

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Clarice Mottet for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Mathematics. Title: Writing a Music Album as a Singer-Song Writer.

Abstract approved: _____

Dana Reason

Abstract:

This thesis is an exploration of writing a music album from a singer-song writer perspective. It contains the process of writing lyrics and music, inspiration from other artists, as well as performance. It goes through the emotional ebbs and flows of creative writing, ground work for recording an album and an EP as a solo artist and as a band. The process of booking shows, playing shows, learning skills from playing open mic nights, and creating an internet following are presented from both a singer-song writer and band perspective.

Key Words: Music, Songwriting, Performance, Composition

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1/7/2017

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Writing a Music Album as a Singer-Songwriter

By

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A PROJECT

Submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

In partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the

Degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Mathematics (Honors Associate)

Presented November 30th 2016

Graduate Winter 2017

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Mathematics project of Clarice Mottet Student presented on November 30th 2016.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Clarice Mottet, Author

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my Mom and Dad for their support in writing this music album. I want to thank my Aunt, Ann Mottet, for opening my eyes to a whole new world of music from her dusty record collection that inspired my writing. To my brother, Andrew Mottet, without whom I wouldn't have the guitar skills I have today. Thanks for being around to write silly songs with.

I want to thank my friend Annie who got me into recording music and composing. My friend, Andrew, whose writing helped me write better myself. My great friend Lisa, who was around when I never wanted to play guitar again and didn't want to write about the stuff going on in my life.

Lastly, I would like to thank my thesis committee members. Dr. Reason for listening to my songs, giving feedback, and pushing me to better myself as a composer. Mike Gamble for helping me with my performance to achieve a genuine and imperfect sound. Eric Hill, for being around, keeping the mood light, and helping me write song lyrics with a card game. Thank you to Ryan Zubieta who did an outstanding job recording, editing and mastering my first album.

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Writing a Music Album as a Singer-Songwriter

An Introduction.

It's 12:41 in the morning and sleep and I are fighting again. Lately it's been a struggle to drift asleep before 4:00 am. I haven't seen the sun in days. My eyes creak side to side after staring at my phone, reading junk for hours. It doesn't even help me sleep but I'm addicted to the distraction of the discombobulating pings that echo through my empty house. My fat cat by my feet doesn't act as my guardian or give me solace. He's just there because he doesn't want to be alone either. I put my phone down for a moment and wonder if I'm bored or just hungry. I'm too on edge to eat and too anxious to watch something. I can't have noises distracting me from the intruder that's about to break into my house at any moment and attack me, a constant worry thanks to years of comments from my mom. In the moments away from my phone, staring listlessly at my cat, the fears I've hidden so many times begin to permeate all realms of thought. One in particular stands out vividly. My honors thesis. So here I am. Rewriting my honors thesis because I can't stand to look at the one I wrote close to six months ago. I almost can't stand to listen to the album I wrote for the thesis too. Let's just blame timing difficulties as me being the "creative type". I've rationalized so many times that I just shouldn't bother graduating with honors and move on. I won't really regret it, I tell myself. But right now, and hopefully this moment isn't fleeting, I think I have to do this. Not for the oh so prestigious honors title but because starting this thesis has changed my life in a way that I didn't think was possible and I don't want to forget it or take it for granted. Plus I wrote a song and finished another today after some writers block and am still riding that creative high. So I suppose I should get to it.

I started singing at a young age and after listening to the home videos I can't believe my parents didn't abandon me. It was bad. And very loud. When I got to be in 5th grade I started doing school plays and putting myself out there. I even auditioned for a school talent show singing the song "One Two Step" by *Ciara* at the completely appropriate age of 11. It's safe to say I didn't get a slot and I'm partially glad so that video evidence does not exist. Although who knows? I could have been discovered like *Lorde* was or something, right? Eventually I joined choir as a first soprano where my choir teachers couldn't help but notice my loud singing and had no choice but to train me. In college, I joined the informal choir but the lack of intensity made the perfectionist in me cringe into quitting. My next musical endeavor was solo opera voice lessons that were fun but not quite my cup of tea seeing as I didn't like listening to opera music whatsoever. I loved singing opera music because I felt so much power and liberation but I could only handle so much, as most only can with opera. After this, I had no music. Sure I listened to stuff and sang in the car but it felt like the relationship with the choir and opera world was over for good. And thus, I was on the market. The summer after my sophomore year I ended up living in Seal Beach, California for reasons I still don't really understand. I was in a phase of listening to *Jimmi Hendrix* (1) and living on the sweet sweet cash I was getting from a job in a pizza shop. I don't think I'll ever forget this next moment in my life. I was on facebook and a guy I knew from high school was interviewed in his college paper and posted the interview. In it he said that if there was anything he'd want to do, it would be to play guitar but he never got around to learning. Well, shoot. Here I was in Seal Beach, California working at a pizza shop with no friends, way too much free time, an impulsive spending habit and dream to be *Jimmi Hendrix*. Within that week, I started my relationship with my first guitar, Lucinda or Luci for short, and although we've had our ups and downs, it's been going really strong ever since. I remember

learning to play my first song, “In the Aeroplane Over the Sea” by *Neutral Milk Hotel* (2). It took me a month to be able to play those four simple chords. My fingertips were in so much pain but eventually they turned into little table tops of callus. I haven’t really ever put down my guitar for too long ever since. It’s been about three years now.

