denouement of the song

Results and future endeavors

Though the creation of the album was done as a capstone to demonstrate everything that I had learned in college, I felt like I was still picking things up as I went through the writing and recording process. Sometimes learning came in the form of stumbling across a recording technique or playing technique; other times, I needed to learn something specific to complete a task, which meant I had to research a new area and understand it within a limited time frame. This usually pertained to mixing techniques that I could use to make a certain instrument sound a certain way. I was continually doing research for the MMP 495 portion of this project, which focused on the producing/arranging/recording techniques for the songs. However, the most important skill I acquired was how to work with others, especially when it came to getting things done. I’ve come to the conclusion that no matter how talented or driven somebody is, they will always benefit from outside help. I’ve learned how to ask for help and get those around me to understand my passion. Through this understanding, I was able to find people willing to use their
own talents to add to my work. I managed to get a music video, several photographs of the band, and a sleeve insert for hard copies of the album thanks to these people.

The next step in the process of the self-made musician is getting the music in the hands of people who can promote and distribute it to a wider audience. Making the album gave me 12 songs, the best of which I can now send in to record companies as demos. I will also be submitting these songs to songwriting contests, including the semi-annual John Lennon Songwriting Contest. The judges of these contests are often producers or famous artists, so having them listen critically to my music is both a privilege and a possible way to make connections. With more free time, our band will be rehearsing and playing live shows as much as possible, expanding our fan base and getting our name out there to the public. We will be using the internet as a means to share our songs and receive feedback. With a series of evaluative tests, including surveys with Likert scales and open-ended questions, we will find the songs that our listeners are most-interested in. We will also provide updates on new songs as well as interviews and candid moments. Some of these were meant to be a part of this project, but the amount of time put into the actual recording of the album meant some of the auxiliary components would have to wait.

Overall, this project pushed me to new heights that I would not have been able to reach ordinarily. It was a great experience; one that taught me much more about writing and recording than I would have ever imagined. Creation of an album that described my experiences in life (especially within the last year) was an appropriate way to wrap up my five years at Ball State. I am grateful that I was given the opportunity to complete such a project, and I will certainly do all I can to make the most out of it.
The song is over. Thank you, and goodnight.
The Lyrics

THE BEST DEFINITION OF YOU

You’re setting sail, you’re on your own
To find a place that you’ll call home
You’ve set your course and mapped your stars
With confidence to take you far
But time will always find a way to stop you in your tracks
And leave you looking back

So remember to make every moment your finest
Remember to hope that your dreams will come true
Remember to give and forgive without question
And make love the best definition of you

While on your way, a wayward breeze
Will lead you to uncharted seas
The rain will fall, and waves will crash
But in the end, the storm will pass
’Cause time will always find a way to stop you in your tracks
And leave you looking back

You’ll lose yourself, but keep the faith
That someday you’ll return

This song is a dedication to those who, like myself, are figuring out the next steps in their lives. It’s a message of hope and a reminder to remember the important things in life no matter what happens. The last twelve months of my life were tumultuous, and this was a way for me to focus on the good and stay optimistic. The sailing metaphor came from the fact that these are uncertain times for everybody. Despite this uncertainty, love is always there in some form or another. I felt this was the best song to start the album with because it was high energy and would establish a positive mood for the album early on.
PEOPLE IN THE MORNING

People in the morning sit and sip their coffee
Staring out the window as the raindrops fall
And people in the morning save their conversation
Mentioning the weather if they talk at all

There must be a million miles between their lukewarm smiles

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare when all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

People in the morning haven’t touched their makeup
Left without the need to feel presentable
And people in the morning put their worries elsewhere
Knowing no one’s there to call them beautiful

There must be a million miles between their lukewarm smiles

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare when all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

‘Cause nothing has to be strong when nothing has to feel wrong
They would never know if they could only go back to bed

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare, ‘cause all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

This song is about a couple who is only together because they are too afraid to be alone. The metaphorical idea here is that in the morning, people are too tired to put any effort into anything; the same can be said about a couple whose last spark has burned out. This song actually initially came to be when I was sitting in a Starbucks early one morning. It was raining outside, and the patrons were all drinking their coffee quietly. The first verse was quite literal; only later did I realize its potential to translate to a couple whose love was all but dead. The idea of going back to bed refers to the denial we go through in the “morning” (both literally and metaphorically), referring the the fact that we have such a strong urge to hit that snooze button and not have to face the day yet (for the couple in this song, facing the day means dealing with being alone).
ALWAYS WALKING AWAY

