

**the cut**



**Kevin Garrett**  
**Vérité**  
**Diet Cig**

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# LETTER

## FROM THE EDITOR



And we're back.

My name is Arun Marsten, and I'm your shiny, new Editor of *The Cut Magazine*! Since moving to Pittsburgh 3 years ago, I've loved watching the music community change and grow around me. From massive shows, to DIY venues, college radio, to recording studios, it's been an awesome ride exploring the city and sharing it with all of you. Pittsburgh never fails to remind me of how much there is to learn, and this month has been no exception. So whether you've been reading *The Cut* since day one, or this is the first time you've picked it up, this issue's bound to be chocked full of surprises.

This month we've got a fantastic lineup of staff picks for albums and songs of the month followed by our inimitable

Music News compiled by yours truly. We've also got concert reviews fresh in from Stage AE, Mr. Small's, and The Carnegie Library of Homestead. We even checked out Thrival and VIA, the two new festivals in Pittsburgh specializing in art, innovation, technology, and new media.

In this issue we're bringing you interviews with Diet Cig, the punk band with the best embroidery skills; Vérité, a pop sensation from New York; and Kevin Garrett, a singer-songwriter from your very own Pittsburgh.

We've spent the last month listening, taking pictures, thinking about, and taking pictures of everything we thought you might want to know about music. Thanks for reading.

**- Arun Marsten**

# Recommended Albums



Top Row from Left to right: *That's The Spirit* by *Bring Me The Horizon*, *M3LI55X* by *FKA twigs*, *Savage Hills Ballroom* by *Youth Lagoon*, *Music Complete* by *New Order*, *Between II Worlds* by *Nero*  
Bottom Row from Left to Right: *Ugly Cherries* by *PWR BTTM*, *1000 Days* by *WAND*, *1989* by *Ryan Adams*, *Family* by *Think About Life*, *BADLANDS* by *Halsey*

## 10 Songs You Need To Hear

- 1 **Sunday Morning** All Dogs
- 2 **All My Friends** Dylan Kelly
- 3 **The Well-Tuned Piano** La Monte Young
- 4 **Champagne** Qualiatik
- 5 **Back Again** Flor
- 6 **Blank Space** Ryan Adams
- 7 **Call Girl** FFS
- 8 **Who Wears The Pants??** Soko
- 9 **New Dawn** Macross 82-99
- 10 **Breathing Underwater** Hiatus Kaiyote



# Music News

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By Arun Marsten

⌘ Beach House is releasing a new album *Thank Your Lucky Stars* on October 16th, just two months after their last album *Depression Cherry*. If *Depression Cherry*'s velvet CD jacket is any indicator, I'm crossing my fingers for bubble wrap on this one.

⌘ Teen website Rookie has released the fourth installment of their "yearbook" series, a helpful guide for teenage girls. It features Ezra Koenig, Bethany Cosentino, Ariana Grande, Lorde, Charli XCX, and more. A great gift for those of you who want advice on how to be a teen girl from the guy who gave you "Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa"

⌘ Mac Demarco is going to be acting in a new horror film, *Dark Prism*. My best guess is *Evil Dead meets Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

⌘ Deafheaven has released their new album *New Bermuda*, so if you secretly like black metal, but don't want to be "that guy", now's your chance to hop on the bandwagon.

⌘ Tyler the Creator uploaded a new track to YouTube under the title "FUCK IT". He also tweeted "COULDNT COME UP WITH A NAME". It's nice to see someone basing their music career off my history papers.

⌘ Like tacos? Like St. Vincent? Then you should head over to Resident Taqueria in Dallas where Annie Clark has been working as a waitress with her sister and brother-in-law. I've heard she'll even sing if it's your birthday.

⌘ Father John Misty decided to come out and say that he was just trolling everyone with his Lou Reed fever dream and that he'd never even listened to Taylor Swift's album before recording his Velvet Underground inspired cover of Ryan Adam's cover of 1989. Whether or not that's true, I'm just happy I got to write that sentence.

⌘ Apparently CeeLo Green has expressed serious interest in getting back together with Danger Mouse to do another Gnarl Barkley album. I for one am very excited. Does that make me crazy?

⌘ Deerhunter has released a music video for their new single "Living My Life" that depicts a mixture of nature shots, old style psychedelic projections, and him and his bandmates hanging out. It's hard to tell if the video is meant to make me feel good about living my life or sad that I'm not living Bradford Cox's.

⌘ Alex G's *Beach Music* is out now and I can't decide if I'm more upset by the word "Beach" or the appropriate album art. Review forthcoming when I calm down.

# ITS HIP TO BE SQUARE

By Donovan Powers

I have a secret. Something so embarrassing, so humiliating, that I fear if anyone in my social circles knew, I would become a pariah. I, Donovan Powers, unironically own the Dave Matthews Band's entire discography. I'm not talking just studio albums, I mean bootlegs from the early 90's, acoustic stuff featuring just Dave, alternate takes from their studio albums, and every live recording they have released. I have blasted "Crush" in my car after first dates, and listened to "The Dreaming Tree" on repeat after break ups. I am sure many of you think I am a monster.

DMB is uncool. They are the Linkin Park of jazz fusion (if that's even a thing). As a culture, we associated DMB with college bros in the 90s; nowadays, they are associated with middle aged, wealthy, white people. But guess what? *That's ok.*

Music shouldn't be created as a fashion statement. The bands you like are not

your identity as a person. Music should make you feel something, true. As long as it works for you, though, who cares what other people think about it? I know those first drum hits in the beginning of "Ants Marching" can function as a traumatic trigger for those who were horrified by the rise of DMB. I also know that late at night, surrounded by the empty countryside, under a sky full of stars, "#41" has made me feel things I hadn't felt in a long time. Dave's slightly off-pitch melancholy wail has seen me through a lot of rough times, would you really begrudge me that?

I like drawn-out saxophone solos. I like 30 minute versions of three minute songs. I LIKE how Dave Matthews has managed to be a successful singer even though he seems to have no understanding of pitch or vocal technique. Godammit, I even love *Crash*.

My name is Donovan Powers, I love DMB, and I think that's ok.

## KIDS' MUSIC IS SURPRISINGLY GOOD

By Brooke Ley

Children's media is not typically known for its musical excellence. However, in some recent cartoons, there has been a shift in the purpose of the soundtracks; the songs are used less for humor and more to enhance the plot and aesthetic of the show. This trend most likely began with the show *Adventure Time*. In the show, some songs have a comedic undertone, but others are used to deepen the relationships between characters. This adds a higher level of emotion than what is typically found within cartoons. *Adventure Time* also has an interesting use of instrumentation, featuring an omnichord, synthesizer, and banjolele within different songs, in addition to featuring musicians such as Donald Glover and LAKE.

