

# On staying self-contained



Experimental musician Daemyan Tang (Industry Standard) discusses the childhood nostalgia that informs his work, using Instagram as its own art form, and trying not to land on his head.

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As told to Alec Hanley Bemis, 2061 words.

Tags: [Music](#), [Beginnings](#), [Family](#), [Production](#), [First attempts](#), [Independence](#), [Business](#).

**How would you describe your artistic practice as Industry Standard? Are you primarily a musician, a performer, or something else?**

It's mostly music, but I do all sorts of things. I make collages, I've made zines out of the collages, and I screen print my own merch. Maybe one day I'll get into fashion. I also perform, and that is tied to the music in different ways.

All my recorded work happens on my computer using software. A virtual instrument called Kontakt is pretty much the backbone of my sound. It was actually gifted to me for my birthday before I even made music. Then I use Audacity as my DAW [digital audio workstation] to record, edit, and manipulate the sounds. It's a very simple set-up. Occasionally I'll play around with ambient pads, or sounds from video games. Not a game's soundtrack—more like environmental sounds, such as a door closing or footsteps. Then I'll build from there. It's all about using my intuition to see what feels right.

Usually, the titles come first, and they're the most expressive part for me. The titles might look like abstract nonsense, but they're references to specific moments or memories. Once I have a few of those, the sounds start to form around them, and an album begins to take shape. My most recent record, Bokmon—which is actually my middle name—was made while I was living in New York City last spring. It's very tied to that time and place.

**I was wondering if it was a Pokemon reference.**

[Laughs] Nah.

**What made you want to start making art and music? And specifically to make work in your style?**

There are many elements pulled from my childhood. For example, making collage with my mother. I rediscovered that quite recently because it's fun and calming. Music making is more recent. I started about two years ago. At first, it was just curiosity—I had friends who were producing in their basements in Glens Falls, [New York] and I realized I could probably do it too. For a long time, I didn't think of myself as someone who could make music. I didn't play any instruments or possess any great technical abilities. What shifted was realizing that I didn't need to be. I could just start throwing myself at it, experimenting, and see what came of it through a process of trial and error.

Both of my parents made music for a very, very brief time—some of which I have sampled on my own recordings. But my family was really much more into listening—lots of industrial and noise music, ambient music, synth pop. My

parents actually met on an online industrial music forum, so that sound world has always been around me. In middle school I drifted away from it, but in high school I came back to that music and realized it carried this childhood nostalgia. I don't consciously try to imitate any of it, but it definitely seeps in subconsciously. I grew up surrounded by those sounds.

As an example of how much my current practice has roots in growing up, I release everything I do under an umbrella brand [called] xB. It's my record label, film studio, zine publisher—and that's all named after the car my dad has driven since I was born. I didn't grow up listening to the radio, but that car was the space I got put onto a lot of music. I was exposed to whatever my parents played on their MP3 player... I mean, to be clear, xB is not a real business.

**It's real if you're doing it! Going deeper on those influences, are there forerunner artists you like to cite? When I saw the clip of your performance from that local TV channel, I immediately noted that you were wearing a Skinny Puppy sweatshirt. I remember the tail end of their peak trendiness, and that was 30 years ago, in the 1990s. You are clearly aware of a certain lineage.**

I don't want to draw from outside influences, really. That's what I mean by "organic." I don't mean analog or natural. I just want all the ideas to come from my head and be self-contained. I don't want to rely on trends or AI or other artists for inspiration. I want it to feel like it's only possible because I made it.

**Can you explain how your very dramatic performance style evolved? The live sets which have brought you a measure of viral attention are brief, unpredictable, visceral bursts of physicality. By contrast, a lot of your recorded music is whimsical, beautiful, ambient, and spacious.**

Well, my first sets were totally different from where I've ended up. I stood behind a folding table with borrowed gear—a CD mixer and a Kaossilator, which is a synth with a touchpad. I mixed a few of my tracks and messed with pitch and speed. It didn't sound terrible, but I felt bored behind the table. So after a couple of those, I just thought, "Screw it." I grabbed a microphone and a shaker box [1], added some distortion, and started spazzing out. That felt right. It took a little while to integrate the flips and physicality, but it evolved naturally.







a shaker box

**Did you have any kind of performance art or athletic background?**

I did track and field in high school; I was a high jumper. I've always been athletic. The theatrics came later. At first I was just flailing, then I started throwing myself around, and eventually I thought, "Maybe I can flip."

