

On losing yourself in order to find yourself



Noise musician Luwayne Glass on the evolution of Dreamcrusher, moving beyond the margins of your own scene, understanding the influence of your own work, and transforming the space around you.

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As told to Leah Mandel, 3144 words.

Tags: [Music](#), [Inspiration](#), [Identity](#), [Creative anxiety](#), [Adversity](#), [Beginnings](#), [Day jobs](#).

You perform in New York all the time. Do you also have a day job?

Mostly odd jobs. I'm 30 and I'm realizing that applying to Trader Joe's is not gonna work. I have a degree in Graphic Design, and when I moved here I was like, "It should be easy, there are a lot of agencies." But then I realized everyone in fucking Brooklyn has a degree in Graphic Design. And a lot of them just know the right people. The bulk of my portfolio is either flyers or album covers, for myself and friends of mine. That doesn't translate well to AIGA type of shit. So I do lots of house sitting, and striking for theatrical companies—that's dried up a lot. I have asthma, so I need to take breaks, and they don't like that.

When I first moved here I played every show that was offered to me. I played everything. Just in New York I did 102 shows in 2015. Half of them I don't even remember, mostly because I didn't get paid for them. For a couple years I took a break from releasing music so I could just play, because I felt like my show wasn't good. I felt like I was just kind of doing it because I needed money, and I didn't want it to feel that way, or come off that way.

I feel like now, it's OK. My main goal is to make sure that people come away feeling that they've experienced something. I wanna take control of the space, and let you know why you are here: get off your phone, stop talking to your friend, spit your gum out. Focus. I feel like I'm able to really do that now, to a certain extent. Not all shows are great. But now I need to start recording again. I'm not sick of any of my songs, but it's kind of becoming stale to me.

I think I went to at least three of your shows in 2018. I definitely heard some of the same songs. Did I just happen to catch a string of the same structured shows? Or is it different every time?

There is a structure. I was performing a lot of the songs on *Grudge2* way before it came out. I think that's why I'm kinda over it. We finished recording that EP in July [2018]. But I had the instrumentals done November of the year before. So I'd been playing them in my head already, and then I'd play three shows a week and be playing that song over and over again.

I think *Grudge2* is my best record. Everything I put out is like, me at the time. There's a *Grudge1* that's gonna come out later—the series is very loosely about a lot of the shit that I went through. In one of my most recent and heavier depressive fits, I realized I am still dealing with a lot of the same shit that I was dealing with when I was in Wichita. I thought that moving here would mean, "Everything's magically solved, because I can

express myself freely in a place that has a lot of people," and I'm realizing that that's not really working. And it's because of me. It's not because of the world. But also I am a part of the world, and the world alienates me in several different ways. And how I'm dealing with that as an adult, rather than as a teenager in a small town. *Grudge2* is assessing the world in a more aggressive way. *Grudge1* is the more internal part of it. A lot of the songs are talking about how I see myself when I am wandering the world. It's all really personal. I'm a Cancer-Gemini, so everything is personal for me.

I've finally found a studio. Now that I have a place to go do the thing, it's a lot easier. I need to record more. People here in NYC don't know that I've been around as long as I have. "Oh, you came here in 2015, that's when your career started." But actually I've been around since before Crystal Castles, before Justice, and I watched them all blow up. And it's partly my fault because I am from Wichita, Kansas, and I never left Wichita, Kansas. I was 27. I was a kid, basically.

There's a lot of parallels between the D.C. scene, and a lot of the Chicago scene, where if you're starting to blow up, people expect you to get the fuck out of there. And when you don't, they're just like, "Well, I don't need to support you because you're blowing up, and you're local. So why would I?" That's totally what happened with me. There was a bar that I played at every week back home. It would be mostly the same people because the noise scene is small, and punk people wouldn't wanna play with me.

You say the noise scene is small in Kansas, but it's small here, too.

It kind of is. I hate that they didn't tell me this before I started living there, but one of my roommates said that they knew of me before [I moved in]. They were like, "We don't go to your shows because it's super white and cis and this, that, and the other." And I was like, "Yeah. Yeah." Because I invited them to Ende Tymes [an annual four-day noise festival in Brooklyn]. My day was a good day because it was three or four different Japanese acts—we were like, the ethnic part of the bill. And then everybody else was white and cis. It was a lot. The music was good, it was just like—you know how I am. I'm a chipper, happy bitch. And I'm around all these motherfuckers just looking at me. I go out to have fun. Lighten the fuck up! It's a festival! It's not that serious. But I get into all that. I get into it. Luckily, there were some people that were actually vibing with me a little bit.

