

IN CONVERSATION: Eva Lawitts (Brooklyn, NY—frontperson for [Stimmerman](#); bass player for [Citris](#), [Oceanator](#), [Princess Nokia](#), [Rotem Sivan](#), [Three Body Problem](#), [Vagabon](#), and more; co-founder of [Wonderpark Studios](#)) interviews, banters, and reminisces with longtime friend and high school classmate **Evan-Daniel Rose-González** (Troy, NY via Manhattan, NY; composer/improviser/performer as [Silica Angel](#)) on the heels of their respective new releases ([Silica Angel's eponymous single](#), and [Stimmerman's Pleasant Vistas in a Somber Place](#)) for Happy Mag.

Eva Lawitts: *How you doing, Evan?*

Evan-Daniel Rose-González: Let me just turn on my recorder, so I don't lose anything. I just downloaded this app a second ago. Video chat doesn't work on my computer at all—I don't get audio. So I got you on my phone right now.

How is that...possible that your computer doesn't support the audio for—well, whatever.

Oh, my computer is broken. Every time I bounce a file, like, I bounce a demo of track or whatever, I do it in the highest quality .wav format, so I get it in, like, 350 megabytes and I'll do that, like, 100 times per track. My problem is I'll forget to label the final one, and they all have the same name or one different number, and I don't delete them as I go. So I've got six years worth of that.

Is that true? Has your computer been broken for six years?

It's been giving me the 'startup disk is full' message for four or five years now. I've been ignoring it—it continues to perform at an adequate level. It comes in in the clutch when I need it to. It doesn't freeze up when I play shows, and I can write music on it, but it doesn't really work otherwise. So I think it's just when I have, like, Chrome open. I also got a lot of viruses, because I watch—I watch the MTV Challenge and I don't have cable up here.

What's the MTV Challenge?

It's formerly known as the Real World/Road Rules Challenge.

Okay, I remember The Real World.

The Real World was the longest lasting of their, like, original flagship shows, you know what I mean? They're bringing it back for Netflix.

Yes. Plans for the future: will you be on The Real World?

That's my backup plan.

I can see that it's going to be very hard for us to reign this in to some level of sanity.

That was kind of the point. So, anyway, the MTV Challenge is on season 32 now.

[laughs] That can't be possible.

It's almost as old as me—The Real World is older than me. First season of The Real World aired in 1992, featuring Heather B., from Sway. I just figured that out, because I hadn't watched season one until recently.

This is where your research has lead you.

Yeah. I had one semester, when I was in school, where I watched...16 seasons of The Real World.

Yeah. [pauses] What?

Yeah. I stopped going to class.

That's in keeping with pretty much everything I know about you.

Me and my two roommates, we would just wake up—in the early afternoon—and all come downstairs to where the TV was, and just sit in silence and watch The Real World until it was nighttime, and then we would all just go to bed.

That sounds a lot like my experience in high school, except I just watched Soul Plane like 10 times in a row. [laughs] So, do you think—I mean, I feel like the answer to this is like undeniably...yes. But do you feel like these sort of...lurid dips into this, like, vague, unreachable degeneracy—for instance, watching the Real World and just sitting in the dark—I mean, how much do you feel like that is...maybe not even reflected in your music, but how much do you feel like that's inevitable? How does that work? [laughs]

[laughs] It's a direct influence. I only listen to, like...really ridiculous or bad things, mostly, for a similar reason. Like...my favorite song right now is...you remember 'Side to Side' by Ariana Grande? The one where Nicki Minaj says "wrist icicle ride dick bicycle." I put that at three quarters speed on the Youtube, the Youtube speed adjuster, and that's my favorite song right now. That's not bad, though...just ridiculous.

That's so weird, because I feel like your music is...good. Like, I like it, but I feel like you're only influenced by terrible, terrible things.

Absolutely.

Like, I don't totally understand...how bad things go into you and good things come out.

For me, it's also, like...when I was younger and really pretentious, all I was listening to was 'cool stuff.' That's the upside to being really pretentious at a young age, and a lot of that just seeped into me, and it's just still sitting there in my brain. Not in a way where I could be like, "I know this song, I know this song," like—

It's just there.

Those threads are still connected in my brain. Just, now, my direct influences are, like, pop music, and...the music I hear on the Real World.

The incidental music of the Real World? [laughs]

That's the real goal—to get my music on The Real World.

I think you could do it. I think that's a really good and, like, kind of an achievable goal.

I would go on there as a cast member, and then not mention anything about it—I don't think I would get cast if they heard it. I don't think I'm what they're looking for, necessarily, as far as talent goes.