Pick your best excuse to cut me loose like dead weight on a rope
My mangled hands will hold on for dear life
‘Cause you’re not there and I’m so scared

So this is me begging and pleading, I need you to stay
There’s no use in talking when you’re always walking away

I’ve eclipsed my pain with lipstick stains from names I’ll soon forget
With hope that one would ruin your favorite shirt
But you don’t care, and I’m still scared

So this is me begging and pleading, I need you to stay
There’s no use in talking when you’re always walking away

The end has been long overdue
But there’s no getting over you

This is me begging and pleading, I need you to stay
There’s no use in talking when you’re always walking away
This is me begging and pleading, I need you to stay
There’s no use in talking when you’re always walking away

Pick your best excuse to cut me loose like dead weight on a rope
But we both know we’ve tied the knot too tight

This describes the desperation we feel after a difficult breakup. There’s always that hope that we’ll get our significant other back, which is always complemented by the frustration that occurs when we don’t. Along with this is the powerlessness we feel; we have lost the one person we were once able to lean on, and we are weaker because of it. I particularly enjoy the “mangled hands” image, because it’s true: no matter how much it hurts, we hang on to that person for as long as we can. The second verse (“I’ve eclipsed my pain...”) describes the games we play in order to make the one we’ve lost jealous or upset, as if this will bring them back. Logic knows this method doesn’t work, but logic takes a backseat to raw emotion during such a time. The final verse of the song indicates denial; the narrator strongly believes the significant other still loves him/her as well.
EXIT 111B

I'm flying down this freeway like a free bird
Running from feelings that run deeper than words
I'm changing lanes and passing signs
With hope that one will tell me everything's fine

'Cause I can't slow down or turn around when love has found no home in me
I'm here and gone, still moving on from exit 111B

I'm driving myself crazy craving your touch
Thinking it's wrong to think about you this much
It takes me back and takes much more
To keep the goddamn pedal pushed to the floor

'Cause I can't slow down or turn around when love has found no home in me
I'm here and gone, still moving on from exit 111B

There's a will and a way
But it's the heart that we must persuade to say goodbye

I studied the lied, or art song, in music history classes, and I was fascinated by the way composers would use music to complement the lyrics (sometimes very literally). I wanted to create something to this effect, so I used a galloping, steady drum beat to create a driving feel to the music. I also set the tempo to 111 beats per minute. During the bridge (“There’s a will...”), I had the instrumentalists play fast and violently, demonstrating the internal struggle between the head and heart. Overall, this song is about the difficulties we have in trying to get over somebody. Exit 111B in this case indicates that we will be tempted to deviate from our path and go back to the one we lost; despite this temptation, we know we must keep driving ahead. I’m particularly fond of the wordplay in this song, as it’s a tactic I became interested when I studied the music of Elvis Costello.
ENJOY BEING BEAUTIFUL

You gave me nothing, but nothing was enough to keep me coming; I came to call it love
The pieces fell right into place, and I found peace in your embracing arms
I stood beside you when others stood less proud; laughed and cried to the life we lived out loud
But in the end, to my surprise, you found somebody else to lie with you

I couldn't breathe, couldn't believe that you could let me down so easy
Enjoy being beautiful, if that's all you're good for
Enjoy being beautiful, you're no good anymore

You tried to own me by giving me your touch when you got lonely and desperate for a crutch
The pieces fell back into place and all the pain was gone, erased for good
If I were wiser, I would have left right then, 'cause the fire could never burn again
But still, it caught me by surprise the second time you turned your eyes away

I couldn't breathe, couldn't believe that you could let me down so easy
Enjoy being beautiful, if that's all you're good for
Enjoy being beautiful, you're no good anymore

And we could talk to make some sense of it all
But in the end, it doesn't change one thing

