The purpose of my project was to tell the story of an alien invasion from a college student’s perspective. I wanted to show how the failure to communicate with aliens over time would result in growing distress across the planet. I made the aliens communicate via parts of a song that interrupt broadcasts to show a juxtaposition between the aliens and humanity. As communication between humans breaks down into chaos, the aliens continue to use music which is often symbolic of harmony. I wanted to impart a sense of hopelessness in listeners as the main character watches their world spiral out of control. The name of the soundscape is a play on how music can be referred to as dissonant when its parts don’t harmonize. In this case, the “dissonance” does not refer to the music of the aliens, but rather the communication among people on Earth that breaks down during the invasion.

I also tried to utilize background noises to communicate changing scenery as well as the changing mood over time. In my early scenes, I created busy backgrounds with several people and cars filling the space. As time progresses, the number of people in the background decreases to symbolize the lack of community until all that is left is the broadcaster.

I was proud of creating the background noise in the introductory scene. I had to duplicate the traffic sounds and then normalize them at the joints to create a cohesive sound that didn’t have any peaks. Then for the UFO crash I took the sound of a cassette tape and added the phaser effect with reverb to create the effect of a screeching alien object hurtling through the sky. I used a sharp fade in and a long fade out on the screech to mimic the doppler effect as the UFO whizzed by. I had to experiment the most to find the right combination to get this sound. I tried echo and distortion among other effects, but they didn’t sound how I wanted. Finally, I added a pre-distorted hit sound that I then edited with a quick fade out so it seemed like the impact happened quickly right at the end of the main character’s sentence. When the characters opened the door, I split the audio of the door so that it had more natural spacing between the door opening and closing. I also faded the traffic sounds out to show how the characterize were walking inside.

I was also proud of my utilization of the envelope and pan tools to create a sense of space. I used the envelope tool to lower the volume of the alien broadcasts while characters were talking so that both the dialogue and the music could be heard. I also used the pan tool during the classroom scene to create a sense of the phones ringing in different parts of the room. This effect added to the feeling that there were multiple people in the room rather than just one or two phones ringing.

My greatest challenges in the project were gathering all of the voice lines and finding free music that fit the mood I wanted. I wrote several characters and so had to find enough people to voice the script for me. It was difficult to find people on short notice and then edit out the various background sounds. My biggest struggle was finding and editing music for the alien soundtrack. Most of the free samples I found did not fit the mood I envisioned or clashed with the other music. I struggled with editing the sound levels of the music for speakers versus headphones. I found that my project was better listened to over headphones as it was too quiet over speakers, but normalizing for speakers made it far too loud for headphones.