

BEYOND THE MERIDIAN

**BIG
MATH***



1 INERTIA

BEN: This was cross influenced by the opening track to Kaki King's album "Legs to Make Us Longer" and the opener for Intronaut's "Prehistoricisms". I wasn't thinking of them at the time, but they definitely crept out from my subconscious.

JAMES: At one point this showed up in the Dropbox folder as a file named "album intro?" and the rest is history. It gets reintroduced and reinterpreted in later tracks, so it became the de facto theme of the album.

2 THE GREAT DIVIDE

JAMES: Ah, the song that inspired a billion riffs.

BEN: I got stuck after the big open chords at 1:14. I kept writing riff after riff, but was never happy with the arrangement. I was in too deep and overthinking it. In the meantime James used the existing pieces along with some of his own contributions (including the massive intro riff) to create a freakin' savage composition.

After all was said and done, I'd rearranged most of James's contributions and he mine. You know what they say: it takes two daiquiris to make a banana.

JAMES:

Some of the extra riffs went on to become Rogue and The Way Home. So we decided to rip off Periphery II and place the trilogy of loosely related songs at the beginning, middle, and end.

3 MOUNTAIN

BEN: This was the first song to officially make it on the album and it set the theme for the rest of the titles. It's meant to inspire you during literal mountain climbing, but you can also listen during more horizontal challenges.

JAMES: Ben pretty much nailed this one from start to finish. He also sampled the audio at the end from Metal Gear Solid 2, which is super nerdy and great. Please don't sue us, Konami.

4 PASS ON

JAMES: This song has a totally unique feel compared to the others and I love it. It's serene, concise, and packed with those sweet Ben Beronda guitarpeggios™

Listen closely for a gong, wind chimes, and a baby.

BEN: I used a type of primitive guitar from the days before amplifiers. And yes my daughter's breathing can be heard at the end. She was sleeping a few feet behind me as rerecorded some of the acoustic parts.

JAMES: I believe those ancient instruments are referred to as "grandpas guitars."

5 EGO KILLER

BEN: While meeting to record ideas and make arrangement decisions, I remember not feeling confident that all the pieces worked together as a whole. Usually, for us, there's a prominent rhythm (or variations of it) throughout the entire song — this was a big departure from that. Not coincidentally, this is one of our first efforts blending our writing styles. I ended up loving the final arrangement. Possibly my favorite song on the album.

JAMES: The first half of this song was inspired by an ancient demo of mine. I was going for a creepy feel with the chords and guitar harmonies, and on drums I alternated between polymeter grooves and Thomas Pridgen-inspired insanity.

In the second half, Ben takes the song to an unexpectedly triumphant place, culminating in a barrage of Sigmund Freud quotes.

So this song's story arc begins with an inner battle with the subconscious, but is inevitably followed by the self-actualization resulting from a deeper understanding of the self, of nature, and of society.

Just kidding, it's an instrumental.

6 FIGHT OR FLIGHT

JAMES: This one almost made it onto the Progression EP, but we were hitting a wall when trying to finish it and Ben spontaneously wrote Anonymia instead (which stressed me the fuck out at the time).

Anyway, this song is a classic example of repetitions and mutations of a theme. We played around with various interpretations of the intro rhythm, combining it with any notes and chords that sounded cool.

Come to think of it, that's how we went about writing most of the songs on the Progression EP. So this song kind of ties it all together.

BEN: I'm glad we revised this song. Lots of cool tricks here. Dueling guitar riffs, a weird melodic guitar solo, a tabla, dueling sitar-ish guitar solos, crazy delay shenanigans. This song is also an example of collaboration at its finest. Every part I wrote inspired something from James and vice versa.

7 ROGUE

JAMES: You have arrived at song number two in the trilogy. This one is equal parts dynamic and melodic. It's a study in how contrast can make for effective songwriting. But that's just, like, my opinion, man.

