Audiovisual Techniques for
Scoring Home Movies

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Initial Research Question:
What can home videos and the practice of collecting, watching, editing, and scoring them with samples reveal about the self and the culture it comes from?

This project began with the archive - over thirty hours of my family's home video footage, shot between 1996 and 2010, that my father digitised and then left alone on a hard-drive. My first step into the archive was to collect the "scenes" that I was a part of. A narcissistic endeavour indeed, I was excessively interested in my own image. I wished to single out myself and my actions, either individually or in relation to the rest of my family. And so I trimmed out scenes that I was excluded from, such as my sisters' concert recitals and theatre performances. Once I had a collection of self-populated scenes, I sifted through them over the course of several weeks, each day picking out different scenes to work with, or "play with," a term I will use throughout this essay to suggest the playful and experimental nature of the practice.

For each scene or collection of scenes, I made an audiovisual work. In the end, the project became a practice and I had eighteen distinct works. In some, I edited the music for the video. In others, I edited the video to the music. And in others, I did both. For every work, I separated the original audio from the video, sometimes weaving them back together. The separation allowed for many moments of audiovisual "mismatch" (Wollen, 2002), imbuing the practice with a sense of tension, or yearning - parts longing to be made whole again. In all of the works, I recorded vocal commentary of my process, sometimes including the commentary in the final audio track.[1] Throughout the practice of making eighteen individual audiovisual works, I identified nine audiovisual techniques that were applied and employed throughout. This essay details those techniques and then discusses the theories that informed them.

The first technique I have termed **"piano-led scoring" - the video dictates piano melodies, which provide the foundation for the music and sound design.** In this technique, I watch a home video sequence and write a piano melody based off of the action in the video. The intent is to use the video's audiovisual information plus my memory to translate a feeling via notes on the piano. For example, in *Jumping in Leaves Sequence*,[2] I wrote the piano melody, including its tempo, based off of the excited jumping leg movements of one of my sisters while she waits her turn to jump in the leaf pile. The remainder of the musical and sound track is then built upon these initial piano parts. In this technique, the piano melody might change its nature during the course of the work to signify a shift in feeling or to reveal "something about a character's psychological condition" (Levinson, 2006, pp.492-493). This technique may also include textual references to the "story" of the video sequence. For example, *Piano Recital Sequence* includes a key change when my piano teacher, whom I disliked, sits down next to me. The melody then brightens when my sister, a companion, comes into the frame. The textual guidance of the story is communicated via the voiceover commentary in the work's audio track.[3] Other works that employ this technique, albeit without textual guidance, are *Nova Scotia Sequence*, which includes a melodic transcription from guitar to piano[4], and *OuterBanks Sequence*, which features improvisational piano playing responding in real time to the images on screen.[5]

The second technique I have termed **"auto-sampling" - grabbing bits of the original audio/video and using them as samples in the audiovisual work.** This is perhaps the most frequent technique employed throughout the practice. It is a way to use the audiovisual work to score itself. Within this technique, I comb through the home video edit and collect audio bits to use as sample sources for percussive elements. I add these elements to a MIDI drum rack or sampler in Ableton Live and use them like a drum hit while constructing the audio track of the work. The

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[1] All commentary can be accessed in the text descriptions of each work on my website, linked here and at the end under "**Webpage Links**"

[2] 00:03 timestamp from *Video for Performance (16-minutes)* - see "**List of Submitted Videos**" at the end; the remainder of references show timestamps only

[3] 00:26

[4] 01:24

[5] 01:38

audio bits can be any sound from the original audio, but are most often vocal sounds and phrases - cries, pleas, yells, songs, commands, questions, etc. These audio samples may also appear as synchronised visual samples in the final work. For example, in *Table Dancing Sequence*, my dad's fist pumping "YEAH!" reappears throughout the work as both an interpolated audio and visual sample.[6] Occasionally, I modulate these audio sampled bits by pitching them up or down, or by adding effects like delay or reverb. For example, at at the end of *New Bikes Sequence*, my dad's vocal samples are pitched down and processed through reverb and delay, giving them rhythm as well as a sense of distance.[7] This technique engendered the exercise of making vocal drum racks for the six members of my immediate family, including myself. Each drum rack contains bits of each person's voice. These drums racks were then used to construct various percussion tracks. For example, the audio track of *Hot Tub Sequence* features vocal samples from several of these drum racks overlapping with one another.[8] *Basketball Bouncing Sequence* utilises a similar drum rack technique with the audio of bouncing basketballs to create the initial percussive rhythm of the musical track.[9]

