

HOKA HAI
Lyrics and Journals

Advisor: Michael Lamirand

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Lamirand", is written over a horizontal line.

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Artist's Statement

HOKA HAI is a Lakota phrase meaning, "It's a good day to die." There is no intent of suicide in this phrase. In fact, it was used as both a greeting and a war cry. The intention of the phrase is that I am not afraid of death, and that I am willing to die for my beliefs. Many people have described my music as "dark." I agree with them that it is dark, but it is a catharsis for me. Through my music I release thoughts and feelings in a constructive, rather than destructive, way.

There are two versions of this album. The first was done in December. This version was more of an experimental stage to work with orchestration and recording techniques. It had its problems, but the overall experience was beneficial. The second version was recorded in March and April. This time I attempted, and I think I succeeded, in correcting the problems of the first recording. The second album, which is the released version, contains one song that was not on the first, "k-see." One song on the first album, "Anything but Pain," I chose not to put on the final album because I am not happy with it yet. The rest of this paper contains the lyrics and explanations of the forces that caused me to write them.

Mister

"Mister," we called him,
And he was the man in child's dreams.
He never spoke,
but all loved him.
He went to work
within their minds,
putting little pieces together
until the time came when
Mister would cup
their face in his hands
So light, and smile at
them warmly, chasing away
their night, and then in
a flash of lightening hot white,
All was gone, but the child
Screaming "Mister!" with all
his might.

The lyrics for this song, which was a poem first, were written in a rather strange way. I woke up from a dream and wrote the poem exactly as it appears. I don't know what the significance of the dream is, but I liked it, so I kept it. In July of 1991 I was playing around with my guitar and came up with the riff that comprises the whole song. I searched my journals for a poem that would work with that music, and found "Mister." The music fit exactly with the words, and the melody took care of itself. At first I was not sure I liked this song because it was so weird, but after playing it a few times, it became one of my favorites.

untitled #1

once a time was
that could not be,
and in this time
that could never be
there lived a man named me.

me was alone
in this time
that could not be,
so he wondered
if he existed.

me knew he saw me
when he looked
into the brook
that flowed
in me's mind.

me decided that
i am me, and therefore
can never die.

Although this song has a sad sound, it was not intended to be sad. At the time I wrote this I was concerned with the philosophical idea that something cannot exist unless you are able to refer to it. This includes any reference to the object or idea --even generic, such as "it" or "that." If you cannot refer to this idea or object, then it cannot exist. There is also a bit of paradoxical word play, such as, "once a time was that could not be." In my journal I originally titled it "Silly Surrealistic Song," but that changed when music was added. The original music did not have a flute in the background, but I thought it added a nice touch. I intended the flute to be background, so it is mainly the reverb of the flute that can be heard on the tape. This gives it the feeling of the flute being very far away, or in a very large space.

Melting Wall

I'm sitting in this world of cold desperation,
Wondering what to do to get by,
Wondering if it's worth the trouble,
Do I throw my life away?
Is it actually thrown away
If I'm doing what I want?
Living up to expectations
Makes the world go 'round and 'round.

And the walls melt,
This is not really me,
I'll just play in my mind,
And watch the walls of this cold world melt,
And watch the walls of this cold world melt.

Sitting in my room,
I hear life screaming to die,
People playing the
Most noble game a man can lose.
People scream at me,
But they can't see
This world of cold desperation.
Can they block it out?
I can't ignore the death and destruction
Of life and reality.

(Chorus)

Then one day my heart
Is touched by a beautiful person.
She taught me that life is not all bad,
And there is good in the world.
The beauty of nature and man
Is revealed to me through her,
And I loved her dearly.

Death is the healer of life,
And this paper is the shades for reality.
This smoking stick is the means to health,
And I'll just sit here and watch the walls.

(Chorus)

"Melting Wall" is the first song that I ever wrote. It was written my freshman year. At this point in my life I was experimenting with drugs and a friend of mine was dropping out

of college. I was rather depressed, to say the least. In addition, I had just changed my major from Architecture to Technical Theatre --despite my parent's disapproval. The text was written at about 11:30 PM on a Sunday night. I went into a friend's room and we were up the rest of the night writing the music. I attribute this friend, Shawn Yeakle, for getting me into song writing. I had always wanted to write music, but I could only play piano, and writing a first song on piano is difficult. Since then, I have learned to play guitar and have written many songs. It would not be the case, though, if it weren't for that first song written in the wee hours of the morning my freshman year.

Helen's Lament

I sit and watch her
Staring out the window.
She's always there
Staring out the window.

Where did she come from?
Where is she going?
Who is she waiting for?
Will he ever show up?

Rosary in her hand,
She clutches it dearly.
Mumbles the words as she is
Staring out the window.

Her hopes and dreams
Fade into the glass.
She muffles a cry.
Her savior came at last.

Where did she come from?
Where is she going?

Who was she waiting for?
Did he ever show up?

I'm sitting here
Staring out the window.
I'm always here
Staring out the window.

Since she died
I've had to take her place.
I don't want to take her place.
Staring out the window.

Where did she come from?
Where is she going?
Who was she waiting for?
Will he ever show up?
Did he ever show up?