I think you're a perfect candidate, and I think if you constantly have your own music blaring at all times, so that other people's interviews and confessions are drowned out—I think that's ideal.

Exactly! And I just...wouldn't tell them it was me. But then when they need to buy the rights to it, suddenly they'd be calling me, and they wouldn't even know they were calling me...but then I'd be on the other end, like, "It's me! You kicked me off the show for breaking the rules of The Real World, and now you want to buy my music?"

[laughs] Wow. That's actually an excellent choice. It's too bad that they now have this information, because they're—I'm certain they're watching us right now, but...

Someone is. I'm not sure if MTV is the guy behind the webcam who's always watching.

I think we're only a couple of years away from reality TV just being, like, NSA found footage of people talking. This is probably a dark web reality show—what we're doing right now, and, you know, all of our whatever, like...sex tapes and nudes.

I remember the first time I went on the dark web.

Yeab?

Saw a grenade launcher for sale.

I've heard about that. I mean, I've never been in the dark web, but I think it's because I'm too impulsive. Not that I have \$10,000, but given my history with, like, reverb.com, I feel like—well, I don't have \$10,000, but I definitely have \$200. So let's see, what can I get for that?

I have that problem with the app Wish.

I don't even know what that is.

It's, like, bootleg imported goods, basically. There are a lot of ads for it on Facebook. I keep buying basketball jerseys with nonsense printed on them.

Yeah, I'm a big fan of those, as you know.

I know, I tagged you in a picture.

I saw it. I delighted in it.

I always wanted to ask you where you get all of yours, though.

Burma.

Okay. I can't make that trip.

Speaking of which, can we, like, talk about how you're back in Troy?

I had a mental breakdown and I moved back up here.

Is that really what happened?

That's about...75 percent of what happened. It all kind of happened very suddenly. I just knew that I know Troy, and I know people up here, and have people up here, and it all just—um, then I started having fifteen panic attacks in my sleep every night, and so I was like, "well, I've got to do something now, I guess"; no more waiting on stuff. So I just moved up here in January and started handing out free samples at the local grocery stores, which is the greatest job in the world.

[laughs] Do you relish in it as much as your social media presence suggests?

It started off as me posting about it to like...deal with it, and break up the monotony of it—and then, gradually, I started really loving the job because people are just...really, absurdly ridiculous, and they act particularly ridiculous towards me because of the way I look. Like, not only am I the only free sample person who's not a 70 year old woman, but also...I wear a bow in my hair, and platform shoes or heels every day. I've broken the dress code way more than I should have. I hope my boss doesn't read this interview, but she did tell me to cool it with the facial piercings, and I did—she was just like, "you can't have the septum ring and the three giant chains on at work," and I was just like..."well, yeah, I guess you're right." She was like, "it's against Food Safe Policy."

That kind of makes sense. Well—the chains, I don't totally understand, but I guess the septum piercing kind of makes sense.

Yeah. And I am Food Safe Certified and I do honor that. I, um, I really try to uphold that badge of honor.

You got it. You got to honor your government certifications. So do you feel like, beyond it just being a place that you know—do you feel like, connected to Troy?

Troy is the perfect place for me to write the type of music that I write. I always do it at, like, five in the morning, too. Troy's always raining, or—right now I live in an apartment with no windows, so that's my...my new sadness. I have one window, actually. That's my hatch. It leads out to the roof. I also have a skylight, but it's not in a room that's used—it's in a special little two by two skylight room.

Okay, like an atrium?

Kind of. But it's filled with garbage from the last tenant, so it's...my trash atrium. That's a song title.

Trash atrium. Well, it could easily be like your new artist name. It's very similar to your last two. [laughs]

I had to make up a fake record label name for DistroKid, and I wish I had come up with Trash Atrium a couple of days earlier. I used Astrobabylon, which is a word that came to me in a dream.

Astrobabylon...reminds me of Smash Mouth, and their seminal first record.

I went and saw Smash Mouth on the 4th of July, up in Albany.

How was it?

They were...really tight.

They're...kind of good? They're, like, actually, like, Astro Lounge...okay. Maybe we won't include this in the actual interview, but Astro Lounge is a great album.

That's going to be the tagline of the interview. [laughs] "Astro Lounge is a great album." This is going to be the highlight, where we talk about how good Smash Mouth is.

To quote [Chris Krasnow](#) (co-owner of Wonderpark Studios, guitar player in Stimmerman, Citris), Astro Lounge is Smash Mouth's "Crack the Skye."

