

creativity
&
creation

animumicum
issue 2 • winter 2023

This summer,
the Animumicum
collective released
FALLEN



ROCK ZONE, our first compilation,
featuring 19 tracks from our artists and collaborations
across genres, locations, and generations.
Projects like this are at the heart of what
we hope to do: unite, inspire, and share
with each other, and amplify diverse voices
for our audience.

You can find the compilation, and info about all
our projects, at the website, on social media,
or by reaching out your favorite artists directly.
We love to make new friends!

ANIMICULUM
bands • links • articles • more!

animumicum

Zine editor Ben Becker (they/him)

I've got 3 words for you:
trans:space



5? FOR Physarum

If you dig consistency, you'll find it in *Physarum*. Since 2020, songwriter Joe Fazio has been releasing 4 trippy, poppy EPs per year; his most recent is November's *Gemmy Umbra*.

You're the only artist I know of that releases albums at regular intervals. How does having a schedule contribute to your creative process? How integral is it to the overall aesthetic of *Physarum*?

It's wholly integral to the process and aesthetic. The release schedule I've established keeps me happily productive; I have to deliver a new album every three months, or once per season. By the time I've finished mixing an album, I'm itching to get back to the writing stage. Through dedication and good fortune, I've been able to maintain the same schedule for five years now, and I hope I'm able to continue with this approach. I'm attracted to things like comic books, though I no longer read them, partly because they adhere to a regular release schedule. There is pleasure and comfort in knowing there will be another one to enjoy in a month or two. I like the industry required of an artist to create something dependable and enjoyable. My hope is that people view *Physarum* the same way: fun and reliable.

You're also a prolific writer of short fiction. What literary influences inform your songs?

More than any one writer or style of writing, it's the process of writing prose—a shitty first draft can be refined in the rewriting and editing stages—that has informed my songwriting. I don't sweat it if a song seems a little underwhelming or outright bad: one can always tweak the arrangement, sharpen the hooks, tighten the lyrics, or simply file it away and move on. But as far as literary influences go, Russell Edson

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would be at the top of the heap. Lydia Davis. Raymond Carver. I've always been drawn to minimalism in literature, so everything I write, be it a song or a story, tends to be in that vein.

Are you always writing songs, or do they come in batches? What's your pile of unused/unfinished ideas & fragments like?

Batches. When it comes time to work on the next release, I'll write 30 songs as quickly as possible, usually within a period of two weeks. At this stage, it's just acoustic guitar and voice. I like to write the songs in one sitting, the same way I

would write a first draft of prose; it usually never takes longer than 20-30 minutes per song, often much less. I record them quickly and simply as soon as the final lyric has been scribbled in my notebook, and I don't listen to them again until it's time to pick the 10 that will make the album. So I'm writing 120 songs a year and releasing 40. That helps keep the quality up. More importantly, it puts me in a consistent creative flow so when it comes time to write a song, I can just sit down and do it. Because of my process, I don't really have unfinished ideas or fragments, just a lot

of unreleased acoustic demos, most of which shouldn't be allowed to see the light of day.

What is the best riff of all time, and what makes a perfect riff? This is an unanswerable question. I'm going to cop out and say the opening riff to Crazy Train just because it's the first one I learned when I was a kid. Once I had it down, I was off to the races. And it is a great riff. A perfect riff will be catchy enough to capture the listener's interest straightaway, to the degree that it could serve as the song's main hook. It should complement the vocal melody (if there are vocals) and mood of the song. The important thing is the feeling a riff engenders in the player and listener. Even the most gentle, jangly riff will feel powerful if [it's] good and played with conviction, in the same way the most boneheaded riff can be sublime. Short answer: When you find one, you know it.

How do you see Physarum evolving? Will there ever be a Physarum video game? A Physarum video game would rule. I rediscovered old-school video games around the same time as Physarum started, and the project is pretty obviously influenced by vintage RPGs, Phantasy Star in particular. In my mind, the name of each album is a

place one might journey to in one of these adventures, and the creatures on the covers are the beings one might encounter there. As far as evolving, that's not for me to determine, but I've gotten better at writing songs and arranging and recording them in ways that I'm more consistently happy with. Any ongoing long-term project like this requires a lot of work, yes, but also good luck, which is outside my control. I find it very fulfilling to write songs and make albums, and I hope I'm able to continue to do so.

*Interviewed by
Dan Jircitano*

Lateral Thinking

People across creative fields can relate to feelings of writer's block, stagnation, and being stuck in a rut; the ideas, coming in a flow only moments before, can disappear in an instant. Even if we're creating, the process can feel rote and lacking inertia. Even if we're producing completed work, it can be easy to fall into old habits.

Lateral thinking (or, more familiarly, "thinking outside the box") can be a way to add randomness and serendipity into our creative processes. At its most basic, lateral thinking involves looking at problems in new and novel ways: by abandoning our most natural or immediate impulses, we can nudge our brains in new directions or towards new connections. These approaches can

involve questioning or seeking out alternatives to what we believe is "right" or what comes easily, deliberately introducing unusual or provocative ideas, or embracing chance as a source of inspiration. Perhaps the most famous example of lateral thinking in music is that of George Harrison who, seeking a book at random and took the first phrase he saw - "gently weeps" - as inspiration. (System of a Down

vocalist Serj Tankian allegedly used the same process while working with Rick Rubin on the band's self-titled album.) Her hands weakened by childhood polio, young Joni Mitchell started retuning her guitar to make it easier to play. Guided By Voices mastermind Robert Pollard took another sideways approach to generating ideas for the group's 1995 record *Alien Lanes*. Raiding his high school yearbooks, "I cut

out all the little different pictures of clusters of guys that looked like rock bands, gave them each a band name and a song title," Bob told journalist Mike McGonigal. "Looking at all those song titles inspired me to write the actual songs"

In the audio realm, hardware and software processing can yield happy-accident results that elevate and add unique flourish to your pitch-shifting, stretching, or otherwise mangling a familiar sound to create something otherworldly, but still grounded in reality. On the flipside, a natural sound in a novel context can take on a life of its own: the noise of the blaster guns in *Star Wars* is derived from the almost wholly unprocessed sound of a wrench hitting a taught metal cable.

An easily-accessible lateral thinking framework is the *Oblique Strategies*, developed by the

pioneering experimental musician Brian Eno. Subtitled "Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas," the *Strategies* are a collection of suggestions - some straightforward, some arcane - to direct or misdirect you through blocks or moments of uncertainty. Originally (and sometimes still available as) a deck of cards, there are now websites and apps available for generating prompts from the collection.

The next time you're in a rut, don't despair! Through practice, perseverance, and a little lateral thinking, you might just come out on the other side with something you never could have dreamed up on the open road.