I remember feeling particularly proud of myself for overlaying a 4/4 feel against the 10/8 riff about a minute in. See, we're as mathy as ever — we're just mathing in more subtle and clever ways.

One of the highlights of the album for me comes 2:00 in, at the "chorus." It just keeps building with melodies and harmonies until it becomes a supermassive ball of dense ear candy.

8 THRIVE

JAMES: I mostly wrote this one, but when Ben recorded his guitar parts he played them an octave down (in good old drop A tuning), which meant the bass parts needed to go an octave down, too. So it went from sounding light and airy to big and burly. Now it's kind of like hanging out with a friendly Sasquatch.

Oh, and what's that at the end? Is that a reinterpretation of the theme that we kicked off the album with? ...Yes.

BEN: In a world of dropped tunings and 7, 8, or 9 string guitars, the opening riff is in E standard and it still sounds heavy as FUAK. This started out as a rejected idea for Great Divide, but it turned into another fun game of composition volleyball.

9 VALLEY

JAMES: More groovy riff goodness, courtesy of yours truly. We actually posted a pre-production version of this on our (old) soundcloud account:
https://soundcloud.com/meridian_music/valley

Astute listeners may notice that we replaced the midsection (which we began referring to as "The 70s sitcom part") with a sweet guitar solo by Ben. And we added some synth. Like, a lot of synth. And then we slugged up the ending.

Which version do you prefer? Please leave your response in your nearest trash can.

BEN: This is such a cool song. The guitars kinda remind me of Jambi...so I couldn't help but drop that A. Other than that I didn't do much other than a few little leads here and there. The rhythm section sounded so big I just tried to stay out of the way!

BEN: James pumped this one out early on. He didn't even like it. He was all like "Wahhh I don't like this song anymore. The middle part sounds lame. WAHHHH!!!" And I was like "SHUT UP!!!" *slap, slap, SLLLAPP* "Snap out of it, man!" One guitar solo and two Dunable-inspired riffs later, and boom.

FYI the working title for the intro riff was "Mythosaur". Only the nerdiest of starwars nerds will appreciate that. Go ahead, google it.

JAMES: When Ben says "slap, slap, SLLLAPP", I'm like 60% sure he's referring to the funky slap bassline I laid down in the bridge.
queue Seinfeld theme

10 THE HUNT > THE KILL

JAMES: I attempted to write the heaviest and most technical song on the album with this one. I think I succeeded?

At 1:10, if you listen very closely, you can hear my head explode as I attempt to pull off this drum part.

And the riff at 1:30 followed by the guitar solo are maybe the trickiest guitar parts I've ever written. I'm proud of them, but please don't ask me to actually play them. That's Ben's job now.

BEN: You wrote this? I thought it was a Hanson cover.

11 SOLITUDE

JAMES: Ben and I went back and forth so many times on this one. But in the end, we brought it pretty close to his original vision. Maybe. Hopefully.

BEN: I did fight to keep this one close to the original composition. I think it had an emotional impact that I really vibed with.

JAMES: About the drum sound on this track. We tracked most of the drums in one day and neglected to retune them in between songs, and by the time we got to Solitude the snare drum tension was super low. But the fat 70s snare sound totally fit the feel of the song so we decided to keep it.

12 THE WAY HOME

JAMES: It's the epic album closer, in which I bring together a bunch of Ben's disparate riffs into one cohesive whole. We also revisit some ideas from The Great Divide in this one, and then it all comes full circle at the end when we reintroduce the Inertia theme.

BEN: I was thinking, "okay we're done with this album." And then James just comes out of nowhere with this. A combination of more rejected Great Divide ideas and some new ones from both of us.

Drums tracked at Black Key Recording. Other instruments recorded and mixed by James and Ben. Special thanks to Dan Gentry for letting us use his studio space; to Matt Eden for providing one of the four snare drum rolls at the beginning of The Way Home; to Adedamola Adeniyi for dutifully upholding #1 fan status; and to Heather and Jordyn for being patient while their mans poured dozens of hours into making this album.

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