Though this song has some elements of my personal life in it, I had a close friend in mind when I made the finishing touches on it. My friend had been cheated on by his girlfriend despite all he did for her. After they broke up, she came crawling back to him on several occasions, but it seemed like she only did so because she knew he would drop everything for her. Naturally, he did, and was repeatedly hurt. The line, “You found somebody else to lie with you,” has a double meaning; the girl not only was sleeping around, but she also kept it covered up, thus “lying” on two different levels. The chorus statement, “Enjoy being beautiful,” is said sarcastically but ultimately shows that the narrator still has feelings for the girl.
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT

Discard and disregard me time and time again, and I'll still make the time for you 'Cause you're the angel with a thousand perfect flaws who I could give my world to

I'm chasing your soft heart, your soft touch, your soft skin
Only to catch on to the truth: you're caught up in him

If that's what you want, then I want you
If that's what you want, then I want you
Yeah, I want you to be happy

I'll be the shoulder you can find when you're alone that's just a friend when he's around
Until you get too good to know what I've endured, or that you've always let me down

I'm chasing your soft heart, your soft touch, your soft skin
Only to catch on to the truth: you're caught up in him

If that's what you want, then I want you
If that's what you want, then I want you
Yeah, I want you to be loved

When you've got it all, it's all I can take
Don't pick up the pieces as I break
'Cause they're not for you, not anymore, not anymore

Time turned the angel that you once portrayed so well into an unfamiliar face
And now you come to me, expecting happiness, only to find you've been replaced

This is a classic example of unrequited love. The narrator has strong feelings for a girl, though the feeling is not reciprocated. The idealization of the girl, as well as the fact that the narrator puts up with so much heartache at her hands, are events that I've both seen from others and experienced myself. In the end, the narrator realizes he deserves better, and moves on to invest his feelings in somebody who will appreciate him.
BLAME THE ROCK ‘N’ ROLL

We smoked cigarettes with no regrets, as though cancer wasn’t invented yet
Took Adderall with alcohol so we could go all night
And we were sure that having fun was worth the price of dying young, oh yeah

If our conscience weighed in, we could always say
Hey, blame the rock ‘n’ roll
Hey, blame the rock ‘n’ roll

We thought innocence was ignorance, so we cashed it in for experience
‘Cause good advice was overpriced when we were always right
And we were sure to make it known that we would make it on our own, oh yeah

If our conscience weighed in, we could always say
Hey, blame the rock ‘n’ roll
Hey, blame the rock ‘n’ roll

If we could do it again and live like we did back then, we would cross a million more lines
If we could do it again, we’d probably be a statistic

I condone none of the activities in this song. This one was written as a tongue-in-cheek anthem
for young people everywhere. I wanted to celebrate the fact that I was still standing despite all
the stupid things I had done in my life (not that I’m confessing to any of them), poking a little
fun at myself and how cool I thought I was. However, I think this song goes deeper than that. It
explores the need for independence young people feel; it also describes the wisdom that comes
with age (“We’d probably be a statistic”). I’m particularly proud of the fact that I was able to use
and maintain such a complex rhyme scheme. It took months to figure out how to pull that off. Of
course, I also like how cancer is “invented;” this goes to show the immortality young people feel,
as well as their general ignorance about life.
STRANGERS (LOST IN THE NIGHT)

Look at me; you look uneasy, with eyes that plead, “don’t come any closer, now”
‘Cause in this club, you’re only perfect until the night turns into morning

But you came here hoping to remember that you don’t have to be alone
So take my hand, take my heart, I’ll take you home
We’ll break away from this parade of hopeless charm
Take my hand, take my heart, I won’t let go
Let’s believe in something we have never known

Look at me and see what I see: your own reflection staring right back at you
‘Cause in this club, we’re not so different: both safe without a name and a number

But I came here hoping to remember that I don’t have to be alone
So take my hand, take my heart, take me home
We’ll break away from this charade and not look back
Take my hand, take my heart, don’t let go
Let’s believe in something we have never known

Two strangers, lost in the night
Who found love in the glow of neon lights
Look at me, you’re beautiful

We’ve come here hoping to remember a night that we can call our own

I always found the club scene to be full of phoniness (along with cheap cologne and an overabundance of male testosterone), but I recall once having an intense moment with a girl at a particularly club in Muncie. This turned out to be nothing more than a one-night thing, but I romanticized the idea of it being more and put it in song form, describing how one who frequents clubs is really just going with the hope that they’ll leave with somebody who they can have a connection with. This story ends with such a thing happening; the narrator sees that the girl is at the club for the same reason he is, and the two escape the phoniness together.
THE GLASS IS HALF-FULL