The third technique I have termed **"bringing original audio forward" - letting the audio of the original video come through to the foreground of the work's musical track.** Thus, the audio of the work periodically synchronises to what the listener is watching, and the elusive link between the audio and visual is made. For example, in *Two Thousand Sequence*, my dad, holding the camera, can be heard asking me in a pitched up voice, "You see any you like Colt?". I look at him and respond, but the original audio has already been cut.[10] For just a moment, we hear what we are watching. Thus, the audience must be vigilant in order to establish the matches between the audio and visual. Some connections are intended to be rare and dubious, while others are clear and overt. For example, at the end of *Ice Skating Sequence*, original audio is re-united to a video clip that had previously been separated.[11]

The fourth technique I have termed **"drum sample scoring" - using drum "break" samples and drum "pack" samples to structure the audiovisual score.** This technique involves collecting pre-recorded drum breaks, often two to eight bars of an old record, as well as using sampled drum packs from Ableton Live to make drum beats. The breaks and beats are then looped and attached to the video track, which may be one continuous "scene" or three to five separate but related "scenes." Thus, each visual scene will call for a new drum loop, and vice versa. *Fantasy Island Sequence* does well to demonstrate this. The penultimate "scene" of the Himalaya-style ride, which includes a drum beat I programmed using a sample pack, gives way to the final Ferris Wheel "scene," which includes a looped two-bar drum break sample.[12] The distinct drum loops provide the foundation for the rest of the music and sound to build upon.

The fifth technique I have termed **"scoring with my library music" - using existing music from my iTunes library to score the home video**. When applying this technique, I choose music that was released or re-released during the year that the home video was shot. *House Demolition Sequence* exemplifies this technique by using two songs from my music library that were released in 2004 - Kanye West's "All Falls Down" and "Still Tippin'" by Mike Jones.[13] The songs progressively slow and pitch down as the video track speeds up. By using my third technique -

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[6] 02:17
[7] 02:43
[8] 02:57
[9] 03:15
[10] 03:32
[11] 03:45
[12] 03:48
[13] 04:18

bringing original audio forward - the pitched-up sound of the original video becomes audible at sporadic moments, crescendoing toward the end of the work before the final silence.

  The sixth technique can be called **"sampling onscreen songs" - using songs that are played or displayed in the original home videos as sample sources.** Here I am using Michele Chion's definition of onscreen as "a diegetic sound whose physical source is visible on screen and corresponds to a present and visible diegetic reality" (Chion and Gorbman, 2019, p.208). Thus, I identify the song or melody that is playing onscreen and re-create or re-use a recorded version of it as a sample source for a new musical composition. This technique is similar to a remix. For example, in *Big Shirt Christmas Sequence*, the original video shows my sisters singing along to the song "Maybe" from the 1992 film *Annie*.[14] I downloaded a few different recorded versions of "Maybe" as sources for samples. These samples, along with a programmed drum beat, formed the first components of the musical composition. For another work, *Mr. Saxophone Sequence*, I remixed a saxophone melody that I was playing in the original home video to create the basis for the rest of the musical composition.[15] In *Boy with a Video Camera*, the original home video reveals the piano sheet music for the song "Rubber Duckie" from *Sesame Street*.[16] I used the image of this sheet music to write the piano melodies and harmonies for the musical composition.[17] I then built up the rest of the tracks from these, sampling bits of the original home video audio as well as a recorded version of "Rubber Duckie" that I downloaded from YouTube.[18]

  In some works, I combine techniques five and six to create the musical composition by using, as sample sources, songs from my library that were released or re-released the same year that the home video was shot. For example, *Dancing in Sweatbands Sequence* features samples from "Car Wash" by Rose Royce and "The Zephyr Song" by The Red Hot Chilli Peppers as the basis for its two-part musical composition.[19] *Basketball Bouncing Sequence* uses samples from several songs in my iTunes library from 1997, including four The Notorious B.I.G songs ("Notorious Thugs," "#! *@ You Tonight (feat. R. Kelly)," "N***as Bleed," and "Ten Crack Commandments"), "Midnight Flower" by Four Tops, and "President House (Acapella)" by DJ Roland Clark & Urban Soul. Bits and samples from all are taken to build up the musical composition.[20]