The first time I tried, I didn't hurt myself, so I kept doing it. I still haven't landed one perfectly, but I've been lucky not to get injured too badly. The recent New York City show you saw was an exception—I actually hurt myself enough to stop early. But generally, I try to keep it safe. The goal isn't to get hurt. I'm not trying to shock people. I just want to move in a way that feels right.

**Interesting. So slamming on the floor is not the point. It's more like you're halfway to a Benson Boone?**

There really is not a goal. I'm not a shock artist in that way. The only thing I try to do is try to mitigate injury. It's cool if I land on my back; or if I land on my knees, that's fine, too. As long as it's not on my head.

**Your performances seem designed for short attention spans, almost like they're meant to be viral clips. Is that intentional?**

Not really. I assumed people would find it shocking, but I didn't plan for virality. The first time one of my performances blew up online was at a local festival called Field Fest, which happened on a farm in Fort Edward, NY. My friend DJ Lucas [2] filmed me and posted it to his Instagram account, and a few hundred thousand people watched it. A few months later DJ Lucas came back to Glens Falls because he was filming a video series documenting musicians in Appalachia. I was featured in one of the videos and eventually he posted a clip of that and it blew up even more than the first time. This one got a couple million views. That was really interesting to see. I wasn't expecting it to blow up again—especially because he didn't post this clip on his actual account, but a new account specifically set up for the video series, which had significantly less followers. It's strange, because none of this was planned. There are way crazier things happening in noise music than what I do. But I think people responded to the rawness. It feels natural and fun. Personally it feels cathartic, just a release of emotion.



DJ Lucas, *America*



DJ Lucas, *Lil Old Town*

**How are you processing these viral moments?**

The first online clip going viral felt the craziest because it was my first exposure. Over time, I've begun to separate myself from the numbers and focus on creating. I just keep making things. There are a lot of people that have started reaching out. I've gotten offers from places like Switzerland, which is wild. But for now, I'm taking things one step at a time. I still don't have a car. Most of my bookings are on the East Coast because that's where I can actually get to.

I definitely do not have aspirations in the traditional sense. I'm not chasing a certain number of listeners or hoping to be covered by a certain publication. When I started, I was fully prepared to make art in total obscurity. Now that some people are paying attention, that's cool. But it's not why I do it. My only goal is to stay consistent with my philosophy: make things that feel natural, organic, and true to myself. Everything else

is temporary. I have a love for the things I'm making, not the attention I get for making those things. Even though I like how people may have their own take on what I do now. That's really valuable—that people can interpret things in an infinite amount of ways even if I have my own thoughts about it.

**I just turned 50. You're literally a full generation younger than me. I wanted to understand a bit better how you relate to the online world. As the saying goes, "back in my day" the internet seemed like it had limitless potential... Do you see the internet that way? Many of your tracks have more than one artist listed so I presume you're finding community with people farther afield than Glens Falls.**

I do have a connection to [Instagram](#) because I see it as an art in and of itself—as a world building tool, rather than something for advertising or promotion. I hate that kind of thing: "Hey guys, go listen to my new track." I use it in the same way and for the same reason that I make zines and screen print my own merch. Music, visuals, performance, and design are all pieces of the same puzzle, and all contribute to the same vision.

Most of the people I collaborate with, though, are just my friends from Glens Falls and other parts of upstate New York. Usually, we're just hanging out, showing each other what we're working on, and someone says, "I feel like I could add something cool to that." I don't collaborate much with people online. I like to actually know the people I'm working with.

**Daemyan Tang recommends:**

Go outside and connect with nature. It can both clear your mind and help you think your greatest thoughts.

Make art for yourself but show love to the people who resonate with it. If nobody resonates with it, at least you do.

Call your friends every once in a while to see how they're doing.

Don't talk too much about something before it happens. It's bad luck.

Make a physical photo album and delete everything in your phone camera roll.

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1. In the culture of noise music, a shaker box is a small box or container with a contact mic and random scraps inside which hit the contact mic when shaken, creating a harsh noise. Daemyan's shaker box was fashioned from a cat food tin by noise artist Crank Sturgeon who sells them on [Big Cartel](#) and [Etsy](#). (The stores seem to be on hiatus at the moment.)

2. DJ Lucas (Lucas Kendall) is a chronicler of suburban realness in the American northeast. The cover of his 2024 album *Lil Old Town* depicts roadside commerce off a freeway exit—a landscape of gas stations, fast-food franchises, ugly signage, and corporate logos (Exxon, Quinzos, Pizza Hut). The artwork for his 2023 album *Americana* features a picture of a crane installing one of those cellphone towers disguised as a tree.

Name

Daemyan Tang

Vocation

musician, performer, collage artist

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