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THE MAKING OF *WHEN WE SAY GOODNIGHT*

by
Andrew Newman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis documents the writing and recording of *When We Say Goodnight*, an album by Lo Noom. The author discusses the various influences that led to the development of the album's concept. The album is meant to explore the feelings the author associates with summer nights in Mississippi. He attempts to create a world in which the songs and feelings live. He discusses the album's song development and various recording processes. As he brings the album to completion, a struggle emerges between the author's desire to please his audience and his desire to create for his own personal enjoyment. He wrestles with which of these two desires should be prioritized in his artistry. He includes how his undergraduate studies in Integrated Marketing Communications helped bring him to a conclusion. He settles that this album represents his prioritization of creating for personal enjoyment over creating for commercial success. In conclusion, the completion of this album causes the author to redefine what success as an artist means to him.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout my collegiate career my passion for writing and recording music has remained steadfast. I have been making albums since I was in twelve years old, but I have never made one based on a pre-conceived concept. My goal for this thesis was to make an album based on a concept. The main purpose for this goal was to challenge my artistic endeavors by doing something I have never done before.

I came to the University of Mississippi unsure of what to study. I always loved music, but I did not want to study it in school. I felt that everything I was interested in could be learned by playing on my own and learning from the internet. I originally chose to study Integrated Marketing Communications as a way to better understand how to market my music.

I have been writing and recording songs since the third grade. As long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with dissecting song structures, production techniques, and song lyrics. I remember recording songs on my family desktop computer with nothing but my guitar and the internal computer microphone. I mostly learned how to record by messing around with these programs and equipment over the years, occasionally watching YouTube tutorials to figure out the programs I was using. Over the years, I have acquired more equipment like a real microphone, headphones, monitors, and my own personal computer. I have done every aspect of writing, recording, and releasing music on my own so far.

In 2014 I began releasing music under the name Lo Noom. I posted songs I recorded on SoundCloud. In 2015 I released an album called *Groovy*, and in 2016 I released an EP called *The Pretty Woman EP*. By 2016, I had 180,000 plays on SoundCloud. In Spring 2017, I posted my most popular SoundCloud songs onto streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, Tidal, etc. One these singles—“Pretty Woman”—has gotten over one million streams. I released my debut album *Noom* on streaming services in May 2019. I began writing and recording it during my sophomore year. The album as a whole has over 100,000 streams. I have an average of 24,000 monthly listeners.

I began working on *When We Say Goodnight* in May 2019. As I have wrestled with the process of writing, recording, and developing the concept for this album, I have learned more about myself, my music, art, and life. I watched this album grow from nothing, and this manuscript details the journey of its creation, from conception to release.

GENERAL INFLUENCES

Whenever I make an album, inspiration comes from everywhere. I am inspired by music, sounds, places, conversations, dreams, movies, books, buildings, colors, textures, and rooms. For me, anything inspires and can be put into music. In the midst of each new beginning of making an album, there is always a chaotic whirlwind of inspiration floating about that settles and builds as I sit down to play.

My philosophy is that for every album I make, I want it to sound different from the last one. I never want to make the same record twice. I also want my music to be unique to other music that has already been made. Of course, I cannot avoid being influenced by other music, but I want the music to stand by itself as new and unique.

In the midst of this ever-spinning tornado of inspiration, there are certain influences that are deeply embedded in my imagination and show up regardless of how I want a new album to sound. These are the influences of The Beach Boys, Bob Dylan, the Beatles, the Velvet Underground, Phil Spector, Kanye West, and Hartle Road. Whenever I mention specific characteristics of the works of these artists, it means that these are sounds, ideas, and philosophies that have deeply impacted the way I make music.

The Beatles are the band I grew up listening to the most. I love the way that every one of their songs sound different, whether it be rhythm, instrumentation, lyrics, or melody. On their albums, each song sounds like a different color pallet, particularly on their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1968). This was the first album I

heard that took me to another world and made me realize I could create my own worlds with music.

