

The Chairman

I am the chairman, I am the head.
There's no unsaying what I have said.
Kingdoms of wisdom, fragmenting fast.
Things I envision all come to pass.

Leader! Leader!
Show us! Show us!

I deal in hard facts, lines in the sand.
Something you would not understand.
I do what's needed, I have no shame.
In my position you'd do the same.

Leader! Leader!
Fool us! Fool us!

I am exalted
I am the great
I am the process
I am the state

I am the chairman and I insist
you are the reason that I exist.

Leader! Leader!
Doom us! Doom us!

Sometime in the late 90's, having just graduated from Keele university, not having yet found a job, I spent a summer dossing around in a house in Stoke On Trent with some fellow students, a cat, and a bunch of slugs who would all come in during the night and leave slime trails over all of my stuff.

At some point someone obtained a VHS video of the MTV animation *Aeon Flux*¹. This fantastically peculiar, original and atmospheric minimalist surreal sci-fi, somehow set the tone for that entire summer, and many of the tracks I made at the time.

¹ Not the Hollywood remake, which is of course formulaic crap.

We finally got around to watching this again recently. The soundtrack is also worth a listen - it's made with really quite horridly digital early 90s synths, but put together in such a way as to perfectly match the oddness of the animation. The rubbishness of the sounds kind of adds an added layer of peculiarity to it somehow - in that it sounds like the kind of music we'd be making on some other world-line where the Acid House-led analogue revival had never happened, no one ever danced to electronic music, they just sat in bars looking weird to it, and "digital coldness" was preferred over "analogue warmth". In complete and pleasing contrast, the hand-painted animations in *Aeon Flux do* have a marvelous sketchy, analogue warmth.

"The Chairman" in *Aeon Flux* is a man by the name of Trevor Goodchild. He is, seemingly, an all powerful dictator, but with a number of strange quirks and peccadillos. Not unlike how one would imagine an early 90s cyber-hippy might turn out given absolute power over a futuristic dystopia. Who is the Chairman in *this* song? The observant among you may notice the initials CM in there. The Chairman is not unlike who Cursor Miner would have ended up as had he been given ultimate power and let it corrupt him. He indulges in wierd sex, freaky drugs, and unadvisable and unethical pet science projects. He is my kind of cool, in fact. So yes, an ideal departure point for a song. But, unoriginality alert: The links between being a musician and a dictator have been made a number of times before - see Bowie, see Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. Nothing I do is *fully* original, but that's fine.

Things I envision, all come to pass:

Sketches and the two-facedness of inspiration

The situation is you have a sketch and it's cool, you feel inspired by it, but it's not a song, and it certainly isn't a decent recording of a song. The pressing question becomes how are you going to sustain that original inspiration for the days, months and years that it might take you to make this damn thing? That's a tough question, and one I only occasionally think I have the answer to. Or rather, I find an answer, use it for a while, and the efficacy of that answer gradually withers and dies the more I utilise it, and then I have to think of a new one. Answers to creative questions have a limited shelf life. You reach an impasse, you find a trick that gets you over it. This trick is good for a few tracks, and then eventually the batteries run down. Sometimes you notice the effectiveness has worn off, sometimes you don't. Sometimes you clearly see that it has worn off but you keep using it anyway, like

those LCD bars on the top of water filters, it's telling you the filter needs replacing but you're too lazy to believe it².

One idea I had was to imitate the cheezy digital General Midi vibe of *Aeon Flux*, which (as usual) never quite panned out as other sounds suggested themselves. There was a fairly flushed out sketch with the bass guitar and so on. The sketch has a good vibe, but was too scruffy to use in the end. The main riff in this song started out as a very nineties Indie sounding bass guitar riff, a guitar through an octaver. This gets you 90's Indie-bass, it seems. I never use octavers, but there's one on my crappy mixing desk, and because it's one of the 16 preset effects, it always pops up. This is one example where the "accessibility" of a simple effect led to its being used in a situation when it wouldn't normally. That single dumb limitation ended up leading to a whole track. It's often far better to have instant access to really basic effects than time consuming access to super complex powerful effects. Instantaneousness is just more inspiring, for sketches especially.

I find that if I re-do a sketch there's absolutely no point in trying to recapture the vibe of the original. Possibly because the scruffiness contributes to the vibe. So just neatening up and polishing the sketch is pointless... Because of this tragic "loss of vibe" I used to *always* turn the sketch into the final piece without starting again, polishing a turd you might say. This album contains the first stuff where I've decided to go the extra mile and restart the whole thing from scratch, and the extra work paid off I think. So here you are not listening to polished turds, you are now listening to turds lovingly recreated in 22 carat gold. Nevertheless, I believe the final version is better than the sketch. It's not a very complicated project. Not too many tracks, not too much going on in any of the tracks. It's fairly tightly arranged.

It's very satisfying when this extra work pays off, obviously, because it makes it the work worth it, but it also sucks, because it means that you know you'll have to be prepared to put in that amount of extra work for every song you do from now on. And if you don't put in that much work, you'll be constantly haunted by the fact it may have been better if you had. Damn.

But it is a shame that the sketch is obsolete, because it has a unique identity all of its own. I would like it if we musicians could do what art galleries do, which is to have exhibitions that display all the sketches leading up to a painting as works in their own right³.

² The key to this particular dilemma is realising that water filters are completely superfluous anyway. Tap water has things in. It's fine.

³ Note: This is NOT the same as dumping random outtakes and bonus tracks onto the end of an album to make a quick buck. It really enrages me that Spotify very often has the crappy CD cash-in version of the album with

I really love carefully curated big box sets of albums like Pet Sounds, or the Beatles collections, where you can listen to all the bits separately. A selected series of sketches and variations is an interesting way to dig into the development of a track, but of course none of us have the time to listen to all that crap, not for any albums less revered than Pet Sounds anyway. Which is another reason an art gallery has an advantage over music - you set aside time to go into the gallery and think about nothing else, whereas music always seems to have to subordinately fit around people's lives somehow.

For a solo producer, the process of production has become one with the process of composition. For a long time, I would build the track piece by piece, having ideas and then laying them down as they come. This is very different from sitting down to compose something, and then only once all the musical content has been finished going to the studio to record it. In one way the new monolithic music making process is much better. As well as tailoring sound to the music, you can also tailor music to sound. The timbre of an instrument or an effect can give you melodic ideas, and the fact that both are emerging together can help make the whole thing more cohesive. On the other hand, you also somehow lose the "fungibility" of music. To be "fungible" means you can swap something out and the essence of it remains the same. So, for instance, one can play [Kraftwerk in a Latin Big Band style](#), and some essence of Kraftwerk is still there. The melodic content preserves its identity despite it being completely remade stylistically and sonically.

A great song is extremely fungible. It contains very little information, just some chords, notes, and words. It's information that could be stored as a few kilobytes text file. Yet these few kilobytes can be immensely expressive, exquisitely unique⁴.

Non-melodic electronic music, being far more about timbre, relies on very specific audio qualities to make sense. There's plenty of electronic music that if you tried to play it with a Latin Big Band, would be nonsensical and unrecognisable. And this is OK, but I suspect that the best electronic music still has fungibility. I think there's plenty of ways that you could do a cover of, say, Aphex Twin's Windowlicker, and it would still be instantly understandable as being Windowlicker. Of course, you can play with this deliberately. Jeff Mills' Techno track The Bells is one such example where I think he is deliberately playing with the melody recognition buttons in our heads. The instantly recognisable melodic line

all the bonus tracks, and not just the original canonical tracklist. Do they not realise that there was a good reason that the artists didn't put a load of sketchy crap on the end of their album? That the tracklist might have had some purpose? When I finish a lovingly crafted classic album I want it to STOP, please. It's like reaching the end of a gourmet meal and then being force fed all the bits that went into the compost bin.

⁴ Later, in Information Addict we shall take a closer look at the idea of art as a compression algorithm.

isn't actually that great *in itself* IMHO, but it's more of a label, a flag, an audio logo. It's more a deliberate sign saying "I am here" over the top of a single-chord techno pounder that is far less recognisable (but, as always with Millsy, perfectly constructed and absolutely stonking).

But, interestingly, the other fungible thing is that timbral sound world. If you have built a track from scratch, you have custom made your drums, your bass, your synthesisers, your mix, your entire sound palette, then not only have you built a machine that plays back that track you were working on, you have built a machine that could create a zillion other tracks, all inheriting that same sound world. So, if the sounds in your original track were all working together reasonably well, then lo and behold those sounds will work well for another track too. You have basically built a new kind of orchestra from scratch, and you can get that orchestra doing all kinds of different things. Very often my day's music making will be spent making sketch after sketch. Each sketch will build up the sound palette a little more. By the end of the day I will have six or seven tracks or ideas that use very similar sounds. And one or two of them will be worth putting more effort into. You can also go quite far into making a track and then trash everything and start again with the same palette. Over the course of a day, a bunch of stuff will happen, a bunch of sketches of various complexity will be made. Then, you pick them all up the next day, or whenever. Some will be crap, some will grab you, and it won't necessarily be the ones that grabbed you as you were making them. Some you will be throw-away nonsense one day and inspired radicalism the next.

This neatly side steps that next-morning-disappointment feeling which is the subject of so many producer memes. Because it is precisely that next morning freshness (and skepticism) of ear that you are using to weed out the duds before you waste any more time on them.

