

The Complete Hussalonia RPM Blogs, or the making of “Instant Winner” and “Sorry Try Again.”

As the days approach...

(Friday, 26 January 2007)

I'm a full time student right now, taking six courses. Needless to say, I don't have much free time, so I might be a bit mental to have signed up for this. Anyway, I've been thinking about what I'm going to do for this and I'd really like to step out of my comfort zone. I am most inclined to write 2-minute pop-rock songs, heavily influenced by the Beatles and the Replacements...but I also listen to quite a bit of hip hop, R&B, soul and old blues. I was thinking of giving worship to those gods. My plan is to on Feb 1st, make a bunch of beats and then build my songs off the beats. But of course, I can't rap. I was dreaming up a stream of consciousness, no rhyme, style of rap for myself. Sounds batty? I'll keep you updated.

Views: 612

To my fellow participants:

(Wednesday, 31 January 2007)

I love you all!

I feel our life as humans are divided into modes: production and consumption. We do both to stay alive, to remain human. We need to consume food, sleep, books, music, movies, etc... But we also need to produce to remain worthwhile individuals. I don't think it really matters what you do, just do something! Make dolls, paint, sew, garden, just do something that animals can't.

The closest I come to having faith in anything, is having faith in humanity. Progress, progress, progress! Every moment of our modern lives is a miracle. Every chair you sit in, every street you walk on, every shirt you put on is the result of thousands and thousands of years of progress. We are all connected to history in this way, and we need to remind ourselves that we are all responsible for continuing this progress in our lifetimes. You can't make progress by standing still. You have to do something, anything. You might even be running in circles, but motherfucker, isn't that better than standing still?

I know this sounds so grande and maybe even crazed, but it's no less crazy than god or heaven or hell or whatever belief people might be holding on to. If you're not doing something, then you're doing nothing. And how boring is that? All your consumption is for naught, if you're not going to produce. If you're smart, teach. If you're musical, sing. If you're observant, write. Don't do nothing! Furthermore, I am so happy that there is no prize or extrinsic motivator for the RPM challenge. It is challenging people to be creative, because they're creative people. Creativity is our defining characteristic as human beings. It's one of the things that separate us from our four-legged brothers and sisters. Birds fly because they have wings; people should be creative because they have minds that have

the capacity to create. And so, celebrate your last day of freedom, my friends. Read a good book, watch an inspiring movie, cook a good meal. Consume! Fill yourselves with the fuel you're creativity will be burning in the next 28 days.

With a big, juicy, wet kiss,
Hussalonia
www.hussalonia.com
Views: 567

Oh, sweet muse. Oh, Lou Reed. (Thursday, 01 February 2007)

For the last few weeks I've heard this whispering in my head that I've been trying to block out. It's my muse, who has been trying to tell me about these songs I should be writing. "But no! Not yet, sweet muse!" I said. "It's not February yet!" After which I could feel her kicking my brain in a most punishing way.

I've been telling everyone about the RPM Challenge and my participation in it. Invariably someone would say to me, "You've got tons of material just lying around. This should be easy for you." And I'd look at them in disgust, as if they just suggested that I should sign up for the Special Olympics; I could lick those kids. No sweat.

I'd explain to them, "Who am I cheating by doing that? There's no prize here. This is a C-H-A-L-L-E-N-G-E!" I'm sure everyone here agrees. How many of you have been told that you should make "Metal Machine Music Part 2"? Sure, that would be easy and fill the criteria. But just whom are you trying to fool?

Well, my friends. It is day one. 7:25AM for me right now. I have 4 classes today and then I have dinner plans. So I might not be able to do anything for another 12 hours. Frustrating? Sure. But I'm on my way to the coffeehouse, and there I will order my muse's favorite elixir. Once she is awake, I will tell her that this is going to be her lucky month. I will do whatever she says. Anything. Just say the word, my love.
Views: 413

Aqua Teen Hunger (Thursday, 01 February 2007)

Well, it's been a long day. I have 4 classes on Thursdays (I walk back and forth to school-4 miles total today), I wrote a two-page paper, went out to get a power supply for the synthesizer that I borrowed from my cousin and went to two stores to find a heat pad for my girlfriend whose back is really hurting. Whew! You'd think that I wouldn't have had time nor energy to write and record today, but you'd be wrong!

I originally said that I wanted to include current events in my lyrics to prove that I was actually writing in February 2007 and I couldn't have had a better news story to start the month off than the Boston bomb scare. What a great story! At the end of my day

(beginning at 8pm) I quickly threw together a beat and started writing around it. I can't say that I'm finished with my first song, but the basic framework is there. It's called "The Cartoon Always Wins" and it's a pretty silly, random affair, heavily influenced by all the hip-hop that I've been listening to.

Tomorrow after I get out of class I intend on "popifying" the track by laying on some sweet 60s vocal harmonies, keyboards and bass. Then I guess it's on to the next song!

I've always been reluctant to write "funny" things because once people think you're funny, no one likes to take you seriously. But I'm not so sure that I can write meaningful and worthwhile lyrics and music under such pressure. I don't want to make garbage. I guess I figure that if this first song isn't good, at least it will be amusing. I've been writing down lyric ideas all day long and hope to have something a little more respectable in the next few days.

Until tomorrow, folks!

Views: 412

Whew hoo! I'm alive! (Friday, 02 February 2007)

Wow! I have had a tremendously productive afternoon. I wrote and recorded a whole song in about 5 hours and I also laid down some instruments for a track that has no lyrics or melody. I borrowed a synthesizer from my cousin, which has proven to be very inspirational. I don't have one of my own, and I don't play very well or often, so it really opens up my creativity. I feel so familiar with the guitar that I sometimes feel restricted by it...like I'm writing the same things over and over.

I am very excited about the song I finished today. It's called The Human Spark. It's a "serious" track (thank goodness after yesterday's rather silly The Cartoon Always Wins track) with acoustic guitar and "piano" set to an electronica beat. Wow, this is exciting. I never would have written this song if I had a million years to do. I just needed five hours. The lyrics were culled from pages of random notes and lyrics I was writing yesterday during school.

