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Listening to Paris: Sound, Space and Creation at IRCAM

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I Feel Like

I Feel Like is 4:13 long, and it began as a recovery from a disaster. Halfway through producing my original project, Ableton crashed and took the session with it. I had saved nothing. All I had were the Baschet recordings and the Bois de Vincennes field recordings. The arrangement and the processing were gone. I had to rebuild the piece from scratch.

What I rebuilt is not the piece I would have made if nothing had gone wrong. The second time around I started recording vocals about the crash itself: the feeling that I had wasted my time, the absurdity of redoing something I had already finished. Those vocals took on a life of their own. Within a few takes, the piece had stopped being about a crashed session and started being a full blown crash out: Who actually listens to the work I make? What am I doing any of this for? How mathematically replicable are we?

So I Feel Like is a piece about the crash that erased the piece. It is also a piece about the difference between being a person making this versus a collection of mathematical and computable processes. The thesis, to the extent that the piece has one, is the position that even if we are the product of a simulation, that does not make us less ourselves.

Sonically the piece is built almost entirely from two sources: percussion and resonant metal/glass recorded at the Ateliers Baschet, and field recordings from the Bois de Vincennes. I did the production in Ableton and the spatialization in Reaper using the IEM Plug-in Suite, with

StereoEncoder for ambisonic encoding and AllRADecoder for decoding to specific output formats. The piece exists in three simultaneous renderings: a binaural version for headphone listening, a decoded multichannel version designed for the 3D speaker layout in Studio D for the May 4 presentation, and a stereo bounce from Ableton.

The foundation of the beat was recorded at the Ateliers Baschet during a class visit. The Baschet Brothers' Structures Sonores are designed around the resonant amplification of vibrating rods, plates, and tuned metal. Our class recorded with a Zoom H6 Essential using its omnidirectional capsule pair, among other mics. The omnis are what I ended up using. The Cristal Baschet in particular relies on its resonators and the room itself for the long shimmering tail that makes it sound the way it does, and the omni capture preserved more of that than a directional pair would have. The percussion samples came from me performing on Le Disque, Les Cordes, L'Escalier, Les Tiges Droites, and L'Étoile, a mix of struck plates, rods, and a staircase-like tuned metal piece.



Recording Structures Sonores at Baschet Brothers'

The melodic instrument that anchors the middle section is Le Grand Cristal Baschet, the large glass-rod instrument that is the most famous piece in the atelier. I did not play it personally, but helped record it from across the room while a classmate did.



Recording Le Grand Cristal Baschet

The Bois de Vincennes recording was made on a separate trip. It is a few minutes of ambient material: birds, rustling, distant intermittent sounds. There is nothing remarkable in the recording itself, which is exactly why it is useful. It gives the piece a real-world floor that the more processed elements can sit on top of. A raw layer of it runs underneath the entire piece.

The opening section, roughly 0:00 to 2:15, is the beat: Baschet percussion arranged into a hip-hop-adjacent groove. The Baschet samples were left untouched effects-wise. I wanted to keep them raw and let the spatialization do the work, moving individual hits through the 3D field rather than processing them. The beat used both quantized raw audio sections and individual hits I chopped out and pitched down to function as kick-and-snare-like conga thumps. Underneath this sits the raw Vincennes layer, plus two granular layers built from the same recording, one pitched down an octave for low-frequency texture and one at the original pitch.

The vocals here are mostly improvised. I would write a line, record it, stop, think of the next one, record that. A process I think of as "punching in." It gives the verses a quality of someone thinking out loud in real time, which is the right register for the lyrical content.

Spatialization was done in Reaper after the production was committed in Ableton, working on rendered stems. The main vocal stays anchored at the front-center. The layered adlib tracks move around the 3D space, giving the impression of different voices, thoughts, or reactions in my head. The granular Vincennes layers orbit the listener, sometimes circling slowly, sometimes flicking from one side to another. As the section moves toward the break, the granular layers swell, like a boulder being rolled around until revealing a hidden room, but it glitches out in the process.

The lyrical arc tracks an argument I have been having with myself for a while. It starts with frustration over the crash and the time I had lost. But the longer the narrator sits with the question of why the lost time matters, the more vertiginous the question gets. If I am annoyed about losing four hours of work, what is the work doing for me, who is actually receiving it, who am I making it for? The vocal moves quickly from artistic frustration into questions about purpose, death, and who actually listens.