The Beach Boys are my favorite band all around. They have been huge inspirations to me in the areas of sound, production, melody, harmony, and feeling. To me, they are the Mozarts of pop music, especially member Brian Wilson. The Beach Boys' use of multiple vocal harmonies is something I have always tried to emulate and incorporate in my music. Apart from the songs being playful and creative, they also capture a feeling that is very nostalgic to me. There is a youthfulness to their sound that reminds me of child-like innocence and teenage foolishness.

Bob Dylan has been my biggest influence in lyrics and songwriting. Whenever I first listened to his record *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965) my eyes were opened to the possibilities of words in music. Since then, I have studied all of his albums. With his lyrics, no words are off limits. He takes words from everything around him like conversations, street signs, newspapers, books, poetry, and even other songs. What I love about *Highway 61 Revisited* in particular is the mysteriousness of the lyrics. Sometimes he sounds like he is talking about something profound, and other times it sounds like he is saying completely random words. I also enjoy how simple his song structures are. His songs are like hymns, and there are usually two parts to every song: verses and refrains.

Another huge inspiration to how I make music is the Velvet Underground. Their music can sound soft, sweet, and tender one song and dangerous, aggressive, and dark the next. I like how they stood out in the 60s in making really strange, unique, non-traditional pop songs. Their songs usually only have two or three chords, and every song

sounds like some sort of experimentation with dynamics, simplicity, and noise. I love their use of droning notes that create an atmosphere around the music. I also enjoy Lou Reed's wild, lazy singing voice.

Phil Spector is one of my biggest influences in production. He is known for his wall of sound technique. The general idea is that all the instruments blend together to sound like a new instrument in itself. Individual instruments become hard to distinguish, and they blend to create a literal sonic wall of sound. The instrumentation is hazy and blended. It sounds like lo-fi orchestra pop music.

From Columbus, Mississippi, Hartle Road is a band that forever influenced the way I make music. Like the Velvet Underground, their music both recorded and performed often provokes a reaction from listeners whether it be positive or negative. Their first album is a dissonant, hardcore, post-punk wall of sound. Hardly anyone listens to it because it is so distorted, lo-fi, and aggressive. They inspire me to be as free and weird as I want to be with my music.

Lastly, Kanye West is an artist who has influenced me in every creative capacity. It was him who inspired me to start recording music on my own. Every album he makes is a new adventure in style, genre, and feeling. He always talks about growing as an artist and never wanting to make the same thing twice. This has had a profound impact on the way I see music. As I grow, I want my music to grow.

ALBUM INFLUENCES

With each new album comes new inspiration, and finding inspiration has never been a conscious act for me. It just happens to be what I am listening to, thinking about, and obsessed with at the time. Before I developed the concept for the album, I told my friends I was attempting to make “a Frankenstein monster” from the influences of Audrey Hepburn, Junior Kimbrough, Elliot Smith, Buddy Holly, Daniel Johnston and the Ronettes.

What many of these influences have in common is acoustic guitars, and the instrumentation on the songs is often limited to acoustic guitars and vocals. However, what I find interesting is that these songs do not sound like they are missing anything. They sound like they have maximized the feeling and emotion of the song by limiting the instrumentation.

Another characteristic of these influences that I enjoy is their production. Compared to modern pop songs that would appear on “Billboard Top 100,” none of these songs have clear, crisp audio quality. Whether it be an intentional technique or a simple limitation of recording equipment of the time, these songs have some sort of haziness or distortion to them that I enjoy.

Lastly, the music of these influences gives off very particular moods and feelings. The majority of these sound like night-time, each in a different way. Other influences do not necessarily give off this feeling, but I want to re imagine them with this feeling.

The idea for this album came from Audrey Hepburn's cover of "Moon River" on the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). The song consists of quiet acoustic guitar chords with Hepburn's voice whisperingly guiding the music to a mountainous orchestral landscape. It has a lonely yet content feeling. It sounds like a lullaby one would sing before going to sleep. Aside from the songwriting, I enjoy the production. It is grainy and crackles like an old vinyl record.