Many of the excellent songs within *Adventure Time* were composed by Rebecca Sugar. When she left the show to create her own series, *Steven Universe*, she brought her musical talent with her. With musicians like Estelle and Kate Micucci of Garfunkel and Oates holding lead voice acting roles, it is no surprise

that the singing within the show is excellent; however, this show especially shines with its instrumental pieces. It expertly uses background music to create and release dramatic tension as it unfolds on-screen.

Patrick McHale, another former member of the *Adventure Time* team, recently created *Over the Garden Wall*, a Cartoon Network mini-series. The format of the show allows for more effort to be put into each episode, earning the show critical acclaim. This can be seen most clearly in the score. The songs have a nostalgic feeling to them, taking influence from musicians like Hoagy Carmichael and Cab Calloway. The show has also gone on to release a composer's cut on the DVD, allowing viewers to listen to the other pieces that the dialog typically covers. A mixtape the protagonist gave to his love interest was even released in limited quantities on cassette. Although these shows are meant for younger audiences, they each have a very distinctive and beautiful soundtrack that are worth giving a listen.

# IS THE SONG OF THE SUMMER A BUMMER?

By Christopher Schuler

If the Song of the Summer model ever applied, it might be on its way out. Indie-ish music blog Stereogum polled readers and selected “I Know There’s Gonna Be (Good Times)” by Jamie xx as their SoS. Spotify users streamed “Lean On” by Major Lazer and DJ Snake more than any other. Redbull, who for some reason had an opinion on the topic, suggested Fetty Wap’s “Trap Queen.” Dozens of other sites have their own choices. As far as I could tell, Nicki Minaj & Meek Mill’s “All Eyes On You” was getting the most plays.

Billboard might have the most definitive answer, since it tracks radio plays. They say the Song of the Summer was “Cheerleader” by OMI. Ignoring the fact that this song was written and originally released in 2013, I was a bit surprised when I read that. The song just wasn’t getting any traction on the stations I was picking up, and I was listening to the radio more than most people my age—according to

Edison Research, an estimated 80% of millennials (ugh) primarily listen to music over the internet. With the freedom granted by services like Spotify, Google Music, or even Youtube, does the idea that a single song can define a summer still work?

Regardless, the only real importance one could really assign to a Song of the Summer was that it showed that people still came together to enjoy something. And in the end, we don’t need blogs or the radio to tell us that’s still true. Online streaming records let us know that millions of people chose Drake as their guilty pleasure music, the latest political poll shows that a majority of Americans just want Donald Trump to Make America Great Again (*note to eds: plz keep caps*), and the Arby’s on Forbes has remained open against all odds; all we need to do is look around to see that we are not alone in our questionable decisions.

# THE METEORIC RISE AND FALL OF DUBSTEP

By Daniel DeLuca

Four years ago, one of my friends played me Skrillex’s “Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites.” At the time, I found the random assortment of noises to be weird and confusing; however, I was also unable to forget the mashed up sounds and complex rhythms. I decided to investigate further. In doing so, I found all sorts of artists and types of dubstep, from melodic (Adventure Club and Seven Lions) to raw and ready for the moshpit (Doctor P and Flux Pavilion). However, one artist captured my eye more than any other. That band was Nero. Composed of three members all originating from the UK, their debut album, *Welcome Reality*, was an instant hit in 2011, thanks to its unique blend of drum and bass elements and excellent production.

Around this time, dubstep started to become more popular. Nero was nominated for the BBC’s “Sound of 2011” award, and many other dubstep artists began to rise in popularity as well. Skrillex

was nominated for several Grammy Awards; artists like Knife Party, Kill The Noise, Bassnectar, and Krewella started to get regular air time on the radio, which was uncommon for electronic music.

Then, both Skrillex and Nero took a long hiatus from releasing new material (Skrillex could not release music due to two of his hard drives being stolen). Following the popularity of breakthrough hits “Levels” by Avicii and “Animals” by Martin Garrix, Knife Party’s newest material approached a newer, hipper sound - Progressive House. Dubstep was no longer the “hip” form of electronic music. The end of dubstep appeared to be inevitable, and when Skrillex joined fellow electronic producer Diplo for their newest project, Jack Ü, the sound of dubstep was completely gone. Although this month marks the return of Nero with an album retaining their original sound, it may have come two years too late.

Hosted outside an old steel mill with ragtag tents alongside two decked-out stages, Thrival was the epitome of a small festival. Despite great energy, good food, and fairly impressive music, Thrival was not an event that could occupy you for a whole day, or even three hours. The highlight was undeniably Panic! at the Disco, as proven when the crowd quadrupled a half hour before their performance. However, many of the smaller acts were full of talent and promise too. The Sheep Dogs, a buoyant boogie rock band, had a very involved crowd for a mid-afternoon concert. Vérité performed an alternate pop setlist filled with passionate vocals and crisp, lively instrumentals. The opener for Panic! at the Disco was Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness, a very spirited and thoroughly entertaining performance, although slightly gimmicky with parachutes and band members repeatedly standing on pianos. Overall, Thrival was entertaining and worth a visit, but not the must-attend event of the year.

**By Dalia Laredo**

First came Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness. The best part: huge balloons showering confetti as the drums supplied us our heartbeats. Afterwards, Panic! At the Disco grooved to a fascinating rhythm, occasionally evoking gypsy music in my mind; I found myself swaying to the infectious intro of “The Ballad of Mona Lisa.”

The next night, Lights lit up the field. She reached exhilarating heights with her vocal range with riffs not included in her recorded work and showed off a charming onstage flair. Finally, there was Manchester Orchestra. The blast throbbled my entire being, and while I was alien to this music it was spectacular to watch.

Overall, despite a weird genre mix with rap between the bands, the lineup of acts was excellent for a new festival--totally worth the bus rides and dirty boots.

**By Jasmine Lim**



Photo by Amy Chen

# THRIVAL

If ever the question “Should I wear long pants to this concert in a large field?” is in your mind, the answer should be a resounding “Yes.” I spent most of the concert wishing I had done so. Learn from my mistakes, and from the fact that I sat on some sort of plant that gave me an ugly rash on my leg.

Besides my own wardrobe-related issues, Thrival was fun and upbeat. Lights was a surprising highlight (I kind-of forgot that they existed), and Manchester Orchestra put on a solid show. The lineup on the second night was a little bizarre; sticking Raekwon and Ghostface Killah between the aforementioned acts gave me genre whiplash. Despite that, Thrival is a change of pace from other local events that students have access to; I recommend hopping on the chance to go next year.