I’ve read countless interviews with musicians I’ve looked up to and it’s easy to say that after reading them, I felt the odds were against me in being a singer-songwriter. I didn’t start guitar lessons at the ripe age of 6. My parents were not particularly musically inclined, skill wise and taste preferences. I almost gagged when I read that the person was a poet before a singer-songwriter since I always despised poetry’s nonsensical use of random words that were profoundly flying over my head. To top it all off, I felt that I was still developing my own music taste after realizing there was music other than what was on the radio around the age of 18. But when my friend Annie, a gifted and brilliant musician, played guitar and sang a bit after writing her own music that was radical and could have come off a *My Bloody Valentine* album, I started to think that maybe I could write my own music. That was a joke, is what I thought to myself after attempting to write a couple songs. But here I am now writing about two albums I wrote with some songs that aren’t too shabby if I do say so myself.

I guess something I’m trying to get at whether someone will read this or not is that, I’m probably not the next *Taylor Swift* or *Elliott Smith*. I’m Clarice Mottet from Lake Oswego, Oregon, a mathematician from Oregon State and the proud owner of a fat cat, although I wouldn’t really say I “own” my cat. The quote “The average person thinks they’re not” comes to my mind. I started writing music because I decided I wanted to start expressing myself that way and I guess I kind of like the challenge of trying to find the right words and music to use to say what I’m feeling. Even though it is sometimes the most frustrating thing I’ve experienced. And

half the time I'll like the song I've written for about a week, then think its trash for a few months before arriving at apathy towards it. I've come to find that I don't like sharing my music with anyone except my friend Annie because one, she always says the nicest things about it and seems to be pretty genuine and second, because I am so incredibly scared that people will not like it, and judge me, or make fun of me, or will hate it, or worse because there could always be a worse. But a part of me feels that even though it means so much to me, I shouldn't take all of this so seriously. It's like, the situation is unique to me but I'm not unique to this situation, if that makes sense? Pretty much in a long and attempting to be fancy way of saying it is that, I think it'd be cool if more people wrote music and weren't afraid to share it. That if I can do it, then so can the average Joe or average Josephine. And hey, I really like doing it so maybe you could too.

Song Writing Process.

General Song Writing.

When I first became interested in writing songs, I didn't look up how to write a song, I just thought of some lyrics, paired them with chords and sang a melody without really thinking about it. I took time to just play around with chords and try finding a new progression that I thought sounded cool. I'd always figure I could add lyrics but I never really did. I found that for me, writing lyrics then finding the chords and melody that work with them is the easiest way to write music. From the lyrics, I'd already have a direction of what I want to say whereas with the composition I never really could figure out what I wanted to say. All of the songs on my first album were written lyrics first and then chords and melody following.

I looked up classes on a free site called *Coursera.org* where I learned about writing lyrics and read a book called *Writing Better Lyrics* by Pat Patterson (3) which helped me write lyrics and convey the meaning of a song through technical phrasing. For learning how to compose, I took a composition class with my mentor, Dana Reason, that opened my eyes to other types of composing in not just a singer-songwriter way.

The most important aspect of songwriting that I've found though, is being in touch with your feelings and message you're trying to convey. When I was writing my songs and other songs not included on the album, my first thought "What did I want to say? What am I feeling, where is it coming from and how I am going make the listener feel and understand it?" I knew that I was feeling a lot of emotions but was struggling to express them and stay in touch with them. I was nervous to put what I was feeling into words and share them with people. But by doing so, I felt a strong connection with my songs and having that presence made my songs

strong too. To do this, I would first write about a paragraph on the topic I wanted to write about so that initially I would have some descriptive words and ideas to expand on if I got stuck coming up with more lyrics.

My main musical inspirations of this time were *Joan Baez* (4) and *Nick Drake* (5). *Joan Baez* has a beautiful first soprano voice that I identified with and she was successful in the mainstream. I loved her simple lyrics and guitar picking and playing. It was comforting and just gorgeous. I looked at the song structures that she performed with such as “Rambler Gambler” and “Railroad Bill.” From these songs I started writing in a verse one, chorus, verse two, chorus song writing structure. I wrote simple folk chord changes as well as simple straight forward lyrics.

Walking

It's a normal day
Like any other day
Just you and me
Walking through the trees

Walking
We're just walking
Talking bout nothing and everything
All of our day dreams Walking
We're just walking
Somehow you're stepping next to me is
Helping me breathe easy

I can see it

It's a moving picture in my head
That I know one day will exist
But for now I'm just...

Walking
Just me walking
Thinking bout nothing and everything

All of my daydreams
Walking
Just me walking
Someday you're stepping next to me will
Help me breathe easy

This is the first song I ever wrote. It started as a chorus that came to me one day. One of the ways I come up with songs is, I'll be humming and trying to think of what song I'm singing, I won't remember it, and then it becomes my own song. I'll make up words to fill in what I'm humming and make up new humming parts. At the time I started writing I only had the chorus "Walking, we're just walking" and came up with the second half of the two verses. I was dating a boy at the time and had a really strong relationship with him. There were times where it felt calm and easy like waves pulling and crashing on the shore. I chose my melody in the chorus to reflect that. I didn't finish writing the rest of song until a few months after we broke up. From that, I decided that I didn't want the song to be about my relationship with him. I spent some time thinking and I felt that I didn't want to write a song about how great it is to be with someone but how it's okay to be with someone and it's okay not to be too. So my song starts off talking about how its great being with someone where it's calm and easy to be with them. Then, in the second half of the song the listener finds that being with the person walking was a dream and it's

okay that the dream isn't fulfilled right now because you can be happy and at peace on your own as well. The dream of walking with that person doesn't have to come true immediately to be okay with one's life. Whether the listener understands that message or not, it doesn't really matter to me. I wrote the song for myself to understand the ebbs and flow of being happy in a relationship and being happy not being in a relationship.