My goal is two have an average of 1 song done for every two days. This way I'll have the whole last week to edit, sequence, master and come up with artwork. In many ways, that's the most time consuming part of making an album.

I also made some "extra" beats for future songs. So far, so good. That might have to be it for today, though. I must spend some time with my girl, and eat, and walk the dog, and I have to DJ tonight...oh, and I should do some reading as I have a paper to write this weekend due Monday morning. Let's hope the RPM Challenge doesn't flunk me out of school. My girlfriend has already complained that February is going to be a boring month because of this.

Oh yeah, I even stopped to eat and do the dishes this afternoon. Being as obsessive as I am, that's a sign of real growth.

Views: 417

Nervous Energy & Time Management (Saturday, 03 February 2007)

I know this is off topic, but man, this is bothering me. I have a lot of nervous energy to burn, which is probably why I chose to participate in this in the first place. Anyway, I have a bad nervous habit of always shaking (or bouncing) my leg. I found a good way to not do this is to sit in a rocking chair and rock. It might be just as irritating to some of you-that is, watching someone rocking back and forth, but I find it cathartic. I bought a "glider" chair over the summer so I can nervously rock and swivel while I read or watch movies. I think I paid about \$150 for it. I can't remember. What I'm leading up to is-it broke. It's all wobbly now. The rocking is most unpleasant. It's definitely not "gliding." So I turned it over and started to take it apart and found that one of the ball bearings fell out of place. I spent about an hour trying to fix it. Taking it apart, trying it, taking it apart etc... I had it fixed for about 15 minutes of nervous rocking and then one of the ball bearings popped out again. Ug! I love that chair. What am I going to do?

Anyway, back on subject. This is proving to be a major exercise in time management. I spent the better part of the day ping-ponging around the house: record/shower/record/do the dishes/record/walk the dog/record/read Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*/record/read for my education class/waste an hour fiddling around with the glider. It's nice to walk away from recording regularly. I usually just work in marathon sessions, but maybe this is better. It keeps my brain agile and prevents me from getting into a hyper-obsessive mode, which is not so cool to be in.

I finished *The Human Spark* and finished the "instrumental" that I mentioned in previous blog entry by adding vocals and a myriad of other overdubs. It's of course, no longer an instrumental, and it's called *Sing Sorrow*. I wrote the leady and lyrics as I was recording. It's named after the Ben Shahn painting of the same name and it's about the usefulness or uselessness of art. And maybe it's also about the law of energy. I don't know. It's a mess. I can't look back. I must move forward.

I still haven't finished *The Cartoon Always Wins*. Maybe tomorrow. I also haven't mixed anything down, yet. I'm recording on an old Roland VS880, so I actually have to mix in real-time; not like you savvy fellows who record on your computers with fast hard drives and brilliant software that allows you to do so. You see, I mix down to my modest iMac G4, but I've lent my USB audio interface to my friend Rich who is also participating in this (see: [Quentin Collins](#)) He only lives a block away, so I've agreed to let him use it on the grounds that I can snatch it back every so often to mix. I think tomorrow will be an "every so often."

I will now finish watching this French film *C.R.A.Z.Y* that I started watching yesterday. So far it's pretty good. Read more about it [here](#).

Views: 370

A Song A Day!

(Sunday, 04 February 2007)

So far I've been averaging a song a day, though there's been a lot of overlap. For instance, I'm still working on the first song I started, but the last song I started is already done. I'm naturally pretty prolific anyway.

Last night I pieced together another beat and then wrote a song around it. Then this morning I fleshed it out with better vocals and guitars and such. It's called Better Dancers for now, though I may change the title. I'm pretty excited. So far everything I'm working on sounds pretty good...and refreshingly different from what I normally do. I'll post at least one of the songs tonight.

I was thinking...I've been playing guitar since I was 8 years old. I started writing songs when I was 12. I first started recording with a 4-track when I was 14. I'm now 30 years old. I've been doing this so long, that it's really quite easy for me. If I didn't have to work or go to school, I could write 12 albums a year.

In that respect, it kills me when it takes famous recording artists 2 years (or more) to make a record. WTF? That's their job! I'd probably be pretty good at writing music for television since I work so fast. Why doesn't somebody just hand me a job like that? I'd take it.

Views: 366

2 Songs posted! Strange and Pretty!

(Monday, 05 February 2007)

Well, I've posted 2 of the 4 songs that I've finished so far. They still need to be mastered, but you'll get the idea. The "pretty" song is called The Human Spark, and I must say that's not bad. Listening back to it, there are things I would have done differently or better if I had more time, but I think it stands on its own as it is.

The "strange" song is called The Cartoon Always Wins and...it's fun...and it gets rather experimental at the end. I might raise the samples voices at the end. What do you think?

I hope people enjoy them. Feel free to comment on them, but please, only say good things.

Views: 446

Blank Blogs

(Tuesday, 06 February 2007)

Oy Vey! Sometimes I would click on an interesting blog title and find that the blogs were blank, that is: no content. I would wonder, "Why would anyone do that?" Until it happened to me this morning.

I was ironically blogging about my "postpartum" depression (once I finish songs, I get a little depressed) and what a crummy morning I was having (was late to class, spilled hot coffee on my hand) and when I clicked on "Save blog entry" it yielded a blank blog entry...twice. It certainly didn't help my mood any, and I'm sure made me look like a real winner. Oh well. The moral of the story is, don't judge a blank blog; it could happen to you.

I don't think I'll be able to do any recording on Tuesdays. I'm pretty much on campus all day, but I have been writing lyrics (or random thoughts/phrases/words that will become lyrics) as much as I can. Last night I felt pretty worn out on this whole project. I have a tendency to get obsessive and it really has been consuming my thoughts (and time). I had the whole "What does it all mean?" feeling. "Why am I doing this?" I wrote and demoed a song (about polar bears, the end of the world, my drug addict father) and I felt so empty afterwards. Who cares, blah, blah, blah. I know myself well enough to know that it (depression) will pass. I need to be blind-sided. I need to be blissfully ignorant. I need the world to look away so that I can make my great escape. I need to be dumbed down by a great song, a bad movie, a pretty face. Then I can be alive enough to live.