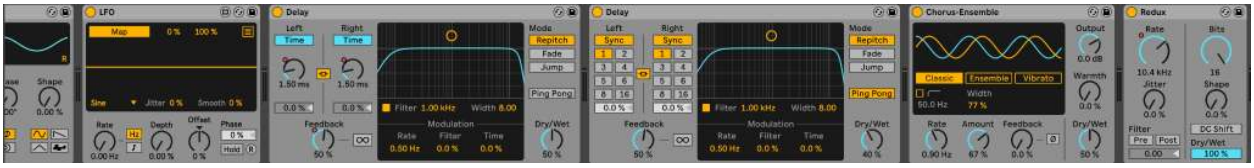
To further emphasize this, for the lines “I mean you don’t even listen to a single of my songs,” I utilize Pocket Dimension by Freakshow Industries paired with spatialization to make it feel like the song is granularizing and dissolving in front of the listener.

The lyric "I can break down all my bones and flesh until there's nothing there, beneath the skin it's simply math, only number equations everywhere" is the narrator reasoning his way down through the levels of his own makeup and finding nothing there that is not computable. The line "a cat chasing a ball of yarn till it's nothing thinks it's yearning" is about the way we keep

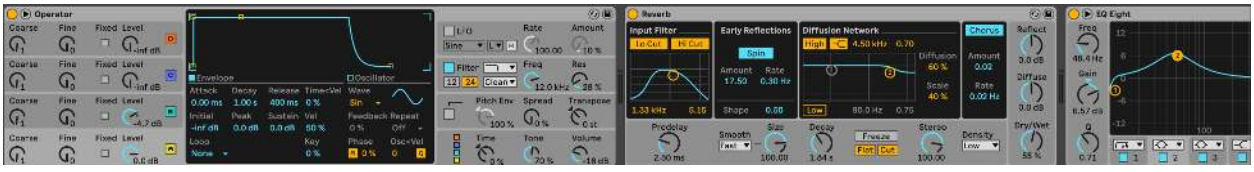
looking deeper and deeper for what makes us human, replicating each layer with computation, and not noticing we are unraveling ourselves in the process. Once you accept that picture, simulation theory is just a special case of it. We are trapped in a box, and the box is the simulation.

The field recording is doing dramatic work here too. The raw Vincennes layer grounds the opening in nature, in natural creatures and ambient life: the world the narrator believes he is in. The granular layers built from the same recording function differently. They are like stress signals, blood pumping, similar to the sounds I heard in the IRCAM anechoic chamber when there was nothing else to hear. They carry the rising suspicion that the world the field recording promises is not the world we are actually in.

The break, around 2:15 to 2:53, drops the beat entirely. In its place sits a wide droning pad built from layered acoustic and synthesized sources. The pad is two melodica recordings I played, each doubled with a pitched-down version of itself both with a little delay and chorus, combined with a layer of the Cristal Baschet also doubled with a pitched-down version. Underneath all of that runs an FM synth bass I built in Operator, the only place in the piece where bass appears. Lastly, there's a melodica lead layer with some delay with automated delay speed, more delay, chorus, and redux. The raw Vincennes layer continues underneath.



Effect chain of lead melodica



FM synth bass made in Operator

The spatial design here is deliberately massive. Each element moves through the field with large gestures rather than fine pans, which is what gives the section its cinematic quality. The vocal becomes a yell, almost a cry, layered into many takes, some with more delay, all spatialized around the listener so the effect is of a crowd. A chorus of internal voices protesting and rejecting the conclusion from the first verse.

The break is the other side of having taken the argument seriously. It is pure chaos and lost hope, the recognition that the world might not be what we thought. The pad fills the field with a wide, slow-decaying space that is supposed to feel both expansive and airless, depending on how you hear it.

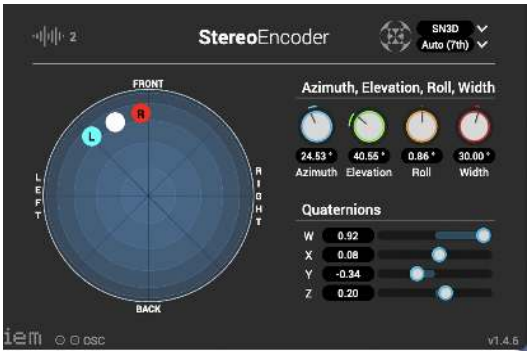
Going in and coming out of the break, a wash of glitch sounds takes over the transition. These were made with Glitch2, a multi-effect plugin that combines beat repeat, redux/bitcrushing, modulation, and gating into a chained processor. For the transition, Glitch2 was ran on every track. I also ran the entire percussion track through it and bounced the result as a separate layer. The original percussion then returns to its pattern and over the first measure I yell an "alright" and then a wordless yell before the second verse begins. The glitch layer runs underneath through the verse, low at first, then growing the way the opening grew into the break, until the glitches take over completely and the song ends.