**By Catherine Kildunne**

After walking around the stages for what felt like an hour, we finally reached the main gate and were able to enter the venue. Thankfully, the acts were all timely and the lighting effects were excellent. Hailing from Festival Pier in Philly, I thought the crowd was refreshingly pleasant - I managed not to get shoved, yelled at, or spilled on.

Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness opened energetically for the two headliners, Wale and Panic! at the Disco. Wale invited two people to come up on stage and jumped into the crowd near the end of his set. Afterwards, Panic! lit up the crowd. Brendon Urie’s crazy falsetto and backflips made for a passionate act and an electric end to the night.

If I had not gotten free tickets from CMU, I probably would have still paid to go, and I am excited to see who they will pick for the lineup next year.

**By Jennifer Zhuge**

Thrival Festival this year was a resounding success. It was initially an event I had only considered because CMU was giving free tickets to students, but I was pleasantly surprised to see some big names on the set list for Friday. Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness gave an incredible performance, getting everyone excited for the rest of the evening. Wale was a transition from the rest of the night, and the venue suited his high intensity performance incredibly well. Finishing off the night with Panic! at the Disco was the highlight, especially the “Bohemian Rhapsody” cover. The event was well organized, well attended, and full of surprises. Thrival has gone from a fun night out to something I’ll be eagerly anticipating next year.

**By Daniel Deluca**

To sum up an evening’s experience: better than expected. Walking into the venue revealed the organizer’s attention to detail: colorful lights lit a path through an avenue of food tents and illuminated a grassy seating area. An old, steel-era warehouse loomed on the far side of the grassy strip, cleverly utilized as a backdrop for huge, brightly colored projections advertising the sponsors of the event. Music by the headliners, Wale and Panic! at the Disco, fit the mood: bright, energetic and interactive. Wale invited several fans on stage to perform stage dives, and Panic! covered Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” a perennial favorite. Panic!’s Brendon Urie was clearly feeling the energy, performing vocal flips and back flips, drawing cheers from the crowd, and ending the night at a high point.

The music and venue was undeniably eclectic, but I look forward to the same unpredictable charm next year.

**By Bryn Scharenberg**



# Artist Spotlight: Vérité

Interviews by Dalia Laredo

Photos by Eric Ryan Anderson

*Kelsey Byrne, the independent artist known most commonly by her stage name, Vérité, performed at Thrival Festival on September 26th. Hailing from the small area of Orange County, New York, Vérité pulls from personal experiences and authentic passion to produce her ethereal indie pop sound. Vérité spoke to The Cut about her writing process, where she finds inspiration, and her future intentions in music.*

**The Cut:** Why the stage name? Does Vérité have a specific meaning to you?

**Vérité:** I did it on a self-imposed deadline, so I made a decision that I was going to change my name. Vérité is derived from cinema Vérité which is documentary film style set to represent candid realism and candid reality, and so I figured that sentiment fit with what I was trying to translate with the project.

**TC:** What artists do you draw inspiration from?

**Vérité:** Oh wow. Lots and lots. I listen to music from every genre. When I was younger it was The Breeders and The Cranberries and Nirvana, and now recently it's been Childish Gambino, Sufjan Stevens, and Son Lux. I'm sure if you asked me tomorrow I'd have a different answer.

**TC:** You've released all your music as EP's and singles; do you have any plans for a full length album in the future?

**Vérité:** There's definitely plans for it, but there's no set structure in which it's going to happen. I'm prepared for it. It's basically written in my mind, and so it's just a matter of figuring what's the best way to just push everything out.

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***"None of it was a decision to be a genre or to sound a certain way, it was more so what I was feeling at any given moment and what I wanted to write."***

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**TC:** I've read that Echo took three years to develop. How would you say you grew through the process? And how did that affect the final product?

**Vérité:** I think we — me and Elliot who produced that EP — didn't really know what the end goal was. We just had a lot of content that we were working on. I think working without real deadlines and being able to just be creative with no

idea of what the end goal was going to be really helped it develop naturally and organically. None of it was a decision to be a genre or to sound a certain way. It was more so what I was feeling at any given moment and what I wanted to write.

**TC:** On average, how long will a song take to create?

**Vérité:** Anywhere from twenty minutes to six months. Usually, the total process of writing a song is an hour, but the amount of time that I procrastinate and go back and forth with decisions can be unpredictable. I've had songs that have sat in demo-form for like a year and then one day you finish them.

**TC:** What was "Strange Enough" written about?

**Vérité:** I write everything from stream of consciousness so I don't really consider meanings immediately. They're more abstract ideas that wind up getting strung together to create a cohesive idea. Looking back on it, "Strange Enough"'s theme is definitely similar to the rest of themes of my music, my own inability to connect and be involved in relationships with other people and a kind of magnifying glass on an instance of that.



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**TC:** How would you say living in a small town in New York influenced your writing?

**Vérité:** I think I just did a lot of crazy shit from a young age. We partied super hard and we had really insane times, and so I think that crazy, emotional insanity from my youth has translated into my writing. Now I'm so normal, but I feel like when I was younger we were just out of our fucking minds and it was fun.

**TC:** What's your favorite song you've written?

**Vérité:** I think some of the new ones are some of my favorites honestly. I'm really excited to release them. I really love "Colors" and I really love "Sentiment," but if you ask me tomorrow I'll probably answer differently.

**TC:** Going forward, what are your personal hopes and goals in the music industry?

**Vérité:** To fucking dominate. I have no humble aspirations for the project, but I don't think about the end goal. I really try to keep my head down and focus and do what needs to be done - to do all the little steps and not skip any is my philosophy.

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***"Strange Enough's theme is definitely similar to the rest of themes of my music, my own inability to connect and be involved in relationships with other people and a kind of magnifying glass on an instance of that."***

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# October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<b>4</b> <b>Built to Spill</b> at Mr. Small's	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Beats Antique</b> at Mr. Small's <b>Grace Potter</b> at Stage AE	<b>7</b> <b>Saintseneca</b> at
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> <b>The Neighbourhood</b> at Stage AE	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>Lucinda Williams</b> Theater
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <b>Stevie Wonder</b> at Consol Energy Center	<b>20</b> <b>Norah Jones</b> at Carnegie Music Hall	<b>21</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>The Front Bottoms</b> at Altar Bar <b>Ringo Starr</b> at Heinz Hall	<b>28</b>

# October

Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday

	<b>1</b> Oberhofer at Brillbox	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
at Club Cafe	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
ms at Byham	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Peter Frampton at Carnegie Library of Homestead	<b>17</b>
	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Lil Dicky at Altar Bar The Who w/ Joan Jett and the Blackhearts at Consol Energy Center	<b>24</b> The Darkness at Altar Bar
	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Beauty Slap at Rex Theater	<b>31</b>

Kevin Garrett at Thrival.  
Photo by David Perry



*AN INTERVIEW WITH*  
*KEVIN GARRETT*  
*BY ANNA GUSMAN*



*Kevin Garrett is a singer and songwriter from Pittsburgh who recently released an EP Mellow Drama. We sat down with him after his set at Thrival to talk more about performing, writing, and everything in between.*

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**The Cut:** Hi Kevin! How are you?