Inspiration is a fantastic feeling, and should be the fuel for what you create. But it also needs to be treated with some skepticism. Inspiration can be a drug that colours and distorts everything, it can cloud your judgement. Because inspiration colours things so radically, it is quite easy to get into a rabbit hole where you are being inspired by a complete phantom. This is the source of the next-morning-letdown. However, it has to be said that the environment you are making your music for is also, with any luck, a situation in which the listeners also are inspired. The audience, if everything is working as it should, is in that state of wild enthusiasm where their critical faculties are suspended. So quite possibly the you that was carried away with something is more reflective of a musical environment than the you that was grumpily dissing the track the next day. So who should

you trust? Well, both selves should have respect for each other. You need both attitudes to be working in harmony somehow.

Fragmenting Fast: Broken chords, further broken

If one thing has really characterised my musical focus over the last decade, it's an obsession with Arpeggios. Arpeggio means, roughly, play on a harp. I don't have a harp, luckily, but I do have an acoustic guitar, and I spend a lot of time on that, more or less just playing arpeggios for ages. Indeed, I spent three years trying to become good at classical guitar pieces *precisely* in order to work on my arpeggiation chops. Did it pay off? Was it worth the time and effort? A bit. I certainly came up with some nice ones, and some of them are on this album.

What is so great about arpeggios? Well, to me they expose the essence of music. If music is like a watch, which it is, an arpeggio is like an open watch where you can see all the gears and stuff. The chord's workings are exposed to view, and laid out across time. Arpeggios are like an exploded technical diagram for your chord sequence. They give the listener the opportunity to grasp the intervals as both melodies and chords. Normal chords are a bit "blocky" to me. A bit stodgy. They're a bit like a dense German loaf of excessively healthy and impossible to slice bread. Bleuch to chords. Arpeggios also form rhythms, where the different pitches of the notes form beats, as if each different note was a drum somehow. Slicing chords into arpeggios gives the music an extra duality, an extra intricate relation between the two principal dimensions of sound: rhythmic time and harmonic pitch. This song is partly about the duality between unification and fragmentation, and how we are currently experiencing both these things simultaneously. Arpeggios are a neat way to illustrate that.

And you can break up arpeggios even further. In the sketch, having that same bass guitar playing the same arpeggiated riff over and over seemed to be both too basic and too cluttered, a bit too normal music⁵, and it got boring to listen to after a while. So what I did instead of playing the whole pattern on a single instrument was split the arpeggio into segments, and have the different segments played with very different synth sounds. I like this trick, as it exposes the multiplicity of interpretation of the riff in an explicit form. An exercise you can perform is to listen to your original pattern over and over, and see which sub-patterns seem to attach themselves to your ears and prove compelling in their own right, and then you can extract these and distribute them to different instruments.

⁵ What is normal music? I'm not sure, but there's definitely stuff that's too normal for me to use. An interesting exercise is to try and find the most *normal* music you can. Spoiler alert: you find the normaler it gets the weirder it gets. Maybe there is no normal music.

Tweaking the timbre of those instruments then gives you a whole new dimension to play with. A similar thing can be done with beats or anything - you just keep listening until something new appears "inside" the sound, a bit like a hallucination, then you go try to recreate that illusory apparition for real, and thereby strengthen that *emergent* form.

So the low notes became super low, super boomy bass, the mids are sometimes on a guitar and the highest notes became a droplet with a rattlesnake tail (No? Listen to it again, now you try to tell me that's not a droplet with a rattlesnake tail. Right. And don't ever doubt me again). This sound very much inspired by Isao Tomita - a genius at layering multiple synths to make composite sound events. Every electronic music fan should listen, I mean really *listen*, to Snowflakes Are Dancing - one more on my all time fave list!

So if you split arpeggios amongst instruments, in the end what you get is the riff having far more space between all the components, and it also highlights the fact that a single pattern can simultaneously have sub-patterns within it that are also fun to listen to on their own.

All these sounds were made using the same synth - Ableton's Wavetable, which I helped develop and consequently know inside out⁶. This was the first song I used Wavetable for "in anger". I don't know why, but I feel with that synth I can leave much more space in the song than usual.

I'm always trying to cram more and more stuff in my music. I have repeatedly suffered from [Horror Vacui](#). Always, always is this tendency to stuff every available nook and cranny of the time-frequency plane with MORE GODDAMN STUFF. You need to listen to ALL MY STUFF, RIGHT NOW. This, needless to say, is not a healthy practise, and one has to constantly fight it. Patience my child. The people *will* still be listening in two seconds time⁷.

Something I've striven for since the last album is using more silence. I've known "less is more" ever since I first got into techno (particularly the first wave of minimal in around 95), but it's as hard as ever to keep that in mind.

However the need to use silence has become more urgent for me recently because of hearing loss. I need to be able to hear the damn thing I'm making, so I need to get rid of all the sonic clutter. In addition, if my tracks are too noisy, then working on them for hours is going to just destroy what little hearing I have left.

⁶ Top Tip: How well you know a synth is far more important than the features or sonic characteristics of that synth, so don't spend time agonising about what synth to buy, just take anything reasonably powerful and really learn it. I shall rant about gear acquisition syndrome later!

⁷ Unless they are *young* people.

In this track I finally feel like I have made silence and space a thing that I have actually used in an effective way, and this feels new to me, because I was never very good at that. The most rewarding tracks feel like I have achieved something new for myself, but I wonder if that simply ends up as a recipe for constantly disappointing one's fans.

The end of each four chord round features a twangy guitar that was very much influenced by "War of The Worlds", another album on my list of Favourite Albums Ever. Now then, a musical version of War of the Worlds with an orchestra and disco beats and electric guitar solos and featuring David Essex *sounds* ridiculous, I know. Maybe to some of you muso kids the record itself sounds ridiculous now... but it is truly a work of genius. It just goes to show that it doesn't matter what genre something is in, it can still be crafted magnificently. I firmly believe there is not a single genre of music that doesn't contain works of genius. And conversely there is not a single genre of music that doesn't contain worthless crap.

I'm not so afraid to venture into Stage Musical - Rock Opera type territory, and this Chairman song one could imagine as a signature song in some kind of Sci-Fi Rocktronica Opera. Give me the budget and I'll do it, I swear!

Fool Us: Art, Self Delusion and Narcissism

Let me tell you about the time I thought I was "The One".

From an early age I thought I was special. Like everyone else does. Just like your parents tell you you are. Fed with a constant diet of Hollywood stories, where the "chosen one", the hero, or some other central figure saves the world, one naturally starts to conceive of life having some ultimate purpose, and the world as revolving around oneself. The strength of this archetypal narrative is such that it starts to appear to you that the world would have no meaning, unless one were called upon, individually, to save it in some spectacular fashion. You grow up more or less certain that this will happen at some point. The Force is strong in me, you say to yourself.

This hero myth is of course an "archetypal" tale, but it seems particularly ubiquitous in American culture, possibly having emerged from the Christian myth, in which the Jesus Christ figure that saves the world single handed with impressive levels of self sacrifice and a dollop of inherited telekinetic privilege. Since this narrative is the only one that makes

movies interesting, then presumably it's the only one that would make life interesting. I wonder if you start to see the risk here?

The world being under threat (as it always is), it will inevitably be left up to one person to save it (why just one?), and who else could that person be but ME (seems unlikely in retrospect but hey). I always felt I had that special something deep inside (what exactly?). I have been “chosen” somehow (by who, by what?). You know I'm not outstandingly smart, or moral, or likeable, or talented or heroic, but I just have that y'know special me-ness that will be the right stuff to face whatever existential crisis threatens humanity. Probably the most important and crisis-y one EVER (I wouldn't want to be the *second* most heroic hero would I? Who am I, *Sam Gamgee!*?). You only get one life, and you only get one crisis to solve, and the goal is to work out what that crisis is and then sort it out. Otherwise... fuck knows, your life has no story. And stories are everything. For some reason⁸.

And it's funny, I seem special because I seem to be the only one who feels anything. Other people look as though they feel stuff, they *seem* to talk about their inner thoughts. But only I really seem to be having them. Yeah maybe that's it, yeah maybe this is the special thing about me. I'm the hero because I'm the CONSCIOUS ONE. And then I start to notice little glitches and bizarre coincidences and synchronicities in reality, and it starts to become apparent that reality is just a simulation, a simulation that could be there for no other purpose than for my own amusement... or is it some kind of test? Since saving the world is usually the goal of simulated realities, then this is clearly the objective in this reality. The object of the game is to save the world. So given that I start to have a little bit of success (not too much - I don't want to end up like THEM, those evil corrupt celebrities, no, just enough success to optimise the game). I really do notice I have had a bit of success doing what I love, which also happens to be the most important thing of all - i.e. the greatest art form known to man, MUSIC, then surely I must be pretty hot stuff and this is what the whole thing was for to play out this amazing story of me being the greatest musician in the world...

There used to be a quite large chunk of my brain that believed this stuff. Really. Alongside the normal everyday reality of random grumpiness and self loathing, inside I was running a semi-fictional narrative of magic chosenness. I think a combination of Hollywood movies and a “positive” upbringing might have made me, and the rest of my generation, into massive narcissists.

⁸ There is an over-dominant narrative in our culture that says that the stories we tell about things are the most important aspects of our lives. This “narrative narrative” is simplistic rubbish espoused by talk supremacists. I'll return to it later.

And it goes on like this. Once you discover alternative philosophies, the counterculture, and quantum weirdness, the sky's the limit in terms of reality customisation. You think you discover a weird trick where you use the right kind of belief and the belief comes true. Strangely, the more I think I'm the badger's nadgers, the more magnetic and amazing I seem to get, like for REAL, and as it goes on the more other people respond to me positively and they start confirming back to me that I'm somehow special... maybe my beliefs are actually affecting reality? Is this how the simulation works? Well, let's just let that feedback loop run for a while. That loop can run for a good long time before it bumps into anything resembling hard reality, especially if you don't actually believe in hard reality.