Well, whatever. Blogging into the great big nothing again. Have a nice day, fellow RPMers. I posted 2 songs yesterday. Go listen to them and tell me nice things. My ego is counting on you.

With Love and Squalor,

Jesse Mank

Hussalonia founder.

Views: 398

Download 3 of my RPM songs...Huzzah! (Tuesday, 06 February 2007)

Hello fellow RPMers and perhaps some voyeuristic visitors,

I think I've bounced back from this morning's depression. I feel so good that, against my better judgment, here are 3 of my finished RPM songs as downloads. I might change these later on...or not. So take it all with a grain of salt.

Wishing Lovers Were Better Dancers (I feel real good about this one. The conversation at the end is with fellow RPM participant: Snow Armory)

The Human Spark (I also feel decently good about this)

The Cartoon Always Wins (I feel funny about this, but that's what happens when you're under pressure.)

As you can see with the weather reports and the phone call samples, I'm trying to take a sonic snapshot of this month. After all, this is the only February 2007 of my life.

I'm exhausted, so I'm taking the night off to watch 20th Century (an old screwball comedy). Tomorrow it's back to work. (Whip cracks!)

With Love and Squalor,

Jesse Mank

Hussalonia founder

Views: 402

Burned out

(Wednesday, 07 February 2007)

Oh god... I just finished another song (called "Nothing Matters But Heat") and boy do I feel burned out. That puts me at 6 completed songs (though one is a really short vignette of sorts called "Professor Rath"...I did it last night). I'm glad that I'm ahead of schedule, but this has really taken a toll on me. I'm walking away for a day. See you Friday, RPM. -

Hussalonia

Views: 417

Poorly written blog-don't read this

(Friday, 09 February 2007)

Really, this will be a lame entry. I can't write for long as I'm pretty much on my way out the door, but I just wanted to document my progress today. Almost true to my word, I hardly worked yesterday...I did however write some lyrics and assemble a beat. Today I recorded the basis (drum/vocals/acoustic) for a song called "Anathema." All the lyrics are from dialogue in 20th Century (John Barrymore and Carol Lombard). I also recorded the basis for a really short, strange pop song called "I Can Feel The Weight." AND AND AND I started recording a spoken word piece called "Death of a Socialite." (Yes, it's a reference to Anna Nicole Smith.) Nothing was finished today. So, I was a pretty busy beaver today. To be fair, everything I recorded today is pretty experimental...which I hate to say, is easier to do than writing "real" songs. Anyone care to disagree? I've decided that I'm not going to stop at 10 songs...I'm going to keep working up to the last minute and see what I can accomplish. Well, I really have to go. More tomorrow?

Views: 448

It helps to have a life

(Saturday, 10 February 2007)

It's Saturday 6:30PM EST and besides me, there are 11 other people online. That's amazing to me! Out of the 2000 participants, only 11?

Well, it goes to prove what I was going to write about; it helps to have a life. You see, I was out late last night DJing...real late. I got in at 6AM. But the point is, that I the night was very inspiring. I played some great songs. I watched people drink and talk and laugh and wiggle to the music. I saw them trying to convince each other that they are the one you should sleep with. I saw commercials on the bar television that seemed to be messages from the gods. I went out for great breakfast diner food. I talked about Houdini and my disbelief in an afterlife with a good friend.

I slept for a few hours and when I woke up, I called an old friend and enjoyed the sound of his laugh. I walked the dog and lamented the cold and snow. I read a chapter in a lame college textbook. I took a nap. I ate pierogis and pop tarts and spinach salad and Newman-Os. I now sit at the computer to write a short paper on what I read in my lame college textbook, but first, this blog.

I'm alive and I'm full of ideas!

I was feeling pretty burned out the other day after spending so much time writing and recording, but after so much stimulation, I'm ready to take on another few songs! Let me at 'em!

When I was younger (say, 19-I'm 30 now) I would obsessive write and record all weekend, holing away in my apartment, ignoring phone calls, never leaving the house for anyone or anything. I was an artist! I had ART to make! Art before everything! Looking back, I think my music suffered from my lack of a life. I won't go into any more detail, but I guess what I'm trying to say is that I commend all 1,989 of you for not being online right now. I hope you're out shopping for fancy cheese, or visiting your mom, or talking to a transvestite at the local watering hole, or playing in a Led Zeppelin cover band, or kissing a stranger, or visiting graveyard, or shoveling a neighbor's drive, or sneaking into a second movie, or watching your daughter beak a board in half at Tai Kwon Do, or listening to bad jazz with someone that you want to sleep with, or eating cake, or enjoying the open bar at a good friend's wedding, or driving across an international border with \$200,000 and a fake passport. Live it up, friends. Live like it's the only life you'll ever have.

With love and squalor,

Jesse Mank

Hussalonia founder
Views: 476

Ryan Adams' Eleven New Albums and Astronauts (Sunday, 11 February 2007)

Well, I had quite a bit of homework to do this weekend. I didn't do any writing or recording on Saturday or all day today and felt rather uneasy about it. I really couldn't. School has to come first. I can't afford to fail. I'm reading Omeros by Derek

Walcott...ug...I just can't get into it. I also had 2 papers to write. Then, I have 2 tests on Tuesday and so I'll have to devote some time tomorrow to studying. I'm frustrated, but not nervous about the approaching deadline.

I felt so uneasy about my lack of RPM activity tonight that I told myself that I can't go to bed until I write and at least lay down the basic tracks for a song. So I did...and to make it easy on myself, it's an acoustic number called "Like an Astronaut in Love" loosely based on the Nasa love triangle that was in the news. It's not an amazing song, but with some overdubs, I think it can at least be a pleasurable listen.

So as of right now I have 6 songs totally finished and I *think* 3 songs sitting on my 8-track waiting to be fleshed out with overdubs. I think I'll keep writing and making bare-bones recordings all week (just acoustic guitar and vocals with or without sequenced beats) and then spend next weekend doing overdubs (bass/keyboards/etc...) in an assembly line fashion.