**Kevin Garrett:** Good. It's always good to be home! Lately it's been a lot of traveling which is great, something I wasn't even expecting a year ago. But now that we're shooting forward and getting ready to go back on tour, it's really nice to be back home to take a breath for a minute. It's always fun to play for the hometown crowd.

**TC:** You're a Pittsburgh native?

**KG:** Yeah! My entire family except for me went to CMU.

**TC:** What do you think were some of the highlights of traveling/performing this year? How has that shift to touring been and how have you been adapting to it?

**KG:** Every show with James Vincent McMorrow is usually a highlight. He has some of the best fans and I've been so fortunate to play a bunch of shows with him. He's sold out everything. There was this one show in February in Edmonton, Alberta where there was a huge concert stage that had been completely sold out and you could hear a pin drop when we started playing- it just goes to show how respectful his fans are. Other highlights are probably the different festivals I got to play this year. Bonnaroo was a really cool experience because I'd always wanted to go but had never been, so this year it was cool to finally get there and actually play at the same time.

**TC:** What important things have you taken away from the people you've been performing with this year?

**KG:** After touring with James, he's become one of my best friends, but he's also become a very positive influence and mentor on this next sort of phase that I'm going through. As I've started to play more and write more and collaborate more he's been there for me every step of the way. He's been very helpful in that light.

**TC:** Bringing it back to the roots, what is your musical background? When did

you first know and feel that you wanted to make music?

**KG:** I started playing music and taking lessons for violin when I was very young. Music has always been a part of my daily routine, whether it was practicing or listening or creating. I didn't really start creating or writing though until I was 14 or 15.

**TC:** What are your greatest influences? Who do you look up to musically?

**KG:** It's all over the place. When I was really young and taking violin lessons, classical music was a big thing. When I was older and finally able to pay for my own stuff, the first thing I bought was a Ray Charles CD, because I love soul music. I'm a huge Sam Cooke fan, that is my ride or die. I also love old country music, and then I also love rap. I'm a huge hip hop fan, and that's why I'm really excited that I'm with Roc Nation, because some of my idols founded this company.

**TC:** How is working under Jay-Z's Roc Nation label?

**KG:** They're great. I'm a songwriter for them, effectively, and also they co-manage me so it's been a really good experience so far. It's only been a year into the publishing of it all, but they really take care of me, so it's been awesome.

**TC:** Your new EP, *Mellow Drama* released just this year is bringing in a lot of attention from the press. Katy Perry and Sam Smith included! What was it like writing it?

**KG:** It took a long time. I think there was a point about two years ago when I really committed to going with this sort of electro-soul kind of vibe that I've started calling "Odd-Soul". The influences are so broad - there's a lot of jazz theory and old soul going on in the record and I've definitely spent a lot of time studying some of my favorite writers in order to incorporate those elements. I



first wrote "Control" when I was 17, and "Coloring" when I was 22, so the writing of it all spanned a long time. By the time "Coloring" came out, it happened to line up really well with the tour with James and same with "Control". When I was picking the songs for this record, I had a list of 15 but the five that were chosen just really connected well in my mind. My goal with any sort of project is that there is an overarching story being told.

**TC:** What would you say that focus or story is for you EP, and what do you want to communicate to your audience with these five tracks?



Photo by David Perry

**KG:** I really wanted to show a mirrored perspective or a double-meaning on personal thoughts. My main goal with any song is to connect with anyone who wants to listen. That's the whole reason we make music. I guess the objective was to illustrate some portion of a relationship or love gained or lost, but sometimes my songs are really just about me reflecting on something about my own personality. I'm giving you the most personal look into me as possible with this record.

**TC:** If you could collaborate with any living human today, who would it be and why?

**KG:** Kanye West. Love him or hate him he's just always trying to push boundaries, whether it's good or bad. He's a genius. Everything he's done from production to writing to fashion, he's just had one of the craziest careers. If not to collaborate with him it's just a life goal to strive to do the kind of stuff that he's done in the creative world. I have a lot of respect for people who are so driven like that. I also really want a pair of Yeezy's.

**TC:** In the future, where do you wish to go with your sound, your themes, your ideas?

**KG:** I think I'd like to put an album out sooner than later, I want to keep touring, and I just want to explore where I can go. So far it's been a very from the ground up, honest, organic process, so I'm just excited to keep putting out new music.

*Starting from the 21st of October, Kevin will on a cross-country touring with X Ambassadors and Skylar Grey. You can listen to his music here*

[kevingarrettmusic.com](http://kevingarrettmusic.com)

[soundcloud.com/kevinogarrett](https://soundcloud.com/kevinogarrett)

[kevingarrettmusic.bandcamp.com](http://kevingarrettmusic.bandcamp.com)

# VIA 2015



Photo by Lucy Denegre

By Arun Marsten

You may have noticed a number of events this past month being held in connection with the cool new festival in town: VIA. The two largest events, the Block Party and the Main Event, were both held at Spirit, a new nightclub in Lawrenceville. I decided to check out both of the events to see what the fuss was about.

One of the big attractions for the early section of the Block Party was a performance by the Girls Rock! program of Pittsburgh, which I thought was a great use of the audience and space on VIA's part. Sheer Mag, a pretty straightforward rock band from Philadelphia, was also there to play a fantastic set, which was surprising given VIA's reputation for electronic music.

As for the late section, I couldn't manage to run up and downstairs quickly enough to catch all of the acts, but I did get to see a couple that were really incredible. Slowdanger played a set downstairs that featured the duo performing beautiful dance pieces. The performances were punctuated by one or both of them running back to their controllers to tweak something or transition between songs.

Upstairs, Tracksploitation and Princess Nokia did a fantastic job of keeping the audience alive by interplaying energetic dancey tracks with smoother ones that you could relax and bob your head to. Wavy Spice even got me to sing along with her in Spanish, which I'm almost positive I don't speak. Finally, Ikonika ended the night with an unapologetic dubstep and garage set that was impossible not to move to.