I was on the Lost Media Wiki recently and, apparently, there's an entire lost Smash Mouth album. They finished it. It was ready to go, and then it just...never came out.

Probably because it's more profitable for them to just continue to be a meme.

Yeah, because it was them, like, going back to the roots of, like, doing that...doing that real shit. That real grimey Smash Mouth. Smath Rock. Smash Rock.

[laughs] Were there, like, a lot of people there to see them? Because I've seen, like, street festival footage of them playing, and it's kind of sad, you know? It's, like, 70 people there, who are, you know—kids and drunk adults.

Oh, it was packed. There were a lot of kids and drunk adults. The fireworks were too way loud though. And then I tried to call an Uber, and that was a whole mess.

I'm sure...because you were at a street fair.

Yeah, we left a little too late, so there were hundreds of people on the street. And the Uber driver's losing his mind trying to find me, and it's making me lose my mind, because I have a terrible sense of direction. Even with GPS, I don't know how to get anywhere. Mine's always wrong.

Yeah. It takes a lot of calculation just to use GPS, because...technology doesn't work. But you're, like, a totally technology based, like—

The only thing I know how to do with technology is make sounds with it.

Yeah, I'm very curious—I know, like, nothing about what you do. I don't know what software you use, what hardware you use—I don't know anything about how you create anything.

Well, I swore off hardware recently. My brain just doesn't work that way, and after sinking \$2,500 into building a modular synth and realizing, well, I don't really like this—I'm all laptop now, one controller, and I just use the Ableton Push 2 and Ableton. When I'm actually writing, I don't even use the controller that much, really—I use it to sequence drums and play out melodies—but for the most part, my whole philosophy is based around breaking Ableton. It's about getting Ableton to freeze, but for it to still be working enough for me to record

what's happening, and then re-importing that. That's where a lot of my little glitch noises come from. I'm breaking the product, and using it entirely how it's not meant to be used.

Interesting. Is that a thing that's done? I mean, I don't know jack shit about Ableton. Is that, like, your hint of madness, or is that something that people do?

I think it's a little bit of both. It's definitely something other people do. I was inspired by seeing someone else advertising a seminar on how he does it, but I didn't actually make it out to that seminar—I didn't have the money or anything. So all I had to go from was the headline, which is often how I get my inspiration—all I'll have is, like, the big description of something and not the actual meat. So I was like, "I could break Ableton," and then I found my own ways to do it. I use it in a very specific 'sound collage' sort of way.

Yes. I mean, that much is obvious enough from listening. [laughs]

A lot of it is visual. I've written a track before—this was for a class project, it was nothing I would have released—but I did write one track without having ever listened to it, just by lining up waveforms of samples. My time writing chamber music in Sibelius has helped me with that, as well.

Yeah, I'm curious about that, as well. Like, I mean, obviously—I mean, maybe not obviously—I've been very vocal about it, although I'm not going to assume that you know that...because we met at LaGuardia [[Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music, Art and Performing Arts](#)], right? So, do you feel that doing that sort of thing, going to a specialized music school at a young age, and learning music theory, and being forced to—not being forced—being compelled to learn instruments and have some sort of classical training...do you feel like that is useful to you now? Do you feel like the environment of that place has hindered you or helped you in any way?

I think it was definitely a boon to me more than it was detrimental to me. I mean, I definitely have a lot of trauma from my time there—I think we all came out with some scars—but one thing LaGuardia brought out was just, like, my competitive energy, and that's what I was missing. That battle, that's always stuck with me. Especially because I was a little too weird for LaGuardia, just in terms of what I was going for musically—and so I always felt that need to prove myself, and that definitely never went away. That's definitely one of the driving forces for me, as far as making things as polished as possible goes. Because that was the philosophy I developed at LaGuardia. No matter how weird it is, as long as it's good, people won't ignore it. Of course, I didn't get to that point at LaGuardia—I was making pure garbage.

I don't think I was really aware that you were making any sort of electronic music at LaGuardia.

I wasn't, until, like...the last three months. What happened was...[laughs] I had just started smoking weed that year, and I got real high at my friend's mom's house and I was like, "It's time for me to make electronic music."

[laughs] "The time has come."

And so he gave me his Microkorg and a mic, and I just did this weird, like...banshee screaming thing, for around...30 minutes? 30 minutes of me just scream singing at the highest part of my register, and—I don't sing, but I do have a large range. And so I was up there, way high up there, with absolutely zero vocal control. I made a little beat—I hit three notes or something on the Microkorg and just...I think I beatboxed, actually, and then put some distortion on it. And then I just saved all those files, loaded them into Audacity when I got home, and, like, layered them with a bunch of archive.org recordings.