This is the only song that I have written the music before the words. My apartment has a wonderful, large window that I like to sit in at night and play guitar while looking over the city. I was playing around with chords, and came up with the riff for the song. The first verse of the song came to me as I was playing. I sat down and quickly wrote the rest of the lyrics. Although it was not my intention when I started, it ended up being a song about a cousin of mine who died a few years ago. She had a very bad childhood and devoted her life to the Catholic Church, but never became a nun. She lived with her sister until she died in 1973, and then lived alone. She never had any joy in her life. She spent her nights at mass, and her days watching television or just staring out the window. She had several severe strokes which left her ,basically, a vegetable. After about three years in a nursing home, she died.

I Don't Know Why

Tell me,
Tell me,
Can't you tell me where I'm goin'?
I lost the path along the way.
And, oh, I miss my home.
I'm in the midst of the thicket now,
With no trail in sight.
My soul yearns for companionship
And guidance through the thorns
That RIP my flesh.
I reach out in vain.
Only to bury my self deeper,
To bury myself deeper.
Once I thought I saw you
Drifting on a trail.
You outlit the sun with your radiance
But the thicket was too thick,
And the thorns were too sharp.
I was lost in the wood
Chasing a glimmer in the haze.

Now it is dark.
Now I sit beside my self
And scorn my folly.
When everything overwhelms
My lost soul in the wood,
And there is no place to hide,
I can only hide within my mind,
within my nightmare, within my life.
When everything overwhelms
My lost soul in the wood,
I can only give up, go insane, or die.
I have done all three,
But I don't know why.

The lyrics for this song were originally intended to be a monologue for my Acting 1 class. It ended up that I set them to music and performed it with "Melting Wall" for my final in that class. There was nothing in my life at the time that contributed to the lyrics. I was writing to evoke a certain feeling for a monologue, but the words came out a little too poetic for a monologue.

Angry Young God

joe was a man that wanted to be hated.
it was just easier that way.
he'd disagree with everyone
to keep them from his soul.
he's hide himself behind a veil of hatred,
and he thought he was a god.

be true to your soul.
don't hide it from yourself.
be true to your soul.
don't be afraid to share it with somebody else.

joe was a man that wanted to be hated.
it was just easier that way.
and that's how it ended.
and that's how he died.
being hated and hating it.
but as he sat alone and thought to himself,
it's better to be an angry young god.

This song was prompted by a conversation that a friend and I were having. He kept saying how he hated this and that and him and her, etc. This stuck in my mind for a while. I worked through the idea and came up with this song --working on lyrics and music at the same time. I tried to play the drums on the first version of this song, but the result was less than adequate. I decided to ask Pete Janidlo, the drummer for Freaks of Nature, if he would play drums on the song. He said yes. With one long rehearsal, and about four hours in the studio, we achieved the final product --much better than my drumming.

Laura

Laura,
thinks she's alone.
Laura,
shivers in the darkness of her soul.
She doesn't know the way to go,
So she cries.

Laura,
shivers in the falling snow.
Laura,
locks herself behind closed doors
to save herself from the pain she knows
while she cries.

Laura,
doesn't know I love her so.
Laura,
smiles with sweet unsureness as she goes.
Do I dare to hold her close
while she cries.

"Laura" was written towards the middle of fall semester, 1991, after hearing about a girl I knew who had a breakdown and was in the hospital. This song is one that just came to me while I was playing around. The girl who inspired this song has heard it, and uses it as an acting tool to bring back all the feelings that were happening to her at the time. "Laura" is probably the favorite of my songs.

k-see

k-see
how you feel,
in a room full of strangers,
unleaded but nevertheless
fueled by strangeness.

k-see
how you feel,
walking through laughness
absorbed in a molotov cocktail
that your sister made you throw.

k-see
how you feel,
in a room full of strangers.

A friend and I were trying to decide what made our songs so completely different. Was it the words, or the music? We decided to exchange a few poems and write music to one of them. The poem he gave me, "k-see," was written in December of 1991 after a poetry reading at my apartment. Not even a half-hour after he gave me the poem I had music written for it. As is the case with most of the music I write, I can't play it like it should be played. After countless takes and frustrations, I finally got a take of the guitar part that was, for the most part, bearable. Of course, I could have left the song off the album, but I thought it added a nice closure and uplift for the end of the album.

Final Thoughts

The tape cover was done on the Macintosh computer using Aldus Freehand. The inspiration for the graphic came from a book of Indian mythology. The title and my name on the front cover were going to be red, but cost prohibited me from fulfilling that. The cover was printed on a Laserwriter and copied on light gray cardstock.

At this time I would like to thank everyone who helped me get this album together. Matt Hart: for suggestions, patience, pushing buttons, and making me get things right when I was ready to let them go as is. Michael Lamirand, my advisor for this album: for bringing in his effects unit, general recording advise, and introducing me to the world of recording. Beth Vanderwilt: for listening to me. Shawn Yeakle: for introducing me to song writing.

On the first version of the tape cover I gave a suggestion for optimum listening pleasure. I would like to leave you with that thought.

Listen to this album very loud with the lights out, and think of all the loves you've lost or never had.