We learn to kill so we can fight another day
And blood gets spilled, but we just turn our eyes away
'Cause denial is the friend who has our back
When we're too scared to stand up and face the facts

The glass is half-full tonight if we measure it right
The glass is half-full tonight, so let's drink up

We watch the news and shake our heads in disbelief
But we refuse to share in some poor widow's grief
'Cause denial is the friend who has our back
When it's courage and commitment that we lack

The glass is half-full tonight if we measure it right
The glass is half-full tonight, so let's drink up

We're young and we're free, and why shouldn't we be?
It's not like we threw the first punch
We're young and we're free, and it's everything we'll ever need

The glass is half-full tonight if we measure it right
The glass is half-full tonight, so let's wake up

I decided to write a heavy political song that was accompanied by light, upbeat music. The juxtaposition of the two reflects the way so many people today ignore the problems in the world; we don’t believe we should have to deal with these problems because we weren’t the ones who caused them in the first place. The chorus (“The glass is half-full tonight...”) refers to the unrealistic optimism commonly seen in those living the good life. They’re too busy being “young and free” to question the ways of the world and try to make a difference. The very last line of the song changes “drink up” to “wake up,” followed by a stark silence. This indicates that it is indeed time for those who have been avoiding the problems of the world to wake up.
IT AIN'T EASY (FALLING IN LOVE)

Maybe a leap of faith is what this should be called
Maybe it's easier to crawl
Maybe it's safe to say the writing's on the wall
Maybe it's not that safe at all

Baby, please, it ain't easy
Baby, please, it ain't easy
Baby, please, it ain't easy falling in love

Maybe I'm forcing rhyme and reason into one
Maybe it's harder said than done
Maybe I've learned to hide my shadow from the sun
Maybe I've only learned to run

Baby, please, it ain't easy
Baby, please, it ain't easy
Baby, please, it ain't easy falling in love

So be patient, be kind, understand
That I'm scared when my heart's in your hands

Maybe the losing side is all I've ever known
Maybe it's time to let it go

I wrote most of this song the very night I went through a breakup. I had never written lyrics so fast and effortlessly, but these words came without much thought at all. Overall, the song is describing the narrator's fears that have led to his reluctance to fall in love. These fears have come about from "the losing side," or the negative experiences of previous relationships. The narrator asks his significant other to be understanding of his fears, later saying that he will try to let them go.
SOMEBEWHERE IN THE DARK

Her hopes, dreams, and desires were once what he inspired, but nothing is meant to last
She tore up every letter he wrote when times were better and buried him in the past

But in her head, a small voice said
“Our love still burns bright, just look for the spark
Come home for one night, and you’ll find yourself somewhere in the dark”

The flame was reignited when faith and fate collided; a meeting they never planned
They forced a conversation which led him to temptation to reach out and hold her hand

She asked him why, and he replied “Our love still burns bright, just look for the spark
Come home for one night, and you’ll find yourself somewhere in the dark”

She screamed, “You lost me here when I lost count of all the tears you made me cry”
But deep down in her heart she knew her pride had played a part
Could she dry her eyes?

Our love still burns bright, just look for the spark
Come home for one night, and you’ll find yourself
Our love still burns bright, just look for the spark
Come home for one night, and we’ll find ourselves somewhere in the dark

Up to this point, the songs of this album have given love a horrible reputation. I wanted to write
something that showed the positive side of love. I wanted to express the hope that came with it,
even when it turned sour. This song does just that, though it ends on a somewhat ambiguous
note: does the girl take the narrator back? The lyrics express that both people were responsible
for the heartbreak that took place; they recognize this and try to reconcile, knowing they both
still love each other.
LIGHT UP THE WORLD

When the week's over, the bar is an open forum
That closes at three
Bottles build mountains as stories go 'round in circles
Next round's on me

We drink to past mistakes and many more we'll make
Every risk we take has its reward

Someday, we may light up the world
Someday, we may light up the world
Someday, we may light up the world
Let's strike the match and watch it burn

We're the big dreamers: outrageous, contagious, and bold
Or maybe just drunk
But we stay hopeful that time will provide the answers
We know we're still young