Another big influence for the album is Junior Kimbrough, specifically his song "Meet Me in the City" (1999). This song sounds like it was recorded at night on a front porch. The song is just an acoustic guitar with Kimbrough's voice singing over it, but it sounds like so much more is there. What is notable about this song is Kimbrough's unique guitar playing style. Throughout the entire song, he picks the same one note with his thumb while picking various melodies with his other fingers. The note that drones serves as the bass and foundation for the melodies that he plays. Another characteristic of his style is that when he sings, he often sings the melodies he is playing on the guitar.

The whole song is dominated by a powerful feeling. Although there seems to be a general structure and melodic phrases, the way that the song is carried out sounds somewhat improvisational. There is a sense of longing, pain, hope, love, and peace to be found in the twang of his guitar and the cry of his voice. It sounds like Mississippi put into a song.

The production on this song is equally as enthralling to me as the song itself. It is low fidelity, with Kimbrough's words often being indistinguishable. It sounds as if he was playing, and someone set down a cheap recording device to capture one moment in

time that he was playing guitar for his own pleasure. The lo-fi sound actually enhances the feeling I get from the song.

Elliot Smith is another huge influence on the production of the album, as well as guitar style. His first second album *Elliot Smith* (1995) has a very particular sound I wanted to emulate. His songs have a powerfully sad and lonely feeling, and they possess the night-time aesthetic that I am trying to achieve. The songs are acoustic guitar-based, and often the instrumentation is just acoustic guitar and vocals. However, the songs sound like there is much more going on, and there is. His guitar style is very set apart. He constantly switches between unusual chords and plays melodies within them, playing both rhythm and lead at the same time.

Aside from Elliot Smith's talent in playing guitar and singing, there are several production techniques he uses to accomplish his sound. For instance, he double tracks the guitars and vocals, which means he records the same guitar and vocal parts two different times. This adds warmth and fullness to the track when done right.

Buddy Holly is another influence on the songwriting and vocal performance of this record. I have always enjoyed Buddy Holly's southern accent and the rawness of his voice. The way he sings on records sounds like a live performance, and his voice sounds free from effects. What I appreciate from his writing is its simplicity. His lyrics are so simple yet relatable. The length of his songs is usually short (lasting only about 2 to 3 minutes). There are usually only two or three parts to his songs, and each part is very short.

The Ronettes are a group whose production, sound, and melodies I love. They were one of the groups Phil Spector produced for, and all their songs possessed his wall-

of-sound technique. I find their sound so pretty and sparkly and romantic. The dryness of lead singer Ronnie Spector's voice laid over the instrumentation sounds so good to me. The Ronettes' sound as a whole is something I would like to reimagine in the context of these night time feelings.

Daniel Johnston is an artist I started listening to in Fall 2019. He writes lo-fi folk-rock songs. His voice is very raw and imperfect sounding. All over his recordings there are mistakes and imperfections like guitars being out of tune, his voice cracking and being off pitch, the rhythm getting off, or the audio quality being distorted or unclear. While I found it disorienting and unpleasant upon my first listen, the more I listened, the more I grew to actually enjoy these qualities. I now find a strange beauty in it.

As I listened to these artists for my own pleasure, I could not help but obsess over these sounds and feelings, and I wanted to combine them to make something new. At this point I found a concept naturally developing for the new album.

CONCEPT

There are a variety of phrases that I use to describe the concept for this album. The phrase I use when talking to my friends is, “The lo-fi Mississippi night-time lullaby album.” The idea first came to me when I was playing guitar on my front porch in Oxford by myself on a summer night. Everything was quiet, the crickets were loud, the air was humid, and the moon and stars that lit the sky were the only company I had. It was such a lonely yet peaceful feeling; so specific yet powerful, and I wanted to make an album entirely focused on it.

I became obsessed with this feeling, and it became more than a feeling but a world in itself with almost fairy-tale like qualities. I could not help but try to express this world and feeling through music. It is by far the most specific record I have ever made, and it is intended to be listened to at a very specific time and place—at night and in solitude.