People will recognize me and just go like this [averts eyes]. I literally walked up to somebody and was like, "Hi. How you doing? Thanks for coming. What's your name? Words, interactions, humans?" What I love about playing shows with people who dance, like Machine Girl, or Show Me The Body, is the crowd. First of all, it's all-ages. And second, people see me as one of them. There's not a weird wall. I'll talk to anybody. I get that from my mom. I like playing shows with people who are also like that. Because I have fun. I also wanna get paid, but I wanna have fun, first and foremost. I enjoy making music and fucking with people's heads! Let me do that.

It's refreshing to play with an audience that I know, like Mutants shows. I get so wrapped up in the need to perform and make money, because I hate doing the thing I am supposed to do to pay rent, that I forget that I'm actually affecting people. And then I see people that send me really long Instagram messages about how me being open about my queerness helped them come out to their parents. It happens so often. It's very weird. I love that we're all fucking nervous and scared and everything.

How are the noise and punk scenes different now, versus when you got to New York?

I think it has a lot to do with the financial situation of the city now. If you aren't working for a major start-up, then you can't afford to live here. Unless you're like me and sleep two hours a night, and work all the time, and play four fucking times a week. I don't know that much about any of those scenes before I moved here, as far as New York is concerned, but I always saw the videos online of White Suns playing to a packed room and would just be like, "What? People really go up for this shit. Okay, I'm not the only one." There's a lot of different ways to make a show. Let's get some people on the bill that will bring in a bunch of different kinds of people so that they'll have to interact with one another. I think that's really important.

That's kind of why I don't really play pure noise shows anymore. I always feel really disconnected from the scene because I'm melanated. But also, I don't really know that many people in the noise scene personally. I've

interacted at shows, but because I don't know that many people, I feel like they don't really engage with me in the same way that they engage with one another. As a performer, not even just as a person. And interaction is very important for what I do, and for my performance in general. I feed off the energy that the crowd gives me.

That's the thing. There are lots of sick noise artists. The shows don't all have to be organized in these little pockets.

Also, why are there so few spots on the dalmatian? There are so many young people out here doing shit. I play shows with them. I've seen them play and they are fucking good.

It's just aggravating. I was talking to Machine Girl recently, because we wanna do a compilation and we wanna do more shows together. We had a mutual friend pass away. We were at the funeral, all of us, and a lot of his close friends came up to the mic to speak. We all spoke and said nice things about them and I was like, "All right, listen. I never see y'all. It's really easy for us to get swept up into surviving, but I just... I miss my friend." And I didn't know that they were even sick. They didn't tell anyone or anything like that. It was just like, "We gotta do right by each other." And if playing shows is the best way to do it, then let's do that.

I think that's so important. A lot of people that come to my shows specifically tell me that they've never seen someone like me play noise before, or they didn't think that someone like them could. The idea that there are young people nowadays with so much more access to that... You couldn't go on YouTube and figure out how to play the software that I used when I was a kid. Now you can, and they're out here doing it and not performing?

I'm always thinking about the other young black queer person who's also from a flyover state who wants to do this thing but no one in their family, none of their close friends, or anything like that, take it seriously. Or, they think it's a liability and this that or the other. I totally get what that's like. When I told my mom that I was going to go on tour with a noise artist in the Pacific Northeast and potentially not come back, she was like, "So what's up with that degree? What are we doing with the degree here?" Now, it's a little different. I sent her the *Village Voice* article. "Bitch I'm in print now." And *The FADER*, too. There are so many people like me. There's this idea that there isn't, and that's fucking frustrating. We gotta get over that shit.

I think we're gonna get this festival worked out. I think it'll show the city that not only are all-ages venues good, they're a necessity. If you're a young person moving to New York from Alabama and you do this very weird, niche thing, you should be able to move here and focus on that. And with the way the area's working right now, you can't do that. And it's not fair.

How do you know when a project is done?

When I can listen to it in a setting of my own choosing and go, "That isn't terrible." The moment I don't hate it. I hate everything. I fucking hate everything I do. This doesn't happen very often but when people request songs for me to play it's usually shit I made when I was 20, and I'm like, "You're still on that? I've come out with like 13 records since then." Like I was saying earlier, all my records are about me at that time, so it's really hard for me to look back.