  The seventh technique, which is more of a visual technique, can be termed **"screen recorded interpolation" - screen recording the creative process from my laptop and displaying it in place of, on top of, or next to the home video edit**. This display might include the process of selecting home videos from the digital archive or of composing the audiovisual work - from sample selection to composition to visual edits within the DAW (Digital Audio Workstation). Thus, the screen recording shows a mix of different digital systems that I am working with while creating: the laptops's Finder, Ableton Live, and Adobe Premiere Pro. These digital syntaxes are then juxtaposed via screen recording with the aesthetic of the home video. The interpolation of media shows a process of reprogramming analog video footage though digital apparatus and composing music digitally with sampled sounds. Sometimes the audience can hear the audio of the screen recording, such as in the beginning of *New Bikes Sequence*.[21] In other works, such as *Mr. Saxophone Sequence*, the entire video is a screen recording of composing audiovisually in Ableton Live, in which different positions on Ableton's "grid" correlate to different scenes of the home video.[22] In *Big Shirt*

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[14] 05:27

[15] 05:35

[16] Written and arranged by Jeff Moss and Joe Raposo in 1970

[17] 06:56

[18] This was the only home video sequence I found in which I am holding the camera, thus giving the work its title.

[19] 07:00

[20] 08:55

[21] 09:49

[22] 10:40. See also **IMAGE 1** at the end under "**Images**"

Christmas Sequence, the screen recording of the work's creative process, compressed down to the work's duration, blocks the view of the original home videos.[23] It is as if the process is forcing itself onto, or disrupting, the product that it is creating. The process is getting "in the way" of the product, or perhaps it is the other way around.

The eighth technique can be called **"scoring a still" - choosing a still or frame from the home video and scoring it with music and with audio from the still's video source.** This technique originated from the questions - "at its most basic function, what is scoring?" and "if scoring is associated with the moving image, what happens when the image is still?". From these questions came attempts to score a still from a home video edit. At first, for *Kids Breakfast Sequence,* I took a still by screenshooting the home video and then screen-recorded the process of making the still "move" by using my laptop's trackpad to zoom in, out, and around the image. I then imported this screen-recorded video into Ableton Live and used the directional keys on my keyboard to move back and forth between the video frames. The movements were played in rhythm with the beat of the soundtracked song - "Spontaneity" by Bahamadia - which was chosen in accordance with audiovisual technique five. Additionally, audio from the original home video was cut into the musical track, as described in technique three.[24] Subsequently, in the work *Hot Tub Sequence,* I first "datamoshed" a home video scene by deleting critical frames (called i-frames) so that part of the video's audiovisual information was lost, resulting in a glitch-like effect. This was my way of "effacing" or "digitally destroying" the home video. Once the video was datamoshed, I screenshot a still from the video and scored this. The entire datamoshed video appears at the end of the work to show the audience the source of the still.[25] As in *Kids Breakfast Sequence*, audio from the original video was used in the musical composition as a way to encourage the audience to visualise the scene of the home video. A similar motivation was also employed in *Jumping in Leaves Sequence.[26]* However, in this work, the still is black (the video before it begins), and thus the audience only has the audio track (with sung descriptions of actions in the video) to help them imagine the visual scene, which isn't revealed until the end of the work.

The ninth, and final, technique I have termed **"scoring by MIDI conversion" - scoring a home video by converting its original audio into MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) information and then assigning digital instruments to the MIDI tracks.** In Ableton Live, one can translate an audio file into MIDI information by converting either its harmony, its melody, or its drums into a new MIDI track. When one chooses to MIDI convert a non-musical audio file, such as dialogue from a home video, Ableton Live encodes the sounds into MIDI information as musical notes or drum rhythms. Once the audio information is in MIDI form, one can choose digital instruments (sampled or synthesised) to play the assigned notes and/or rhythms. Such a process feels like a "direct" score, for it represents the sounds of the original audio, albeit within a new medium and technology. We could also say that it is a type of sound remediation, as if the original audio were transposed from one instrument (in most cases the voice) to another instrument. Such a technique makes musical what may previously have seemed to be non-musical. A home video scene of a family at at the kitchen table can take on the feel of free jazz improvisation via a translation of "sound" into "music."

Painting Pumpkins Sequence best represents this technique. For this work, I converted the audio of the home video into MIDI by melody and by drums. For the melody, I assigned to the MIDI information three different digital instruments - a grand piano playing any MIDI notes between C-2 to D#2, alto sax playing any MIDI notes between D#2 and E3, and alto flute playing

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[23] 11:28. See also **IMAGE 2**
[24] 12:40
[25] 13:49
[26] 14:18

any MIDI notes between E3 and G8. For the drum track, I assigned the two-note MIDI pattern to two sampled instruments - a closed hi hat and a bass drum. For both melody and drums, all instruments play the notes assigned to them by the converted MIDI information, resulting in an irregular and unpredictable musical composition. Occasionally, the original audio from the home video is made audible so that the audience has the opportunity to make the connection between the pitched musical notes and the voices and sounds in the video.[27] In addition to this technique striving for a type of "direct" scoring, it also allows the interface, in this case the DAW, to help score the home video on its own. Such a process elucidates the inextricable collaboration between myself and Ableton Live - as if the software is acting as composer in writing the music, and I am acting as orchestrator in determining which instrument plays which part of the composition. Like technique two, this is another way of using the audiovisual work to score itself.