With past albums, I wanted each song to sound completely different. I intended each song to contain a feeling in itself and the whole album to be a collection of sharply contrasting feelings. For example, one song could be cheerful and happy, while the next could be angry or sad.

With this album, the whole work is intended this communicate one overarching mood. This is not to say that every song is supposed to sound the same. On the contrary, I wanted each song to have different nuances of the feeling, each touching a different aspect of the world I am imagining. I wanted every song to be tied together by a mood of

dreaminess, tranquility, peace, loneliness, confusion, contentment, longing, love, and hope in the night.

All songs are based around the acoustic guitar and share similar supportive instrumentation, limited to electric guitars, synthesizers, tambourines, kick drums, and vocal harmonies. In addition to using instruments to create landscapes, recordings of soundscapes were used to add extra dimensions to the music. There are sounds of crickets chirping, birds singing, winds blowing, swings creaking, leaves crunching, and highways humming. These are the sounds I associate with those peaceful, summer nights spent alone on my front porch, looking out into the street bordered with trees lying underneath the starry moonlit sky.

The production on this album is very intentional and essential to the concept of it being a world. I did not want the audio to be clear or crisp. I wanted it to sound hazy and dirty, like someone dug it up from the ground, with sharp, grainy, and occasionally piercing textures. The purpose of this production style is to create a hazy, dreamy feeling that ties the songs together.

As for the nature of the songwriting, I wanted them to be as simple as possible. Since I was trying to write lullabies, I wrote the songs imagining a mother singing them to her children as they go to sleep. The songs have easy melodies, simple words, and memorable structures. There is usually nothing more than a verse-chorus structure.

As mentioned before, the night-time sounds of Junior Kimbrough, Audrey Hepburn, and Elliot Smith were leading me in this direction and giving me ideas of how I wanted to execute this concept. Others like Buddy Holly, the Ronettes, and Daniel Johnston became sounds I wanted to reimagine in the light of this feeling. Hepburn

made me want to write lullabies. Junior Kimbrough made me want this world to sound like it could be found in Mississippi. Elliot Smith showed me how an album could communicate one mood. Buddy Holly inspired me with his raw voice and songwriting simplicity. The Ronettes made me want to make it a pretty wall of sound. Daniel Johnston made me want to embrace my imperfection and lo-fi production.

The more time I spent working on the album, the more worried I became that an idea like this would lose some fans. The concept of a “lo-fi Mississippi night-time lullaby album” is not something I imagine being commercially appealing. Aside from what the songs ended up sounding like, the concept itself does not seem like it would appeal to a wide-ranging audience, let alone my own target audience for Lo Noom. The production is lo-fi, the songs are meant to be listened in an ultra-specific context, and it is a definite departure in sound.

As I mentioned before, I chose to study Integrated Marketing Communications as a way to better market my music. The more I learned about brands and marketing strategy, the more pressure I felt to incorporate what I was learning into my music. I felt a pressure to become more self-aware with my brand. If I could “build my brand,” find out who my target audience is, and more strategically communicate with them, I could be more successful. This way of thinking started bleeding into the actual making of my music, and I hated it. It robbed the joy out of creating, and it was distorting my view of success. Success had become getting more listeners and approval over enjoying making the music.

As I approached my senior year and developed the concept for the album, I found myself at a crossroads of either capitalizing on the momentum of my success by making

music that would appeal to my target audience or making something that I truly wanted to make apart from any consideration of what other people think. To continue making this album would mean to choose the latter. I wanted to be creatively free.

The concept became more than just my next album as Lo Noom. It became the culmination of my studies in Integrated Marketing Communications in a surprising way. I found it to be a personal rejection of consciously involving Integrated Marketing Communications in the creation of my art.

PROCESS

The majority of recording was done in my bedroom in Oxford. I use the digital audio workstation software Logic Pro X on my MacBook Pro. I use a Shure SM-58 microphone to record guitar and vocals. I use Yamaha HS5 Monitors and Sennheiser headphones for track mixing. Towards the end of the album making process, I listen and do some mixing through my car speakers. As for instruments, I used a cheap Yamaha acoustic guitar, a few electric guitars, a MicroKorg, a Yamaha Dx7, and the Logic Pro X software instruments.

