

TRACK BY TRACK: **MAX ALLARD | MARCH MAXNESS**

These notes were written about the pieces as they were written and recorded in March 2021, and we have left them in Max's first person narrative, although edited for length.

Day 1

There was no preconception of starting with the piano, but I was feelin' the piano, so I decided to go with it. A lot of piano players I'm listening to right now (like Ólafur Arnalds and Nils Frahm) use felted piano, and I put some felt in my own piano earlier this year. I love the quality of this, I like the extra noise and buzzes and everything else that comes with it.

Day 2

Today's composition is on the electric guitar. It started as a chord melody idea, and I later decided to add a section with a whole bunch of layers. I used to write a lot of music on electric guitar with various pedals, and it was fun to revisit writing with the loop pedal and my Telecaster.

Day 3

Here's a banjo tune. I started experimenting with arpeggiating a chord progression, and the tune began to write itself. I knew pretty early on that I wanted to give the harmonium a surprise appearance at the end, and I knew exactly the melody I would play with it and the vibe that I would set. I really like the European sound of the harmonium juxtaposed against the American sound of the bluegrass banjo. I also really like the fact that this is a driving banjo tune but with an overall melancholic and bittersweet feel. This tune features my brother Otto on mandolin, and me on the rest of the instruments: banjo, harmonium, guitar, and electric bass.

Day 4

Today's piece is a guitar composition that I wrote in the morning in just about 15 minutes or so. It features my Martin Dreadnaught and my Martin 000. The 000 is 'High Strung' or in 'Nashville Tuning,' which means that the lowest for strings of the guitar are tuned an octave higher than normal. I overdubbed the high strung guitar over the regularly tuned guitar to get a dreamy and sparkly effect. I'm basically trying to achieve what a 12 string guitar would do with its strings in octaves. I also added some electric bass at the ending for extra depth.

Day 5

Today I have another banjo tune for you. I decided to begin it solo, and then have the "band" join in. I added myself playing two guitars: The Martin Dreadnaught, and the 'High Strung' 000 Martin (same combo as yesterday's tune, but in a pretty different context today). Then, I added harmonium and bass.

Day 6

Today's composition is an experimental, atmospheric, sometimes wistful, sometimes groovy, but hopefully overall interesting piece of music. I experimented, and I ended up using a lot of different instruments: acoustic guitar, high strung guitar, electric guitar, electric bass, drum & brush, banjo and xylophone. It was fun to go crazy with all these instruments and possibilities. It goes through many different feels and moods in its brief 2 minutes.

Day 7

Today I'm going a little bit simpler with a solo blues guitar piece. Of course, at times it deviates from conventional blues harmony, so maybe it's more of the Max Blues, but it's certainly inspired by finger style delta blues.



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Recorded and mixed by

Max Allard

Design by

Otto Allard

Release Date: March 1, 2023

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Day 8

Today I have a solo banjo piece for you (first one in this series!). I wrote it in sort of a classical style. To me, it sounds like a Prelude.

Day 9

Today I have a solo guitar experiment for you. This one was a bit of a pain on the fingers. Also, apologies for the noisy string squeaks.

Day 10

Today I have another interesting experiment. I feel like the arrangement is not completely finished, but the tune is there. The ending was made up on the spot to try to find a way to end the tune. It was getting late, and I owed you a tune!

Day 11

Today we have a piece of music that feels to me like my current mood: exhausted, but relatively happy. The maraca makes its first appearance in this one. That, and all of the instruments are played by me.

Day 12

Today I have a dramatic piano piece for you. It's very dark and stormy sounding, but ironically it was a beautiful sunny day when I recorded it.

Day 13

Today I have a solo guitar piece for you, I spent the day in the backseat of a car, as my family and I are driving to North Carolina from Chicago. We are currently about halfway, staying in a Holiday Inn in Charleston, West Virginia. The most remarkable thing about our hotel room is the loud screeching of the freight trains as they go by. I hope I was still able to write an interesting piece. We set up my recording equipment in the hotel room, and I played a few takes before I got a good one for you.

Day 14

I spent most of the day in the car again, but this time the reward was a beach house in Topsail, North Carolina. I picked up the guitar and started writing this fiddle tune inspired tune, if you will. My brother Otto started playing mandolin along with me. We worked up an arrangement, then sat down around our condenser microphone and started recording single track takes. I like the raw and fresh quality and that you can hear us breathing.

Day 15

Today I have a solo banjo piece for you. I spent the day in Topsail, North Carolina walking on the beach and around the town, biking, and playing music in the sun. It's the first beach vacation I've had in 15 years. I'm not really a beach person, but the experience is fairly unique and interesting for me. I even got a sunburn, which I don't get often.

Day 16

We've crossed the halfway point! Today I have a solo guitar composition for you. I sat down while looking at the Atlantic ocean and started writing this one, it wasn't all written there, but that's where it started.