Just as many of the nine techniques overlap with one another, the theory that informed the techniques intermingle and converge with one other. The remainder of the essay discusses these theories and suggests their relation to my audiovisual practice. The first part explores the home video as a medium and filmic practice. The second discusses auto-ethnography as a form of cultural and personal research. The third explains musical sampling as an inter-temporal dialogue. The fourth looks into the differences between traditional film scoring and music video. Each section makes reference to the others and to my practice. The final section summarises the practice in terms of an embodied performance, remediated into a physical form.

For the remainder of this essay, I will use the term "home movie" to include both film and video made within the "home mode" of communication, a term introduced by Richard Chalfen (Chalfen, 1987) and elaborated on by James Moran (Moran, 2002). While the technical differences between film and video are significant, this essay chooses to forego their discussion to instead examine several general features of the moving image within the home mode, which Chalfen describes as a "pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centred around the home" (Chalfen, 1987, p.8).

Such communication has been recorded, watched, and studied since the creation of the first motion picture cameras at the beginning of the 20th century. It could be argued elsewhere that the very first movies were, indeed, home movies. In our current century, home movie scholarship has surfaced within film and cultural studies, converging into books such as *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Moran, 2002), *Mining the Home Movie* (Ishizuka and Zimmerman, 2007) and *Amateur Filmmaking* (Rascaroli, Monahan and Young, 2014). In the introduction to their collection of essays on amateur filmmaking, Rascaroli, Monahan and Young argue that recent times have produced a "greater emphasis on the importance of micro-histories and on alter-native, non-mainstream, private and communal practices of memorialisation," which has invigorated analysis of home movies and amateur film (Rascaroli, Monahan and Young, 2014, p.1).

The appeal and contemporary relevance of home movies have been described by many, including Rascaroli, Monahan and Young, who praise their preservative power and their "ephemeral, private, marginal and personal nature" (Rascaroli, Monahan and Young, 2014, p.3). Jeffrey Ruoff has written about the inextricable link between home movies and the past, which ties them to childhood. He writes that because they are "viewed as traces of a receding past and imbued with nostalgia, home movies are typically regarded as among the most valuable of family possessions" (Ruoff, 1991, p.14). We could ask ourselves what is it about the past and its documentation that we value so much? When I asked my father why he documented so many hours of our family life, he responded, "I wanted you to be able to see where you came from…it's

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[27] 14:46

something that I never had." It is possible that my current audiovisual practice is a filial fulfilment of that wish. Perhaps the past reveals some things that can help us in the present; perhaps home movies can upgrade our perceptions. Might working with them in the present change the meaning of the past?

Fred Camper has contributed several significant theories to home movie scholarship, citing the peculiar filmic techniques of home movies and their revelations into how we "see" each other. Camper writes that "the home movie possesses a degree of randomness not present in more polished forms…it is indeed the combination of individual intentionality and technical lack of control that gives most home movies their peculiar flavour" (Camper, 1986, p.11). The peculiarities of filming methods - jump cuts, unpredictable camera placements, voiceover narration, rapid camera movements and zoom actions, and changing exposure and focus - can be revelatory. For Camper, they may help uncover "the attitudes that adults have about themselves, each other, their homes, family events, and their children" (Camper, 1986, p.10). Camper's point is that it is not just the past, but the way that the past was filmed that can expose our interpersonal perspectives. Thus, if we are interested in studying people, their views, and their culture, then looking to home movies could be invaluable. In Camper's words: "it would be hard to imagine a richer source to mine than these primary creations of "the people" themselves" (Camper, 1986, p.10).

Such an emphatic declaration encourages the process of extracting cultural understandings from home movies. Richard Chalfen has elaborated on this ethnographical impetus, suggesting that home movie cameras "may be understood as tools that enable ordinary people to represent an insider's point of view of society in culturally appropriate ways" (Chalfen, 1986, p.104). Within this understanding, home movies present specific "versions of the world" (Chalfen, 1986, p.103) that reflect the society from which they are made, perhaps similar to how grains of sand reflect the universe from which they come. For example, most home movies often present only the "good" and never the "bad" sides of life. Chalfen argues that these constructed world views affirm pleasure while suppressing pain (Chalfen, 1986, p.105). We could understand such conditioned constructions as, for example, reflections of capitalistic advertising culture and/or forerunners to today's social media culture. By examining our own home movies, we may discover more about the cultures that we come from.