Sanity Vs. Happiness

A working definition of one's sanity is that one's actions are taken in one's own rational best interest.

But, if it seems that considering yourself to be The Magic Chosen One will get you ahead in life, then it's only rational to start believing that, right? Maybe the most rational course of action is to put your rationality indefinitely on hold? There's a whole trough of kooky self help books that will help you "manifest" your dreams and generate your own personal "Vortex". And the bizarre thing was, I found that this bollocks actually works, at least initially. Can something be bollocks and still work? Sure, in that crazy neurological pinball machine called the human mind it can!

I have always considered myself a rationalist. But... if your rational worldview is holding you back from "being all you can be", well it only seems sensible to abandon that. Ditch your belief in the real material world, and become an idealist, a mystic, or panpsychist, or a solipsist, there's plenty of respectable philosophical alternatives to boring old realist-naturalist-materialism, which is just so *mainstream*. Much cognitive dissonance is required, but with a healthy dose of psychedelic soaked quantum-woo you can reconcile your scientific worldview with your spirituo-magical one, and you're well on the way to Infinite Abundance. Hooray!

The theme of solipsism is one that runs through a lot of songs The Chairman has made (see also Me and My Clone). And it's not just something in his art, it's not just some philosophical curiosity, it's also something he has lived. Between 2003 and 2005 I would by some accounts have been "suffering" from borderline psychotic, solipsistic delusions of grandeur. Either that or a chronic lack of a proper job. I managed to maintain a suspension of disbelief where I knew I was manipulating my own beliefs independent of reality, and yet I did really believe them. It's not actually as hard as it sounds, and I think we are all

doing this all the time to a certain extent. The basic trick seemed to be immediately assuming the most favourable reading of a situation, and move on from that thought quick enough that your rational brain doesn't get time to question it. If you can make this a habit, all of a sudden the world becomes a much more positive place. Wonderful, in fact.

I don't think The Chairman is actually schizophrenic (as that is more of a permanent physical brain condition), but certainly "at risk", I think the term is Schizotypic. Maybe it is more Bipolar, a condition that runs in my mother's side of my family. Whatever, everyone lies somewhere on a multitude of mental unhealth spectra, and I was and maybe still am, somewhere along some kind of spectrum. Crazy enough to spend most of my time in a dreamworld, but sane enough to keep it fairly low key. Practical everyday insanity, keeping it just ticking along enough to get some good tunes out of. I would have got away with it too, if it wasn't for those pesky real things!

Self actualisation *is* a thing, actually, and whilst I was occasionally pretty weird, I think I got myself quite damn actual. I distinctly remember being sat on a train thinking to myself, no, *knowing* that I was the luckiest person alive. I had achieved a state where my reality was 100% perfected, I felt exactly aligned with who I wanted to be and what I wanted to be doing. And how many people have ever *really* felt that? And even rarer than that, how many people have felt that whilst travelling on a Network Southeast service?

Depending on what definition you use, I was saner when I was mad than than I am now. It's important to stress that the deluded years of my life may have also been the happiest. At the time I'm talking about I was more confident, I was more relaxed, I had tons of energy, I almost never fell ill or had any physical problems of any kind, I was super motivated, creative and my life felt imbued with profound meaning. Magical thinking may be nonsense, but it is also really, well, *magical*, in the sense that it is exciting and wonderful and bursting with possibility. Sanity, in contrast, is fairly dull, it's a drag. Sanity is in some ways simply an extremely long list of all the things you can't do.

Unfortunately, self actualisation is not irreversible, or necessarily even stable, so it didn't last, I lost that state, my real/imagined superpowers faded away. It felt like falling from grace. And when, after a few years of being a bit more normal, I tried to bring that magic-man feeling back... things went *really* sideways and I experienced what really would be unambiguously categorised as psychosis. I want to write about that episode at some point, but it feels too much to write about here.

But again, to be honest, more interesting stuff happened to me (subjectively speaking), in that one single psychotic week than has happened in the entire five years since. So that

would be another narcissistic incentive that we maybe don't want to talk about: some of us might go crazy just to liven our otherwise unbearably prosaic existence up a bit.

I have always been attracted to the mad, the weird, the unusual, the disturbing, the unsettling and the bizarre. It's just more interesting, isn't it? One thing that struck me when being crazy is how much of normal life we spend seeking out crazy stuff. Every movie or television program for instance, is by and large like peering into a psychotic mind... None of it is real. Is this attraction to interestingness another driver of being less-than-sane? This means that, for me, part of it has actually been voluntary. This is clearly not the case for many more unfortunate people, who have conditions that are utterly beyond their control.

Voluntary aspects of mental illness are probably very unfashionable to mention these days. We woke-onauts like to think that mental illness and addiction are simply things that happen to people, like getting cholera or being struck by lightning. But that's not really the whole story. There are actions you can take to avoid it, and there are actions you can take to exacerbate it.

I think some of my life choices exacerbated it. But I still stand by those life choices, because I value diverse experimental states of mind over and above the potential risk. Or at least I did when I was young. To forgo those experiences would have almost certainly left me a spiritually and creatively impoverished person. And this *risk taking* aspect is another important creative factor that we shall return to.

Social Insanity Vs Personal Insanity

There was another force that was pushing The Chairman further out, and disincentivizing his sanity.

So everyone else is sane, right? Cue hollow laughter.

"Normal" people spend at least 90% of the time thinking about things that don't exist. Most of what we talk about doesn't exist, most of what we worry about is futile to worry about, most of what we do is pointless, and most of what we're working so very hard on with such impressive self sacrifice will seemingly lead to the destruction of everything that gives us life. So don't feel sorry for me, feel sorry for all your mad selves, yeah? According to the "rational self interest" definition most of humanity is quite clearly insane. And I realised this quite early, so I've never really been overly afraid of insanity, or being thought of as weird. Maybe, given my family history, I should have been slightly more cautious there. What I fear far more is that I might end up as one of those people who thinks they are

crazy, wacky, zany and really really mad, when in fact I'm basically just a dreary David Brent style office prankster. That might be the worst outcome.

But really, if you have any independence of thought at all you twig fairly early on that all the crazy stuff in your life seems interesting and fun, and all the normal stuff seems crazy and stupid.

To act differently from the majority of humankind is to be considered, socially, as insane. To act in exact conformity with the majority of humankind is to actually *be* insane. So, for me it is a question of where upon the wobbly fraying elastic band between these two extremes you balance your own (in)sanity. This tension between "social insanity" and "personal insanity" is another recurring theme in my work. In fact, almost everything I wrote in the mid 90's was based around the Jungian archetype of the mad genius, the wise fool, the Jester. The idea that the one who knows how things really work is considered as crazy by society, but similarly their ideas are so ambiguous and Janusian that you can never really know if they're insane or not. This is an extremely well worn archetypal story of course, easily falling into cliché. And of course this is a recurring theme in 60's psychedelic music. The subtext being you need to have a Psychedelic experience (which has often been classified as chemically-induced insanity, but is very different) in order to gain insight into the true nature of reality.

In the end I think I over did that theme in my tunes. It was one of those creativity enhancers that start to become a dumb unthinking habit, and hence a creativity *inhibitor*.

For The Chairman, well, he gets to decide on society's definition of sanity - therefore his sanity is the true one, in the way that Kim Jong Un's weird-ass haircut is the One True Haircut.



The One True Haircut

Society helps keep one sane by acting as a kind of low-pass filter on your world model. Interacting with others smooths out the spikes. Merely hanging out with sane people can stabilise you. That doesn't mean you are any closer to the truth, but you are at least "stabilised". Real insanity seems to me to be more about being *unstable* than being *weird*. It's OK to be consistently, calmly, strategically, agreeably weird. It's not OK to radically change your opinion of how the world works every three seconds on the basis of random symbols and words that you see everywhere and attach intense cosmic significance to (Been there. I can report that "cosmic significance" can be incredibly unhelpful sometimes). Entire civilisations have existed for thousands of years believing in things that were utterly bat-shit crazy, but because it was stable-crazy and not unstable-crazy things chugged along fine. When societies started wildly and rapidly veering between Catholicism and Protestantism or Communism and Fascism, not so fine. The Chairman now believes that holding on to self-consistent beliefs is more important than flailing around in a mess of infinite possibilities, however he acknowledges that actually having been through the experience of drowning in irrationality can be beneficial - assuming you come out the other side intact.

Madness and Genius?

Around a third of people will deal with mental illness at some stage in their lives. If you take yourself seriously as an artist, unless you are an unfeeling machine, the chances are even higher you will have to deal with mental illness in some form. Whether it is due to too

much success, or too little, whether it's due to too much pressure, or too little, or too much self belief or too little, or too much self-medication or too little... you get the idea. You will be walking a cognitive tightrope of some kind, for it's on the knife edge that new ideas happen.

Whilst at one point the link between creativity and mental illness was dismissed as a popular myth⁹, there is now thought to be a correlation between having a history of mental illness in your family and being creative. Whilst extreme forms of mental illness are certainly far too debilitating for someone suffering from them to actually have a fully functional artistic career, there is indeed something in the old idea of a link between genius and madness. I'd like to go into why I think this may be the case.

For one thing, and this seems facetious but I think it's actually a major factor, you need to be fairly deluded to think that going into music is a good idea. It is these days, let's face it, a classic "poor life choice". The chances of success are minute. A rational cost-benefit analysis of being an underground musician would give you some utterly stupid ratio of effort to payback. So this necessitates some fancy philosophical footwork to find other, more personal definitions of payback (I'll tell you why I personally still consider music to be completely, totally and utterly *worth it* later). However you slice it, it's not really a rational decision.