Earlier today someone sent me a link about Ryan Adams having posted like 11 new albums on his website and I couldn't help but think about the RPM challenge. I went to the site and listened for a while. It's clear that most of the songs are throw-aways, if not downright jokes, but it still had to take a considerable amount of time, effort and wit to produce all that material. Even if it's a joke, it's a pretty elaborate one. I never cared much for Ryan Adams...I think he's talented but inconsistent and perhaps a little full of himself...but this kind of changes my mind about him. I like that he's not afraid to show his humor or jeopardize whatever "image" he's worked to create by making crazy rap or punk records about pyramids and nonsense. It also made me feel like making an album in 28 days is no real big feat when someone's making 11 albums in less than a year. (And don't forget the Magnetic Field's brilliant 3 disc "69 Love Songs" which was made in a year. If you don't have it, go get it. It's perfect for Valentine's Day.) Be inspired, not discouraged...right?

OK...I'm off to bed. Sweet dreams, RPMers.

Hussalonia
Views: 383

I recorded the same song twice today (Monday, 12 February 2007)

That's right, friends. I wrote and recorded a song earlier today and hated the recording so much that I scrapped it and started all over. Ordinarily it wouldn't be too much of a big deal, but while under such a deadline, and with so little available time to record, it hurt. I probably wasted about 3 hours worth of work...which in the scheme of things isn't much, but clearly it's enough time to write and record a song.

Anyway, the song is called "What will I do when this is over?" and it's vague enough to be about a relationship, but in a way it's a commentary about this project and I guess the end of anything. As Georgey boy said, "all things must pass." So, what next?

The second version is way better and I'm really glad that I started over. It only took me about 2 hours to record the second version, as it was already written and I knew what I had to do. The only thing it needs is bass and a "solo" of some sort. Most of the tracks I've recorded for this project only have one "beat" that repeats throughout the song...which I know is sort of lame, but I had to cut corners somewhere.

So, I think my goal for the week is to write and record something everyday...even if it's just a 30 second song...and then I'll have a bunch of stuff to mix and overdub over the weekend. I have enough completed "songs" to meet the deadline, but I'd like to create some segue pieces and short vignettes to create more of an "album" feel to my final project. In my mind, I'd like to finish with a 20 track CD consisting of at least 10 "real songs" and the rest "experimental" tracks. I'm usually so focused with writing pop songs that I feel that this is my golden opportunity to go wild and be weird.

Tomorrow is my crazy day at school; I'm on campus all day. Though it didn't stop me from working last Tuesday...we'll see how I feel. I have to find time to read more of "Omeros" and answer some questions on it for a class Wednesday morning.

So long for now,

Hussalonia
Views: 394

Meep Meep! **(Tuesday, 13 February 2007)**

I had an awful day today. It's so cold that my iPod just shut down after 10 minutes of walking through the arctic Buffalo weather. I was on campus for 11 hours straight (5 classes today). I have too many morons in my classes and they all sit next to me, which means that whenever we're asked to "get into groups" I'm stuck with a moron. I lost my scarf (which was made for me by a friend) and I lost my bus pass! Curses!

So when I got home, I was pleased to see that I received a Netflix DVD that I put into the queue the other day: The Looney Tunes Collection (Vol. 2 Disc 2.). I randomly chose the disc out of the massive 4 volume set, so I had no idea that I was going to be watching a solid hour of Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote cartoons. It's been years since I've seen one, and now I just watched enough to make me delirious.

It never struck me how hopeless the cartoons were. The coyote is starving in the desert. There's no water. There's no greenery. No people. No civilization. Just the vast, lonely (and nearly apocalyptic) desert landscape, the coyote and the roadrunner. (Oh, and the occasional speeding truck.) The coyote isn't stupid; he's smart enough to assemble all these strange Acme devices. He even invents his own elaborate and ingenious traps. The roadrunner is given no personality, no redeemable traits. He only says "meep meep." Yet, we root for the roadrunner. Why?

I'll tell you why I think we root for the Road Runner. We see too much of ourselves in the coyote. There we are, coming up with all sorts of crazy schemes to get ourselves ahead in life, or maybe even (like the coyote) just to save ourselves from starving to death. We're desperate animals! And yet we just love to see the coyote punished for his efforts. Boom! Crash! Meep meep! There's something cathartic about the sadistic nature of those cartoons. We're constantly failing in our lives, and wouldn't it be great to fail big like that? To fall off a cliff? To be blown up by TNT? Don't we deserve the big boom instead of the small humiliations we have to endure everyday? We just hate ourselves and it feels so good to see that side of us get blown up over and over and over.

Anyway, try watching an hour of Road Runner cartoons. No dialogue. All those "meep meeps" and explosions. All that desert. No real plot. No mortal consequences. And that Looney Tunes theme song over and over. The futility of it all! It had a strange effect on me. It made me think of Diogenes and the cynics. I think he would have really loved the Road Runner cartoons. The coyote is being punished for his reliance on the material world. Acme is evil and the world is a hostile place! (My favorite Acme products: the Acme bottle of bees, the Acme do-it-yourself tornado and the Acme female roadrunner costume)

Needless to say, I did no writing or recording today and I'm about to turn in for the night. I'm still reeling from the cartoons and so maybe I should just stop right here.

With a falling anvil,

Jesse Mank

Hussalonia founder

Views: 408

Lazy day (Wednesday, 14 February 2007)

I'm really tired, so I'll keep it brief.

Today I wrote a short piece about Little Richard...saying how he should give us one more hit song before he dies. I created a beat for it and layed down the main vocal and some harmonies as well as a guitar. Like most of the other tracks I've started, I plan to finish them over this upcoming weekend.

It was a "snow day" for much of Buffalo today. I still had to hike over to the college to take care of some business (including replacing my bus pass that I lost yesterday). I went to New World Records and bought the new Apples in Stereo on vinyl. Quite an enjoyable (and inspiring) listen.

The rest of my day was spent studying and eating and doing boring stuff the regular humans do. Bad Hussalonia. (Yawn.)

See you tomorrow.

Views: 376

Marie Antoinette

(Thursday, 15 February 2007)

I was physiologically depressed today. That is, I was not really depressed about anything, but my body felt the symptoms of depression: tired, hard time focusing, slow thinking. This was unfortunate, as I had two exams today. I did ok I'm sure, but not as well as I could have. The weather doesn't help. I've decided that the earth wants everyone in the Northeast dead.