Yeah, that, like, actually is...I would actually be kind of interested to hear what that sounds like.

It's just, like, this very...avant-noise...thing. And then, right after that, I wrote two chamber music pieces, which is what got me into school to study with [Pauline Oliveros](#). I think the juxtaposition of coming from a very traditional classical background at LaGuardia, and then moving into this much more open ended, like, modern classical, new music sort of background, studying with Pauline Oliveros privately—I think those two things together really created a good headspace for me.

Talk a little bit more about her, because I don't know anything about her except that she was your mentor, and she passed away recently.

Yeah, she passed away in 2016. She was a contemporary to Terry Riley, John Cage—she pioneered the [Deep Listening](#) philosophy, which is probably deeper than I can verbalize just off the cuff, but it's largely about listening to the environment as an instrument, listening to the different components of the environment as instruments and just regarding every sound as sound, as viable sound to either be used; or listened to; or just interacted with as music. It's a very cerebral philosophy.

Well, I mean, not only does that explicitly suit you, but I think very cerebral philosophies suit you. [laughs]

Yeah, it was definitely what I needed, and it definitely is the reason that the music I make sounds the way it sounds now. She was really at the forefront of everything. With Pauline, I remember I would always bring her textbooks and things I wanted to study, and she'd always be like, "Oh, yeah, I taught them," or "Oh, I worked with him!" My thesis was centered on physicalization and sonification of brainwaves, using the [Subpac](#), and when she put on the Subpac and felt the low frequencies of her alpha waves vibrating, she just looked at me and said, "Hmm. Feels about right!" It was all just—it was unreal, and it was such a privilege just to be able to be in her presence at all, let alone to get to know her on both a mentor/mentee level and on a friend level. We were close—I was the only person who spent as long studying with her privately as I did.

It was my impression that there aren't really that many people who are—their main focus is, like, music, I guess—in Troy. It's more of maybe, like, music is another lens through which to view technology, or something.

Yeah, and a lot of those musicians who do kind of fall into that category are very good musicians. There's definitely no shortage of talented musicians up here. There's people who are, like, very good at what they do, but there are very few people pursuing music as a career. Some guys I went to school with up here were recently featured on a very big album, but...I don't think they're very good, so I'm not going say their names. They're like, very generic sounding autotune rappers.

Like the...Atlanta...twins?

No, more like Drake. That's the other thing that's influenced my music during the past year—

Drake?

That I watched...not Drake. I watched 700 episodes of Degrassi.

Everyone has been telling me about Degrassi. I feel like I missed out on Degrassi.

Degrassi is my shit. I didn't watch it as a child; I missed out as well. But I got started on it last year, on the recommendation of my friend who also watched it as an adult.

Princess Nokia recommended it to me. [laughs]

It's really that show though. I've never watched the original Degrassi from the '80s. I still want to do that, but I've watched everything from Degrassi: The Next Generation, the one Drake is in, going forward.

Is it really called The Next Generation, like Star Trek?

Yes.

[laughs] Why would they call it that? That's so confusing!

[laughs] I've never even considered that! But just as an aside, before I go back to Degrassi, that reminds me, our English teacher—

Yes!

—responded to an email I sent him seven years ago...just a couple of months ago. Like, I just saw this very recently. I was skipping class seven years ago, I guess, so I emailed him and I was like, "Can't make it to class today! Got rehearsal!" And so he emailed me back, like, again, a couple of months ago, like, "I just saw this! That's fine." So I decided to not respond to it, but I saved it. And in seven years I'm going to respond to it.

That's really good. That's great. Well, you know, hopefully he's still alive in seven years.

I feel like he looks a lot older than he is. That was such a weird feeling, though, like—when I sent that email my life was so different. I had no idea I was going to get kicked out of every band I was playing with for...well, never memorizing the parts.

[laughs] Just getting kicked out left and right.

When that happened, I'd just moved to Troy, so I was like...fuck it. I'm about to make some...fucked up Venetian Snares sounding music and not have to answer to any bandmates anymore. All of those songs have been deleted now, because I didn't know how to use Ableton. I was just taking drum loops from Gospel Chops videos and, like, speeding them up and throwing them under random synths.

[imitates breakbeat drums]

Someone told me recently that my music from that time "sounds like a panic attack." And I was just like...if you only knew. Like, especially then, I had just turned 18 and started college, and I had started taking Adderall off prescription in order to handle my workload.

Wow. At 18 I was a walking panic attack.

Yeah. And I'd never taken stimulants before. Now I'm prescribed Adderall, which—God bless.

Does that help you?