With You

I'm with you
I've always been with you
Even now I'm still with you
Even though I'm gone

When you see the sun set
When you see it rise
All I want for you's to have no
Tears in your eyes

The world may feel cold
And you may be lost
But if you look for my warmth
It's there in your heart

I'm with you
I've always been with you
Even now I'm still with you
Even though I'm gone

This song is a little hard for me to talk about. It was the first time I turned to song writing during a dark time in my life to heal. When I was writing this song I was feeling suicidal. I had a best friend who also went through dark times and had felt suicidal before. We always talked about how mad we'd be and how much we'd miss each other if the other person were to commit suicide. I wanted to write something so that if I were to commit suicide or leave to go somewhere for a long time, my best friend would have something to remember me by and feel better if I couldn't be there for them anymore. So, in a way, this song was a bit of a suicide letter for my friend and loved ones to remember me by because I wouldn't want them to be sad if I wasn't there for them anymore. I ended up not committing suicide and got help from friends and am in a better place now. When I think of this song, I don't think so much of how I was suicidal but of how much I care about my friends and family and how grateful I am to have them in my life.

This song started from me writing out all the lyrics and then finding chords and a melody to match the feeling I was looking for. I went through a couple variations of chords and melodies because I wanted the chords to feel sad, like how I was feeling at the time, yet hopeful, like how I wanted to feel. In the end I think I achieved this.

Heart of the Forest

I miss the warmth of the orange city lights
Knowing my place by the names of side streets
Isolated by the world of people buzzing
These trees feel too cold and lurking

Ooh Ooh Ooh

The crackle of gravel

My own bread crumbs have been made
Crisp air, thick fog, what do I follow
The blanket leaves, the trees
But no feeling of safety
Yet I keep moving forward

Ooh Ooh Ooh

I think I know where you feel
Cool, full of life, strong
But unable to move from the roots holding you down
I go on but already know I've come here
The same green view seen from everywhere
Snap stick curve a place unknown
I've been swallowed by the consciousness of this forest's home

Ooh Ooh Ooh

This may be the worst song I've ever written and I can't stand listening to it, which is why I wanted to talk about it. In all of my songs I don't utilize many similes or metaphors, the reason being I'm not too good at coming up with very good ones. I tried to push myself to write more with this particular song. While writing songs, typically the song I'm working on tends to get stuck in my head where I'll hear it on repeat for hours. This song was stuck in my head for three days and I felt like I was going insane. I realized that I wasn't strong with metaphors and that wasn't my style or what my inner voice wanted me to do. Although writing forward and direct songs doesn't create the same feeling as songs that use metaphors to take the listener on a journey, I wanted to keep saying what I wanted to say as is. The reason being, I had and still have difficulty opening up my emotions to others and spitting out what I was feeling was more

doable than reinventing what I was already struggling to say. This song helped me find my voice by telling me what my voice wasn't.

Dead Eyes

Happy places on the doormat
Happy faces in the portrait
Spotless counters backed lasagna
Thought I couldn't tell, huh mom

Empty wrappers, barely eating
Hiding from the family Two
a.m., muffled cries
Did you think I couldn't see the dead in your eyes

I'm sick and tired of all of these lies Force
fed your bullshit, the pill poppin highs You
wake up the next day forget everything
But I'll always remember the dead in your eyes

The dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes

Black sky, no stars
Passenger seat of the car
Gurgling out nonsense
Said your state was an accident

Frantic words, he's cheating
Creeping urge, that feeling
Twenty hours spent sleeping
Did you think I didn't know what you were doing

I'm sick and tired of all of these lies Force fed
your bullshit, the pill poppin highs You wake
up the next day, forget everything But I'll
always remember the dead in your eyes The
dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes

Sunny Palm Springs
Circle talks, feelings You're the
same haven't changed Shallow
being

So go on walk out
Didn't need you anyways
I haven't had a mom for most of these days

I'm sick and tired of all of these lies Force fed
your bullshit, the pill poppin highs You wake
up the next day, forget everything But I'll
always remember the dead in your eyes The
dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes
The dead in your eyes

This song is probably the most personal song I've written and have the most difficult time performing. I really want to explain why I wrote this song and to do so I'm going to have to give a lot of background. Through high school and the first couple years of college my mom was addicted to Ambien, Vicodin and zanax. During winter term my junior year of college, my mom took a higher dose of her usual cocktail and tried to kill my dad with an ax. She went to jail for a couple weeks and was off the drugs cold turkey in there, then was sent to the Betty Ford Center for rehab. In the years leading up to this moment, I was forced to talk to my mom by my dad who was supporting me in school. I was also forced to live with her on my own for a summer in southern California. Most of our phone calls and time spent together I was acting as her therapist where she'd tell me all of her problems in life and tell me how I'd understand her problems were worse than mine once I was older. I always knew my mom was on drugs but never really thought anything of it since after years it was just normal for her to be like this and she was prescribed to take all of these drugs after all.

I found out about the ax incident from a short phone call with my sister the day after it happened. She also texted me pictures of the door she axed, table, picture frame and other things

too. It was around ten at night and I was home alone at my apartment. I couldn't even fathom or understand how such a thing could happen in my family, I was in total shock. Shortly after, my roommate came home from a first date she had just had to change her shirt covered in a soda that was spilt and I told her what had happened. She gave me her condolences, was there to witness my shock and took care of me even though I felt uncomfortable asking for it. She told me to give her a second and texted the guy she just had a date with that she couldn't meet back up with him. In the text, she told him everything I had just confessed to her. My mom's drug crazed axing spree, her transportation to jail and my shock surrounding it. She told this to a person she had met that night, someone I had never met. I felt that my life was a reality show and I hadn't caught up with the new episodes but other people were already casually talking about the dramatic finale. I felt completely disconnected from every person around me. No one understood what I had been going through and was continuing to go through. I was given condolences or others acted uncomfortable, not having any experiences with addicts, not knowing how to react. I stopped talking about it and I never really healed. Over a year later, I decided to write this song because I wanted people to know what it was like having a mom who was an addict. I wanted to talk about it on my own terms and in my own words. I didn't want it to be passively told by someone else. I wanted my mom to know how much pain she had caused me since she couldn't remember practically any of it. I wanted to express my pain and be done with it.