The home movie might reveal much about the cultural relationship between its makers and its subjects, in most cases between parents and their children. Camper addresses this dynamic in his observation: "there is a sense in which the children of home movies are seen by the camera/parent not as human beings, but as objects and images, as appearances to be preserved rather than as whole persons with their own independent psyches" (Camper, 1986, p.11). Children are often asked to perform for the camera (parent) in service of the recording. What happens, we might ask, to the child's sense of self? Does the child exist only for the camera? Does her existence as a whole being become seen only in terms of the image that is made of her? (Camper, 1986, p.12). Camper suggests that it does, that such an existential experience is a characteristic of the home movie, as it is of modern mass culture (Camper, 1986, p.12).

At the outset of my own audiovisual practice, I found that I was watching my family's home movies through the eyes of my parents. After completing the eighteen audiovisual works, I find that I am now seeing and hearing these home movies through my own practice. The evolution is a type of self-fashioning or self-making. First, I am coming to better know myself and the culture I come from by watching the home movies and reflecting on them. Second, I am coming to better know myself and my culture by establishing my own audiovisual practice and personal point of view, which may override that of my parents. Similar to when a snake sheds an old skin, my practice is an attempt to shed the skin of another's formulation, or image, of myself. Such a process is continual.

Whether its our own or someone else's, the experience of watching any home movie is a strange one. There is a sense for the viewer of constantly moving in and out of the world that the movie constructs. Camper beautifully elucidates this experience -

> When a character stares directly into the camera, he also stares out of the screen at the viewer, and in doing so breaks the spell of illusion, the sense one is watching a world separate from oneself. The movements and gestures that accompany such gazes in home movies contribute to this rupture. But the rupture is rarely complete; the gaze is not unvarying. Other movements, other positions, occur, so that one is aware of a constant oscillation between a represented world contained within a series of film frames and those moments in which the very borders of the frame appear to collapse into a particular personage. Such films are constantly leaping out of themselves, and then settling back into the mode of simple recording. (Camper, 1986, p.13)

Similar to the movie's behaviour, when I watch myself on home movie, there is a sense of "leaping out" of myself and settling back in. Thrust toward memories that I don't remember, I am observing a self that is familiar but not absolute. It must be "me," yet "he" is always changing and morphing. As such, there are constant ruptures - between past and present; between myself and other; between film and reality; between how I am mediated and how I experience the world; between seeing myself and being myself. Such ruptures call to mind Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories on the "mirror stage" of human development, during which the infant *misrecognises* its reflected image as itself instead of as a projection of itself (influenced by the desires of others), producing an alienated and limited sense of "me" (Johnston, 2023). In its misrecognition of self, the infant begins to identify with its reflection, and its ego begins to develop as an "effect of images" (Mambrol, 2016). From this, we can understand how the tendency for the home movie to enforce its subjects' mediated image may strengthen an individual's identification with his own projection.

One way to extricate this limited sense of self is by playing with the home movies. Through my practice, not only may I shed my parents' fashioning (ego-building) of myself, but I may also come to understand that I am more than my image. In other words, that my image is only an image. Through the audiovisual techniques described above, I may change the meaning of my imaged self; I might remix the past, and remediate the memories. And if I am a product of my culture and my family, then as a product, I must be non-static, ever-becoming and only partially-projected.

Perhaps another way to extricate a repressed sense of self is through autoethnography. We can look to autoethnography to help us conceptualise the self as a process of becoming within its culture. In their essay titled 'Autoethnography: An Overview,' Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner define autoethnography as an "approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2001, p.1). They continue their overview by writing, "a researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography…as a method, autoethnography is both process and product" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2001, p.1). By this definition, autoethnography can fit into the larger body of practice research.

