

The Last Left Behind

FACULTY MENTOR

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OUTCOME

I began this project with the goal of creating an incredibly immersive and powerful musical experience that explores the beauty of the ocean and the destructive interaction between human life and aquatic ecosystems as a result of persistent industrialisation, using field recordings across the East Coast of the US. Having been granted funding for a more powerful computer and high-fidelity field recorder (*see Budget*), I was able to source a large collection of sounds to use in the project to that end. This was stage 1 of my process: *material collection*. I spent much of my time in New York City in Summer 2022 exploring New Jersey and New York alike to collect sounds of all different contexts; conversations, train sounds, car honking, and other ambient textures. I aimed to collect a wide array of sounds that appropriately represent the voice of the city which is often thought of first as the prime example of capitalistic enterprise through natural destruction. Having felt confident in the volume of recordings I amassed, I transitioned to stage 2: *cleaning & refinement*.

I took the recorded material I had and imported them into my DAW to process them with basic clean-up techniques such as EQ, filtering, etc. to remove unwanted elements that I felt muddied the audio clips. This took a long time to achieve, and indeed it formed the basis for many of the creative ideas that I had when listening to small snippets of the material. Much time later I moved into stage 3: *composition & exploration*.

Here I spent a lot of time going through all of my source material to chop out, modulate, and experiment with different compelling gestures. This is my favourite part as the snippets often are transformed into completely new ideas, frequently unrecognisable from the original. This process spawned many new ideas that I felt were not able to be constrained within this one project, so I explored them in hopes that they would lead me somewhere interesting. For instance, one detour I took was in exploring many recordings of bird calls I made, which led me to create a binaural (and surround sound) piece that interrogates this interaction between humans and nature. You can see this piece listed via a private Soundcloud link in the [media](#) section below.

As I began to approach the composition phase for this piece in so far as musical arrangement, I found myself in a great conflict: *Do I take this piece in a more acousmatic direction, or one that has a familiarity in a more contemporary context?* My own musical inspirations were impeding my initial goal as I separately have become very interested in combining real life with contemporary rhythms, structures, and other musical elements. In the end I knew that I wanted this piece to be both approachable for the common listener and yet compelling in so far as motivating some change, so in this piece I do not limit myself to one aspect — instead I lean into both a more avant-garde ecoacoustic space as well as a perhaps more familiar beat-driven musical space in the piece to point in the direction of my initial goal but also satisfy my own creative inclination. Although the piece is not yet completed entirely, I am excited to share it in the outcome presentations in April!

BUDGET

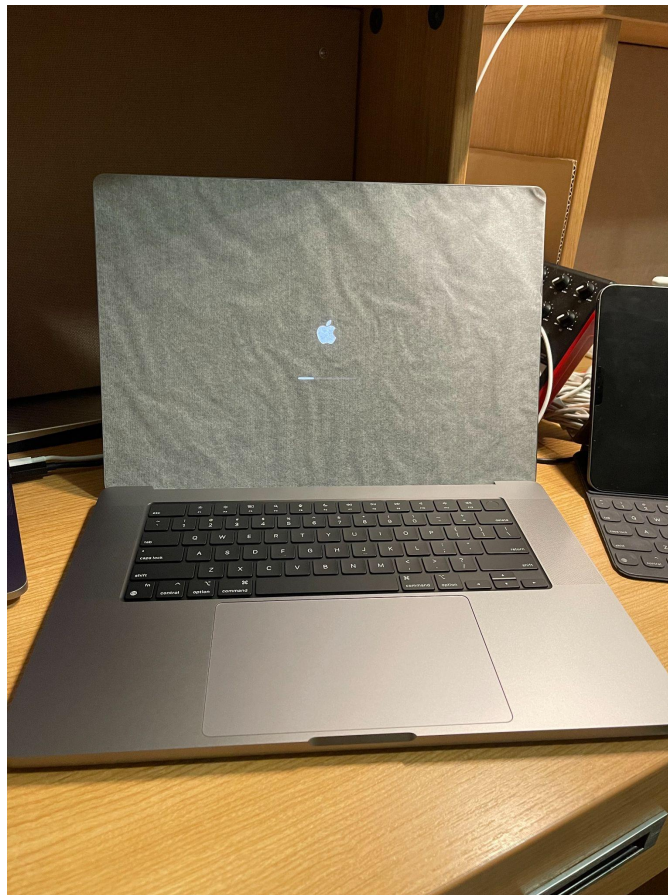
Apple Macbook Pro 16-inch computer,
with M1 Max chip with 10-core CPU,
32-core GPU, and 16-core Neural Engine **\$3899.00**

Zoom H5 Field Recorder **\$279.99**

Total leftover: \$0.00

MEDIA

Bird Cage.....[link](#)



The Apple Macbook Pro 16"



H5 Zoom recorder in action; captured from one of my recording sessions in a street market in Manhattan