You also need to be sufficiently whacked that you think you are talented. Even when you're not. Because no one starts off being great. It will take you ten years of practice to become great, and something needs to get you through that - and mild delusions of grandeur, or convictions regarding destiny or chosenness can be very useful for fuelling that persistence. I distinctly remember thinking things I'd made were genius, and of course I listen back to them now and they're incompetent shite. But it's likely that if I had a clearer picture of how rubbish they were I would have just given up straight off the bat. It took an irrational suspension of self-disbelief to keep me in the game.

On the other hand, if you persuade yourself that your stuff is so good that there's no room for improvement, then you will stagnate and never develop. So there's a delicate balance to be struck there. This may be why bipolar disorder is associated with being creative - because you veer wildly between thinking your ideas are spectacularly brilliant (when manic) and thinking you utterly suck (when you're depressive) which gives you both the fuel and self belief to let your ideas run wild, but also the ruthless self-criticism and

⁹ It's one of those ideas that reliably goes in and out of fashion every twenty years.

dissatisfaction to keep striving for more. I think that's the reason why a genetic history of bipolarity predicts creativity.

I think there are distinct modes of thought, inspiration and error-correction are to a large extent polar opposites. To be creative you need both. The inspiration part gives you momentum, it gives you true novelty, it fuels a creative vision. The error correction *improves* your art, and cements the and gives solid form to the ideas you had when inspired. Psychological predilections or even illnesses that can maintain these two modes, or even enhance them and make them more extreme, will be associated with creativity. There is also a connection with the scientific process: inspiration being aligned with speculative theory and error-correction being associated with gathering experimental evidence. I shall return to this idea in Stand Up For Science.

I'm not bipolar, but it runs in the family, and I definitely notice ebbs and flows in creativity, in brain power even. I think most people do. These seemingly last a few months each. I can feel when a creative burst finishes and I'm turning to a down period. During a down period the intensity of thought diminishes, and creative output withers. I'm far from being depressed these days, during down periods I'm generally just bad tempered and super impatient with things. Previous times in my life I would say I've been close to depression, but never really suffered it to a truly debilitating extent, maybe only for a year or so.

So there's a few bats in the belfry I think, but they're very tame, cuddly bats, and really it's so mild that I do now count myself a blessed and stable human being. As luck would have it, I feel I know enough to prattle on about this stuff like I know what I'm talking about, but am not too depressed to have the energy to prattle.

Self Belief Vs. Self Delusion

Our society has an extremely contradictory attitude to self belief. Considering yourself as a chosen and special hero is simultaneously encouraged by incessant, relentless American propaganda, and at the same time deluded people are considered tragic and pitiable. Witness our modern day televisual freakshow of ogling hopelessly talentless people who were *absolutely convinced* they were going to be famous, having their dreams shattered by merciless judges on talent shows. One of the (myriad) reasons I find these shows so horrific is that I see my own soul in their tearful, disillusioned eyes¹⁰.

¹⁰ I think, finally, it is being recognised that these shows attract deluded, mentally unstable people, and to exhibit their delusion and pain as spectacle is grotesquely inhumane. I hope so, because apart from anything else, the winners are fucking shite too.

I think in the 70's and 80's it was some kind of recommendation to parents that they tell their kids that they are special. I know my parents did. I do wonder how wise this was. I wonder if this just gives people a massive sense of entitlement and endows them with a huge amount of fragility. I wonder if this plays a part in spreading all this New Age nonsense. If your child is at risk for Schizophrenia you should probably *not* tell them they're special. Though equally, telling them they're a worthless heap of shit may be unwise too... and definitely don't tell them that they're Joan of Arc or Jesus or someone. "Mum, I feel like a loser and I'm never going to amount to anything", "Oh, Jimmy dear, just remember that your father and I love you very much, and that you are in fact *actually Napoleon*". I dunno, maybe just try and be honest? Or do we collectively feel that being "unremarkable" is a fate so cosmically unbearable that we must collectively inoculate our young against it with this incessant eschatological hypnosis?

As I said, one thing that I feel has kept me making music against all better judgement is the knowledge, uhm, feeling, well, delusion that I'm good at it. I now know that, at least when I started, I thought I was amazing when I actually sucked. Maybe that's true now. Whether this is true or not is perhaps not important. What is important is that at every stage I felt I was good enough for it to be worth continuing. I felt I was good enough that it didn't matter if no one listened, or people didn't get it, or that people didn't like what I did, or if my Aunt said it reminded her of her washing machine¹¹, or if the reviews kept saying I was "retro" when I was trying to be the exact opposite. "Screw them", I scoffed, "I know I'm good!". It didn't even matter that everything I made up until that point was crap, it was always the *next* track that would be brilliant. At root, it's a belief in your vision, not your execution. Imagination leads, technique follows. The music you make can be crap, it can fail to live up to your dreams, but it is the *dreams* you need faith in. After all, music is *built* from dreams.

Finishing a track or an album is often heartbreaking. Either you failed to live up to the dream - in which case the dream is dead - or you lived up to the dream and the dream failed to live up to your hopes for what the dream could be in reality. In other words, either your skills fall short of your dream, or no one else believes in your dream. It's a kinda lose-lose situation.

I think this might be a hidden driver behind this book. I finished an album, and it didn't live up to my dream, so I had to continue it in some form, so I started this.

The turning point in my self belief came in the late nineties when I first had the feeling that it was as good as the "real" music that got released as records. A couple of years later this

¹¹ True story. She didn't say it was bad, as such, just... washing machine-like.

was supplanted by the feeling that I was actually making music that was ahead of the curve. It was as if my delusion that I was going to become good got supplanted by the feeling that I actually *was* good. It did indeed take an entire ten years of semi-fooling myself to get to that point. Coincidentally (or not?) these were the final days of any kind of curve to be ahead of. Also this coincided with people actually releasing my music. So presumably I wasn't *totally* out of whack.

Primarily this feeling of "ahead of the curveness" came from the fact that this time (early 2000's) was the first time you finally, thanks to computers, had complete control of the microscopic properties of sound - you could process anything as many times as you liked and get exactly what you wanted, and there was no limit to the complexity or precision of craft that could be achieved. *Events Began to Spiral out of Control* was one track in particular that, when I finished it, I thought to myself "no one else has done this". This much sonic complexity combined with that much rhythmic impact and that much mad funkiness and zany humour I had not heard before. I felt I'd pushed things a bit further. I'm glad I managed to have this feeling once or twice in my life. Now, when I finish a track, I feel that I have merely thrown a new ball in a formless sea of balls. There is no sense of collective cultural forward progress anymore.

I used to imagine I would make some amazing thingy that would change the world. I used to believe I would become famous for making said amazing thingy. These beliefs are gone. In a way that's a relief. They turned out to be silly. Quite embarrassing to admit that here, in fact. I now have no deluded hope that the entertainment industry will ever find what I do valuable. I now tell myself that my creativity must live on without these dreams, and ultimately I will be better for losing them, as they are very close to what is at the heart of what I consider corrupt in our society. I don't really miss the dream of success, but do really *really* miss the dream that I will make something magnificent. That delusion was a fun one.

Whilst arrogant people are insufferable, I think it's actually quite important that an artist, however bad they are, has something like this kind of belief in themselves. It's ridiculous, but it's also OK to be ridiculous. It's OK to have a completely contradictory idea that on the one hand your music is "the best" music, and on the other that there is no such thing as "the best" music. I think one of the reasons art is interesting is that these two contradictory ideas can exist in superposition. If I didn't feel that in some way each track was "the best track ever" I wouldn't do it. The trouble with getting older is that belief gets harder and harder to sustain in the face of all the evidence. More of your best moments are behind you. It becomes harder to imagine that the thing you're working on is "the one". The dart board is full of darts, and the chances of a dart being way closer to the bullseye than all the

previous darts is slim. You can feel stuck on an eternal plateau. And inevitably, the antidote to this feeling is creativity, is innovation. If you make something different and new, then you don't even need to worry whether it's better than your old stuff or not, because if it's different then it's like comparing apples and oranges¹².

So now I try to sustain my belief in myself as an artist without tying it to some dream of future success or recognition, without shackling it to some hypothetical magnum opus that I will eventually make. My belief is simply that I have (and you do too) a unique way of seeing the world, a unique approach to dealing with sounds, a unique approach to songwriting and a unique and richly detailed swath of influences leading up to who I am right now, and this is enough. I feel the necessity to keep creating, this too is enough. If I fail to create, my mind will shrivel up and die. The idea that I might give up making music horrifies me. It's just what I do. There is no choice, there is no cost-benefit analysis, there is no worldly ambition, there is only a uniqueness, a journey, an enjoyment, a rag-tag bunch of skills, and a need.

Belief in myself as an artist didn't just sustain me as an artist. It has been a large component in what sustained me as a *person*. It is simply not enough to just exist. There has to be a reason to exist. Because existence as a human is hard, and the human soul is intensely fragile. Music, at many points, has been the thing that got me through life. The fact that music even *exists* changes everything. It transforms life from being an endless parade of meaningless drudgery to a playful, delightful sea of possibilities. Music is the thing that tips the balance between humans being a bunch of monsters that would be better off eradicated, and the shining beacons of the living universe.