Well, this January I found out that, to no one's surprise, I have a number of different mental illnesses. I was diagnosed with depression, severe anxiety, ADHD and OCD, so the medication I'm on helps me just, like—beyond just focusing, it helps me take the parts of my OCD that are good, like...the parts that control my high standard for quality, and it isolates those. The parts that make me, like, have to blink a certain number of times or have to, like, knock on wood a certain number of times before I leave a room—those ease up.

Yeah, totally. So, I mean, if it's working for you, it's working, you know?

It is! It does make me want to smoke a lot more, though.

I wasn't even aware that you smoked.

I started smoking, like, the day I turned 18. I'm on the JUUL now, though.

I mean, I vaguely remember you smoking. I remember you...did you throw up blood? Were you bleeding out of your throat?

I threw up blood...at the Hudson River with y'all.

Oh yeah! That's what that was.

What happened was, the cops were rolling up, and we were drinking 40s at the river, and it was like...the third time I'd ever been drunk, and I had a 40 going that was about three quarters of the way full. I was like, I could chug this whole thing right now before the cops get here, so I tried to....

And you threw up blood.

I ended up pouring it all over myself, and then we all started running...and then I just went down and started vomiting blood.

[laughs] And thus began the trajectory that landed you exactly where you are now.

[laughs] I've thrown up a lot more blood since then.

I seem to recall there being, like, a pervasive issue with you throwing up blood.

I have these, like, hacking coughs that cut up my throat. At first I was worried about it, and then I realized if the blood is fresh, I'm good. If the blood is fresh, that just means it's cuts. That means there's not, like, internal bleeding. As long as there's no internal bleeding, I'm not complaining. That's the other tagline. "As long as there's no internal bleeding, I'm not complaining."

How would—[laughs]—yes. How would you know if there is any internal bleeding?

If it's old blood. If it's a dark, like, sanguine, color. That's when you know that that bleeding's been in there for a minute.

Sanguine hack.

I would not be shocked by internal bleeding, because I mostly only eat Airheads.

That's good. That's good. I mean, I feel like self-destructive artists are not a rare breed, but I feel like you're a rare breed of self-destructiveness.

Thank you!

[laughs]

That's absolutely true. I slept with my head in the fridge last night.

What is that? Why?

Because I've got no windows and it's, like, ridiculously humid! And I wanted to actually go to bed, because there's a fan next to the bed, but I still had things to do. And, well, I don't have a couch or anything here—I just moved into this apartment. I just have the floor. And it was so hot, so I just opened the fridge up and I just...laid with my head in it and my body on the ground, and I'm sitting there for a good two hours...incubating. Then something started melting, because I was letting all the cold out—something started dripping onto my face, and then I got up and sent all the important emails I had to send.

Once your head was sufficiently recharged?

I felt like I charged up a little bit.

[laughs] How do you feel about the tap water in Troy?

It's not bad, actually. Upstate New York has good tap water. I've been hearing about upstate New York tap water for my whole life, because my grandma has a country house up in Accord and their tap gets artesian well water—whatever that means.

What is an artesian well? Except for another new pseudonym for you.

I honestly have no idea—Accord is in the middle of nowhere, though. That's where I learned how to pitch.

Pitch?

Yeah. My dad played semi-pro ball, and I grew up with aspirations of being a professional baseball player.

I remember you being a baseball man.

That was the goal, and I was good at it! And then everyone else got real tall, and at that time I didn't know one of the best players in baseball, come this year, was going to be my height. I was like, I guess I'm too short to play baseball now. I used to be way more sensitive about it—it's ironic. That's why I'm so short. All the time that I should have spent growing was spent online, trying to figure out ways to make myself grow. Staying up all night, and sleep is what you need to grow.

You cheated yourself out of—you nervous yourself out of being tall?

Yeah.

Well...that sucks.

Now I just wear platform shoes...I got platform Timbs.

I like the platform shoes. You got platform Timbs?

Yeah, I got these platform Timbs on Ebay. They're bootleg too. Like, they were 30 bucks, made by a company called Shoe Republic, but they're actually better made than my Timbs. They're fully waterproof. They're, like...incredible shoes. So, shout out to Shoe Republic.

Bootleg shit is the best.

Bootleg shit is truly the best. And now I just go to Goodwill and buy blouses. That's my other shit that I've been doing.

I've noticed you in some blouses, when you're not [on the Internet trying to look like you're about to join Papa Roach](#).

Oh my God. I just remembered that I meant to start this whole thing like, "So we're talking about my new role in famed alt-rock band Daughtry!" I was going to start this whole thing off like that, and I completely forgot. I was going to say that I was going to be replacing Daughtry himself, and I was going to be the new Chris Daughtry.