I can't say that the Block Party was all good. The early section also featured a pop-up market that had been put together by the Urbanist. It was certainly a good collection of local shops and restaurants, but it was also incredibly empty. I couldn't tell you exactly why that part of the event was so poorly attended, but my first guess would have to be that all of the shops were decently upmarket and it was unapparent whether or not you needed a ticket on top of that to buy anything. My other complaint would have to be the surprise that, while Pierogi Night made an appearance, the price was not included in your ticket. The tickets to Pierogi Night were also sold out by the day of the event, so even if you had been

willing to pay you would have been out of luck.

The Main Event, on the other hand, went over without a hitch. The downstairs event was called Discwoman, and it featured a variety of fantastic female DJs including Yaeji, who performed live vocals while mixing the rest of her set. As for the upstairs, I got there when Lower Dens started, which I thought would pale the rest of the evening by comparison, but MC Lyte and XYYXX managed to come through with amazing sets that really brought the crowd together.

My only complaint for both events would have to be that they were both 21+ at night, which, for an event whose aim is to augment the music scene, seems counterproductive and unfair to the countless teens who told me that they would have loved to go. However, considering this year's turnout, I'm sure that VIA will be back again next year and hopefully in greater numbers.



# DIET CIG

By Arun Marsten

*Diet Cig is a punk duo from New Paltz, New York consisting of Alex Luciano on guitar and Noah Bowman on drums. After their show in Pittsburgh, we got to talk with them about patches, lighters, cupcake shops, and rocking.*

**The Cut:** I feel like I have to start off with the one thing everyone's wondering: what is your name supposed to mean?

**Alex Luciano:** Ooh, that's a good one. Honestly, it can mean whatever you want it to mean, which is kind of a cop out answer [laughs]. Sometimes I think that we chose it because it was short enough to embroider onto stuff, like patches for the band, but other times I just think of it as something that's addictive but not bad for you.

**TC:** So, where did you guys meet?

**Noah Bowman:** On a boat in Alaska.

**AL:** What? No, we met in New Paltz at a show my friend was hosting and Noah was playing. I interrupted his set to ask him for a lighter and ended up getting his number, so we started hanging out from there.

**TC:** What kinds of places were you playing shows in when you first started?

**NB:** A lot of basement shows and house shows around New Paltz. We'd make our way down to the city pretty often, but that was basically it.

**AL:** Yeah, most of it was our friends graciously hosting us in their houses despite the fact that we were pretty bad in the beginning. Any band is pretty rough when they're first starting, so it was nice to be playing for our friends.

**TC:** Would you say you're part of the DIY scene then?

**AL:** Definitely. We love DIY.

**TC:** Is the song "Scene Sick" supposed to be about that at all?

**AL:** Yeah, it was mainly about my frustration with that crowd. I actually wrote it before I started playing in a band, so it's really supposed to be from the perspective of an audience member. I would get really annoyed that everyone was too cool to dance and that they would worship bands without thinking about their music. As we've gotten more involved with the scene I've just thought of it as a different perspective to have.

**TC:** What kind of bands were you thinking about when you first started writing music?

**AL:** I really really love Frankie Cosmos. She showed me that anyone can write songs about whatever they want. They can be simple or complex, but you should just write them anyways. We also both listened to a lot of Hop Along and Best Coast when we first started. I guess we were just interested in female-fronted bands that could rock but also talked about whatever they wanted to instead of traditional rock song tropes.

**TC:** Related question, what's the tallest thing you've ever jumped off of at a show?

**AL:** Definitely that one time at a cupcake shop in Connecticut. I was already standing on a stack of amps and the two or three suitcases that were on top of it when I realized I could reach my foot to this air conditioner that was on the ceiling, so I jumped off of it. I don't think I realized how high it was when I jumped, but my friends got a lot of good pictures, so I'd say it was worth it. It felt pretty punk, especially in such a cutesy location.

**TC:** You guys have an EP and single out right now, any plans for future releases?

**AL:** We're working on a full length right now and we're hoping to have it recorded by the end of the year. It'll be nice to have a full record out, so we're both excited to finish it up when we get home.

# Spotify's Effect on the Music Industry

By Stephen Yamalis

Soul has undergone various forms of evolution and divergence, growing from the inclusion of secularity and regionalization and shifting with the advent of funk beats and politically influenced lyrics. The genre is a broad one, holding both the spiritual Mavis Staples and the funkier James Brown. Some of the most popular modern variations, such as British and blue-eyed soul, mix soul and other genres. Artists like Amy Winehouse, Adele, Duffy, Estelle, and Hozier have used the elements of soul to create beautiful and smooth pop.

While many modern artists have taken Soul music in radical directions, infusing it with synths or blending it with hip-hop, some artists have begun to come full circle, returning to the flavor of the early 60s. Leon Bridges is one of the foremost singers of this movement. His album *Coming Home* has become one of the most recent standard-bearers of the throwback-soul genre. His smooth sounds and vocals are reminiscent of Sam Cooke's, his sweet lyrics add a note of romance. Still, some are hesitant to call this genre a notable success.

If you were to ask Taylor Swift, she would say that Spotify is absolutely destroying the music industry. Last year, the pop-superstar made her disapproval of streaming services clear when she removed her entire catalog of music from Spotify. Artists on average earn less than one cent per play, so Swift was certainly correct that profits from Spotify should be less than those from a service like iTunes. Still, she might be wrong about its effect on the music industry as a whole.

Daniel Ek, founder and CEO of the Swedish-originated Spotify, proposed that Spotify is actually contributing to improving the entire music industry through royalties. Considering that every listen that each song gets puts fractions of a cent directly into the pockets of the artists and record labels, for an incredibly successful artist like Swift streaming services would not negatively impact her financially - her music would potentially get thousands and thousands of plays daily. In fact, about 70% of Spotify's revenue is paid to the artists or labels. The advertisements shown to users with free subscriptions and the fees that premium subscribers pay provide the income that Spotify uses to pay these royalties.

Technically, artists probably did make more money from songs bought individually at \$0.69-\$1.29. But when this

was the only legal option for accessing music online, most people just chose to download their music illegally for free, providing no profits to the artist. Therefore, even free users who used to download music illegally are contributing much more to the music industry than they were before.

Services like Spotify may not always benefit the artist more than the old purchase-centered system. Still, the number of users is increasing and the music industry will need to find a way to make internet radio work. Sorry Taylor, but this is one battle you have not won yet!