Nevertheless I did do some writing and recording today. True to my method this week, I laid down basic tracks and will give it "the works" this weekend. Today's song is called "Cruel and Unusual" and it's a love song of sorts. No drums, just voice, "piano" and guitar so far. I plan to put some accordion on the bridge later on.

I watched Sofia Coppola's Marie Antoinette tonight. Boo!

Did I think I would ever care about aristocrats?

Views: 373

The workaholic works all day, changes cell phone plan.

(Sunday, 18 February 2007)

Today was nearly dedicated to the RPM challenge. Instead of sleeping in (as I planned on doing) I woke up at 8am and almost immediately started working. All week I had been laying down basic tracks for songs that I was writing within an hour or so. This morning I went through all the songs and added bass/electric guitar/keyboards/etc... and finished that by 1pm. I took a break to eat and unclog our bathtub drain (yuck!) and then headed over to my friend Rich's house (a fellow RPMer working under the name Quentin Collins) to pick up my USB audio interface that I lent him. He too was working on his RPM challenge record. What nerds we are! I also had to call my cell phone provider to switch plans. This forced me to decide who my top 5 phone friends are, a decidedly Rob Gordon thing to do. It struck me how unfair the 5 favorite plan is, as my 5 contacts aren't really my top 5 favorite people to talk to, they're just the ones who talk the most and therefore eat up all my minutes. If only there were a cell phone plan that allowed you to choose the top 5 people that you want to call you more often, and then they did.

When I got back from Rich's I did the dishes, ate again and commenced mixing the songs that I finished today. I had no idea how many songs there were and I could barely remember writing the songs. It was like listening to songs written by a future me, even if it meant a future as close as next week. My mind has been suffering with fatigue; there's too much to remember for exams and papers and appointments. Janet says that I have holes in my brain, and she's right. They (the holes) keep the ideas circulating, but often information just slips away.

Mixing pretty much chewed up the rest of the night. I stopped to find an old homemade 78 record I have of a woman reading a letter to her boyfriend made in the late 1940s. (Before tape recorders were available to the public, they sold recordable records that played at 78rpm. Whenever I see a homemade record from this era, I pick it up. Mostly they're boring-recordings of people singing badly or playing an instrument badly, but every so often you find something worthwhile.) I wanted to graft it on the end of "Astronauts in Love." Finding it was a fiasco. My room is in shambles and the cats are crawling everywhere. Then I couldn't find my phono preamp for my 78 player. That forced me to go up in the attic and sift through boxes. It was definitely up there. I went through all that trouble that I decided to go through a few more old 78s and back them up onto the computer. I had 3 discs with Jewish weddings from the early 50s on them. They all started with this really awful sounding organ and someone singing, a man or a woman. One of them ended in this beautifully distorted climax. It sounded so wonderful that I included it at the end of one of the RPM songs...I forget which one.

By the time I was done mixing it was already 10:30pm. I backed everything up on my external harddrive and listened to everything that I had: 12 songs, 31 minutes. It was a strange experience. Some of the material was surprisingly good or at least engaging. Some of it is sort of boring or undercooked. Oh well, I mean I didn't think that I everything I did this month would be worthwhile.

I might write and record one more song tomorrow...I think I need to write about Britney Spears losing her mind. I guess she shaved her head. I haven't seen any photos yet...

I need to start thinking about an album title/artwork/sequencing. I also need to master everything...so I really don't have a lot of time for writing and recording new songs. I must say, I'll be glad when this is over. It's really been occupying a large space in my brain. I've written and recorded 12 songs in 17 days! (To be fair, 2 tracks are under 1 minute.) What will I do with all the extra space (in my brain)?

On that note, I'm off to bed. Here's to a workaholic work ethic and a workaholic work ethic.

Workaholically,

Jesse Mank

Hussalonia founder, workaholic. stickler for details, devil worshipper, nonperel eater
Views: 373

Pretending it's yesterday and more time anxiety (Monday, 19 February 2007)

I kept putting off blogging last night, until eventually I woke up on the couch in the middle of the night, staring at a DVD menu. So lets pretend this blog is happening yesterday, because that's what it's going to cover.

Perhaps in spite of my super-productive Saturday, I woke up in an awful mood on Sunday. Nothing seemed to matter. I watched a movie ("The Illusionist"...meh) and somehow managed to get into a petty argument with Janet about blankets. I was so discouraged that I went back to bed to try and start the day over.

When I re-woke up, it was 3 in the afternoon. The very fact that it was so late already depressed me. I'm always so concerned about time, especially wasting it. I'm not always going to be young, or creative, or alive. What should I be doing right now? It's a sort of anxiety that doesn't really help if you're already feeling a little depressed. I fixed myself something to eat and while I was looking in the fridge, a song came into my head, and it was one my songs that I wrote for RPM, but I didn't remember seeing it in my list of 12 completed songs on Saturday. Which means that I forgot about a song! I went to the computer to check, and sure enough, I had missed a song in my messy folder of RPM mixes. That means I have 13 completed songs, not 12.

The recognition of this oversight cheered me up a little bit. I sat down and tried to write an up-tempo song. Here is my problem...I think I have too many slow songs, but the slow songs are good. I hate the fast songs. I don't want to include them! They're lame and weird and contrived. But no, I told myself that I wasn't going to edit. I was just going to write, record and release no matter what happened. So, to perpetuate this problem, I sat down and wrote a contrived up-tempo song. I hate it. It's called "Who will chronicle my descent into madness?" and it's about Britney Spears and me.

I didn't finish the recording. I just got so tired and it felt so empty and pointless. I stopped and turned on a DVD ("Down with love"). I fell asleep during the ending credits and well, that brings us to the beginning of our blog.

It's currently Monday (Presidents Day-here in the United States) and so I have the day off from school. Tomorrow as well, but I'm delegating tomorrow as a homework day. I guess I'll finish the Britney Spears song, but then maybe I should pull the plug on the songwriting. I only have 9 days left and I really should start mastering and getting artwork ready. I also have some school projects coming up that I should start focusing on. Besides, I don't think I have any energy left to do anything great this month. I really feel like this has wrung me dry like a rag. Too much production, not enough consumption.

