

Sunday Entropy List: Writing Music 🎵

written by Entropy | April 13, 2014



“Without music, life would be a mistake.”

– Friedrich Nietzsche

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.”

– Maya Angelou

There is no doubt that music is a powerful thing, emerging as secret ritual, elusive inspiration, or steady rhythm-keeper, filling in the gaps of this sequence called life. Especially while writing or working, certain music becomes a soundtrack, strikes that mood and tempo and meditative state that is perfect for inducing the will to articulate words to page. As writers, we rely on music in a variety of ways: to calm, to distract, to mediate, to write, to inspire, to dance, to cry, to exist. Regardless, here are some of the songs that members of the *Entropy* team are currently listening to while writing/working, or just currently being very influenced by. Presenting, the Entropy OST:

Felipe W.Martinez

- Future Islands – [A Dream of You and Me](#)
- Nirvana – [School](#)
- Eliane Radigue – [Kyema](#)

Berit Ellingsen

- Dead Can Dance – [Xavier](#)
This has been a favorite since my mid teens and it still affects me deeply every time I listen to it. For some reason it makes me think of the Epic of Gilgamesh, it might be the line “Hung like jewels in the forest of veils”. By now I realize that this song will stay with me my entire life. http://youtu.be/RLc0gb9_-qq
- Radiohead – [High and Dry](#)
From the album The Bends. I’ve bought this album twice on CD because I wore out the first disc. This is one of my favorite tracks on that album. ☐
- Daft Punk – [A capella Medley by Pentatonix](#)
Daft Punk’s animated movie/music video film Interstella 555 contains some very fun and catchy tracks. This is a fantastic a capella medley of

Daft Punk's biggest hits. Let's dance!

Keith McCleary

- **Fever Ray** – [If I Had a Heart](#) (being real, this is 90% the only song I write to, for hours/days/weeks on repeat)
 - **iamamiwhoami** – [Fountain](#) For a little while this winter, I cheated on Fever Ray with this song.
 - **Dave Shaffer** – [ET \(Katy Perry cover\)](#) In which a screamo cover of a pop song makes me write, like, a lot, like, really fast, when I don't want to write at all.
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Byron Campbell

- **Kleenex Girl Wonder** – [For the Emotional Disease](#)
I have been listening to the album this is from (*Secret Thinking*) constantly lately, for whatever reason. Nobody knows why I do the things I do, man!
 - **Carpenter Brut** – [Le Perv](#)
I just love this video. I had a dream where I was trying to find it Myspace to impress an ex-girlfriend.
 - **Nobuo Uematsu** – [Crossing Those Hills](#) (Final Fantasy IX world map theme)
Do not ask me why. This has been playing in my head during quiet moments for months now.
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Kari Larsen

- **Marie LaForet** – [Le Moisson](#) ☐
 - **Fiona Apple** – [Every Single Night](#)
 - **Arvo Part with Else Torp and Christoher Bowers** – [My Heart's in the Highlands](#)
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Quincy Rhoads

I prefer to write in silence, but here are a few songs I like to listen to while I edit:

- **Deafheaven**- [Dreamhouse](#)
This song is so loud that the guitars and vocals easily transition into white noise, but when I stop and listen closely there are some really beautiful and singular moments in this song, too.

Fun fact: if you walk by my office during office hours 3/5 times you can hear me playing Sunbather on my cell phone speakers.

- **Chvrches** – [Gun](#)

I find the repetitiveness of synthpop easy to write to. It makes me happy, even when the lyrics are dour, and energizes me. There's also a line in this song that says "I am going to break you down to tiny, tiny parts ... / I'm learning your lesson / I'm learning your lesson." I know the songs about a breakup, but that part makes me think of my mindset when I'm reviewing a novel or prepping my Intro. to lit. lectures. Yeah, I'm a nerd like that.

- **Idina Menzel, Frozen S/T-** [Let it Go](#)

I've recently taken this up as my theme song. Whether it's feelings about my own childhood, anxieties with my writing and professional life, or worries about my personal life, if I can gain the power to move on, the ice palaces that I craft while being free of doubt will dazzle. Queen Elsa sings, "It's funny how some distance makes everything seem small. / The fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all." Indeed.

Gabriela Torres Olivares

- Miguel Bosé – [Amante bandido](#)
 - Joy Division – [She's Lost Control](#)
 - The Breeders – [The She](#)
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Michael Seidlinger

- Caspian – [Malacoda](#) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TND0nsYKLEU>
 - IO – [Twins](#)
 - This Will Destroy You – [Tunnel Blanket](#) (Album)
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Leif Haven

The three works I probably listen to the most while working.