For this album, most of the songs were written in short spans of time and recorded right after. I would have an hour or two of free time before having to go somewhere, and it was in these little moments that I wrote and recorded most of the album.

The idea for how the album's production would be executed came from recording one song – "Lullaby." Inspired by Audrey Hepburn's performance of "Moon River" (1961) I wrote "Lullaby" intending it to sound like a Mississippi lullaby. After my first attempt at recording it, I was not satisfied with the production. One trait I loved about Hepburn's cover was its hazy, crackling production. The reason it sounds like this is because it was recorded to tape in the 60s, and this was most likely as good of sound quality as they could get. However, to me, this hazy sound quality is just as important to the song as the chords, lyrics, and melody. The quality of my recording was too clear, crisp, and upfront. There was no mystery to it.

There was also a problem with the instruments and sounds blending. Because the first line of my song is “when crickets are chirping underneath the Mississippi Moon,” I recorded the crickets chirping outside my house one night with my phone. I placed the audio in the background of the song, but it did not sound like the guitar and vocals were outside with the crickets. They sounded separate. I gave up on the song for the day.

A few days later, I came back to it and was messing around with the mixing for it, and I found something that worked. In Logic Pro X, there are amplifier simulators within the program, that can alter audio to sound like it is coming out of a guitar amplifier. Normally one would put this effect on an individual track to alter one particular instrument or sound, but I put it on the master track, which altered the sound of everything in the song. It added the distortion and haziness I wanted, blended the instruments and sounds together, and created a grainy texture that I found aesthetically pleasing. This effect made the song sound like a world that the listener enters into.

After discovering the trick with the amp simulator, I started putting this effect on everything I recorded. I found many times that this was the secret ingredient to tying both the individual song and the entire album together.

SONG DEVELOPMENT

Although “Lullaby” was the song that gave me the idea for the album, “Tomorrow” was the first song to be recorded. I wrote it on the banjo in May 2019. I wanted it to sound like a hick kid from Mississippi was singing on a front porch with a banjo. Like “Lullaby,” the initial recording sounded too clear and crisp. It didn’t have that dirty, Mississippi quality I was trying to get. After discovering the trick with the amp simulator, I put it on this song, and it sounded how I wanted. I later brought in my friend Hal Kolodney to add a guitar part, and my other friend Andrew Gardner to add a violin part.

The third song I recorded was “Can’t Wait.” I recorded two versions of it. The first time I sat down to record it, I had arranged it with all kinds of instruments and effects. It sounded so exact, mechanical, and forced. I also could not get a vocal take that I liked. It was important to me that this song in particular sounded raw and sincere. The second time I tried to record it, I told myself I was only going to do one take on acoustic guitar and one take on vocals. I did precisely that, and I did not think it was good after I recorded it, so I closed my laptop and went on with my day. A week later, I opened up the project, put the amp simulator on it, and found that it was exactly what I wanted. Towards the end of the song, I added some choir sounds and birds chirping because I wanted it to sound like a glorious new morning where the sun had finally risen at the end of the night.

The fourth song I recorded was “When We Say Goodnight.” I had been listening to Junior Kimbrough and had created a guitar part in which I would play different melodies over a droning G bass note. One night when I was playing it, I took the main riff I liked about it, and put two other chords with it, and I wrote the song in about thirty minutes. I recorded it the next day in about an hour before I had to go to a meeting. This was the first song I ever recorded without using a metronome. I recorded the guitar part all the way through, and then I added vocals, strings, bass, and synth on top.

The next song I recorded was “My Baby’s Having an Awful Day.” When I wrote this, I told myself I was going to write a song just to say that I had written something that day. I believe I was sitting in my bathroom when I wrote this, because my room mates were being loud. I recorded it a few weeks later in about an hour. I want this one to sound like an acoustic, wall-of-sound, Ronettes song.