We drink to past mistakes and many more we'll make
Every risk we take has its reward

Someday, we may light up the world
Someday, we may light up the world
Someday, we may light up the world
Let's strike the match and watch it burn

And one week from now, we'll meet again
To tell our best stories with our best friends

This seemed like the perfect song on which to end the album. It's optimistic, reminiscent, and comforting. It's also the longest song on the album, starting very calmly and building in intensity. The lyrics describe a night at the bar with friends in which much conversation takes place. The friends are both looking forward and looking back, reflecting on everything that has gone on in their lives as well as talking about their hopes for the future. This song was written as a toast to my friends and fellow band members, expressing my own hopes for our future.
Paul Schwarz

Links to websites (for additional material):

Famous Last Words Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Famous-Last-Words/177535452306193

Music video for “If That’s What You Want”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3gj1YU9LYA&feature=youtu.be

Live Performance of “It Ain’t Easy (Falling in Love)”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLQ9-OM0md0&list=UU0Vq_SnKOILNgo99nAqid3g&index=16&feature=plcp

The next few pages are pre-production documents used in the initial stages of the project. These documents contain many deviations from the elements seen in the final product, but are meant to give readers an idea of what we were planning to do as a band. Many of these goals will be accomplished in the upcoming months.

In addition, some of the pages contain artwork prototypes as well as band photos. In essence, this is the miscellaneous media.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>LLS</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Key Sig.</th>
<th>Time Sig.</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Best Definition of You</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td>Db major</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Anywhere with You</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td>Db major</td>
<td>4/4</td>
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<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bb major</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>the grass is green enough</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4/4 swing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4/4</td>
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<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td>F dorian</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Exit 111B</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
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<td>4/4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A minor</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>F mixolydian</td>
<td>4/4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Paul</td>
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<tr>
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<td>It Ain't Easy (Falling in Love)</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Light Up the World</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td>B major</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the demo portion of BSU SESSIONS 2012, we will submit the following:

A three-song demo, containing the following (in order):

“Tears We Cry”
“Strangers (Lost in the Night)”
“Somewhere in the Dark”

A one-page cover letter, complete with mini-biography and contact information
Lyric sheets to the three songs in the demo
Copies of press clippings and other testimonial information

For the transmedia portion of BSU SESSIONS 2012, we will do the following:

We will distribute our material on CDs and DVDs

The CD will contain the 14 songs
The DVD will contain live performances, interviews, and behind-the-scenes footage
We will have a booklet with notes that comes with each CD and DVD
We will have photos of the band, which will be taken before April 1st
We will have video and audio clips of outtakes and extra footage
We will have a band biography
We will have a series of printed interviews about the band members
We will include a list of artists one might like if they like us
We will include contact information in our EPK, including the following:

Name
Email Address
Phone Number
Facebook Links

We will contact members of the Daily News to review our material and create a press release
We will play an acoustic set for Wooty’s Power Hour no later than May 1st
We will have a variety of websites, including the following:

A YouTube channel
A Facebook page
A Wordpress blog
A Twitter account
A Google+ account
A Ping account
A Flickr account
A main hub with a domain name; this will come last due to upkeep costs

For the BSU SESSIONS 2012 album, we will record the following songs:

1. The Best Definition of You
2. Anywhere with You
3. Tears We Cry
4. The Grass Is Green Enough
5. People in the Morning
6. If That’s What You Want
7. Exit 111B
8. Enjoy Being Beautiful
9. Blame the Rock ‘n’ Roll
10. Strangers (Lost in the Night)
11. hold you tonight
12. Somewhere in the Dark
13. (It Ain’t Easy) Falling in Love
14. matchstick

We will most likely record them in the following order:
1. If That's What You Want
2. (It Ain't Easy) Falling in Love
3. Blame the Rock 'n' Roll
4. People in the Morning
5. Exit 111B
6. Enjoy Being Beautiful
7. Strangers (Lost in the Night)
8. Tears We Cry
9. Somewhere in the Dark
10. Anywhere with You
11. The Best Definition of You
12. The Grass Is Green Enough
13. hold you tonight
14. matchstick

We will incorporate extra instrumentation into the production; the following are some ideas for achieving that:

Melodic / Harmonic

**Acoustic Guitar**
- Strumming - chords with different voicings and tunings
- Noodling - single note countermelodies
- Arpeggiating
- Fingerstyle Playing
  - With effects: Delay, Reverb