Music has been a huge component of my self image. If I started considering myself as an engineer, programmer, an employee, a scientist, a husband, a citizen, or even just a normal human being, I would lose some vital aspect of who I think I am, I would lose a dream, a hope that sustains and inspires me. You may call it a delusion, but this delusion is what kept me engaged with existence. It is a similar delusion to what keeps anyone going in life: a willingness to be something more than we are. If you truly thought of yourself as merely what exists, merely what has happened to you, wouldn't you collapse? Rationally, there is no "hope" for the future, we all grow old and die and everything we know and love is lost. Nevertheless, we keep going and we keep hoping, we find meaning in our actions. The way I rationalise this is that "The Future" that we are working toward is not the real actual stuff

¹² Apples and oranges, however, are intensely comparable. I mean you can weigh them, compare their colour, their taste, how easy they are to peel, the range of climates in which they grow, how nice they taste. And the winner is apples, without a shadow of a doubt. I hope we've finally cleared that confusion up.

that will happen in the future, but more like some platonic eternal ideal that is the focus for our spiritual efforts. The future is the dwelling place of our aspirations. So in a way, since the most essential of our aspirations are timeless, the future is timeless. Imagination is a timeless realm that is the true resting place of the human soul. And this is why music, art, film and literature are so vital.

I find the meaning that striving to make music gives me is very similar to the meaning that striving to live gives me. It is a meaning independent of time. You are working your way toward something in a dimension that is orthogonal to time. If you tie meaning to notions of progress toward an *objective* accomplishment in the future, you have *no* meaning. In the long run, everything you accomplish will disappear, you will accomplish nothing. Meaning has to be here and now. An imagined future is a tool you use to effect aspiration in the here and now. The meaning of the music you are making has to be in the moment of the making. This is why the process of making music is more important than the music you make, but yet the music you *want* to make is even more important than that.

Furthermore, the exact manner of how people *failed* to achieve the dream also very often becomes part of the magic soup of music culture. You fly towards the sun, the wax holding on your feathers melts, and you plunge to your doom, but a few years pass and then lo and behold at the site of your demise there emerges a thriving wax-feather-art scene. People fall in love with the way that certain artists *fail*. We think of it as success now but maybe if you asked that artist what they wanted, it wouldn't be *that*. This is why *The Disaster Artist* is such a compelling film. A borderline delusional guy obsessed with movies is somehow rich enough to fund his own film, and it's absolutely *terrible...* and yet we all feel for that guy. It looks like it's going to bomb and be a massive embarrassment. And yes, suddenly it's a cult film, and then it's a cult film about a cult film, and then a legend. We laugh at how bad the film is and what a lunatic he is, and yet we have to admire his conviction in his dream/delusion. Every artist *is* that guy, really. Every work of art *is* such a failure, because they all fall short, they are all misinterpreted, and every attempt at communication is garbled and inept. And yet people still fall in love with it, and the dream lives on.

I have to confess that I still (sometimes) think that what I'm making now is pretty damn good, and still enjoy that rush of mad dictator delusion. This feeling fades much faster than it used to. Perhaps I've "made progress" or perhaps I've lost "the magic"? It could be either. I could still be just as deluded as I was when I started out. I still struggle occasionally reconciling my self belief with the lack of recognition, but I found the best attitude to this is to have no attitude to this at all. The good thing with being in my mid forties is that I give less of shit, and rather than my music being the sole source of my self worth (which when I

was younger it definitely was), it's nicely compartmentalised as just, I dunno, something I do.

I like to think that my self aggrandisement is nicely localised in the realm of my own creative practise, and doesn't spill out into everyday life. I think it's perfectly possible to have the attitude that your music is The Very Best without becoming arrogant socially, or complacent artistically. After all, it's your music, it's your own world, you make the rules. In your world, your rules can be the best rules, because you can invent the rules for judging how good rules are. In the semi-fictional story you tell with your music, you can be the best musician. It's a weird belief that doesn't stand up to rational scrutiny. But it doesn't have to, because we're just making music here, not doing open heart surgery. Or voting in an election.

Understanding "The New"

And then another thing that could drive you, as an artist, mad is the immensely aggravating fact that if you've created something genuinely new, then no one will understand it. Because it's new, and new things will take people time to process, if that happens ever at all. Many creative people have gone mad, not from being mad, but from the relentless dunderheaded rejection that being ahead of their time entails. Not that I'd include myself in this group especially (I'm "retro", remember), but it's a risk to you, young aspiring artist, if so you be.

There's a great [documentary about Godel, Boltzman and Cantor](#) which tells the story of their struggles for the recognition of their work (in the mathematical/scientific domain not artistic, but it's basically the same issue). It's really hard to keep your shit together when the supposedly smartest most important people around are telling you that you suck. Or when you have poured life and soul into something and it's just utterly ignored. The strain and cognitive dissonance of this can send people round the bend.

And there's no avoiding this, really. If you want to produce something original, then you need to be disagreeing with the rest of the world in some fundamental way. All the stuff that would be considered good by the existing value system has already been made - this means you need to invent a new value system. If you disagree with the values of the world, you should fully expect it to disagree with you back, right? Then you'll need to have the mental fortitude to deal with that, which unfortunately not all creative people have.

Part of dealing with society's rejection is just about sticking to your guns. Sticking to my guns in general is something I find really hard. I feel like I'm stuck to my guns with that glue

they use for post-it notes, and in the slightest breeze my guns just clatter to the ground. This is because *everything* can be questioned, and I have a habit of it. As soon as a sentence is about to leave my lips, I'm questioning it. And since I know my music intimately, I can question every tiny part of it. As I said, I don't have many "opinions" because opinions are where thought processes go to die. I do however have artistic *convictions*. I believe certain things to be absolute truths about art and music. That's not to say that you must listen to or believe my convictions. You make your own rules. But if you set up rules that are different from everyone else, how are you going to enforce them, what's going to be the thing that gives you conviction?

There is a time and place for questioning yourself, but when getting down to the nitty gritty of producing ideas, most of the time you just need faith in your own creativity. I think the key to staying creative and productive is to do all the questioning *away* from the studio. In other words you should never question anything as you're doing it. When you are making something, it should just flow out, and whatever happens let it be. The self-critical stage should happen elsewhere, or at another time. In other words: write drunk, edit sober¹³.

There is then the gotcha that, once you have departed from the rest of society and decided that they don't know fuckin' nothing, and that you are a lone genius, you may then start to reject everything else that the stinking rotten normals say too. And doing that you'll probably end up in a really peculiar place. The romantic idea of you being the lone genius is something that *can* sustain you and keep you going, by all means use it, but sparingly - watch out that that doesn't send you into a death spiral and send you mad in a different way - by detaching you from the reality of what would improve your music or make you a better human being. It is rather easy to turn artistic conviction into a paranoid conspiracy. Seriously, just don't bother. Externalising it won't help.

There is also the sad fact that the idea of the lone genius is itself a quite tiresome Hollywood trope. The recent film about Alan Turing illustrates this quite dramatically. The whole film, basically, is based around him being a misunderstood rebellious genius, persecuted by the authorities who just didn't understand. And it's all bollocks. None of that ever happened¹⁴. Of course, he *was* persecuted, terribly, but not for his *work*, which was absolutely respected by his peers even if many didn't grasp the full implications. So irritating. Why is this necessary? Why must you take the most fascinating stories, and gifted people of all time and replace them with your own cliched story that you insert an identical copy of into every single sodding film? How is such misleading bilge even allowed on

¹³ Ernest Hemmingway said this. Whilst drunk. In actual fact he said a lot more than this during that particular drinking session, but managed to whittle it down to a snappy four word aphorism later on.

¹⁴ Just like Hemmingway never actually said "write drunk edit sober". It's another misattributed quote.

screen? And this is another thing that will drive you insane if you become a competent artist. The blatant incompetence of other “artists” who via some fucked up social pathology are gifted with huge exposure for their formulaic drivel.

What also helps is knowing a bunch of (sane) people who are in exactly the same boat. I know plenty of like-minded musicians who I consider shit-hot who are woefully ignored by society at large. It helps to stick together, friends. That's part of the reason I'm writing all this nonsense, someone else might read it and feel less alone. Though I can just imagine someone writing to me saying “I read your stuff, and I felt... more alone”. Well, at least we can be alone together.

I Am The Head

This song isn't about the delusions of mental illness as such, it's more about the question of what happens if you start to acquire *power* through these delusions, and in turn become deluded from your power. It is perfectly possible that there is a correlation between mental abnormality and disproportionate success. Being bipolar, autistic, sociopathic, all could lead people to exceptional achievements.

So then, artistic power, political power, magical power, self-delusional whatever, what do you do with it? What should you do with your power? Well, hey, let's face it, the easiest person to please is yourself, especially if you're lucky enough to know what you want. How many people can say they know exactly what they want? It seems to be ridiculous to not take what you want if you have been given the chance. But if you achieve power through delusion, it seems likely that the desires that fueled your ascent will be delusions too, and thus potentially disastrous.

One of the best things about being absolutely dead set on being a musician is that you know what you want. And that is such a powerful force in your life. For about six or seven years in my life I knew exactly what I wanted to do, I believed I could do it, and I was doing it. I believed I had an artistic vision, I had an ambition, I had a reason to wake up in the morning. If someone had randomly stopped me on the street and demanded “Hey you! What's the point of you? Why do you exist?” I would have unhesitatingly replied, “I am here to make awesome music”. I had found the meaning of life, of my life. This is a great thing to have, I recommend it highly. What exactly that vision and ambition consisted of and why it wasn't sustainable is a question for another time, but no matter how pure your intentions are for gaining prestige there is never any guarantee that you will be able to maintain that purity if you ever really achieve that prestige.