“Yellow Fields” was recorded next. I had just watched the movie *O Brother Where Art Thou* and I wanted to write a song in a twangy old timey voice. I had a dream in which I was walking up a steep forest hill, and the sky was gray and hazy. I wanted the song to sound like this dream. I did not use a metronome on this song either. I recorded the guitar first all the way through. Then I added a piano software instrument that played the same melody as the guitar. Next, I added the bass part, and I just played the root notes to the chords on the down beat. The song structure is verse-chorus-verse-chorus-chorus. I added some droning strings at the second verse that continue and raise in volume through the rest of the song.

Then, I recorded the lead vocal part, but I knew the song was still missing something. I thought it would sound cool to have a vocal harmony with the lead melody

going through the entire song. I pressed record and started singing the harmony on the spot, and that is what appears on the recording.

“Grow” was the only song recorded somewhere besides my bedroom in Oxford. This instrumental song was mostly improvisational. I was visiting my friend, Jack Wilkins, at the University of Virginia in his dorm, and I was playing a Junior Kimbrough inspired guitar part, and we recorded it. He had a vocal sample on his computer and recorded an improvisational melody over the guitar with it. We added simple piano notes over the top and a software bass that played the same note as the piano part. Then I improvised several vocal parts over the top. The final piece we added was a recording of some people outside his dorm walking on the leaves and grass. We thought the song sounded like some form of life was growing, so I called it “Grow.”

The final song I recorded on the album is “There is a Place.” I had the intro written, but that was all I could come up with in the numerous times I sat down to finish writing it. I knew I wanted it to be on the album. I wanted it to sound like the gate or opening to the world I was creating with the album. I also wanted it to sound like an expressionist painting and an old Disney fairy tale movie. A few nights before I ended up recording it, I had a dream that I heard the recording, and there was the sound of a sparkler in it when all the instruments came in. So, I downloaded the sound of a sparkler from YouTube and put it where I remembered it being in the dream. I added strings, synths, minor percussion, vocal harmonies, electric guitars to fill the space. I wanted this song to be more on the experimental side.

LYRICS

“Yellow Fields”

We walked a thousand miles
Through yellow fields
You kissed my fingertips
It wasn't real

But I'm not there as much as you are
I'm scared you'll disappear through the shadows of my heart

We lit two candlesticks
Got lost then found
I don't remember well
How we got out

But I'm not there as much as you are
I'm scared you'll disappear through the shadows of my heart

“There is a place”

There is place in my heart
That time can't erase no matter how hard it tries
It's mine

There is a place in my heart
That time can't erase no matter how hard it tries

It gets dark on the way
But don't be scared
When the light goes away
It comes back in time

There's a place
In my heart

It gets dark on the way
But don't be scared

When the light goes away
It comes back in time
There's a place

"Tomorrow"

Fame is just an old broken record of time
The tame kid let's all of the world come inside
Can't let you under my skin
O how the time it flew by

Romance it's always so easy at first
The way you dance it turns to whatever you want
Can't let you under my skin
O how the time it flew by

Tomorrow I may be sad and lonely
I may be blind and happy
I may be dead from a heart attack
But right now, outside all of my feelings
Something that shoots through the ceiling
Tells me that one day I'm coming right back

Moments when fortune favored my eyes
It came when I was poor and it came by surprise
Can't let you under my skin
O how the time it flew by

Tomorrow I may be sad and lonely
I may be blind and happy
I may be dead from a heart attack
But right now outside all of my feelings
Something that shoots through the ceiling
Tells me that one day I'm coming right back

"My Baby's Having An Awful Day"

My baby's having an awful day
And I wish I had the words to say
To make it better

But what can you do
When every little thing is in the way
And how can you prove

That everything is gonna be okay

My baby looks so scared and sad
I hold her close and say, don't look back, don't look back

But what can you do
When every little thing is in the way
And how can you prove
That everything is gonna be okay

I'm sorry you had an awful day
I'm sorry you had an awful day

"Lullaby"