After the three days of having Heart of the Forest stuck in my head, I sat down and told myself 'It's time to finally acknowledge this pain you've been carrying around.' And I wrote the lyrics to the whole song within a few hours. The first thing I thought of when facing the experiences with my mom was the term 'dead eyes.' When she used to be on whatever mix she was on, her eyes would be completely glazed over. It looked like she was missing her soul, they

were empty and dead. From there I started telling the story of coming into my house and everyone putting on the suburban family face, to the cracks in the façade. There was a time when my mom was driving with me in the passenger's seat and she started to lose steering to the point that she was pretending to change lanes. We pulled into a parking lot where the car slowly coasts along. I get out, go over to her car door, pull it open and yell at her to move over to the passenger seat. She was falling asleep but complied. We go home and she's talking her usual nonsense. The next morning she says she accidentally took Ambien and if I stole her toothbrush. She forgot how she almost crashed the car with me in it because of her "mistake".

In the bridge, I talk about my experience visiting her at the rehab center. She didn't want to hear about how much she hurt me, my dad and my brother and stormed out of the room. That night, she threatened to leave the rehab facility and I pleaded with her not to leave. After a while of talking, she seemed more stable and we left each other. I told her to stay in rehab or I wouldn't talk to her anymore. I needed to have boundaries to protect myself. An hour later I got a call saying that she left the rehab facility. I didn't talk to her for eight months after that. Even though she was sober for a few months before leaving, she still had lifeless dead eyes.

I really like the chords and strumming pattern that I pair with this song. The chords exemplify anger and pain while my strumming pattern portrays what I think of as a racing and conflicted heart.

Directionless

Softly glowing by the porch last night

Yet not a star in sight

Been waiting for the wind to change

Something to call my name

My name

Hoping, wishing to the sky

Compass gone for miles Lost

in the tidal waves Crashing in

my mind

My mind

Can it be a shooting star Telling

me where to go Wandering

directionless Searching for my

new home

Directionless, Directionless Home's

something that I've missed

Directionless, Directionless

Want a place to feel bliss

Grasses blowing in the wind

Carefree as my being Home's a

distant memory

Moon's the only thing with me

With me

Can it be a shooting star Telling

me where to go Wandering

directionless Searching for my
new home

Directionless, Directionless
Home's something that I've missed
Directionless, Directionless
Want a place to feel bliss

As the title suggests when I was writing this song I felt directionless in my life. I was finishing up one of my last terms of college, didn't really know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go with my life. I was seeing my friends from high school and college graduate and find jobs where my job outlook was not looking so good. With this song, I wanted to push myself to create how I was feeling by describing a nature setting instead of only stating my feelings outright. The inspiration came from me taking a study break in my backyard one evening, looking at the stars and the moon. I was daydreaming that I was someone else, somewhere in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by fields of wheat and calmed by the lack of connection to a fast paced world away from this place. I wrote the song from the perspective of this fictional character in my daydreams. I made up a backstory to this person, that she was a weary traveler searching for herself, but always a step or two behind what she needed to know to feel fulfilled with life. The goal of my fictional character was to find a home or a place where she could feel content with life. Folk music is a big inspiration for my song writing and composition. This song I feel reflects that the most and is a bit of a homage to all the great folk songs and artists I've listened to. It's the only one on my album that I finger pick to. My story of feeling directionless and travelling the world really resonated with folk songs of being on the road for this reason or that. This is one of the reasons I chose to have a more folky feel.

Hanging by the Sea

Hanging by the sea
Ain't got nowhere else to be
Salty breeze
Ain't got no care with me

Ice cream sundaes
Hippies roller blade
Nickel arcade games

Sun wash over me
Bright as can be
No clouds in the sky
Just hanging with my guy

Keep telling me
You really love me
Feeling so free

Hanging by the sea
Ain't got nowhere else to be
Salty breeze
Ain't no care with me

Carefree days
Living the right way
Happiness haze

Most of the time when I want to write a song, it's the same impulse I have when I want to write in my journal. I feel sad about something. So, I wrote this song because I wanted to have at least one happy song on my album. I didn't want the listener to think that I've had only bad experiences. I wanted to look at happy life experiences of my own too to remind myself that life isn't so bad. One summer in high school, me and my group of friends headed to the beach and it was one of the most fun trips I've ever had. The weather was overcast and the water was cold but one of my friends went in anyways while the rest of us, being the good friends we are, made fun of him incessantly. We looked at seals, walked the board walk, had ice cream and went on rickety rides that were probably going to break down at any moment.

As I started writing this song, I thought of the Beach Boys (6). My dad and I listened to them when I was growing up in Southern California. I wanted to have a similar message as the Beach Boys in terms of a certain carefree style of singing and playing even though my song is not a surf rock type of song. I started playing the two chords I opened with as an exercise my friend taught me on how to strum and mute strings. I kept practicing and the chords and strumming felt carefree in style. I started to think of the beach while playing and then the lyrics and chorus chords flowed out of me. I played around with the lyrics a bit because the chorus sounds a tad gimmicky but I decided to leave it because my time at the beach with my friends was cheesy good fun.