In their book, *Music Autoethnographies: Making Autoethnography Sing / Making Music Personal*, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Carolyn Ellis summarise autoethnography as an "autobiographical genre that connects the personal to the cultural, social, and political." They

explain that autoethnographic projects are distinguished by a "focus on intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation in the subject matter one is exploring" (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009, p.7). The role of autoethnographers is compared to that of a camera lens:

> Autoethnographers look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009, p.8)

Heewon Chang elaborates on the role of the autoethnographer to highlight the inextricable link between the personal with the cultural and the self with the other. After examining the self in its cultural context, Chang writes that "autoethnographers hope to gain a cultural understanding of self and others directly and indirectly related to self" (Chang, 2008, p.47). One goal is for autoethnographers to use personal experience to "illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in doing so, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2001, p.4). The autoethnographic process recognises that the self is a result of its culture and the culture a result of its many selves. In gaining a better understanding of herself, the autoethnographer should gain a better understanding of her culture.

There are various forms and approaches to autoethnography, including reflexive ethnographies, layered accounts, interactive interviews, co-constructed narratives, and personal narratives (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2001). One approach is through music. Ellis and Bartleet recognise the inherent similarities between music and autoethnography - "at the heart of both is the desire to communicate engaging and personal tales, through music and words, which inspire audiences to react, reflect, and, in many cases, reciprocate" (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009, p.7). Perhaps musicians can use autoethnography to better express and understand their own music-making experiences. Per the subtitle of their book, music has the ability to make autoethnography sing (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009). Such a metaphor can open up the creative possibilities between music and autoethnography, where one is constantly influencing the other.

I would argue that another approach is through home movies, through scoring and sampling, as detailed by the audiovisual techniques above. This could perhaps be called "creative autoethnography" or "practice autoethnography" or "audiovisual autoethnography." This is a form of autoethnographical research in which the output and theory are not written, but presented audiovisually. The output reveals the results of research into the self and its culture, fulfilling objectives of autoethnography in an audiovisual format.

There are many films that have successfully done this using home movies, narrative text, music, and sound. These include, among others, Jonas Mekas's *Reminisces of a Journey to Lithuania* (1972), Michelle Citron's *Daughter Rite* (1978), Daniel Reeves's *Obsessive Becoming* (1995), Alan Berliner's *The Sweetest Sound* (2001), and Annie Ernaux and David Ernaux-Briot's *The Super 8 Years* (2022). Such films combine personal experience with home movie footage to illustrate and understand cultural experience. The filmmakers' research into themselves reveals much about the societies from which they come. The results of their research are then presented audiovisually, much like a cinematic essay (Berliner).

In place of one long "essay," my practice takes the form of many short "essays" - little audiovisual works that act like experiments, playing with different ideas and techniques. As discussed, this audiovisual practice relies heavily on the musical practice of digital sampling, a

technique most frequently used by hip-hop musicians, producers, and beat makers. Sampling involves collecting bits of past records and putting them onto a sampler to be played alongside other sampled bits and instruments. In his seminal 1985 essay, 'Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative,' John Oswald theorises the sampler's essence as a "recording, transforming instrument…simultaneously a documenting device and a creative device" (Oswald, 1985). The sampler documents a previously recorded sound while creating for that sound a new context, another musical home. Hanif Abdurraqib, author of the book *Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to A Tribe Called Quest* describes sampling within hip-hop as "creating a dialogue between past and present" (Abdurraqib, 2019, p.82). Such a dialogue brings past music up into the present, where it can be re-experienced and re-situated in a new musical setting for both the maker and the listener.

In my audiovisual works, I attempt to participate in this inter-temporal dialogue by sampling songs from my iTunes library. Turning to my own library for samples pays homage to others' recorded works as well as to my own musical tastes from a previous era. It is as much musical mining as self-examination, if we include in our understanding of self the music that we listened to when we were younger. If we also agree that the self is a result of its culture, then exposure to and inspection of such musical samples may reveal much about the culture that I come from. My work, as a whole, attempts to achieve the autoethnographical aim of making "characteristics of a culture familiar to insiders and outsiders" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2001, p.4). These songs and their sampled bits expose clues about the sonic landscape that I have come out of, for this was the music that I grew up with and valued enough to purchase. Through these samples, I am exclaiming: "these are some of the songs and sounds that made me!".

Such self-expression includes sampling not only pre-recorded songs from my music library but also sounds and images from the home movies themselves. By employing audiovisual technique two - "auto-sampling" (grabbing bits of the original audio/video and using them as samples in the audiovisual work) - I am attempting to sample the sounds and images of my own life, giving additional meaning to the term "auto-sampling." One question I asked at the outset of this project was, "what might it look and sound like to sample one's own life?". This practice attempts an answer. Additionally, I am asking what this practice can reveal about the self and the culture that it comes from. At the very least, we know that my culture must value sampled music, and that it has passed on this value to its products. At the very most, we know that the works must "speak" for themselves in answering such probes, and they must encourage the audience to come away with their own understandings.