- Liturgy – [Aesthetica](#)
 - William Basinski – [The Disintegration Loops I-IV](#)
 - Philip Glass – [Metamorphosis](#)
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Janice Lee

- Elliot Smith – [Say Yes](#)
 - Bohren & Der Club of Gore – [Midnight Black Earth](#) (Thanks to Jared Woodland for turning me on to this)
 - NIN – [Right Where it Belongs](#)
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Kyle Muntz

- Vallendusk – [Black Clouds Gathering](#) (Indonesia)
I've been working to this album off and on for something like two months. It's intense and full of feeling, but somehow still subdued. Black metal, but with elements of post-rock, folk, and tons of melody.
 - Ulver – [Bergtatt](#) (Norway)
Extremely subdued and atmospheric, but with a sort of cold wintery feel to it, and a heavier folk sound this time. This album is sort of a black metal classic except I just found it, haha.
 - Kayo-Dot – [Hubuardo](#) (America)
A very avant-garde band that I've followed for years. Their newest album is huge—expansive, strange, atmospheric, and rich enough that I still work to it though it came out quite a while ago.
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Cole Cohen ☐

- Diamanda Galás – [I'm Gonna Live The Life](#)
 - Andrew Jackson Jihad – [Brave As A Noun](#)
 - The Mountain Goats – [Dilaudid](#) (This is my book's theme song)
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Joe Milazzo

This listening is specific to work on a manuscript that is trying to make claims on my attention but is only occasionally succeeding in its attempts to reveal its urgencies to me.

- Ed Askew – [May Blossoms Be Praised](#) ☐
 - Aphrodite's Child – [All The Seats Were Occupied](#) ☐
 - Morton Feldman – [Coptic Light](#) ☐
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Joseph Michael Owens

Almost all the music playing in the background while I write is of the instrumental variety, often soundtracks. Words mess me up, or rather, they mess up the words I'm trying to set down on the page. Almost all the music playing in the background while I write also happens to be electronic. I've been making electronic music since the late 90s, so i think a lot of the mojo comes from it being another creative process; creativity aiding creation, if you will.

Consequently, this was a particularly difficult elimination process, especially only being allowed three main picks. Many of my honorable mentions get rotation, depending on my mood.

- **Nine Inch Nails' [Ghosts I-IV](#)**: This is one of my favorite albums to listen to, writing or otherwise. It runs the gamut of intensity from barely above a whisper to . . . pretty much what you'd expect from a NIN's album. This pick came down to Ghosts and another Trent Reznor (and Atticus Ross) project, The Social Network OST. Ghosts gets the nod in the end though. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JA5rc4M-YrA>
- **UNKLE's [War Stories](#)**: This was another close call. I'll probably go back and forth with this pick endlessly, but War Stories edges out DJ Shadow's Endtroducing (though I can't recommend the latter enough!). Trip Hop was super hot in the late 90s and early 00s, but faded a little as electronic music's popularity shifted toward dubstep-flavored EDM. That being said, it never lost its appeal to me. Breakbeats, samples, and synths just go together. UNKLE morphed their sound into something that sounds like an OST for your life. Ultimately, I wouldn't blame you if you wanted to swap in some Massive Attack or Portishead.
- Picking this third spot feels harder than a parent choosing a favorite child. The Fight Club OST is incredibly tempting; I do love the Dust Brothers after all! Daft Punk's Tron OST is another great one for getting some writing done. Ultimately, I think the nod has to go to **BT's [This Binary Universe](#)**. There is so much complexity in all the tracks that it basically stunned me the first time I listened to it. I challenge you to listen to "The Antikythera Mechanism" and not be impressed. (Wait until it gets really epic!) It's an album BT recorded in 5.1 surround sound too, so if you've got the home theater setup, that's the way to listen to this album!

Megan Milks

- **Swans – [The Seer](#)** (I've been listening to Swans a lot while writing, no particular song but I'll drop The Seer for example)

I have a hard time listening to melodic music while working – when I'm off the grind, I'm getting a lot of joy/energy from these two albums:

- **Against Me! – [Transgender Dysphoria Blues](#)** (repped by [Black Me Out](#))
- **Solange – [True](#)** (repped by [Losing You](#))

Robert Vaughan

I mostly listen to movie soundtracks or classical (songs without words) today's list includes:

- **The Social Network OST** (especially [Hand Covers Bruise](#))
 - **Olafur Arnalds** – [1440](#)
 - **Jonsi** – [Boy 1994](#)
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Laura Vena

- **Nine Inch Nails** – [The Perfect Drug](#)
#1 is a case in which the video does not enhance the song. Way too HP in The Goblet of Fire. Silly, even. I thought it was Snape in the thumbnail! DON'T RUIN THE SONG BY WATCHING THE VIDEO!
 - **Tool** – [Ticks & Leeches](#)
I almost put "Stinkfist," but this guy won out cuz I like to hear people screaming when I write.
 - **Tom Waits** – [Trouble's Braids](#)
Cuz, no list of music is complete without him, and I really don't write to music that is even remotely unfamiliar, but instead stuff that I know all the folds and crevices of...□
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Bud Smith

I have a goofy record player next to my desk that I lean over and flip records when I write.