Driftin' Away

The pauses in the conversations

The look away from our faces

The fake smile we both know
The knowing look in our eyes

Like leaves in a river
Pushed by life's water
We've hit the river bend
And now it saddens me to say

We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away
We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away

I love you so much
You love me too
But we've grown apart
And there's nothing we can do

We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away
We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away

The old songs we listened too
Don't carry the same tune
The fun stuff we used to do
Can't replace where we grew

Like leaves in a river
Pushed by life's water
We've hit the river bend
And now it saddens me to say

We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away
We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away

I love you so much
You love me too
But we've grown apart
And there's nothing we can do

We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away
We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away

The distant memories
Don't feel so long ago
I just hope you believe
I never wanted to let you go

But, we are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away
We are drifting away, Drifting away, Drifting away

I wrote this song with having a particular friend in mind. Me and this person, let's call them Earl, had been best friends for many years but had some hiccups in our friendship that caused us to be distant with each other. For years, I could look at Earl's face and know exactly what he was thinking, but he face looked foreign to me now. When we used to hang out, we didn't need anything specifically to do because our talking and joking around was what was fun in our friendship. There were things we'd do like listen to rap music, rap with each other, go to nickel arcades and watch certain tv shows that we'd only really do with each other. In the months following us to be distant, we had trouble keeping conversations going, we started to need something to do during our hang outs to keep them fun and engaging. There are songs that

we used to rap together to, playing them in the car, driving around, felt forced. We simply weren't the friends we used to be. I really had a hard time acknowledging it. Earl had a hard time too. It felt like the friend I once had was dead and some person I didn't really know was trying to replace them. After the years of friendship, us practically being family to each other, both of us expected to be friends for a really long time. We joked about being cranky old people together, but it didn't feel like that was in the cards for us anymore. I thought of it as both of us were traveling along paths in a forests. When we were good friends our paths intersected or ran parallel but since then we started to grow in two different directions. Neither of us understood how the other person had grown and after some time both of us changed into a person neither of us recognized. This became the inspiration for leaves on a path in the river being pushed here and there from life experiences where the leaves just start to drift away from each other.

When I was coming up with the composition for this song, I wanted the strumming and melody to reflect the push and pull of water but also of creating distance. That's why I created an evenly spaced descending melody. For the verses, I created a descending melody but its where the last note being lower is prominent since I felt a sudden drop our friendship changing.

Album 2: Live Teen or Die EP

After writing my first album, I traveled in France for three months and took a break from song writing. I wrote a song here and there and kept up playing guitar but didn't feel ready to compose a second album. By chance my friend Annie started playing bass and her and I started to mess around playing some songs together. I played an open mic night in December of 2015 and invited some high school friends. There Annie and I reconnected with our friend Zane who recently moved to Portland and as luck would have it we formed a band. Over the course of four

months I wrote six new songs for our band *Why Oh Why* with surf rock and punk influences. We record an EP using the songs “Mexican Food”, “Dead Eyes” and “Better Off”. With the release of the EP we started playing shows at venues in Portland such as Al’s Den, Alberta Street Pub and a few house shows here and there. Currently I’ve been focusing my energy on networking with other bands to play shows while continually dabbling in writing a song here and there. The songs below are listed in the order we play them during shows. Our music can be found at whyohwhy.bandcamp.com

Mexican Food

I’m not going no where
I’d say there’s enough stars in the sky
I’m not going no where
Them roads out there are icy let’s stay in side
We can’t say where the night is going
But tomorrow I’m not gonna look back
I’m not going no where

I’m not going no where You
made us tacos by the fire I’m
not going no where
I really liked the tacos you prepared
We can’t say where the night is going
But your cooking skills are really helping
I’m not going no where
Oh yesterday
I didn’t have any Mexican food
Oh yesterday

I didn't have you

I can tell where the night is going
But I respect you if you only want cuddling
I'm not going no where

The inspiration for this song came from the beginning of a new relationship in the start of January of 2016 while also drawing song lyrical content from a relationship from the summer of 2015. I felt really cozy in the relationship but also playful and that's how the song came to be. I wrote it over the course of a couple weeks and changed things around here and there as I kept playing the song. The intro and verses follow a chords of C chord shape and F chord shape on the third fret. The chorus is third fret E chord shape, F chord shape, C chord shape and G chord shape and then back to alternating between C and F shapes. The bridge is Am shape, C shape, F shape and C shape for two measures.

Oh Darling

There's times in life
When I'm not sure about my romances
But boy when I look at you
I got all my answers
No girl could be blue
If she's got you
So like glue
I'm gonna stick with you

Wuh-uh-oh Darling
Wuh-uh-oh Darling
Wuh-uh-oh Darling Oh
Honey

Its two past eight And
you're late... again So you
know

I was just thinking How
bout you and me We take
a daycation
I hope you get what I'm picturing

Wuh-uh-oh Darling
Wuh-uh-oh Darling
Wuh-uh-oh Darling Oh
honey

In the summer time
You buy me red snow cones
In the winter time
You keep me all nice and warm
I don't think I could picture a life without you
There's something so good and sweet about you I'm
80 percent sure
You're the one I'm gonna stay with

Wu-Oh-Oh Darling
Wu-Oh-Oh Darling
Wu-Oh-Oh Darling
Oh Honey

I honestly wrote this song because I wanted to write a lovey dovey song. I wasn't in a relationship at the time and was getting tired of writing sad folk songs so I decided to write this song. This was during a time period of unemployment and I was playing guitar for hours every day. I wrote this song and the song "Nothing" within a week of each other. I personally dislike this song the most on our set because it's a simple song musically and it wasn't my favorite moment lyrically particularly in the bridge.