Can I hear your Daughtry?

My Daughtry? Um...I don't know any Daughtry songs.

[laughs] I don't know any Daughtry songs either.

He was the fourth place winner of American Idol.

I remember that. Wow. That's a long time ago.

Yeah, but I'm the American Idol lexicon. I got it all up in here.

I mean, there's only room for so much stuff in the human mind.

Most of mine is filled with reality TV trivia.

Tangentially related to that, I feel like our earliest...musical camaraderie moments, and we're talking about being, like, young, pretentious people, right? I feel like our earliest musical camaraderie moments were like these highly conceptual bands and—me and Chris have this discussion all the time, which is sort of like—you can try and abandon your influences, but at the end of the day you're always going to sound like what you listened to when you were, like, ages 13 to 16. It's why everything Chris writes kind of sounds like Blink 182, even when it doesn't, and like why everything I write sounds a little bit like System of a Down even though I'm trying really hard to make it not sound that way.

That's why everything I write sounds like The Mars Volta being played through a computer that went through the washing machine.

Exactly, exactly. So, like—yeah, I mean the Mars Volta thing is clearly in there, but I wonder if the Mars Volta level—okay. I feel like I'm personally at odds with this sort of thing now, which we can get into. But, I wonder—the Mars Volta sound, I think, is there, but do you still like uphold this idea of...heavy concepts—almost near programmatic music?

No, not at all.

Okay. I didn't think so.

Unless it's, like, an opera, and in that case, I'm definitely all for it. As far as albums go, yeah, I'm not about it at all. I like the idea of an album feeling like a concept album, but not actually telling a story? An album having thematic elements, just musically, that recur and call back to other tracks, and just has cohesion throughout. I want everything to feel like a score, more than telling a literal story.

I feel like every album is a concept album if you're thoughtful, you know what I mean? [laughs] If you work really hard on it, every album is a concept album because you're being thoughtful about it. But if it's in terms of like, this is the story of, you know, whatever....

Exactly, yeah. That I don't try to do at all.

What's your relationship to the world of chance music?

Very love-hate! Very, very love-hate. Especially because I studied John Cage as part of my curriculum—and also just as part of my life—and I've studied other chance composers, I've focused on that concept a lot. My process involves a little bit of it, because I'll set up randomizers on my drums or something, or I'll set up randomizers on a chord progression. I feel like it does add a little more life to what I'm doing, in the context of how I'm doing it, but I would never do it as the only element of a composition. I'm too anal about control and consistency for that, and I guess that's where the hate part of the love-hate relationship comes in. It does make me feel like I'm working with more human, living components. It's never that I want things to sound random—I'll throw it in there when I feel like randomizing something will give me better, or different, ideas than what I can come up with. If I want an interesting chord progression, and I want to make it sound like it didn't come straight out of my brain and out of my particular tendencies, then I'll use the randomizer and just wait for it to hit on something I like. My problem is that I never sample it out and have it recorded, so then I end up having to just keep recording bounces with randomization over and over again, until it sounds right. I'm really disorganized.

Just rolling the dice, over and over again, until you get the same combination. That's so crazy. That's, like, the definition of insanity.

That has definitely gone through my head before. That's one problem—I mean, it might not be a problem—that's definitely one place where having extreme OCD comes into play for my work is, like...I spent two weeks just bouncing, over and over, that ten minute long B-side on my new single until the randomization was right.

So, that sort of brings me to my standard inquiry for everybody—but also, I feel like there's an opportunity to go to another thing that I'm interested in. I think I have an intimation of your answer to this, but what do you feel

is—for you, personally—the balance of who you're creating things for? Because I feel like there's creating things for yourself; creating things for an audience, which is very hypothetical, like... 'The Audience'; or creating things for your peers. I mean, if you were in a band, I would say your bandmates, but you're not. [laughs] It's like a totally different world. So I guess your peers, whoever those are. Your fellow...whatever the fuck it is that you're doing. [laughs]

I'm trying to create things for people...like me, in a lot of ways? I feel like I have a very specific brand of strangeness in my head where I've just...felt like I've been running for 25 years. I just feel, like, this constant sprinting feeling, and this constant rushing energy. Just wildly anxious, like...you know.

Yeah.

And I feel like my music is largely a reflection of that and a response to that, almost, because a lot of it is very slow and very droney.

I think you do an excellent job of expressing that, you know? That's good, that's a good answer.