In mid-September, NPR released an article criticizing *Coming Home* for merely being a tribute to sentimentality. They also criticized Bridges' failure to include historically or socially influenced lyrics. Although they do have a legitimate concern, they oversimplify Bridges' throwback sound, ignoring the potential music like this has to inspire. The act of re-creating 60s soul allows for a new remembrance of its roots and a full appreciation of the original sound. This new form of soul is not a simple replication of past music, but a carefully crafted representation of the emotion behind it all. Bridges does not need the addition of politics or history to create a 'soul' behind his genre.

# The Return of Soul

By Sophia Suarez



# Songs to Play At Your Own Funeral

## “Highway to Hell” by AC/DC

We spend so much time fearing the underworld, but I want this song played on full blast while my casket is lowered into the ground. My sins will be remembered with celebratory reverence while everyone is served heaping plates of devil's food cake.

Izzy McCarthy

## “Naked As We Came” by Iron and Wine

If I've finally kicked the bucket it may be time to turn down to the thought of loved ones scattering each others ashes. Added bonus, since I'm dead no one will see me cry.

Arun Marsten

## “The Nest” by Jeanine Piersol

This song perfectly captures that feeling of keeping the party going long after the lights have been turned off and everyone has gone home. Ideally, my funeral will feel the same way. Plus, it's my eternal jam.

Owen Stone

## “Last Kiss” by Cœur de Pirate

It's just so sad and beautiful. Even if I haven't been killed in a car accident, I'll come back to life if someone sings this to me.

Serene Gao

## “Make Me Wanna Die” by The Pretty Reckless

If u salty about some of your funeral attendees and tryna haunt from beyond the grave.

Jennifer Zhuge

## “Female\$ Welcomed” by Trinidad James

I just want to die how I lived.

Donovan Powers

## “P.F.F.” by Hank Williams III

How better to meet the grave than to a rude and irreverent celebration of living hard and dying young?

Mark Egge

## “And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going” by Jennifer Hudson

The only song from *Dreamgirls* that I have ever heard would pretty much capture the resistance to “live without [me]” unanimously felt by all the attendees of my funeral. Plus I feel I should be remembered for my amazing lip-sync performance to this song.

Stephen Yamalis



Photo by Mark Egge

# CONC REVI

## punch brothers

As The Punch Brothers took the stage for their two-song encore, the energy in Mr. Smalls Theater was palpable. After delivering a demanding hour and a half's worth of electrifying hoedowns, sonatas, ballads, and tunes, the band had hardly broken a sweat. The band used every trick at their disposal, stringing the audience along between periods of silent attention and uproarious applause.

When a band gains popularity, it can cause a sense of disconnectedness between them and their audiences. However, for the Punch Brothers, this hasn't been the case at all. The band did all they could to make the audience feel welcome. Chris Thile, a MacArthur award winning mandolinist, cracked a few jokes over a glass of julep and they encouraged everyone to scream the choruses at full blast during the amplified folk tunes.

They started out the show with a crisp folk piece from one of their older albums, weaving

their way through more standard songs and into the content of their newest album *The Phosphorescent Blues*, which blends traditional bluegrass and classical music into a more progressive sound. Longtime Punch Brothers fans were delighted to hear songs from the older albums, *Antifogmatic* and *Who's Feeling Young Now?*, while newcomers were entranced by the elaborate stylings of the new one. Watching these musicians effortlessly genre-hop back and forth from bluegrass to acoustic folk to classical had the audience with their jaws on the floor. By the end of the show, the room was blown away again with a surprise cover of The Strokes' "Alone Together." The contrast between the rocking cover and the rest of the night's highly technical string picking and strumming cemented an already-solid performance. With an evening of such varied sound and energy, the Punch Brothers once again kept their longstanding audience on their toes.

By Ana Gusman

## death cab for cutie

On Thursday, September 17th, Death Cab for Cutie played Stage AE, departing from the mellow studio sound they are known for and giving an electrifying performance. The music itself was phenomenal. Death Cab wove their old hits throughout the set along with newer chart-toppers from recently released album *Kintsugi*.

Death Cab for Cutie was formed in 1997 and has produced a string of successful alternative rock albums since then. They became better known in mainstream media in the early 2000s through their songs' appearances on popular TV shows like *The OC*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *Gossip Girl*. Despite their massive popularity, this particular show was not sold out.

Twin Shadow opened the concert, and the set was short but sweet. His songs were somewhat unconventional, and his sound was a breath of fresh air. Despite his obvious celebrity, he was humble and kind towards the audience which was well received.

Death Cab for Cutie began with "No Room in Frame," during which Gibbard seemed angry

and distracted; he kept kneeling between vocals to fix his guitar pedals. The band transitioned to "Crooked Teeth," a classic from *Plans*, but the technical difficulties persisted.

Although the music itself was great, Ben Gibbard's frustration onstage distracted from it. While the performance was fine on paper, Gibbard's unprofessional attitude sapped the emotional value from the songs and made the concert feel impersonal. That, combined with a calm audience, made the mood straddle the line between chill and unenthusiastic. Don't get me wrong, I didn't miss being shoved around in a sweaty mass of young adults, but when an audience isn't singing along and shouting out their love for the band, the concert can become a little lackluster.

Death Cab played most of *Kintsugi* during the first half and older hits during the second, including "What Sarah Said," "Cath...," "Soul Meets Body," and of course, "I Will Follow You Into the Dark." "Bixby Canyon Bridge" was the last song before the encore, which was followed by an unnecessarily dramatic mic drop.

By Emily Porat

# CONCERT REVIEWS



Photo by Jonathan Leung

The Purity Ring concert was, by and large, amazing. But milling around Stage AE, waiting for the opening act to start, I realized something wasn't quite right: I had become old. I was surrounded on all sides by well-coiffed high schoolers. They were young and spry, could totally dance, and were probably in middle school when *Shrines* came out. I never realized how much the crowd itself accounted for your experience at a concert until I was surrounded by several hundred people who probably got a ride in their friend's mom's Honda.

Luckily for me, that bizarre dissonance (how could I, at twenty years old, be the oldest person in a thirty foot radius?) didn't spill over to the stage. The opener, Hana, eerily echoed some of the serener sounds Purity Ring is known for and even added a dance-friendly drum machine. Her lack of notoriety was no obstacle in connecting with the crowd. But the real energy didn't become palpable until the sheet was torn off Purity Ring's signature light cocoons. Functioning as controls for both the instrumentals and the light show onstage, they look like giant crystals straight

*The car is on fire, and there's no driver at the wheel, and the sewers are all muddied with a thousand lonely suicides, and a dark wind blows.*

If you think that sounds a bit over-dramatic, you might not be a Godspeed fan. That passage, the opening to their first album, threw me the first time I heard it. Calling it overwrought is an understatement, but in the context of the album it just works. The band sells it through their commitment to a bleak, all-encompassing atmosphere. You better come along for the ride, because they won't be compromising anything for you.