Crossing Through the Stream

In the quiet cold of night
You brush my hair
Past my ear
You say baby don't worry
There's ain't nothing to fear
Ain't nothing to fear
Well hey I'm not some damsel in distress
Don't need you or any of that mess But I
guess I could confess
Crossing through the stream
With your arms around me
Your arms around me
Your arms around me
Oh baby
Oh life's a dream
Life's a dream
Oh life's a dream
Stop pushing your shoulder to my eye
Expecting tears to appear

I know you're just trying to be a nice guy

But we both know what's here

Tonight I'll stay, tomorrow I'll go

By next week who knows

Like the freckles on your face

I guess I'm feeling this place

Crossing through the stream

With your arms around me

Your arms around me

Your arms around me

Oh baby

Oh life's a dream

Life's a dream

Oh life's a dream

Stop pushing your shoulder to my eye

Could it be I'm just not ready

Could it be the dust is still settling

Could it be your just not the one

for me

Could it be we're just not ready

Crossing through the stream

With your arms around me

Your arms around me

Your arms around me

Oh baby

Oh life's a dream

Oh life's a dream

I wrote the chorus to this song while jamming around with a boy I was seeing and at the time I really liked him, Later on I broke up with him and the verses reflect that insecurity and questioning of a relationships. A few months after that, I was jamming around and wrote the intro. I think of this as my Frankenstein song because I wrote almost all parts of this songs a part from each other about different things I was going through but stitched them all together and hey it worked out great. People get confused by what this song is about, and I do too but its still a good song to listen to.

Nothing

Searching for some answers
Scratching the card for chances
Shedding off all the glances
That girl don't feel nothing
Bending her back
Breath and steam run down her neck
Eyes glaze towards the ceiling That
girl don't feel nothing
Oh-oh-oh-oh
Milk and sugar in her coffee
Slipping on the shower curtaining
She didn't know she'd be dying
That girl don't feel nothing
Oh-oh-oh-oh
Whispers from the past
In a flash showed her a life
Not worth living

That girl don't feel nothing

That girl don't feel nothing

Oh-oh-oh-oh

I wrote this song when I was really depressed about someone moving through life numb. Originally I wrote this song on acoustic guitar but later adapted it to electric. Over time I changed strumming patterns and shortened the lyrics because I noticed when we were playing open mic nights as a band, this song would drag and I could hear people talking more when we played this song versus others.

Hammock

In a hammock

In the summer

In the winter

With our sweaters

In the fall

We fell to each other

In a field

With a

meadow

In the rain

Under shadows

In the fall

We fell to each other

Oh-oh-oh-oh

One day

Not to far away

In our place
We can be together
Together-oh-oh-oh
Take me away
Take me away
Oh-oh-oh-oh

This is the first song Annie and I wrote for *Why Oh Why*. We were hanging out and just talking and then somehow came up with the name *Why Oh Why*. That night we wrote this song for fun as a song for Annie to practice bass. The whole song is only two chords, C and F. Annie was seeing someone at the time and I just started seeing someone too so both of our moods were kind of lovey dovey. We had a love of reverb going and I felt calm and happy but with a Jesus and Mary Chain edge. The lyrics took me about 5 minutes to write. They differ from my other lyrics because these aren't so "sentence based" and more just saying romantic-y scenarios that give off the idea of developing romance.

Better Off

The sorrow in your voice
Quivers as it entices
Sad feelings, dreary evening
The madness of the rain
Flickers in your eyes
Restless sinking, stopped breathing

The clouds didn't part for each other

I know you'll find another

Its better off this way

Wouldn't you say

Wipe that tear from your eye

Or have another cry

We'll move along

We just don't belong

The list of reasons

To go explain

Broken promises, disdain

Unspoken arguments

Clear detachment

All I'll say is there's no mistake

The clouds didn't part for each other

I know you'll find another

Its better off this way

Wouldn't you say

Wipe that tear from your eye

Or have another cry

We'll move along

We just don't belong

Its not a lie to say I'm
Sorry to see you go
But I'd rather you
Not stay
I'm not too worried about
Things of the past
We knew this couldn't last and
All I gotta say

The clouds didn't part for each other
I know you'll find another
Its better off this way
Wouldn't you say
Wipe that tear from your eye
Or have another cry
We'll move along
We just don't belong

I wrote this song as a break up song but no I didn't sing it to the person I wrote it about. Before we broke up, I hung out with him a couple more times to really confirm. The three verses reflect the last few times we were together. I felt really liberated after writing this song. I wrote it around march 2016 and it became my favorite song. After writing it I had a block on writing new

material and developed doubts that I'd ever write another song that I liked as much as this one. After a month or so I started writing again and wrote another song that I ended up liking more and got over the doubt and fear that I couldn't keep up with writing songs that I would like.

Tangerine

You walk down the street

Do you see me?

You're looking my way

Ain't got nothing to say?

Do you want,

Do you want me?

Do you want,

Do you want me?

My Tangerine

My Tangerine

You're at the party

And you find a drink

Do you think,

You could find me?

Do you want,

Do you want me?

Do you want,

Do you want me?

My Tangerine

My Tangerine

What do you want

Do you want

What do you want

Do you want

My Tangerine

My Tangerine

This is probably the first song that I wrote really in a pure surf rock type of style. The lyrics are really simple and during the time I was writing this in August of 2016, I was listening to the local Portland band, *The Shivas*. Their music really inspired me to take a step away from lyric writing and try writing simple catchy guitar chord changes that feel up beat. I wrote this song from a fictional perspective. I messed around with the chords for this song over and over and didn't write a melody. For some reason though the word tangerine kept coming to my head as food is one of my main musical inspirations. My drummer was getting frustrated that I hadn't finished the song so in five minutes I came up with the melody, all the lyrics and the bridge as a rough draft just so we could mess around with it and it ended up sticking. Having written the chords and playing around with them for a few weeks made bringing this song together very easy. Also having the pressure from my drummer made it come to fruition.