Not that I wouldn't have loved a job in the Brill building in the 1950s/60s. If writing songs was my job, and I didn't have other responsibilities, I could definitely come into an office everyday and write songs for 8 hours. Especially if they weren't songs that I'd have to sing...and especially if I had a lyricist working with me. Wow, that would be beautiful.

Well, here's to a better day. If anybody who has been following these blog entries has any ideas for an album title, please do share! I was thinking of giving this project a human name (in the classic vein of Hussalonia titles). One of the potential names I had was "Professor Immanuel Hussalonia" or "Immanuel Rath Hussalonia" after the character in "The Blue Angel." He does, after all, descend into madness.

Love,

Professor Hussalonia

Views: 355

I decided to make TWO albums.

(Tuesday, 20 February 2007)

First of all, I burned my hand today...nothing serious...but it hurts. I was boiling water for tea and forgot about it. (I have a tendency to forget about things. I burned the last teapot to black) When I remembered, there was hardly any water left. I went to pour it and the lid was ajar and water came spilling out. I removed my hand as quick as I could, but some splashed on my pinky. I put ice on it and it's a real small burn, but it's still a burn. It won't impair my ability to do anything, it just hurts.

It being a holiday, I had nothing to do today. I finished my Britney Spears song ("Who will chronicle my descent into madness?") and took a break to shower and clean the apartment. I'd been concerned about my "album" I'm making here. There are about 8 songs that I like and 6 songs that I don't. I hate to waste material, but I feel funny "ruining" an album with songs I don't like on it. I bogged about it and a fellow RPMer suggested that I just include the songs that I like. It's a good idea, but I still hate wasting material. A lot of time went into those songs I hate!

So I came up with a solution. I'm going to make 2 albums.

You see, I only have to come up with 2 more songs that I like to complete the "good" album. Most of the songs on the "good" album are slow and sad or pretty. The songs that I don't like are all weird or experimental. And it's not that I really *hate* them, I just feel that they don't gel with the other songs. They would cheapen the record if I put them on all together. So, after I come up with 2 more "good" songs, I can either call the rest of the material an EP, or I could come up with 4 more experimental tracks and submit both for the RPM challenge. I still have a week after all. I like the idea of having 2 opposing records coming out of the same 28 days. The same thoughts, worries, pleasures culminating into 2 differing experiences.

I think this is a good solution, but it also creates more work for me. I'm feeling anxious about the amount of time that I've been spending doing this. There are books that I want to read. There are books that I have to read for school. I have a 7-page paper due next Monday. I feel that Janet has had it up to here with me and this project. I'm so tired of pushing myself, and yet my obsessive nature won't let me stop.

After I came to this decision, I fired up the equipment again and wrote and recorded an acoustic number called "This Goodbye Implies Forever." It's not the best thing I've ever done, but it will fit in nicely on the "good" record. That brings us to 9 songs for the record that matters. (I just stopped to relisten to the song, and I think it's really pretty. I'm

pleasantly surprised. Writing sad songs is so much easier for me. I could write a thousand sad songs and not exhaust my sadness.)

After I finished the song, our friend Symon came over and we ordered Chinese food and watched "Dog Day Afternoon" with Al Pacino. I had never seen it before and really enjoyed it. It's the sort of movie I could watch over again. After Symon left, I talked on the phone to my friend Brett who lives in Queens. I bitched about how whenever I think I'm close to finishing something, and freeing myself of an obligation, I pile on another. Every time I see a way out, I'm stacking the goddamn bricks over it. Whatever. I bitch, but I won't stop doing it. And if I gave up music, it would be something else...ships in a bottle or cabinet making or model airplanes. I need a project to keep me occupied or I'm designing my demise.

I've never kept a diary before, and so I thank the RPM challenge for giving me a taste of it. It's rather nice and I've been considering keeping it up after this is over in the form of a blog of some sort. It's cathartic and maybe a bit indulgent, but it gives your day a real sense of purpose if you have to file a report on it.

I have off from school tomorrow as well, and I hope to write and record another song, but I really have to do my homework as well. Really. No, really.

Attica!

Mr. Hussalonia
Views: 323

"There's good and bad (mmm mmm) in everyone" (Tuesday, 20 February 2007)

So now that I've decided to make 2 albums, (one good, one evil) I have renewed interest in the project. You see, the good one I'm excited about because, well, it's good. I like the songs. They're not perfect, but hey, I cranked them out. But now I'm especially excited about the bad record. I needed 4 songs to complete the bad record, and since I'm already dissatisfied with some of the material on it, I feel complete freedom to sabotage the record! It's like a "get out jail free" card. I'm allowed to make the shittiest album I could ever dream of! I've always been strangely attracted to artist's bad albums (McCartney in the 80s, Little Richard in the 70s especially). Part of me likes to kick a man while he's down, but then part of me sees it as a true glimpse of an artist. You can't really understand someone's greatness until you understand their weaknesses. Bad records are almost as mysterious as good records. What happens?

Rather than work on the 10th song needed to complete my good album, I set to work on a bad song today. It's called "Sweet Lucifer" and it's mostly instrumental with samples from a Christian radio show about satanic messages in rock music from the 80s. I found the samples on WFMU's website. The show really hits close to home, as I had attended a program of that nature as a child at a church. The details are sketchy in my head, but I don't remember my mother being there, and it was at some big evangelical mega church.

Very strange. It was advertised on the local rock station and there were tons of people there. I also remember later smashing rock records that had satanic messages in them at my mother's instruction. (Sadly, that was the fate of my "Plastic Ono Band" record.) My mother went through an ill-advised evangelical phase when I was young. The program really scared me...hearing the records being played backwards was terrifying as a child. Today, the program is hilarious to me. The show's host is downright paranoid about Satan sneaking messages into our heads. I remember being that paranoid while I was under the spell of Christianity. I was convinced that just one listen to "Stairway to Heaven" would open soul to Satan. I still get the chills when I hear the opening notes. Sorry if I'm currently offending the Christian majority out there. Nobody's persecuting anybody. I'll change the subject.