**Electric Guitar**
- Reversed
  - With tremolo, playing melodic lines
- Slide

**Ukulele**

**Hammond B3**

**Grand Piano**

**Synths** of varying richness and with different effects
- Leads
- Pads
- Sequencers
- Steppers

**Electric Piano**


**Pro-Tools Simulators**

**Harmonica**

**Rhythmic**

**Tambourine**

This is a requirements list for the instruments and effects pedals that will be used in the studio. Unlike the previous section, this section will point out specific instruments and effects pedals as well as their owners, availability, and general purpose (if necessary). This will probably be made into a spreadsheet.

**Electric Guitars:**
- *Fender American Vintage '62 Reissue Jazzmaster*, owned by Paul Schwarz
Fender FatStrat HSS, owned by Paul Schwarz
Gretsch G5120 Electromatic Hollowbody, owned by Nick Walters
BLANK, owned by Paul Witkamp
Gibson SG, owned by Sean Obringer

Acoustic Guitars:
  Martin DCX1E, owned by Paul Schwarz
  Ibanez BLANK, owned by Nick Walters

Bass Guitars:

Percussion:
  Sterlyng's drums
  Tambourine, owned by Paul Schwarz
  Shaker, owned by Aaron Hadley

People involved in this project will include the following:

Paul Schwarz, who will play guitar and sing lead/backing vocals
Aaron Hadley, who will play bass and sing backing vocals
Nick Walters, who will play guitar and sing lead/backing vocals
Sterlyng Powell, who will play drums and sing backing vocals
Graeme Wilson, who will head the production of the documentary
Sarah Stearns, who will contribute artwork
Bri Beck, who will contribute artwork
Keith Kothman, who will oversee the academic side of the project
Paul Witkamp, who will provide instruments
Sean Obringer, who will provide instruments
THE BEST DEFINITION OF YOU

You're setting sail, you're on your own
To find a place that you'll call home
You've set your course and mapped your stars
With confidence to take you far
But time will always find a way to stop you in your tracks
And leave you looking back

So remember to make every moment your finest
Remember to hope that your dreams will come true
Remember to give and forgive without question
And make love the best definition of you

While on your way, a wayward breeze
Will lead you to uncharted seas
The rain will fall, and waves will crash
But in the end, the storm will pass
'Cause time will always find a way to stop you in your tracks
And leave you looking back

You'll lose yourself, but keep the faith
That someday you'll return

This song is a dedication to those who, like myself, are figuring out the next steps in their lives. It's a message of hope and a reminder to remember the important things in life no matter what happens. The last twelve months of my life were tumultuous, and this was a way for me to focus on the good and stay optimistic. The sailing metaphor came from the fact that these are uncertain times for everybody. Despite this uncertainty, love is always there in some form or another. I felt this was the best song to start the album with because it was high energy and would establish a positive mood for the album early on.
PEOPLE IN THE MORNING

People in the morning sit and sip their coffee
Staring out the window as the raindrops fall
And people in the morning save their conversation
Mentioning the weather if they talk at all

There must be a million miles between their lukewarm smiles

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare when all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

People in the morning haven’t touched their makeup
Left without the need to feel presentable
And people in the morning put their worries elsewhere
Knowing no one’s there to call them beautiful

There must be a million miles between their lukewarm smiles

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare when all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

’Cause nothing has to be strong when nothing has to feel wrong
They would never know if they could only go back to bed

The scene lies bare when all they share
Are all the nights that got them there
The scene lies bare, ’cause all they share
Is the fear of waking up to nothing at all

This song is about a couple who is only together because they are too afraid to be alone. The metaphorical idea here is that in the morning, people are too tired to put any effort into anything; the same can be said about a couple whose last spark has burned out. This song actually initially came to be when I was sitting in a Starbucks early one morning. It was raining outside, and the patrons were all drinking their coffee quietly. The first verse was quite literal; only later did I realize its potential to translate to a couple whose love was all but dead. The idea of going back to bed refers to the denial we go through in the “morning” (both literally and metaphorically), referring the the fact that we have such a strong urge to hit that snooze button and not have to face the day yet (for the couple in this song, facing the day means dealing with being alone).