"Speaking" through their attempt to score home movies with sampled music and audio, the works are playing with the practice of scoring the moving image. Traditionally, "to score" means to compose music for visual media - film, video, television, theatre, dance, etc. But is it possible to score a still image? Or an image that moves within itself? Or to score only by sampling? My practice asks and experiments with such questions. Perhaps our understanding of "scoring" can be expanded to include home movies and the sampling techniques described above.

In her book, *Unheard Melodies*, Claudia Gorbman identifies seven traditional functions of music in "classical cinema," including as a "signifier of emotion," whereby the music "sets specific moods and emphasises particular emotions" (Gorbman, 1987, p.79). She states that one goal of classical scoring is to "place the auditor's ears in a subject position harmonious with the spectator's eyes" (Gorbman, 1987, p.7). Thus, there should be an unspoken accordance between the audio and the visual. Jarold Levinson, in his essay 'Film Music and Narrative Agency' (2006), identifies as many as fifteen narrative functions of film music, including "the lulling or mesmerising of the viewer, so as to facilitate emotional involvement in the fictional world to which the viewer would otherwise prove resistant" (Levinson, 2006, p.492). Film music is meant to coax the audience into the fictional world of the story. But what if the world is less than fictional? Or someone else's

childhood? And what if the narrative is still unfolding? My practice plays with these traditional scoring conventions, employing and combining some of them while rejecting others. Composing for one's own home movies requires such acceptance and rejection. By separating the audio and visual tracks and teasing them back into symbiosis, I am always presenting the threat of audiovisual mismatch, playing with the tension that it may create. In this way, the works attempt to convey my own experience with this practice, during which harmony, mesmerisation, and emotional involvement were both easy and difficult to achieve. Again, I was constantly leaping in and out of myself and my "story." Playing with one's past by scoring it is neither conventional nor classical, but rather fertile for the art of sampling.

Perhaps sampling and my practice as a whole are more akin to music video, which as theorised by Mathias B. Korsgaard, expresses a "multimedia character more clearly than cinema" through its "intensified musicalisation of vision and visualisation of music" (Korsgaard, 2017, pp.11-12). Music video presents, as my practice attempts, an "intermedial" (Korsgaard, 2017) situation in which the image is the music and the music is the image. Both are made up of many bits and pieces (samples) of other media forms. Korsgaard argues that music video is "both aesthetically and perceptually composite" and a "fundamentally remediational phenomenon: it incorporates and transforms other media forms and is also itself incorporated and transformed across media" (Korsgaard, 2017, p.14). Such a summary could be coopted as a description for my practice. Home movies, auto-ethnography, sampling, and scoring - all composites that are incorporated and transformed through the practice. Consequently, the practice has developed as a composite of samples. It creates an audiovisual dialogue between past and present, self and culture, convention and experimentation. The question can then become - how might it be transformed across media? Beyond showing clips of the audiovisual techniques employed in each work, how can the practice be represented in person?

The performance, thus, serves as an embodied sample of the digital audiovisual practice, intended to convey its playful and improvisatory nature with the space and the technologies provided. In this instance, it was the EMS 7.1.4 Room that played host. The first half of the performance features a 16-minute video of clips from the eighteen works, highlighting the nine different audiovisual techniques, and their examples, from this essay. During the video's projection, I play with the idea of showing the audience only what I want them to see - only a sample of the full practice.[28] Such manipulation suggests a lineage of selective documentation and presentation that continues all the way up through this writing. In my viewing of the original home movies, I saw only what my parents (mostly my father) had chosen to film. Now, the audience sees and hears only what I have chosen to reveal. What might a revelation uncover about myself and the culture I come from?

The second half of the performance provides a look into the creative and self-exploratory compulsion that inspired the techniques, attempting to translate the practice into physical form. Through many steps, I play around with my audiovisual techniques, and sample the attempted destruction of a home movie tape.[29] While the past cannot be destroyed, it can be re-worked, re-played, and re-sampled. Although methodised, the practice and its performance are intended to change with each representation. The eighteen audiovisual works have been completed, but the practice carries on, transforming itself across media and presenting itself through me. The process is ongoing.

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[28] See "Appendix 1" for more details

[29] The steps of the performance are displayed under "Appendix 1"

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Webpage Links

https://www.coltonkempf.com/majorproject - all eighteen of the audiovisual works (in their entirety) are presented here. The titles of each work include the date that the work was made. The text descriptions for each work contain the vocal commentary of the creative process, as transcribed via Adobe Premiere Pro. Thus, there are spelling and grammatical errors, which have been purposely left unedited.