The Chairman has a clear idea of what he wants, what he considers good and important, and is prepared to be the one who steps out of line and takes what he wants from the people who don't know what they want. But then he makes no effort to find out what other people want. And so the first step to corruption is taken.

I have always been fairly confident that my heart is good. I wish no one ill. But, there is a suspicion that if there were really, truly no consequences to what I did, previously suppressed dark desires might emerge within me. And the idea of "consequences" heavily depends on what kind of reality you think you're living in. If this was a simulation, then what are the "consequences"? What if morality was itself a parochial delusion, as it does in fact look like being? At the moment we can be fairly sure that the entities in computer games we merrily shoot to digital shit are not living feeling beings. We think there are no consequences, but what if simulated AIs had feelings? What if this reality was a simulation, and you were *the only* thinking, feeling being? What if you could get away with anything and be confident that none of what you caused was real?

The Chairman is a solipsist - he really believes reality to simply be a construct made entirely for him, by him, to do what he wants with. Since he has so much power there really are no actual consequences, in that no one has the power to inflict any consequences upon him. And I too, sometimes have thought that. Is Cursor Miner the Chairman? Well, look at the first letters: CM. If there's only one consciousness manifesting the world, then who else would he be?

I wonder what would have happened if the delusion spiral I was on continued. I might have ended up in a really good place or a really bad place. I think fame, prestige and power can have a way of magnifying flaws in a character. Blowing up a balloon with a tiny weak spot, will eventually turn that weak spot into a bit that stretches rapidly more than the rest of the balloon, and then becomes a crack and then POP! The balloon explodes. As your power increases exponentially, the little bubbles and cracks in an otherwise stable character can balloon and shatter your psyche. Anything dark inside you could come out and eventually dominate. Because the slightest tendency for that part to dominate will be increasingly manifested in the world.

I think many celebrities go through this process, but perhaps do not talk about it openly. Being famous is clearly a great way to exacerbate mental health problems. A fascinating film (on Netflix currently) is *Jim and Andy*, a documentary about Jim Carrey playing Andy Kaufman. Carrey would appear to be a fully signed up member of this New Age "manifestation" credo. He's become wildly successful, assumes it's because of his conscious will manifesting things in reality, and his head's clearly ended up in a rather peculiar place.

That said, Carrey is great, I love it when people push the boundaries like that... but you have to say, the people working with him in that film look pretty pissed off. Working with crazy people is a drag, no matter how funny they are.

In fact, working with very creative people can be a drag sometimes. Especially if you fancy yourself as a creative person yourself, having to work alongside someone who is having a zillion nutty ideas every minute and is head over heels in love with them all can be a huge ball ache. A person flying on the wings of their own inspiration is completely self-absorbed, and can be completely inconsiderate and ignorant. Especially if they expect you to do the dirty work of making them all, like, actually happen and to be refined to a certain production quality. But, if you find yourself in that situation it is a question of getting over yourself enough to enjoy the ride, and more importantly *learn* from their creativity.

There's no unsaying what I have said

The problem with creating a vortex of strategic uncritical self-delusion, is that when the bubble bursts, all the things you edited in or out of your reality and thought were fine can suddenly rush back in and be revealed in another light. All those things that the creative accountancy firm in your mind cooked out of the books suddenly turn up in the audit. Gulp. You were convinced you were doing something for good reasons, because you've convinced yourself that everything you do is perfect, and then whoops, all of a sudden you realise it was purely due to base selfish lust. Turns out you caused a lot of suffering and you brushed it off as other people's trip. There is a line between believing in yourself and willful ignorance, and I think I might have crossed it a couple of times. But who hasn't?

The modern consumer-capitalist dream is to think we can have everything we want and not impinge on other's lives, let's call this school of thought "Abundantism". This idea has spread into all kinds of strange philosophical corners, from Ray Kurtzweil and those Silicon Valley bigwigs who believe in the Singularity when AI will make everything great, to New Age cults that believe you can manifest yourself a yacht, to basic "sensible" economic policy that says we can have endless economic growth. Mix in a bit of eastern obfuscation and some quantum woo and you have arrived at some bizarre solipsistic narcissistic belief system (see things like "The Secret", or the "The Law of Attraction"). It's ironic that these New Age philosophies have taken on Abundantism, because many of the spiritual practices they reference contain very ascetic values, where satisfying desires is seen as the root of all suffering. And yet people have managed to twist that and say that spiritual beliefs are a route to satisfying your desires! It's hard to think of any point of anything ever being missed so completely and utterly!

Rather than being about Spiritual development, these pseudo-philosophies are really a regression to the most egocentric stage of infantile development. They seem profound to some people, but are in actuality spiritually inferior to any of the worlds most primitive religions. It feels great to think in this Abundantist way, for a while, but I imagine it would be extremely toxic if it spread everywhere. In some cases you might even be better off upgrading your New Age cult to an Old Age cult such as Christianity

<https://catholicexchange.com/new-age-still-with-us-and-still-dangerus-part-two>

<https://responsiblespirituality.com/>

It's hard for me to admit this, but becoming a Christian might actually make you a more responsible person!

Gene Wilder in his role as Willy Wonka said "Don't forget what happened to the man who suddenly got everything he wanted." Charlie Bucket replies: "What happened?" Mr. Wonka: "He lived happily ever after." Now this is a nice twist of expectations (there's a lot of class stuff in that film), but I'm prepared to bet large sums of money that that line was not present in Roald Dahl's original book, plainly this is American Abundantism being cut-pasted into a story that was very much about the opposite: Dahl displays a more British, mean, frugal morality where greedy children such as Augustus Gloop come to literally sticky ends.

Abundantism is in the process of coming to a sticky end. We're about to run up against the cold hard chocolate wall of reality. Turns out we can't have everything you want. The planet is not infinitely big. But this is a topic for another song.

If you yourself have dabbled in this kind of thinking I suggest you read about how it can go really tits-up. Luckily I never joined any group or cult, as once you are part of a community it's really hard to escape. Me, I was quite happy being weird on my own thank-you-very-much. And my critical thinking skills have always, so far, plucked me out of danger. And a little rationality goes a long way here. Nevertheless there are a huge number of things you can gather from esoteric thought that are valuable.

So I can report that positive thinking really does work, and should certainly be utilised in the domain that it is valid, which is the psyche. You can't manifest yourself a yacht, but you can manifest yourself into a better and happier person, and actually that is far more useful. After all, if you are happy already, you don't need a yacht.

Sex, Manipulation and Rock 'n Roll

Part of the attraction of being a rock star is, surely, to become more sexually, uh, successful. I'm pretty sure this is the reason I considered joining a band in the first place. There seemed nothing better than emulating The Beatles, The Stones, Led Zeppelin or Jimi Hendrix and having millions of adoring female fans. A kind of consensual harem if you will. What could possibly go wrong? It certainly seemed a step up from being nervously ignored by all the girls, standing like a dork at the edge of the dance floor at the school disco. All of a sudden, with one deft ninja move, you have gone from being too uncool for the school disco to being too cool for the school disco, and in the process conveniently sidestepped having to engage with the terrible, traumatic experience of trying to dance at the school disco.

But I'm a bit more mature now. When you realise how young groupies were in the 60's and 70's the Rock n Roll lifestyle starts to look a little questionable. The 60s dream of going on an inspired drug fueled binge where you dismantle the rules of art, society, morality, sexuality, psychology and turn inside out the very meaning of hedonism and bang a load of chicks on the way is great and all, but maybe one day you wake up and you've ruined some poor girl's life and scarcely realised¹⁵.

Some people got damaged along the way, and they're often girls. There is a 60s interview with Mitch Mitchell from the Jimi Hendrix Experience where he said he woke up and suddenly realised that these groupies he'd been shagging actually had mothers, they were real people... and it completely changed his attitude. Using fame for sex increasingly seems to me like just another form of manipulation. The Rock 'n Roll dream is, perhaps, simply a way to acquire social status without social responsibility.

The trouble with any kind of Abundantism is that some desires are really a zero-sum game. And despite all our attempts at liberating ourselves, romantic relationships resolutely stay such a zero-sum kind of thing. To have another is often to take away. It's not like the idealised free market economy where we can all get richer simultaneously, sexual partners are a finite resource. To them that hath shall be given, at which point someone is taken away from someone else. One starts to wonder whether being sexually successful as a man is partly about beating other men, and displaying status, rather than having pleasurable experiences with women. I always felt that my motivations were for the latter, but suspect

¹⁵ See for example the Diner scene in Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, or consider the episode in "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" where one girl had a mental breakdown on the Merry Pranksters' bus, and they simply left her behind and continued on their merry way.

that the former is buried underneath the surface somewhere in some primitive part of my brain.

I don't believe we can fully eradicate these dark primitive forces, we can only master ourselves in spite of them. There do exist people who have liberated themselves from monogamy for this reason, but they seem to be a very small minority, I wonder how successful that is in practise. Actually there is some evidence that ancient humans were far less monogamous than modern ones, so who knows *what* was going on then.

So what does the Chairman want? The Chairman, whilst appearing solely concerned with the bureaucratic business of running things, is underneath a sexual predator. As his power grows the subjective pleasures of sexual experiences become dwarfed by the function of sex as a display of power and status... As his ability to satisfy his lust increases, The Chairman's lust morphs - to become less about satisfying the desire for intercourse with attractive women and more about satisfying The Chairman's ideological convictions. In such a way Power becomes all consuming and wipes out all other human pleasures.

