Chris Stehm

Electronic Music

First Project

My project is called “Lullaby for the End”. Might be a tad overly dramatic, but whatever. I will explain the concept later, and will start with where I sourced my sounds from. I didn’t end up with a ton of sound files, but they all were random happenings that I was able to capture in chance moments, or “Hey, this might be cool” sort of things. Some of the sounds were pretty useless and I didn’t use them. Like the sound of construction equipment which had just a bit too much background noise to make use of. I had the strange fire pipe sound that I showed you in class last week (or a couple weeks ago depending on when you read this) that I knew I just had to use. The coolest part about the fire pipe noise is that it actually wasn’t in the fire when I recorded it. It held that same noise for well after it was out of the fire. Overall though I probably found the most use out of sounds that I took from my car. I took the exhaust drone, recorded it while driving thru the parking garage, and just the other random sounds that it makes. I also had random things like fans and crickets, a foot latch on the walk-in freezer door, and the sound of the walk-in freezer compressor.

When I was doing the project I will be honest, I didn’t really have a concrete idea of what concept I wanted to push for. At first I thought I would do something like “Social Media” and have a bunch of random quick bursts of sound to abstractly simulate our modern sensory overload and short attention span. I was also thinking that I might want to do something that represented my normal day in sound. That’s where most of the car sounds I recorded originated from since I deliver for a couple different pizza shops so driving is a big part of just about every day. I eventually crafted my concept while I was just fooling around with the sounds instead of trying a preconceived idea. After multiple attempts at getting something happening I created a melody that reminded me of a lullaby and the rest of the piece wrote itself once I had the proper imagery in my head. I knew I wanted to make it feel kind of light but also be unsettling. I am not sure if I was able to capture all that, but I gave it my best with my limited means.

In terms of recording techniques, I do a lot of midi editing and audio clean up in Cubase so I transferred a lot of that over to this piece. It was many times more cumbersome and less intuitive then Cubase, and most of the time was spent learning how to get everything chopped up and manipulated the way I wanted instead of experimenting with sonic possibilities. I didn’t use to many recording techniques per say, but I did use my knowledge of music to help me figure out the harmonies and timing. The pitch change effect was fun but oddly inaccurate. Once I found that I couldn’t fully trust what it was telling me it became a game of trial and error to get the right notes. At the end of the day, I found it quite interesting to work with such a crippled fashion in terms of source material and the program itself.

I did try and take some concepts from the music played in class, but I will be honest and say that I find the music that is shown to be interesting in concept but I probably wouldn’t seek it out. That being said, I believe that is why I think that the piece I wrote doesn’t quite resemble what we have been listening to in class. There are, of course, similarities, but I have a harder time being overly abstract and always try to be representative whether it be my art or my music. I bring over the same idea to my music that I do my art in that I do not wish to just take “pictures” of what is around me, but I also do not want to obscure the meaning so far as to have to explain it.

The piece I wrote reflects my current interests in modern electronic music, specifically more “chilled out” songs that are more down tempo. I have been wanting to produce electronic music for some time and I am hoping that I get to learn more about that art form going forward!