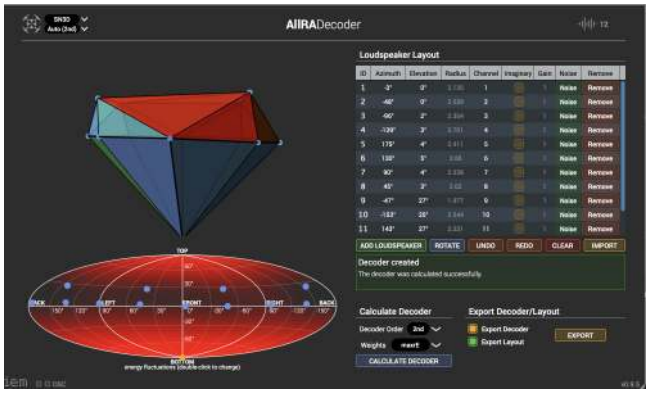
Glitch2 preset on the overall track during the transition

The narrator does not argue his way out of the conclusion he reached before the break. He goes through with it. The "alright" and the yell, with the glitch layer running underneath, allude to the narrator ripping his skin off and revealing that he was the computer he was afraid of being. The percussion returns more or less unchanged, but the glitches are everywhere now: as if a human ripped off his skin and can now hear the robot underneath glitching as he moves. The vocal is more confident because the question of whether being computable disqualifies the self has been answered. It does not. The narrator is still the narrator. The piece is still the piece.

Three things from the course showed up directly in this piece. The first is the ambisonic workflow with the IEM Plug-in Suite. Before this course, my spatial intuitions were stereo intuitions: left/right, near/far, narrow/wide. Working with StereoEncoder and AllRADecoder forced me to think about position as azimuth and elevation, and motion as continuous trajectories rather than channel-to-channel jumps. That changed how I designed every spatial element in this piece. The granular layers do not pan; they orbit. It also changed how I thought about output formats: the same ambisonic master decoded for binaural and for the Studio D layout, rather than mixing in stereo and panning around.



StereoEncoder



AllRADecoder

The second is field recording methodology, specifically the discipline of capturing the room as well as the source. The omni capture at the Baschet atelier picked up the resonant tail of the Cristal Baschet and the room behavior of the atelier itself, which is most of what gives the instrument its sound in the piece.

The third, and I think the most important, is treating spatial motion as a compositional parameter rather than an effect. This is what made the difference between the spatial design feeling decorative and feeling structural. The granular layers swell into the break because the boulder is being rolled aside. The drone takes over the field at the break because the argument has gone somewhere the beat cannot follow. The glitches take over at the end because the narrator has accepted what he is.

In retrospect the crash was the best thing that happened to the project. The piece I had been making before was a more conventional spatial composition: Baschet recordings, field recordings, careful diffusion, no vocals, no narrative. What I have instead uses the same source material in service of something I actually needed to say, with a vocal performance that captures the moment in time. I would not have gotten there without losing the first version.

What I would improve: I think I could have taken advantage of spatialization even more than I did. I could have gotten more granular in the automation and made everything more on the dot rather than broad strokes. The other limitation is a matter of workflow. Producing in Ableton and spatializing in Reaper required me to commit to stems before doing the spatial design. Any change to the source material, a vocal punch-in I want to redo, a percussion hit I want to swap, costs a re-render and a re-import. A more integrated workflow would have let the spatial decisions and the production decisions inform each other in real time, instead of in passes.

I plan to release this piece. I Feel Like sits at the intersection of three things I have been doing separately for a while: DSP and field-recorded sound, hip-hop production and vocal performance, and writing about consciousness and computation. This is the first time those three have coexisted in my work and I found it to be an incredibly fun intersection.

Works Cited

"Structures Sonores Baschet." Association Structures Sonores Baschet, www.baschet.org. Accessed 4 May 2026.