When crickets are chirping
Underneath the Mississippi moon
I get a strange feeling
All my dreams are gonna come true

Nothing to do
But tilt my head and look up at the stars
Dreaming of you
Somewhere out there far away from me

I love you
sweet dreams

When the wind it starts blowing
Over me like comfort from a friend
I wake up to memories
Of a place where Summer never ends

Nothing to do
But tilt my head and look up at the stars
Dreaming of you
Somewhere out there far away from me

I love you
sweet dreams

I'm sitting on the front porch
Just dreaming to you
And it feels like I'm the last one in the world
And it isn't so bad

At night time baby
I just look up
And know I got my dreams

“When We Say Goodnight”

When the moon gets full
And the stars come out so bright
And you kiss my lips
And you hold me close so tight

That’s when we say goodnight
That’s when we say goodnight

And we walk outside
And you make me seem so tall
And the neighbors see
But you just don’t care at all

That’s when we say goodnight
That’s when we say goodnight

In the empty streets
Where the time it seems to slow down
And you smile at me
And it’s all I need to know now

That’s when we say goodnight
That’s when we say goodnight

“Can’t Wait”

I can’t wait for everything
To peel back and be
The way that it should be
And I can’t wait for my eyes
To finally see
All the real colors

When that morning star appears
And spins to a sphere
And every dream I’ve never seen
Or thought of kills my fear

And every moment spent alone
It finally makes sense
And all those times I should have cried
I can finally give in

I can't wait for everything
To not feel pretend
And never a dead end
And I can't wait for your love
To not feel like wind
I'll hold you in the end

When that morning star appears
And spins to a sphere
And every dream I've never seen
Or thought of kills my fear

And every moment spent alone
It finally makes sense
And all those times I should have cried
I can finally give in

And there's no miscommunication
So much more than sweet sensation
Knowing you're in love with me
And what you got is all I need

And though you told me just how hard this life is going to be,
Still where we will be there my heart is never going to leave

FINAL STAGES

The album is entitled *When We Say Goodnight*. I thought that this title suited the concept, feeling, imagery, and context of the album. I also thought it sounded cool.

By Christmas, the album was about eighty-five percent finished. All the songs had been recorded. The album was only in need of finishing touches and cover art.

This was the stage where doubts, fears, and lack of motivation crept in, and I began to question everything I was doing. There were days when I thought this album was the opposite direction that I should have been going with my music, and that everyone was going to hate it.

When I let various people listen to the rough draft of the album, the reactions were lukewarm and discouraging. Depending on whether I was having a good or bad day, I would either love the album or hate it. I had heard it too many times to count, and I was sick of the music. I heard every imperfection and have dreamt of every possible critique.

When I was in these moments of fear and doubt, I had to remind myself of the original concept: This album is for me and my creative freedom. Before I showed anyone, I loved it. Before I showed anyone, I anticipated the possibility that people may not like it compared to my past work. I chose to move forward in this creative endeavor in spite of this possibility. I chose to make something I enjoyed rather than something I thought would be commercially successful. I chose to make something I had no idea people would like or dislike.

CONCLUSION

As I come to the end of this creative journey, I realize that this is the only album I could have made that was true to myself. Although there were times of high anxiety and fear, and the work was often toilsome, I found this album happened extremely naturally. When I look back on the year, it is like I watched the album appear. As I mentioned when talking about my influences, my inspiration for this album was unavoidable. These were the sounds I enjoyed this year, these were the feelings, and these were the stories. I could not help but make this album.

Even to the last day of working on it, my concept has developed. This is me saying, “goodnight,” to what other people think of my music. This is me dying to the control of others’ artistic approval. I am doing this in hopes of being able to continue enjoying making music in the future. This is a fight for the enjoyment of creating to be the center rather than success or approval. I have redefined success for myself, and it does not have anything to do with commercial success. Commercial success would be nice, but it means nothing to me if I do not like what I am making. The making of this album redirected my focus and helped me understand what I truly love about making music.

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