Their concert was the same way. Yes, there were some obvious negatives, even from the beginning. There was mandatory seating in rigid wooden bleachers. The auditorium was about 15 degrees too hot. For over half of the performance, the band played their newest album in full, meaning there were several drone pieces lasting over ten minutes: songs with a single violin playing long, slow notes. The rest of the band sat in the dark and waited, occasionally glancing out at the audience before returning to a meditative state.

out of a fantastical video game. Instrumentalist Corin Roddick seemed to embody sprezzatura as he operated the bizarre machine. The performances of "Obedear" and "Ungirthed" were sensory treats.

Megan James maintained such eerie vocals that entire sections of songs seemed to separate from her body. For part of the set, James was on stage left and my entire view of her was blocked by phones held up, recording the concert, probably for Snapchat or Instagram (that's what I would do!). It made me weirdly thankful for the transportive quality of the sounds reverberating through my bones, and the illuminations that would never be properly captured on camera. The irony of deftly utilizing technology and electronics to create a show that could only be faithfully captured by *being there* made everything seem sweeter: the bass deeper, the lights more beautiful, the high schoolers less like dumb kids and more like a version of ourselves from the past.

Even so, the band sold the performance completely. The lone violin was eventually it was joined, slowly but surely, by a guitar, a drummer, a bass; eventually all eight members of a band had built to a crescendo. When music like this works, you fall into the sound and it takes you somewhere far outside of the concert hall.

GY!BE sets themselves apart from many of their contemporaries through their politics—their far-left beliefs are as much a part of most of their work as the detuned string instruments. In the case of this show, though, the messages didn't always feel fully formed. At one point, the lead singer shouted "Andrew CARNEGIE," as if ready to summon the robber baron out of the grave. But after this he just trailed off. It was just as well, his voice was almost lost in the guitars and soon I was too.

## purity ring

By Catherine Kildunne

## godspeed you! black emperor

By Christopher Schuler

# Ben Folds So There

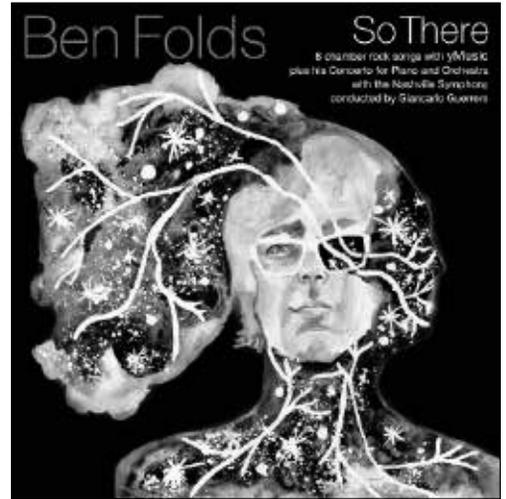
By Donovan Powers

*So There* is proof that some 90s stars can age like fine wine. The album came about from a collaboration between Ben Folds and yMusic, a New York based chamber group. Each track on the record blends the traditional piano-pop styling we have come to know and love from Ben Folds with elaborate orchestration.

One of the things that really struck me about this album is the intricacy of each and every track. Other artists have combined classical influences with pop stylings before, but it's often little more than a gimmick. In the case of *So There*, every run on the violin, every pointed horn hit, and every cello rumble drips of intention. Each note more deliberate than the last, not a moment of the album feels phoned in. Given that Folds has released over 20 records, it's a testament to him as an artist that he was so willing to change his sound and embrace a new musical challenge. It would have been easy for him to bang out another 13 piano-pop four-chord-wonders, and, let's be honest I would have eaten it up. But he didn't. The passion he had for this project oozes from every seam of this release.

The music of *So There* is so elegant, and the lyrics so light-hearted, that it often feels like Ben Folds tried to prevent the listener from taking it too seriously. On the track "Fro-D-A," Folds turns a juvenile dick joke into a lavish and charming chorale, and on the track "Yes Man," he confronts a fictional manager for not telling him he gained weight on tour.

In an age where musicality is often undervalued, Ben Folds made classical music cool again. Unfortunately, the album is a bit short, only eight tracks and a concerto. While the concerto is impressive and large, the eight tracks with yMusic left me wanting more. That being said, it is absolutely worth a listen.



🎧🎧🎧🎧/5

# Beirut No No No

By Ina Rastegar

After a four-year absence, Beirut finally released a new album with the unmistakable trumpet-heavy, folk-inspired sound that has encompassed all of their previous works. Still, a long gap was bound to bring some change and growth. The album was written during a very tumultuous part of lead singer Zach Condon's life, and the lyrics reflect this. The poppier tempos may be Condon's foray into the more mainstream or an attempt to cover up the sadder feelings hidden in the lyrics; either way, it provides an interesting juxtaposition. *No No No* is Beirut's most simple album, with minimal lyricism and less chaotic instrumentation.

After such a long wait, the stakes were high for *No No No*. Unfortunately, Condon's apparent intent on simplicity, left the album cut short. At only 29 minutes, the nine tracks featured don't have much time to develop in the way I hoped and expected from Beirut. Those 29 minutes are incredibly pleasant and invoke the same memories of past Beirut. However, the minimalism in the lyrics leaves you wanting more, and the songs end without complete satisfaction.

Like most Beirut albums, *No No No* includes one instrumental song, appropriately named "As Needed." The fifth of nine songs, it acts as an interesting divider for the album. Sandwiched between "August Holland" and "Perth," two very upbeat songs, "As Needed" is much more solemn, with minimal piano and violin notes. Given the upbeat tempos of the majority of the album, it is easy to overlook the solemnness of Condon's lyrics. The lyrical subtlety requires multiple listens to truly grasp the full sentiment. Overall, for a long-time Beirut fan, *No No No* is definitely worth hearing, and, if you're new to the group, it's an easy introduction with little time commitment.



🎧🎧🎧🎧/5

## Disclosure Caracal

By David Dwyer

After two years and the smash hit, “Latch,” Disclosure followed up their extraordinary first album, *Settle*, with *Caracal*. The music integrated new R&B influences, yet Disclosure retained their knack for writing catchy melodies. “Good Intentions,” featuring Miguel, shows how well the signature sound works with R&B; their sensual production perfectly matches the sighing melody. Disclosure’s own Howard Lawrence’s vocals on “Molecules” are surprisingly slick; they have more confidence on this album to have songs without superstar vocals.