I think above all I'm creating for myself, because I feel like, in the end, everyone kind of is. I can only create something that I would want to listen to.

I feel the same way, and as I get older and work with more people, I'm discovering that definitely not everybody thinks that way as much as I would prefer that they did. But I think that's my ideal approach to music, right? That you're creating something that's therapeutic for yourself, but also vaguely in the hopes that you can do some kind of service for somebody else by, you know—creating it for some anonymous listener.

Exactly. I also definitely value technicality, and just being good at what you do, so a large part of my audience is...not a certain type of person who listens to any certain type of music, it's just anyone who can appreciate something that's done well, whether or not it's to their particular tastes.

That sort of leads me to another question which is, like, how do you see your relationship to performance? Because I think of your music as being kind of antithetical to performance, but I've also seen you perform several times and [laughs]...I like it! So, I don't know—because for me, the end goal is performance, you know what I mean? I feel like I almost make albums as advertisements for shows, which I feel like is almost definitely not the case for you.

It's the exact opposite. My shows are an advertisement to listen to my album. With performance, it's always a compromise for me. I write headphone music. It's in '3D audio,' or whatever, and I pay extra attention to where in the sonic space sounds exist. I feel like I'm conducting, more than anything—giving directions to different groups of instruments. One time I was playing at, like, some little art gallery in Greenpoint, and while I was playing someone just...walked on stage and started trying to hold a conversation with me. I was so distracted I had to end the set, because I couldn't keep track of so many moving parts with someone talking in my ear. That whole night was weird—I was very late to the show because I had been in Atlantic City on a date, where I vomited.

You went to Atlantic City for a date? This sounds like a very lonely time in your life.

Oh, this is when I was watching Gilmore Girls, so...I think that explains it all. This is when I watched eight seasons of Gilmore Girls in two months.

That is somehow lonelier than Friends, and I didn't think that that was—

Oh, I knocked out Friends right after, too.

That's really sad.

After that, that was when I started Degrassi.

But that's, like, a recovery show.

I found a predictive text app, and I loaded a bunch of Degrassi scripts into it, and I've been [writing my own](#).

That's good, man. Dammit. I'm kind of envious of your, uh...okay.

I'm going to grab my coffee real quick.

Okay. Yeah.

I was waiting for it to cool off, because all I have here is a wine glass. Oh, it's still hot, but I'm thirsty. Oh, yeah. My brown wine.

[sings] Coffee in a wine glass. That's how it goes. [speaks] Okay. So, like, you know, I think my artistic—you have to forgive me. I'm trying to get these fucking bottles open. They're impossible to get open. But yeah, I feel like my musical...path that I've been on, right, has been—my main thing that I like, and I think the main thing that I've always liked—beyond receiving praise for being good, which I'm trying to work out of my system, is—

That's my favorite thing as well.

Yes, I know, and it sucks. It sucks a little bit, but it also is...the drive to do things. But it's been, like, making stuff, and because I like making stuff, I feel like I'd be better suited, maybe, to a lifestyle where I could just make crazy bullshit and let it inform what I'm doing more, you know? Like making predictive text Degrassi episodes and having it inform my music making. But, instead, I've sort of arrived at this place where I'm doing a lot of gigslut, hired gun type of things, which was, for a long time, what I thought I wanted to do. Although, this year especially, I feel like, increasingly so, I'm just more and more disgusted with the lack of ingenuity that I see. I feel like there's just this—on the part of the person whose band it is—this desperate need to satisfy an audience, or to do something beyond their own vision which they feel like is going to 'further their career.' And I think it's really disingenuous and dishonest a lot of the time. And I'm finding that, the older I get, the less patience I have for it, which—I always assumed it would be the opposite way. I thought you'd have your flirtation with punk rock aesthetic when you're a teenager, and then as you get older you're...more and more okay with making money. But I feel like I'd rather have a sort of mindless day job, and really pursue 'art,' than to interact with half art, half "let me pay my bills and have people praise me," and I feel like you're in a world where it's impossible, from my perspective at least, to take what you do and pander to an audience with it, you know what I mean? And—

I mean, I've tried. [laughs] But every time I write music, I black out. And I'll come to when it's done, basically, and I'll be like, "Oh shit! This is wild." I'll be listening to it like a listener, basically.

I don't think what I experience is quite that severe, but I know what you mean. I feel like the best stuff that I've written is...I wasn't there for it. I don't know if I actually lose consciousness, but I know what you mean.

It's not a full blackout, but I go into 'autopilot mode.' Like, my brain is being controlled—I'm watching myself, almost.

Exactly. Yeah. I feel that. I feel the same way.