Anyway, I spent way more time on "Sweet Lucifer" that I would have liked, but I'm pleased with it. That's 7 down for the bad album! After that I showered, went for a walk, read for school and watched "The Prestige." It was okay. I liked seeing David Bowie as Tesla and Scarlett Johansson looked beautiful. When it was over I wrote and recorded another song (acoustic and voice only), loosely based on yesterday's viewing of "Dog Day Afternoon." I don't think it's a great song, but it's not terrible. It's called "Love you like a novelist." I don't know which album it will go on. I guess the good one, since it will fit in better there, but I'm not yet counting this song as the 10th song for the good album. I still think I have one more good song left in me. We'll see.

I'm going to really let loose and lose my mind for the remaining 3 songs on the bad album, though. I have an insatiable appetite for nonsense and non-sequiturs. This is a perfect opportunity to flex my Dadaist brain. No ideas for album titles yet. Should the 2 albums be considered companion pieces? Should their titles work together? Should I pray to Satan for guidance?

Views: 358

Spring is like a controlled substance and love is like a gun or a basket of kittens or both.

(Wednesday, 21 February 2007)

Let me begin by saying that it was so nice out in Buffalo today. For those of you in warm areas of the world right now, don't laugh, but it was 35 degrees Fahrenheit today. If you lived here, you'd understand. When February began it was like 8 degrees everyday with a wind-chill of -2 or lower. 35 seems like a summer day. The sun was out and snow started melting and everyone was out and smiling and walking around. The air smelled like life again! Sometimes I dream about living in a part of the world where there is no winter, but then every spring I'm reminded why I love the seasons. Spring brings pure EUPHORIA! It's sick! You feel like you drank 12 cups of coffee and you want to run around kissing everyone and falling in love with them and meeting their parents all the time. I know, I know, it only works because winter is so cruel and depressing and you're ready to kill yourself every February...but it's almost worth it for the spring mania that possesses you. Really. I don't use drugs, but if they could put spring into a pill, I'd do it. A lot.

Anyway, in addition to an early case of spring euphoria, I treated myself to an actual cup of coffee this afternoon which gave me the pep I needed to write and record my 10th song for the "good" album. It's called "I love the idea of you."

I have to say this. I used to refuse to write love songs. There are just so many already. Does the world need more? If I did write a love song, I would refuse to use the word love. It's just too easy. Well, I don't know if it was all those years of repressing that word out of my songwriting vocabulary, but now that I've allowed myself to use it, it feels so good. I don't want to get all hippy on you, but love is probably the best thing ever. It's better than pizza. It's better than Coca Cola. It's better than new sneakers. And don't get me wrong, I'm not idealizing it. I know how dangerous it is. It can be a real motherfucker...and that's why I think it's so great. You tell someone "I love you" and it's like shooting them in the face. It's crazy.

So, "I love the idea of you" was written without any drums or beats in it to help break up the album. Ditto with "This goodbye implies forever." For a while I was making beats and writing songs around it, and when you string the songs together, you start to see a pattern. 2 drumless songs was a great idea. At this writing, I'm very pleased with my first completed album this month. I hope to start mastering soon.

Now...the bad album. I finished up "Love you like a novelist" (added organ and back-up harmonies) and decided to throw it on the bad album. That leaves me with 2 more songs to write and record to finish it. Now that I'm finished with the good record, all the pressure is off and it should be a breeze finishing the other one. I can't believe that I will have written and recorded 20 tracks this month. There may be some doubting Thomases out there, thinking that I made 20 bullshit tracks of nonsense, but just wait and give it a listen. I really worked hard and neglected a lot of people and schoolwork this month in order to get so much work done. I'm not saying it's all brilliant, but I'll proudly stand behind it. Even the bad album, is not really bad. It's just a little esoteric.

Speaking of which, my fiancé asked to hear the "good" record today...which is remarkable in itself. Since we live together, she hears me writing and recording all the time and frankly speaking, I just don't impress her anymore. I don't blame her, really. I get sick of hearing my voice sometimes. So a few tracks into it, she says, "I don't know Jes, maybe you should think about working like this more often. I think this is some of your best work in a while. I think some of your other stuff sounds like you're trying too hard."

Hmmm. That was a real mixed compliment wasn't it? It hurt a little, but she's a smart girl with good taste and razor-sharp judgment. She may be somewhat right. I think I have benefited from the "shoot first, ask questions later" spirit of these recordings. And maybe when you try real hard at something, even if it's because it's real important to you, people pick up on it...and it's off-putting.

OK, wrap it up, Jesse. I will look into blog spaces this weekend. I've really enjoyed writing every night and the blogs keep getting longer and more revealing. It may be the

best (and cheapest) therapy I ever had. It seems there are a lot of people reading my posts and I want to thank you for caring. If I do decide to continue writing after this is over, I will provide a link in my last post. I hope some of you will follow me and we can grow old together.

Until tomorrow,

Jesse "Hussalonia" Mank

PS Bill, start recording! You can do it!

Views: 251

I've finally come up with a title. (Thursday, 22 February 2007)

I wish I were in a better mood to write my exciting news, but no dice. To quote one of my RPM songs, "I'm down and almost out."

I have titles for my 2 RPM albums:

"Instant Winner" and "Sorry Try Again"

They are inspired by an episode that I blogged about on my MySpace in January. I'm pleased with the way the titles work together, how they reference "pop" (or soda) bottles, and of course the speedy (or instant) nature of this project. "Instant Winner" is my A-list material and "Sorry Try Again" is (yeah, I'm sure you get it already) the rest.

When I came home from class today I just felt so defeated. I actually climbed into bed and went to sleep for a few hours. A part of it is just plain-old, senseless depression and a part of it is the fact I'm 30 years old and I'm still in school and I'm still battling the same demons and I'm still thinking about the same things I was the first time I was in college (and dropped out when I was 20). It gets pretty tiring being me. Whatever. I'll get over it.

When I got up I wrote a short paper for class tomorrow and, believe it or not, mastered "Instant Winner." So, it's done. I just need some artwork.

I have a 7 page paper to write over the weekend, so it doesn't look good for writing/recording time. I still have 2 songs to write and record for "Sorry Try Again."