But specifically about the two new songs I just put out: I made so many versions of those two songs. That's adult me, working on music. I was using the trial version of my software so I had to finish it that day or else it was not gonna get done at all. I think the versions that are out now are 5 and 6, respectively, or something like that. I was listening on the train, going to my boyfriend's place in Astoria. When I go to Astoria I have to pass through Times Square. And I'm listening to "CISHET" and watching all these LL Bean couples come on. And I was like, "Alright, this song is done. This song is about you and I'm looking at you while I'm listening to it and it works."

I want to go back to your live shows. I'm curious how that came together as a concept, as it involves many different senses: sound, light, scent, touch. Was that on purpose?

Kind of. I grew up really loving Throbbing Gristle and Coil and Psychic TV and all that stuff. I'm always thinking about the kind of show I want to go to that I will not forget. I never divorced punk, hardcore, noise, industrial, power electronics—I always thought they were the same thing. It was stuff that my mom doesn't listen to. I'm going to note this: nothing that I do is original. I really like the idea of noise sets that can affect you on multiple fronts. Because so much noise affects you on no fronts other than just surface. And that has its place, too. I'm passionate about music and I want that to come across in everything that I do. And when someone comes to my show, I want them to feel like they're at a Dreamcrusher show. There's no grey area with that at all.

Another element of why I do all of the things kind of all at once is because it makes me forget that the people are there. On a normal day I am in bed watching *Game of Thrones* and eating Indian food. I don't talk to anybody, I don't even talk to my roommates half the time. "You need toilet paper? Oh, okay, I'll get it in a minute." I don't go out, I don't interact with humans much. So that's my only time to go out. If I'm able to put you in the same position that I'm in—I'm also nervous, I'm also in my shell. Let's break out of it together, and let's find each other in that. I think there's a lot of potential in that. I hope someday I can have a bigger budget to expand on that in different ways.

I like the idea of losing yourself and then finding yourself. The dichotomy of those two things happening in a space or a place that you're able to transform and change. There are so few artists who have an opportunity to really do that. And when I'm able to do that, it feels so good creatively. It honestly helps me record new material. It's in those moments and those interactions, and the interactions I have after the show.

I think intent is very important. I want to continue to put out music that you don't have to guess what I'm thinking. There's so much experimental music that is problematic, not just because of the intent behind it but because of the apathy behind how they're addressing the claims against them. Even some musicians I like, they don't talk about the fact that they don't fuck with that nazi shit. I think that's really important. I don't think people address it because they know, "These motherfuckers are buying all my merch. These are the motherfuckers buying my records, streaming my shit."

What is something you wish someone had told you when you started out making art?

That you're going to affect people whether they tell you or not. Sometimes I'll get emails from people or DMs from a white boy that came to a show. Actually, the first time I played with Show Me The Body I played at Babycastles. This 40-something white guy was there, and he DMed me a week after the show and was like, "I've been thinking about your set a lot lately. I didn't come up to you and say hi, but it kind of fucked with me. And I had to process it in order to message you to let you know that I'm processing it." You'll be affecting people who you wouldn't expect, not just the people who have the same cross-interacting identities that I do. I didn't think I'd be affecting the people who were giving me wedgies when I was younger.

Dreamcrusher Recommends:

the read podcast

sol sips!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! [vegan soul food in Bushwick]

diamond stingily (if you see she has a piece or a panel somewhere, GO!)

THE MUTANTS: channel 63, machine girl, kill alters, food corps, deli girls, nurse, grooming, the 83rd, king sheep
+ more (whenever you see them play, GO!)

CORPUS GANG: show me the body, trippiones, slim poppins, cold deck, dog breath, noble, ceno (asha, naya, elijah, elias), etc (whenever you see them doing something, GO!)

Braxton Family Values, the best reality tv show in the fucking world

SILENT WEAPONS, PTP, GENG, KING VISION ULTRA

Negative Pleasure on Newtown Radio!

Yokubari on the Lot Radio

Cruel Noise on Mixcloud

Blackest Ever Black on NTS

EEL TANK

stop drinking cold water, or tap water

eat fresh organic fruit

don't go to shows and just stand there like a dumb start-up male with measles

Name

Dreamcrusher

Vocation

Musician, Graphic Designer

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