Here's the three songs I mostly listen to:

- □ **Moonface** – *Dreamland EP*: [Marimba And Shit-Drums](#) □
 - □ **Harry Nilsson** – [The Moonbeam Song](#)
 - □ **Black Moth Super Rainbow** – [Like A Sundae](#) □
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Peter Tieryas Liu

Right now, because I'm writing a darker piece, I'm listening to three darker soundtracks.

- [Fight Club OST](#)
- [Blade Runner OST](#)

- [Patlabor 2 OST](#)
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JS Breukelaar

- **Radiohead** – [Reckoner](#) (Always anything from Radiohead's album *In Rainbows*, especially the song Reckoner.)
 - **The Stranglers** – [Golden Brown](#) (And for this novel, specifically, (because it's a punk character's fave song :))
 - **Fever Ray** – [Dry And Dusty](#)
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Alex Vladi

- **Boom Boom Satellites** – [Stay](#)
I must say, I am affected by this song. I'm not a cry-baby usually, but listening to this song I can cry out the hell of me. Especially after my dad died. "Stay"... "So far... so far"
 - Something awesome and great. For wake up and to jam all this scene together. An intro to a wonderful anime "[Cowboy Bebop](#)" by a wonderful wonderful wonderful (...) wonderful composer KANNO Yoko. She can do everything: from hardboiled hard rock to Bach'ish fugue, from Kraftwerk'ish experiments to folk songs (sung by Bulgarian angels). And Jazz – yes sir, she can Jazz. Actually, every her music piece is a masterpiece. So this one is just to illustrate her craziness.
 - **Einstürzende Neubauten** – [Blume](#)
These international dadaists from Germany begun with noise music, but their development is more awesome: mystic, surreal, avant-gardist, dada. Blixas Bargeld's voice rocks, his German is the most beautiful I've ever heard, and the music is very intense in their DavidLynch-ism.
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Ben Segal

- **Galaxie 500** – [Strange](#) (forever on rotation)
 - **Pavement** – [Kennel District](#)
 - **Black Tambourine** – [Throw Aggi Off The Bridge](#)
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Meghan Tutolo

- **Midlake** – [Young Bride](#)
- **Grizzly Bear** – [While You Wait for the Others](#)
- **Yeastayer** – [Tightrope](#)

Nicholas Grider

- Right now I have Careful's [The World Doesn't End](#) on constant repeat... And when I'm not listening to that I'm listening to the new self-titled St. Vincent album or sometimes the Trust album *Joyland*.
 - tUnE-yArDs – [Water Fountain](#)
 - Fujiya & Miyagi – [Flaws](#)
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M Kitchell

- Cut Hands – *Black Mamba* (Susan Lawly, 2012) – [Witness the Spread of the Dream](#) & [Black Mamba](#)
 - The Slaves – *Spirit of the Sun* (Digitalis Recordings, 2012) – [Water](#)
 - Yoga – *Megafauna* (Holy Mountain, 2009) – [Seventh Mind](#) & [Dreamcast](#)
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Eddy Rathke

Usually I'm all instrumental stuff, but lately I've been listening to a lot of people sing while I work.

- Exitmusic – [Passage](#) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmtrcv2ImF4>
 - Spooky Black – [Without U](#) (a sixteen year old kid from my hometown who's sort of a mix of James Blake and Frank Ocean, and is about to blow up and be everywhere)
 - [Josef Salvat – Hustler](#)
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Dennis James Sweeney

- Bear vs. Shark – [Buses/No Buses](#)
A lot of the time, I listen to music to get my blood flowing. This is one I play before I go out for a run, or when I have to do a bunch of dishes or work on something less than exciting.
- Kendrick Lamar – [Bitch, Don't Kill My Vibe](#)
Amazingly, I just learned about Kendrick Lamar a few weeks ago. I alternate between being a huge fan of this jam and hating myself for singing the chorus over and over in my head.
- Modest Mouse – [Trailer Trash](#)
I've reached that point in my life where most of the time I just listen to songs from my glory days. I once bet a friend of mine that I'd give him a blowjob if Modest Mouse didn't play this song at their concert. Those were the kinds of things we talked about then. They didn't play

it. I'm still in debt.