In comparison to *Settle* however, there is a lack of energy on a few of the songs. Sam Smith’s performance in “Omen” pales next to the enthusiastic “Latch” which catapulted him to fame last year. Even though this album does not meet the standard set by *Settle*, Disclosure came back with a sophomore album that successfully devoted itself to a new, more relaxed sound.



⊂⊂⊂⊂/5

## Chris Cornell Higher Truth

By Andrew Kim

Chris Cornell needs no introduction. Frontman, vocalist, and rhythm guitarist for Soundgarden, Cornell has been in the music industry for decades and is well known for his four-octave hard-rawkin’ voice. However, this voice was last used inappropriately in his 2009 solo album *Scream*. The album was called a “trainwreck” by some and “deserving of a hallowed place in the Shitty Solo Album Hall of Fame” by others. Going into *Higher Truth*, many people were not sure what to expect.

*Higher Truth* is a great redemption. While others chastise Cornell and producer Brendan O’Brien for only making songs which deal with subject matters like loss and the passing of time, I praise the two for casting light on a fantastic characteristic of Cornell’s voice: delicacy. With no hard gain guitar in the background, the nuances of his vocals are amplified, portraying a deeper level of emotion and subtlety.



⊂⊂⊂⊂/5

## Fetty Wap Fetty Wap

By Christopher Schuler

“Trap Queen,” “679,” and “My Way” all raced up the charts when Fetty Wap dropped them, and for good reason: they’re undeniably catchy. Critics complained that they all have the same Trap-style beats and three-note melodies, but if that’s the only trick Fetty has up his sleeve, it’s a trick that can work three times. “Alright,” the album’s fourth single, proves that Fetty can go hard when he wants to. There are also a handful of other similarly fun songs; “RGF Island” breaks the earlier mold by tacking on a catchy coda.

Unfortunately, *Fetty Wap* is hurt by its length. At 20 songs and 77 minutes, it is by no means slim. Almost half the songs feature Monty, a rapper with half the dexterity and a tenth of the knack for melody that Fetty has. This album was never going to be great, but with a more relevant feature to bring some variety and pruning of the weaker tracks, it could have been good.



⊂⊂⊂⊂/5

## Oh Wonder Oh Wonder

By Dalia Laredo

Up-and-coming band Oh Wonder released their self-titled debut on September 4th. The duo, Josephine Vander Gucht and Anthony West, have created a unique sound out of their vocal harmonies and simple beats. The lack of fuller instrumentation creates a hollow but well rounded mood throughout the album. Somehow, it manages to be both uplifting and calming at the same time, the perfect album for a rainy day.

The album contains elements of many genres but tends towards electronic R&B with heavy keyboards and drums. Their real strength lies in the lyrical complexity, which is emphasized by the quiet accompaniment. The best tracks, “Livewire,” “Plans,” “Without You,” and “White Blood,” have lyrics full of clever phrases and double meanings that might not be caught on a first listen. With its uniquely indulgent-yet-mellow vibe, *Oh Wonder*’s whimsical tones and striking lyrics are guaranteed leave a lasting impression.



⊂⊂⊂⊂/5

# Sonder by Donovan Powers



Last summer, I woke up at 6 am to get to work at 8 am so I could go to the gym at 5 pm so I could get home at 8 pm. By the time I had eaten dinner and read my email it was 10pm, and I would go to sleep so I could greet the next day of monotony head on. I was living the American dream, and I hated it. I hated myself for letting this job control me.

Cut to the middle of August. I was at a party and very “socially lubricated,” talking to a friend about how miserable I was. Before I was able to finish my diatribe against the capitalist dream, they interrupted me and asked why I didn’t choose to be happy. I was very caught off guard. “You can’t choose to be happy,” I scoffed. They stopped me again, and asked once more, “*Why don’t you choose to be happy?*” I took a moment, and reflected on their question, and answered, “Because I don’t invest in the things I love.”

All of a sudden everything seemed to click. I had been so caught up in being miserable that I hadn’t stopped to think about how I could fix it. I stayed out alone on that porch for quite a while that night. Partially to reflect on my breakthrough, and partially because I was throwing up and couldn’t really walk. As the gathering inside wound down and things became more intimate, I kept overhearing snippets of conversation. It was bizarre. I had never simultaneously felt more

alone and more surrounded by other people in my life. I was overwhelmed by the idea that each of these conversations was a moment in time that was passing between two people, just like me, with hopes, dreams, fears.

*Sonder.*

I knew what I had to do. I wanted to make a concept album that captured the feeling I had that night. I had vague ideas for what I wanted but I needed a skeleton to latch onto. I had been spending my days in the office listening to vaporwave because I thought its themes mirrored the irony of me wasting my summer away as a corporate slave. As my work droned on every day, so did the beautiful stylings of Diana Ross slowed down 300%. I had fallen in love with the aesthetic it presented, the simultaneous love letter to and attack on consumer culture. Combine that with my obsession with 80s synths and it seemed like a natural fit.

On the night my keyboard came in, I left work early, skipped the gym, and holed myself up in my room. By 3 am I was done with the first version of “Makeout Point.”

I figured if the first track took nine hours to make, the next would take somewhere around six since I’d learned how to use my tools. I was wrong. I pulled an all nighter trying to finish my second track, and as I got ready for work the next day, a

zombie, I had nothing to show for it. I was crushed. Had I already run out of ideas? Exhausted and feeling defeated, I gave up that night and considered abandoning the project all together.

The next day, after a full night of sleep, I looked in the mirror and asked again, “Why am I choosing to be unhappy?” I was back at it that night. And the next night. Before I knew it, I had 15 tracks in various states of finish and polish. I had done it. I brought on another friend to make a video for the album and he worked with me, editing tracks and cutting the less inspired ones. The whole thing came together, and, by the first week of classes, *Sonder* was ready for release.

Now that *Sonder* has been out for a few weeks and I have been able to reflect on the experience, of course there are things I would do differently. All that said, *Sonder* saved me. Beyond an album, *Sonder* is a physical manifestation of my choice to be happy, and for that reason the project will always mean a lot to me. Please go give it a listen if you haven’t yet, [www.sonder.link](http://www.sonder.link). Or don’t, I’m not your dad. No matter what you do though, please choose to be happy and pursue what you love.



Punch Brothers at Mr. Small's  
Photo by Mark Egge

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