The Chairman's relationship with Aeon Flux is a complex and ambiguous one. It is never really explained or made sense of in the series. Which is great. My favourite works of art are always ones where nothing is really explained or made sense of, because that most closely and faithfully recreates the reality of life. Flux (which of course means change) is ideologically opposed to the Chairman, she is some kind of insurgent within his state, and this seems to be why he desires her in particular. He seeks to possess the "other", but of course if he really possessed her she would no longer be the other. The Chairman, the male principle, is tyrannical, but also helplessly in love with the thing that strives to destroy it's tyranny. This is the eternal self-contradiction of sexual desire. We seek to merge with what we are not, and yet if we ever succeeded in this endeavour, we would be left with nothing that is not ourselves. We would be back at solipsism. Is this the time to describe the weirdest sexual experience I ever had? Yeah why not. So... it was on acid, of course, what else? So my girlfriend and I took a trip and "gave it a go" but it really didn't work out. Why? Because we started to *merge*. My girlfriend's body went from being another body to being a numb part of my body. It went from having sex to masturbating. Beurgh, weird... but not the *weirdest* thing. The weirdest thing is that it happened to her at *exactly the same time*. So I hallucinated that we merged, but not only that, she had the exact same hallucination at the exact same instant, in other words... *we really did merge*. Possibly. Rather than this merging of consciousness being the orgasmic magic rainbow bliss that you might wish it was, it was just extremely bizarre and unsettling and not really sexy at all, because "the other" was *gone*. It was so freaky that the sex had to be immediately called off. Hey ho. The moral of the story is that if you want to keep things romantic, stick to red wine.

While we're on the touchy subject of sex... One of the things that most empowered me when getting into this New Agey bullshit vortex was the increase in sexual confidence it gave me. As a teenager I had always been very shy and had difficulty approaching girls, and had low self esteem (in this respect at least), and very often considered myself unattractive. But being confident about being "the one", and being on my way to a form of musical stardom (bear in mind I consider stardom to be quite different from fame, I will expand on that later) blew all that away. All of a sudden this self belief had made me far more attractive. It really was particularly noticeable in this area I think because women judge men to such a large extent according to men's confidence in themselves. It's quite easy to sweep others up in your vortex of self-belief, or conversely if you have low self esteem, you sweep them away from you with your own insecurity.

When I became single in 2003 - at the end of a long relationship - this whole part of life suddenly appeared completely transformed. From a boy who would desperately fancy a classmate for two years and say nothing, to an electrosexual artist-about-town who could easily rock up to any woman in a club and flirt the pants off her. Sort of. Well. I still had my off days to be honest.

Being a mild-mannered shy teenager with liberal ideals, I was always slightly terrified of approaching girls, for a multitude of reasons, maybe we'll get into that later. I have also been terrified of responsibility. Maybe the two are related in some fucked up lizard brain way. The few times I have been "in charge" of something stressed me out immensely. I don't know why, exactly. It may be that the distrust of authority is so deeply ingrained in me that it seems suspect to me even to try to become any kind of authority myself. Or maybe I just don't trust myself? At what point does seduction become manipulation? We'll get back to that.

In general smart, creative and sensitive people tend to avoid rigid, hierarchical structures. As we touched on in Winston, this becomes a problem in some groups, where everyone is so keen to avoid any semblance of "dominance" that people end up incapable of getting their shit together. I'm sure it is possible to lead without dominating things, I know people who manage it, but I sure as hell don't know how it's done, and don't trust myself to try. Luckily it seems to me that everyone just ignores what I say most of the time anyway, so the risk of me becoming tyrannical is practically zero. Phew. I'm well aware of what it would take for people to listen to me as a source of authority, but it seems to be mainly about primitive monkey-dominance displays, and as such is the thing I wish to avoid. And part of me thinks, if you're too stupid to listen to anyone without them talking confidently

in a loud booming big-man voice, then you're too stupid to be worth leading anyway. The Chairman is the thing I fear to become, but maybe The Chairman is all you deserve.

My fear of responsibility perhaps also impinged on aforesaid musical ambitions. Whilst one part of me wanted to become successful, another part didn't. It wasn't anything like stage fright, or the fear of getting things wrong, I think it was the fear of people phoning me up.

I never liked being phoned up. It's annoying and intrusive and breaks one's train of thought. I'm scared that I'll pick up the phone and not know what to say. I'm scared that I'll turn into one of those annoying people whose lives consist solely of being on the phone all day. Being more famous seemed like a surefire way to get phoned up a lot. The more famous I got, the more the phone would ring, that seemed like a really bad idea. People would be constantly demanding my time. People would be constantly getting in touch about all the projects I might like to be involved in. Ugh. I *hate* demands on my time. In fact I'd far rather be just obscurely rich than famous, because if you're just rich you can buy time, but if you're famous all the money in the world still might not get you out of being *hassled*. You might say "hey, if you're so famous can't you just hire someone to answer the phone for you?", but then you'd be *their* boss and talk to *them* on the phone. And then your phonesperson might get all manipulative and controlling, feed you tranquilizers and it would turn into the whole Brian Wilson thing. Still ugh¹⁶.

I think I have the temporal equivalent of claustrophobia. If even a single commitment is present in a day, my day feels ruined. I hate the feeling of doing a task knowing that another task immediately follows it. If my day feels rushed and busy, I get panicky, like a claustrophobe freaking out in a stuck lift.

This is another reason I love music so much, it wipes out the future and the past and makes time feel infinite. I've always suspected that becoming "popular" for making music would ruin that.

The Lyrics

So that's a grab bag of fun-sized philosophical concept snacks. How do the lyrics relate to these ideas?

¹⁶ I do hope you understand this is a parody of what my thought processes were like in my twenties. I really hope I'm not still such an insufferably precious up tight twerp.

"I am the head"

A fairly obvious pun. I'm not afraid of obvious puns, and try to insert as many as I can.

"You are the reason that I exist"

Originally this line was "I am the reason that you exist" which was more solipsistic, referring to that fact that people only exist as figments in the chairman's mind. But I am acutely aware that I over use this "it's all in your mind" thing so I flipped it around. The Chairman believes he is doing things for the people, and because it sometimes looks as though people really do want to vote in a dictator and give him absolute power, it worked better reversed. It speaks to the weird paradox that people often vote to have their votes taken away. We'll get back to that in the next track.

"I do what's needed, I have no shame"

This was also inspired by an interesting theory that claims that Psychopaths are useful for society. The fact that they have no empathy, or more crucially no *shame*, comes in handy in emergency situations where normal people would be overwhelmed. Their disconnect from negative, empathic emotion enables them to think more clearly and act more effectively, and paradoxically therefore help more people than if they cared more. The Chairman is a psychopath, and necessarily so, as he deals in "hard facts, lines in the sand. Something you (the non-psychopath) would not understand". He claims he has to leave his moral qualms, including feelings of guilt and shame at the door in order to lead effectively. On the other hand, "In my position, you'd do the same", refers to the idea that if *you* were given absolute power, you would behave in exactly the same way, from necessity. Maybe the Chairman is operating according to principles that you will only understand if you possessed as much knowledge and power as he has.

Psychopaths are pretty interesting. The current theory in brain stuffology¹⁷ is that the connection between the Amygdala (fear, emotion, empathy) and the frontal lobes (cognitive control, working memory) is weak or absent in psychopaths. This seems to mean that sensations of empathy do not affect your actions. This aspect of social reality is switched off. You could completely see how it could be useful, and how it could be terrifying. Me, I'm far too empathetic to be a psychopath. With the emphasis on the pathetic. I have great trouble killing insects. Our cat keeps catching mice and leaving them half dead. My wife has the balls to put them out of their misery, but I, pathetically, do not. Nevertheless I suspect that social emotions affect my thoughts less than the average person. I can be fairly cold, distant and compartmentalising. Furthermore, somewhat

¹⁷ The scientific field that studies brain stuff. Otherwise known as Thinkology, or Mindulent Science.

unfashionably, I value that ability highly. Simply being touchy feely does not make you effectively good. Being “distant” can also be valuable, creatively speaking, and even morally speaking. My favourite artists are all distant, and express distance, detachment and solitude in their work.

We’ve always recognised that we’re in this bind that the only people who want to be rulers shouldn’t be allowed to do it. But now we seem to be in the double bind of having the people who are *best* at ruling being the one who care *least* about the effect they will have on large numbers of people. Ruh roh... That does sound really quite dangerous doesn’t it. We need to sort that shit out. We need to wire some brain shit differently. Help us, Braingineers¹⁸, we need to know more!

"I am the process, I am the state"

The Chairman is declaring himself to be both the bureaucratic means *by which* things happen, and also the ultimate reason *for which* it all happens, he represents and is subservient to the entire country, but he is also the reason for which the country exists. Also a little geeky play on words to increase the self-referentiality here, the state being, in computer science, the thing on which processes act. If the state and the process are one and the same entity, we are in functional programming territory.

"Kingdoms of wisdom fragmenting fast"

Refers to the disintegration of western civilisation that's seemingly going on as we speak. The Chairman is of course the kind of person who will end up in power if we don't get our shit together. You might think that we already have psychopathic dictators, but we don't, at the moment we just have idiots, but these idiots probably pave the way and open up competence-vacuums for psychopaths to fill later. For example: I don't worry too much about Trump might do to be honest, because he's so obviously just an incompetent twat who happened to catch a wave. He has already destroyed and screwed up a great many things, but I worry more about the one *after* the next Democrat government, who more skillfully and deliberately rides a bigger version of that same wave, a wave that the regressive left seems hellbent on making as huge as possible.

The Chairman is ultimately very ambiguous about whether he is doing things for the good of the people or himself. Since he is so powerful, all the people around him accept his every whim and he is told what he is doing is great, whatever he does¹⁹. He lives in a sealed

¹⁸ Braingineering is applied Mindulent Science.