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Day 17

Today I have something very different. This is an electric piano piece. I decided to sample the ocean waves crashing for this piece. Right now, and for most of the trip, it has been relatively overcast. I feel like the moody piano sound with the waves sample captures that perfectly.

Day 18

Hey folks, today I have a solo guitar piece for you. I started it last night in an alternate tuning I had just come up with. I recorded it this morning and decided to sample the birds out the window for the end of the piece.

Day 19

Today I have a nice surprise. Since my family and I are staying here in Topsail, NC with my grandparents, uncle and cousins, I decided to write something to feature my cousin Noah Allard, who's a very talented trombone player. I also decided to include my brother Otto to play some Venetian-esque tremolo harmonies on mandolin.

Day 20

Today I have a guitar tune for you. I wrote it while gazing at the Atlantic Ocean...well, the B part anyway. I wrote the B part first and immediately knew that it had to be a second part of a fiddle tune like piece of music. I couldn't imagine it being anything else. I knew the vibe I wanted for the first part. I played around with A part ideas until a strong melody came forward.

Day 21

I know it's very late. I was actually up before the sunrise and took a bike ride for my last morning in Topsail. I spent the rest of the day in the car with my family, driving from the coast of North Carolina to Parkersburg, West Virginia. We arrived here just after sunset and could barely find an open restaurant. Apparently it's a sleepy town on a Sunday. We finally found a pizza place (named, surprisingly The Pizza Place) and brought a pretty delicious pan pizza back to our hotel room. After I finally got some food in me, I wrote this guitar tune. I think it captures the sleepy feeling of the night, the town and me.

Day 22

Here's another composition that's posting just under the wire. Today we drove to Oberlin, Ohio where I toured the beautiful campus of Oberlin College & Conservatory. I recently learned that I was accepted into their composition program. There were no official tours, but we just got a map and walked around to see what we could see from the outside. It was a perfect day in terms of the weather, and we walked the entire campus back and forth. My phone tells me we walked 7 miles. I was pretty spent when we got to the hotel, both my body and my brain were tired, and this is what came out. It's a solo banjo piece, and that's something I would normally spend a really long time crafting. But this one came out pretty quickly. I hope you will still like it.

Day 23

Today I have a solo banjo piece for you. I am back home in Chicago after visiting the Oberlin campus again this morning, but I wrote this piece while sitting on an Oberlin park bench before we left. It was a very nice day and I decided to play outside.



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Day 24

Today I have an electric guitar piece for you. I wrote a lot of this while recording it, so it's sort of an impromptu piece. A lot of it feels chaotic with its polyrhythms and guitar harmonies. I think it represents how I feel, balancing March Maxness with everything else in my life. In the ending, I play a wine glass with a consistent pitch, and whistle wavering, interfering pitches around it. These interfering high frequencies cause a phenomenon called 'beats.' I'm not going to try to explain the science thoroughly, but when you listen to the ending with the wine glass and the whistle, you can also hear some lower pitches.

Day 25

Today I have an experiment. It has banjo, bass, and the slide whistle makes an appearance around the end. It started as only an A part, and I ended up jamming on this modal, bluesy constant C7 bass line for the rest of it. I don't want to spoil some of the tune's surprises, so I won't say more.

Day 26

Today we have another experimental piece. It started as one little acoustic guitar seed, then I sat down to record it hoping to get struck by more inspiration to expand upon the idea. I laid down the guitar seed with a harmony and added bass. I later wrote a melody on glockenspiel, added a glockenspiel harmony, added harmonium, banjo and wrote an ending.

Day 27

Well, I spent way too long working on this one, but I think it was worth it. I'm excited for you to hear it. I think it's one of my favorites from this month.

Day 28

Today's piece is inspired by middle eastern folk music. It revolves around one mode, the same one used famously in the Dick Dale tune 'Misirlou,' which is actually a melody taken from an old Turkish tune, if memory serves me.

Day 29

Today I have a mostly mandolin tune for you. This was a request from patron (and my former teacher and sometimes collaborator) Matt Brown, who asked me to compose something on mandolin, since the mandolin is not something I've ever studied, and Matt always likes to throw down a challenge. I think you'll like this tune if you like fancy tremolo, and incredibly funky bass solos.

Day 30

Today we have a slightly country, slightly tropical rock thingy. I decided to mimic the pedal steel sound with a clay slide on my Telecaster. I'm pretty happy with how close it scores to the sound of the pedal steel.

Day 31

It's the last day of March Maxness! For the final piece I wanted something with a lot of different sounds and styles. I used banjo, guitar, high strung guitar, Telecaster, bass, and harmonium in this track. It has elements of bluegrass, country, pop, middle eastern music, and European music.

Thank you for following along with this whole series. It has been a challenge and a privilege and a joy to do it for you.



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