And that's becoming easier for me to capture, because I don't have to learn parts anymore, which—I'm not sure if you remember from my time in bands, but that was my Achilles' heel: learning parts.

I don't remember that, but I believe it.

I just don't think of things in terms of, like, traditional song structure.

No, that much is very clear.

I'll just write a part, and then I'll write a transition, and then I'll just write another part. It flows, and as it's flowing, it's being recorded in. Instead of, like, writing parts and being like, "Okay, well, at this part, this happens; and then at this part, this happens; now how do I arrange these parts?" they're already arranged.

Maybe this is a corny question or whatever, but—when you think about blacking out, or having an out of body experience, or whatever you want to call it—do you think that that's kind of like a phenomenon of the creative mind or something, or do you think there's...a spiritual dimension to it? I mean, Bach, for instance, experienced the same thing, but he explained it as being a religious experience—that he didn't actually write any of his music. That God wrote his music, and he wasn't conscious for it.

Yeah, that's something that I've also heard from, like, Gospel musicians over the years.

Exactly. Basically, I think all very creative people experience that, where you're not—that's what I crave from a live performance, is that I feel like I was never there—but I don't know if that's like a biological function, or if you experience that as a spiritual thing.

I definitely think there are things in life that are spiritual things, but I've never had that with music. It's always been very internal, very cerebral, very insular, very just...within myself. Except for the one time I played bass when I was on acid—that felt very religious, because there were laser beams coming out of my fingers every time I pressed down on a fret.

[sings] God is a laser beam. [speaks] I mean, it's such a cliché, but it's so true. Lots of people who are...artistically inclined are super fucking introverted, and it's harder and easier to be introverted and be in the music business now, you know? On one hand, you don't really need people skills to get your stuff out there. But on the other hand—I'd say probably even more than, like, in the days of gatekeepers for the music industry—it's so important to have, like, a cult of personality, you know?

That's been a big thing for me up here. Troy is the place where I first felt like I could get as weird as I wanted, and that was part of why I came back up here, just because—even if I'm dressed totally normal, because when I came up here as a freshman in college, that was when I had just cut my hair, and I was...a very 'normal' looking kid. And everyone still looked at me like I was this fucking unicorn. As soon as that hit me, I was like, "Oh, it doesn't matter what I do!" People are going to look at me the same way no matter what. So I just took it to the extreme.

I've had that revelation before. It's like, oh, like...even when I'm trying to fit in, I'm failing miserably. I might as well just do whatever I want!

And in the city, I feel like there's a little more scrutiny, just as far as, like, being able to try things.

Definitely. I think you've sort of touched on something that a lot of people overlook; which is that, I think, New York is heralded as this place where you can do whatever you want, and I think that's sort of like one of the great cliches about New York. Like, if you're a guy walking down the street in a crazy outfit and screaming to yourself, no one's going to care. And I think the truth is that lots of people care, and lots of people are extremely judgmental, and that, if anything, New York forces you to pigeonhole yourself more than a place with less of a scene.

Absolutely.

I should probably go pretty soon. Do you think you have enough? Should I interrogate you more?

Okay! Do you have anything else that you wanted to ask? Oh, we should probably plug the show that we're playing together.

Oh, yeah. Well, you definitely have more information about it than I do. Where is it?

It's at River Street Pub, in Troy—it's a block away from my house. They throw weekly shows every Thursday—"they" being Super Dark Collective. Also, just to be clear, who's in your band right now?

*Okay! So the band...it's a weird one. I'm trying to keep it so that it's me, Chris, Russell [Holzman, who has served as the touring drummer for [Beach Fossils](#)] and [trumpeter] [Adam \[O'Farrill\]](#). We did a show that also included Carlos Hernandez, frontman of [Ava Luna](#). When I come up there, it's going to be me, Chris, and Ethan [Meyer], the drummer from *Three Body Problem*. Because I'm also playing with Rotem Sivan, I was just like, "Alright, let's just use the same band and we'll just do two sets—I'll just scream over one." So that's what we're doing. It'll be me, Ethan and Rotem; and then me, Ethan and Chris. I think it's going to be great.*

Awesome. I'm so excited. Anyway, thank you so much for doing this!

Thank you, it was super fun! Well, I'll see you in like a month or whatever.

Take care!

[Silica Angel](#), [Stimmerman](#), and [Rotem](#) will be [sharing the stage](#)—along with Austin, TX band [BUHU](#)—on October 25th at River Street Pub, in Troy, NY, as part of [Super Dark Collective's](#) Super Dark Thursday series. They're also working on a collaborative album, which will be out...eventually.