Images

IMAGE 1

IMAGE 2

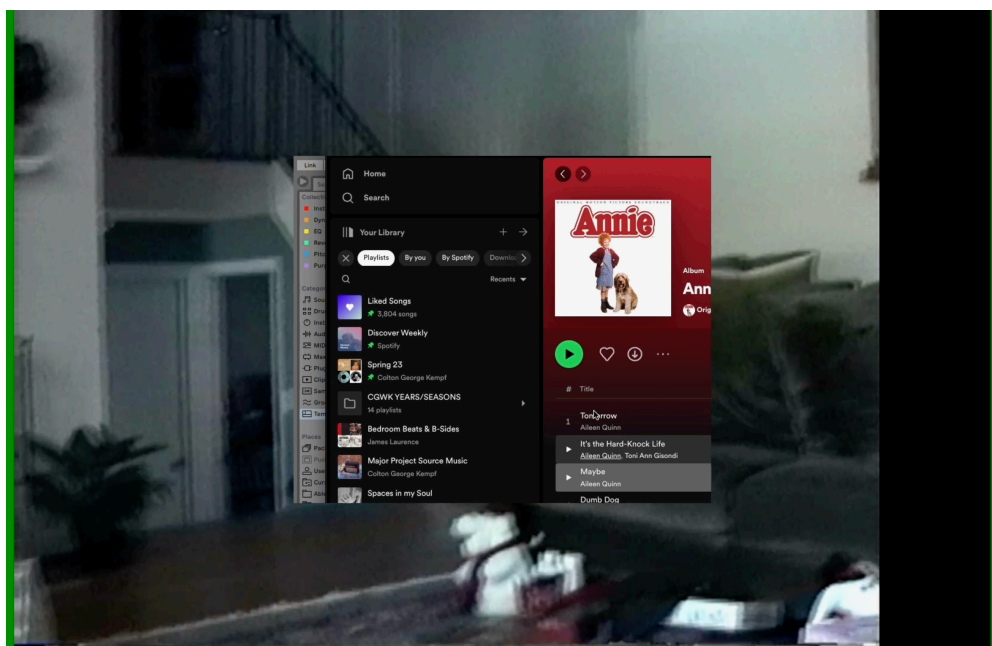**Appendix 1**

<u>Steps for Second Half of the Performance</u>

1. Initiate performance by turning off the overhead lights in the room
2. Project the 16-minute video of clips from the eighteen works in two-channel stereo
3. Audience is watching the video, but also watching me watching myself through my practice
4. While the video is playing, experiment with opening and closing the curtain, playing with the idea of showing the audience what I want them to see - only a sample of the full practice
5. While the video is playing, record some of the sounds through Ableton Live to be played back and looped during the second half of the performance
6. When the video ends, put it on loop and turn down its volume
7. Start a screen recording with Quicktime, using the laptop microphone to record sound
8. Start a movie recording with Quicktime, using the iPhone to record video and sound
9. Use iPhone to video myself playing around with video tapes - inspecting them, opening them up, unraveling the tapes, making loops out of them, attempting to destroy them
10. Stop the movie recording, replay it it on a loop
11. Tap out a tempo in Ableton Live based on an imagined tempo of the tape unraveling
12. Use microphone to record sounds from the snare drum, loop them
13. Use recorded samples from first half of performance to create additional loops
14. Use microphone throughout to explain the creative process
15. Use notebook throughout to document any notes/thoughts
16. Use microphone to record sounds from the xylophone, loop them
17. Loop sounds from the vocalised commentary
18. Play with changing the volume levels of each of the eight speakers in the room
19. Turn off the speakers one by one
20. Turn off the projector
21. Pick up the blanket of materials
22. Turn on the overhead lights
23. Put on shoes
24. Start to walk out of the room while holding the sack to signify the end of the performance - I am exporting the goods by carrying them away
25. End of performance

List of Submitted Videos

Video for Performance (16-minutes) - clips from the eighteen works, highlighting the nine different audiovisual techniques, and their examples, that are discussed in the essay. This video was projected during the first half of the performance.

Recording of Performance 1 of 2 and *Recording of Performance 2 of 2* - sequential video recordings of my performance. As mentioned to Holly, the second one cuts out slightly before the end of the performance, due to unforeseen camera recording limitations.

Screen-recording of Second Half of Performance (what was projected) - a screen-recording from my laptop of what was projected during the second half of the performance. It includes audio from the entire second half of the performance, including what was missed by the aforementioned recording limitation and from the ensuing discussion in the room.