I guess I'm going to have to create a second profile in order to register my 2nd album. I had emailed RPM headquarters to find out if you can register 2 albums, and they said that creating a 2nd profile (under a different name, i.e. Hussalonia2 or whatever) was the only way to do it.

I watched a terrific movie the other night: "A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints" There's a scene at about one hour and five minutes into the film that was so well done that it

brought tears to my eyes. I did all that I could to not burst into tears. Really, really well directed and shot.

Well, goodnight whole wide world. I probably won't be able to do any work tomorrow, but I might blog anyway.

Views: 332

Defending my ability to write/record two albums for RPM.

(Saturday, 24 February 2007)

As suspected, I did not do any RPM work on Friday. I worked on my paper, making great headway and then I had to DJ. I had a great night. I DJ'd right up to 3:30am...great crowd, very receptive to my eclectic tastes.

It is now Saturday afternoon and I just finished my paper, so proof-reading and minor adjustments aside, I have the rest of the weekend to write/record 2 more songs for "Sorry Try Again" and come up with artwork for the 2 records. The sun is out today. I think I'm having a good "hair day." I've been obsessively listening to side one of David Bowie's "Station to Station." All is well!

I think I've decided not to continue blogging after this is over. I'm not sure why I changed my mind. Maybe I'm just sick of it. Maybe I'll change my mind again. Who knows? Who cares?

Also, believe it or not, I wrote an entire album in January, but only demo'd it. I'll be heading into a studio on Monday with my friend Matt who plays drums to begin recording it. It's in some ways similar to "Marsupial Garamond Hussalonia"...4 chord, guitar-driven, pop songs...but this one will be less slick, more Paul Westerberg influenced. Looser. Louder. Dumber. I also recorded the bulk of an EP in December that I never got around to finishing. (Remember that I also recorded my song-for-song cover of Billy Joel's 1980 album "Glass Houses" in December as well.) It just needs some finishing touches. It's called "Welcome Home Winter," but I don't know how appropriate it is to release such an EP in March. I might just wait until next winter to release it. And...oh god...there are still 2 albums that I have been working on forever that I have no idea what to do with. So to those who might doubt my ability to write and record two albums in February, I think my track record speaks for itself. I am sick. I work too much.

Views: 193

I'm so ready to be done with this, but I'm not done yet.

(Sunday, 25 February 2007)

If you haven't been following my blog-o-rama, I've decided to make 2 albums of ten songs apiece. Ug!

I started getting a migraine headache on Saturday and so I decided that I would work on the artwork for the records. I had to stop for a few hours because we had dinner plans, but I was finished with the artwork when I went to bed...at 2 in the morning.

Sunday, the headache was still there. I rented some Aqua Teen Hunger force from Netflix, as I had never seen any and was curious ever since the Boston bomb thing. (We don't have cable.) So I basically sat in a state of head-throbbing comatose watching a milkshake, a meatball and a french fry do random stuff. I will say that even with a migraine, I thought the show was pretty funny.

The headache got so bad that I went back to bed. I still had 2 more songs to write and record for the 2nd album. This headache was not good news for me. The rest of the month is pretty tight schedule-wise. I had to finish these songs today.

When I re-awoke, the headache had mildly subdued. I went for a walk to get a newspaper and when I come home started working on a song. I'll be honest, at this writing, I don't remember what the song was about, or what it sounds like, but I know that I wrote and recorded a song. Oh right, it was a song about...well, anyway, I remember now...sort of. It's a somber track about these characters...kids...and they're all mixed up. Whatever.

At that point, I almost decided to just make a random noise track just to be technically finished. I also could have used a track that I scrapped and re-recorded for the 1st album. Instead I wrote and recorded another, really short, bossanova song called "Turn me on, dead man." It's sort of random, and could be considered a joke track, but at least it's not a noise track. I'm pretty busy tomorrow, but I'll have to mix them later on in the evening and maybe start mastering the 2nd album. (The first one is done.) I still have to design the tray cards also. I'm cutting it close, but it looks like I'll be able to mail them out Wednesday night. Somewhere in between I have a pretty lengthy take-home exam due Thursday.

That said, I'm out. I'm taking a serious vacation from writing/recording in March.
Views: 123

Watch me fizzle out and fade away (Monday, 26 February 2007)

I feel like I'm on automatic pilot right now. I just spent several hours doing really boring "behind the scenes" stuff...encoding MP3s, uploading files to my website, etc...

"Instant Winner" is all ready to go. It's uploaded to my site and will be available on the evening of February 28th.

I mixed the last 2 songs of "Sorry Try Again" today, but there just wasn't enough time to master the album. I'm going to try real hard to master it tomorrow night, which will be hard as I have 5 classes on Tuesdays and am effectively on campus for 11 hours straight.

I have a take home exam due Thursday and must start working on it soon! It's giving me anxiety that I haven't started it already.

I'm in a lousy mood.

Views: 106

My Last Blog (Wednesday, 28 February 2007)

Well, this about wraps it up for me. I just finished up my 2nd album and I'll be mailing both records out tomorrow.

I will be posting both of my records as free downloads on my website. (www.hussalonia.com go to the free EPs section) They should be up by Wednesday night.

I have to say that I am really tired right now and I wish I didn't have to go out on such a sour note. My last few blogs have not been much fun. I haven't been feeling well. I have a pain in my side that won't go away (I'm going to the doctor tomorrow) and I've been real tired and depressed. I'm a pretty moody guy anyway, and I think my blogs unfortunately reveal me as such. Thanks to all the people who have been reading anyway and leaving comments and sending me messages. It means a lot.

The RPM Challenge brought out the best and the worst in me, both as a person and an artist. My blogs and the two records I made certainly reflect this. (I love "Instant Winner." I hate "Sorry Try Again.") I'm really glad that I participated, but then I'm really glad that the month is over. It has really taken its toll on me and my personal (and academic) life. Nevertheless, I do have to say that this project will probably change the way I work, and for that I am grateful. Will you see me here next year? No way.

Thanks again, everyone. Best wishes to you all. I look forward to hearing your records.

Jesse Mank
Hussalonia founder
www.hussalonia.com