Going Nowhere

We could be like them

Hanging by the

Poolside and drinking

Margaritas

Without a care in the world

We could be like them

But what's is for

Wake up at 8 am in the morning

Sipping on our green smoothies

Dressed head to toe in our Nikes

What doesn't sound appealing

But we sleep in

And drink too much beer

Disappointing families

Going nowhere

We could be like them

Go out get our

Hair done and nails did

At the salon

Without a care in the world

We could be like them

But what's it for

Wake up at 8 am in the morning

Sipping on our green smoothies

Dressed head to toe in our Nikes

What doesn't sound appealing

But we sleep in

And drink too much beer

Disappointing families

Going nowhere

I wrote this song in early November of 2016. My bandmates and I went to Seattle over Halloween and went to an amazing house show. There we saw local Seattle punk bands *Nail Polish* and *Mommy Long Legs*. Seeing them and experiencing the punk scene in Seattle made me feel so connected to the music that I was writing and the musicians I cherished in Portland. It reinvigorated my love for punk music and catapulted me into writing this song. The lyrical inspiration comes from a time when me and my best friend Annie were driving to a coffee shop in Portland. We passed by two girls dressed in work out gear walking together and smiling, and I looked at them and looked at me and Annie, hungover wearing drab denim jackets, and said to her “We could be them.” And we laughed but it stuck in my head that I was on a different path than so many people I saw walking down the street. I kind of thought to myself “geez I need to grow up and eat some vegetables” but also “why bother?” This is a song that captures how I feel in life right now. I’m not working at a fancy job and I write silly music, sometimes I feel disappointed in myself for not choosing the typical life path that I see my siblings take but this song reassures me that going nowhere is technically somewhere.

Recording and Editing Process

The recording and editing of my album was done by Ryan Zubieta, a student of Oregon State studying to be a music producer. I found recording to be profoundly more difficult than I had thought before. For all of my songs except *Dead Eyes*, the guitar and voice was recorded separately. Since I’m still an immature guitar player, it can be difficult playing and singing the song, giving the song justice, at the same time. If I could rerecord the album, I’d probably do all

the recording as guitar and voice at the same time. It gives a more cohesive sound and I feel that my voice has more power and meaning when I'm strumming even if there are a few little mistakes present.

The way I normally practice playing my songs is I sit and play them straight through or will work on sections that I want to tweak. When we recorded the guitar part, there was a microphone right by my sound hole, and I had headphones on with a metronome going. Since I didn't regularly practice with a metronome and was wearing noise cancelling headphones I couldn't really hear what my playing sounded like. My guitar strumming was more heavy handed than I intended it to sound. It sounds almost like I was angrily strumming on the album, but we didn't have the time to rerecord the guitar parts. Another reason that I wish I recorded the guitar and voice at the same time is that there are parts when I play guitar a little quieter or louder to embellish the message I'm singing. Although I was thinking of the lyrics when we were recording the guitar parts, the embellishments I do when I perform the songs don't come through as strong.

After we recorded the guitar parts, we recorded vocal parts. When Ryan and I recorded the guitar parts, I was in a big room in Benton Hall, the music building at Oregon State. When we started to record the singing parts, I moved into a small sound proof booth with Ryan in it. The microphone was really close to my face and it felt really claustrophobic. I had on sound proof headphones that my guitar track came through with a metronome as well. When I sang with these headphones on, I couldn't really hear my voice, it felt like I was singing underwater. We changed to have my voice come through the headphones too in real time with recording but it still was difficult to hear how I was sounding.

Thanks to Ryan's amazing editing skills I am happy with the final result of the album. He would send me the tracks he edited and I told him the sound I liked on certain tracks, that I wanted this song to be edited like this other song, and such until I liked the sound of each song. Something I really learned from recording this album with Ryan is how much brain power it took to get the right take I wanted on a song. There are so many small nuances to the songs that I wanted to come across in the recordings but didn't due to my lack of practice with a metronome. If I could rerecord the album, I'd want to come up with exercises of some kind to get my mind into the right mindset for each song. I sing my sad songs the best when I'm sad. When I was recording I was in a pretty good state of mind and I had never performed these songs before so didn't feel them as much as I wish I would have. Overall I'm happy with the way the album turned out.

After playing with Why Oh Why for a few months and developing a seven song set that was about thirty minutes long, my band and I became hungry to start playing shows. To do this I felt it was pertinent to release our songs online so that when we contacted venues they could get a taste of what we were about. My guitar teacher Ken had experience recording and mixing EPs and albums for bands so we hired him to record three of our seven songs. The reason we chose three is because that a typical EP length and it would be too expensive to record all of our songs. The recording process took place at my parent's house in Lake Oswego where we started with recording the drum part for the three songs. Then we recorded bass guitar in Ken's studio at his apartment followed by guitar and vocals. The whole process of recording took a little over a month due to scheduling and obtaining the right sound. I found it really difficult to record vocals because it took everything I had take after take. I could only really sustain singing each song about three times before my voice would become horse. After recording all of the tracks we got

to work with adding effects to first the drums, bass, guitar, vocals in that order. We added distortion to the bass and electric guitar and some reverb to the vocals. I really liked a more stripped down and lo-fi type of sound with a modern perspective than a vintage one. We released our EP named Live Teen or Die. We came up with the name after spit balling different ideas. Annie, Zane and I learned a song to cover, Teenagers by My Chemical Romance, at first as a joke but then it became a part of our set. The song has a super teenage angst vibe and so lead to Zane coming up with the idea of Live Teen or Die. We released the EP on bandcamp at whyohwhy.bandcamp.com. Annie made the front cover of the album using a picture Zane took of a half living flower. We created a facebook page and Instagram account for our band with a link to the bandcamp site, whyohwhy.bandcamp.com and invited our friends to follow us. Having all these things seems to be an almost bare minimum to be able to book shows. It's the way that venues and other bands can see that we're serious about playing shows.