¹⁹ A fantastic book to read along these lines is [The Autumn of the Patriarch](#) by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Potemkin village-like solipsistic bubble, hence the very "close" nature of these vocals. Which I spent a long time trying to get right.

I tried to get a certain level of psychopathic intensity into the vocals. It wasn't easy, one can imitate a cartoon psychopath for instance, and you will just end up sounding like a camp horror comedy. I tried to compress the intensity into a very simple voice, lacking in too much inflection, but somehow this is an acting skill that I don't really have... but the intention is there and maybe that's enough sometimes. Maybe I act it up too much, it ends up being hammy. I hope it doesn't sound like that.

An English accent helps here I find: the insane baddy always has an English accent, remember.

Actually, my favorite vocalists are very often British, and very often underplay the emotion. They often have deliberately flat their voices, use the mathematical nature of pure notes to squeeze out the humanity from their vocals and sound distant and disembodied. This is the exact opposite of hammy acting, where the mannerisms are exaggeratedly overdone. If you underdo the emotion it leaves more room for other people to interpret the lines as they see fit, and this ambiguity is essential. Of course, you can overdo the flatness too. Miss Kittin I'm looking at you. You should do everything in moderation, but try not to carry moderation to excess.

The first vocals I recorded were heavily effected, distorted and echoed. I heavily effect my vocals all the time. Due to lack of singing ability I need to mask my inadequacies using effects. Yeah so what? The more processed and alien my vocals sound the better. I don't want to sound like "me", I want to sound like a weird sci-fi Anime avatar version of me. But when you do this you lose intelligibility, and it was pretty important to hear the words here. Also, to get the right feeling of claustrophobic solipsism the vocals needed to be very dry and close-up. Like you are facing the Chairman across a desk in a very heavily wood panelled office, or in a prison cell, or in a padded cell. So I did them all again with a completely different vocal tone (really quiet, almost whispering) and a much cleaner effect chain. The last lines in verse three are probably the most naked my voice has ever been. I'm glad I tried that, even if they don't sound 100% great it doesn't matter: the needs of the song are more important than the needs of my own singer-ego (the producer-me forced the singer me to man up - I'll get back to these multiple artistic personalities later).

But then I was annoyed because I really liked the *original* distorted smashed up vocals too, so I wanted to shoehorn them in somewhere somehow.... when you're creating it's very

important to mercilessly throw away stuff, but it's also very important to reuse stuff too²⁰. So in the end the original vocals act as a "shadow" for the dry vocals. For example after the line "fragmenting fast" you hear distorted, fragmented versions of the vocals shuddering around behind the main vocals. The intelligibility of the dry vocals is preserved by sidechaining them to the effected ones - in other words the dry vocals duck down the distorted ones, and then the reverb tail of the distortion surges back once the dry vocals have stopped.

This idea that the musical sonic effects reflect the concepts in the lyrics is another thing I really like doing. Using sound to "paint" the concept. I don't actually know the word for it. Funnily enough I think it's one of the only things I ever learned about in school music lessons that I still use. Basically the music teacher would play Peter and the Wolf, and try to get our heads round the fact that the music was painting the animals and the events involved. And classical music is really rather remarkable for this, my favourite being Scheherezade by Rimsky Korsakov, where you can actually hear storm driven deep ocean waves heaving and breaking. The fact that an orchestra can successfully replicate in our minds the fluid dynamics of terrestrial weather systems is impressive. So occasionally I try this. The trouble is that I have no way to ascertain whether I have succeeded or not. Of course, now I intentionally made that sound mean that thing, it means that thing to me, but how would I know if that comes across to you?

The vocal layering is a nice effect I thought because it hints at the fact that there is a disturbing dark shadow flickering around the periphery of the Chairman's vision, the sense that his authority is not as absolute as he would like, or maybe his personality is not as coherent and stable as he would like, or the sense that he is becoming further and further removed from reality. Or maybe the flickering shadows are the remnants of his conscience? You decide.

"Things I envision all come to pass"

This is a reference to the phenomena we discussed earlier, that can be experienced on hallucinogens or during psychosis, that your mind is manifesting and controlling reality in some fundamental way. Initially I was going to write that I used to believe this was possible, and now I do not. In fact it's more like I used to spend large amounts of time playing with the idea that this might be possible, and now I do not. Of course, the more powerful you get, the more likely you are to believe that this might be true.

²⁰ Just don't ask me which stuff. Great advice, eh?

Leader!

So, I know you don't want to hear, yet again, about how delighted I am with the exquisite bouquet of my own brainfarts, but I admit I'm just a smidge chuffed with the chords in the chorus. Again this came from a small acoustic guitar sketch. This was a two chord pattern that I had lying around on my iPhone, recorded years before the verse was a glimmer in my guitar's tuning peg.

Something I've been doing a lot more of since the last album came out is using an iPhone to record every idea I have (guitar, vocal beat boxing whatever) and it's super useful. Currently I have over five hundred ideas in there which I can plunder whenever I feel like it. In a way this is awesome: I have five blinking hundred unused ideas! Like having a cellar full of five hundred devilishly useful 007 gadgets. In another way it's terribly depressing: I have five hundred abandoned ideas! Like having a cellar full of five hundred hungry, starveling orphans. "Can we play today Mr Miner, please Sir?" they all clamour as I open the voice memo folder, many of them desperately attempting pathetic, hobbling attempts at circus tricks, hoping to get noticed. "No! Get back in your hole, wretched malformed proto-songs! I'm having much better ideas than you *now*" I bellow, beating the pale snivelling urchins back with a stick.

They're mainly guitar or vocal sketches, if I have an idea, then I'll record a vocal idea into my phone wherever I am. It can feel a bit weird just standing on the street beatboxing into my phone, but to hell with it. It's Berlin, there's plenty of freaks, just deal. The chorus chords were hanging around and I really wanted to use them for something or other - and this song seemed the perfect fit. The more you take these sonic notes, the better you get at knowing which sketch to go back to when making a track. It often turns out that the sketch I think of reusing *will* miraculously be roughly the same key and tempo as the thing I'm currently making. I think that's just a result of healthy amounts of practise, tinged with an unhealthy amount of obsession. And hey, it gives the other abandoned idea urchins hope, which is all they have.

It's a mournful sounding chord change, let's be honest. Again with the doomy early 20th century classical vibes - probably because there's an inversion (i.e. the lowest note is not the "root" of the chord) which crops up a lot in western classical music. Or maybe the gloominess is a result of this idea being locked in the basement for five years.

Anyway, if you're at all "into chords" then you should be listening to classical music, period. Or period music, classical. Holst, Mahler, Debussy, Beethoven, Wagner. Incredible chords all

over the shop. You can simply steal a couple of neat chords from a classical piece and smash the hell out of them and you immediately have the basis of a killer track. Our band Standard Planets did this with two chords from the Moonlight Sonata, and it was great. Easy peasy. Until you compare yourself with the original again and get disheartened at your simplistic amateur ineptitude.

So verse-chorus-verse-chorus is a very traditional structure, isn't it? What, am I such a traditionalist?

The word "Chorus" itself goes back to the Ancient Greeks. The Wikipedia definition of a Greek Chorus: "a homogeneous, non-individualised group of performers, who comment with a collective voice on the dramatic action", which is pretty much exactly what we have here (2000 years old... "retro" enough for ya?). In this song, the chorus is sung by the citizens ruled by the Chairman. In the first chorus, they sing "Show us" - they are lost, looking for direction from a strongman leader. They are looking for inspiration. In the next chorus they sing "Fool us" - they realise that things aren't right, but they are content to have the wool pulled over their eyes and go on as normal. They want to be deluded, they realise perhaps that delusion is the only thing that will get them where they want to go. In the final chorus they sing "Doom us", in which they cry out for annihilation, for oblivion, which is where these things often end up... I wonder if there is an analogy with the story of my own musical delusions. All music should contain a self-referential layer.

I like it when you have doomy lyrics delivered over desperate but somehow *sweet* chords, the beauty of it somehow pulls you into thinking that maybe there's something to be said for doom after all... the chorus is begging the leader to put them out of their misery - leading them into some kind of romantic, heroic, collective oblivion.

Ideally I wanted to have the three verses having content that related directly to the "show", "fool" and "doom" responses of the chorus, but that never really panned out. Maybe you can make your own connections there.

I think the thing in this song I'm most satisfied with is how the verse and the chorus complement each other. Whenever you have two alternating sections in a song, it's awesome if section A makes section B sound better and then section B makes the original section A sound better too, you then get a spiralling circle of virtue that just never gets tiring. I feel that this song, maybe via chance, maybe via a peculiar and unhealthy intimate psychological understanding of my little incarcerated sketch orphans, achieves this. You can tell that when the final chorus ends there's a real "pull" or a "need" for the original

pattern back again, it is in effect a "Leader, Leader". In other words the desire comes from the populace to set up the need for the Chairman's vocals to come back in.

Does this mean that the doomed citizens will inevitably crave their dictator again? Maybe. Does this mean my music-powered delusions are constantly rearing their ugly head the moment I get carried away with a track or at a good gig? Certainly.

Does this mean you also want to hear the song again? Hopefully.

Next Time

The next track is a less than charitable look at the kind of people who might willingly vote for The Chairman. "It's a Win For The Stupid" contains the most strident and shrill of my articles, it should be tasty, and inspire a lot of hate and fury and outrage and all that stuff we socially mediated humans crave so much. Mike, having been strangely silent for this song, makes an explosive return, ruins the whole vibe, and trashes the entire reputation of this album. So definitely join me for that.