Performance and Shows

In the months following my writing of the album, I've performed my songs at Oregon State, open mic nights in Corvallis and at my own show at Bomb's Away Café. Every time I have performed I have been nervous. The first song is always the most uneasy, but the following songs get better. The first performance I ever played my guitar and sang at was an event held by Oregon State celebrating the arts in Spring 2015. Ryan, the music engineer of my album, was doing sound work and asked if I wanted monitors to which I had no idea what that meant and said I'd be fine. I soon learned that that was a horrible mistake. I didn't realize that I wouldn't be able to hear myself whatsoever. It felt like I was singing into an empty vacuum and couldn't hear

my voice or my guitar at all. I had some friends that came and were listening to me which eased my nerves and I just carried on because what else could I do.

The second performance I played as a solo artist was at Bomb's Away in august of 2015. My friend and now bass player for Why Oh Why, Annie Fifer, opened for me playing all covers and I followed. Both sets were around 45 minutes long. I played my first album and also a few covers to be able to fulfill a 45 minutes set. Friends and family from Corvallis and came it was a great show. I was so nervous before going on. I didn't have anything to drink because I was scared that my guitar playing would get sloppy after one beer. The first couple songs I played I stumbled here and there but once I was about 20 minutes into my set I felt exactly where I was supposed to be in the world. I felt at home being on stage and playing for people. Once I was getting towards the end of my set I didn't want to get off stage and played one extra song that I wasn't planning on playing. The reception to my performance was great. All of my friends and family only had nice things to say and were so kind and supportive and complimentary. It was truly an amazing and unforgettable night. One tid bit of information that I'm thankful for is having played many open mic nights before playing my first show. Playing open mic nights is how I gained the skills needed to keep cool under blinding lights and people's eyes. The first couple open mic nights I played, I bombed and not in the good way. I totally blanked on lyrics and messing up strumming patterns and chord orders. Eventually I became more comfortable playing in front of people and my heart beat eased back to a functional pace. I cannot stress enough how starting out at open mics, where it's acceptable to mess up, is necessary to be a good performer. Once you book a gig, it is not acceptable to make very noticeable errors.

The first two times Why Oh Why played for a general audience were at open mic nights at The Goodfoot in SE Portland. Finding an open mic night to host a band is more difficult than finding one for solo artists. At both we stumbled here and there but came out feeling happy about our performances. These happened before we started recording for the EP. About a week after the release of our EP, we were contacted by a member of the band Beach Fire who Annie and I were friends with and offered the chance to open for them at Al's Den. We obviously jumped at the chance to play and it was a great show. I was super nervous and arriving for sound check there was literally no one in the bar. So, I figured, "hey, I'll be playing for no one what's there to be nervous about" and set up my equipment and that was that. Within 30 or 40 minutes after sound check the venue started to fill but my nerves weren't really returning. I was just so excited to be playing a show. Annie, Zane and I go to so many shows and Portland and for months I just watched other bands thinking "I need to be doing this. I want to be on stage. I have to get up there. I want this now." So getting onto that stage was finally scratching that itch that wouldn't go away. I felt a part of each song that I played and it was magnetic. I was completely present.

I won't go into every show we've played as Why Oh Why but one more thing that I've learned about being in a band is that a lot of playing shows is just waiting to play. Waiting and waiting and more waiting. We played a show at Alberta Street Pub again with Beach Fire and a couple other artists but this time we were going last. Sound check was at 7pm and we didn't get on stage until 11:45pm. It was easily the worst show that I've played mostly because I felt so tired and had a couple beers then sobered up after my beers. None of us knew if we were rushing like madmen or just tired and trying to keep up with the normal tempo. The thirty minutes we played came and went like a confused lightning bolt.

Since then, we've played more shows spanning house shows and venue. Playing shows at venues is difficult without a large following. The best way to book shows is to have connections with other bands that have strong followings and for them to invite you to play with them. Booking shows at house shows is more accessible but aren't typically paid. Currently for booking more shows, we're working on networking with other bands by going to shows and just meeting and talking to other people. Its challenging to break into the scene but is gratifying at the same time. Plus all of us in Why Oh Why like going to shows frequently anyways so its mostly just fun socializing with other musicians.

Overall Experience

I had no idea this is where I would end up when I started this thesis project. It's funny to think not that long ago I didn't play guitar, I didn't write music and now somehow I'm the lead singer and guitarist of a band I formed, wrote the music for, and am booking shows for. Its so surreal. I feel sentimental towards my first album. Over the months I've gone back and forth from being proud that I made it and disappointed in how it turned it. They were some of the first few songs I had ever written and I see them as baby steps that got me where I am today. There's a certain innocence to them that I don't feel with my current writing. I feel that my second album came from feelings of frustration and betrayal, where my first album was lighter hearted with a "here I go, plunging into I don't know where but I'm doing it" kind of initial song writing stance. I look at who I am now and who I was and just think I was so naïve. I had no idea what I was doing and I'm still figuring it out but I had no idea how much it would take from me. Developing songs, writing new songs, networking, recording, just everything. Being in this band has been

one of the only moments in my life that I've felt that I'm doing something right. I don't see the end of the path that I'm on. My goal currently for my band is to play a show at Mississippi Studios. I think it's achievable but will take a lot of work to get there. I feel relaxed and alive and terrified with what I'm doing. I feel silly sometimes that I'm in a band with my friends from high school writing songs about boys where it didn't work out. Just another girl playing a Fender Strat and yelling some stuff no one can make out into a mic. But I care so deeply. I don't expect to be the next big thing. I just want to be blinded by the lights and electrocuted from the night. I need to feel that high again.

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