

**DESTROYED  
CINEMA AND  
MUSIC VOL 1**

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# A NOISE PRIMER



If you follow the Grindcoreian tradition of calling certain stuff ‘not music’ or ‘anti-music,’ then a lot of music is ‘not music.’ Furthermore, ‘noise’ fans will nitpick what is ‘noise’ and what is ‘noise-music.’ A great blog called Audio Crackle, for example, highlights “non-music for the non-masses,” and certain grindcore enthusiasts champion their culture as ‘anti-music,’ as seen in the logo above. Personally, I think these distinctions give rise to powerful anti-institutional ethos as much as they gatekeep, exclude, and ‘other’ music that defies convention. It’s all music as far as I’m concerned.



As a glazomaniacal (list-obsessed) teenager, I crushed every ‘best of’ list I could find—perhaps the most esoteric being various /mu/ essentials lists and FACT Magazine’s decade lists. Three albums stand out as having challenged my precocious curiosities. Music Has the Right to Children by Boards of Canada was about as ‘ambient’ as I had experienced; I remember saying to my friends that I had a hard time distinguishing it from the diegetic noise of the world around me—boy, that was only the tip of the iceberg meme. Second was Pink by Boris, which sounded like the most evil Queens of the Stone Age cover band imaginable—again, Boris predates QOTSA by nearly a decade. Last was Jane Doe by Converge (which I’ve included as a primer)—still an onslaught of overcompressed mayhem, deeply felt harsh vocals, and the best-recorded drums ever. After learning to love all three of these records, however, not even Merzbow could shock me.



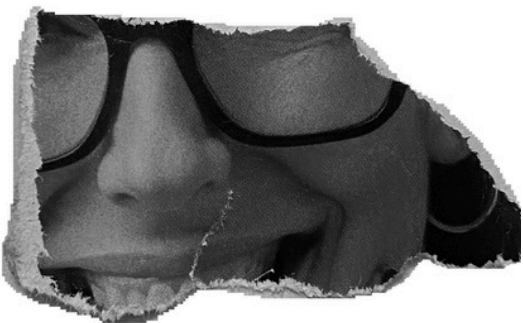


So, I've compiled a handful of amazing albums that push music into noise territory. This isn't exclusively a list of harsh noise records—although there are a number of them—so much as it is a primer on music that may help massage the synapses into appreciating the more extreme forms out there.

So, here's a bunch of noisy albums I recommend as primers for the larger esoteric world of 'noise music'—both pure noise and wherever 'noise' crosses over elsewhere.



Going Places Yellow Swans Jane Doe Converge Sheer H  
 Braxton When Drug Becomes A Cult Sister Blanche  
 ma Deathprod New Music for electronic and re  
 Kuroi Jakai Flowersfightforsunshine Flow  
 recorded media: women in electronic music Various artists Silence resounding  
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[illegible]

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IT DOESN'T GET ANY	BETTER
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THAN THIS	
RACHEL THAN THIS	KEMPF
NICK INTERVIEW	TOM
RACHEL INTERVIEW	KEMPF
NICK INTERVIEW	TOM
IT DOESN'T GET ANY	BETTER
IT DOESN'T GET ANY	BETTER
THAN THIS	
RACHEL THAN THIS	KEMPF
IT DOESN'T GET ANY	BETTER
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THAN THIS	



**Destroyed:** Thank you for doing this interview and letting us show your film. I've been excited to watch it ever since I first heard about it. It seems like a really unique project, which leads me to my first question, How did It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This come to be? What was the initial spark?



**Rachel:** Back in 2021, we were looking for a location to shoot a movie called Homebody. One day, Nick sent me an email titled “Bad idea” that just had a listing for an insanely cheap, incredibly rundown duplex and the sentence: “What if we bought this shitty duplex and shot Homebody there?” But when we went to look at the place, it was a complete nightmare inside, filled with a bunch of weird trash and with both religious and Satanic graffiti covering the walls. We didn’t want to waste this incredible production value, so we decided to shelve Homebody and shoot a found footage movie about two filmmakers buying a haunted duplex. That movie became It Doesn’t Get Any Better Than This.



**Nick:** We started making the movie before we knew what the story would be. We just pulled out our phones and started recording. There’s even a brief shot in the beginning of the movie where you can see our realtor showing us around the place.

**Destroyed:** The film falls within the found-footage horror genre, which often has a lo-fi aesthetic. How did you approach the lo-fi aesthetic? Was it a stylistic choice or a necessity?

**Nick:** I'm a bit obsessed with lo-fi aesthetics. For this particular movie, we didn't lean into the lo-fi-ness as much as we could have, but we also didn't try to make it look overly "professional." We just used the equipment that we already owned because that's what our characters would have done.

However, it's worth noting that the movie incorporates a lot of older footage of me, Rachel, and our co-star/co-writer Christian (going back to 2005 or so), most of which was shot on miniDV. Since that was a texture we introduced, we also used miniDV for some of the newer footage. The same goes for the old photographs we found throughout the duplex. Any time we needed some kind of mysterious video or mysterious photograph to move the plot forward, we used older, more analog equipment to create it.

I think constantly about this essay Virginia Woolf wrote in the 1920s, in which she writes, fairly critically, about the relatively new medium of cinema. The passage that's been running through my head ever since I read it is about the unexplored potentials of the medium. Since this is an email interview, I'm just going to include the quote:

“[A]t a performance of Dr. Caligari the other day a shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic’s brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words. The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement ‘I am afraid.’ In fact, the shadow was accidental and the effect unintentional. But if a shadow at a certain moment can suggest so

so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women in a state of fear, it seems plain that the cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression.”

I think Woolf’s experience—which essentially describes an imperfection of the photochemical process that was present in the print of Caligari she saw—gets at what is appealing and powerful about the lo-fi aesthetic. Lo-fi is about giving up some elements of control and inviting in imperfection. But those supposed imperfections have the potential to be more moving than a more ti

ghtly controlled, carefully composed shot. I like to make movies that explore that tension. (It can also be a lot cheaper.)

If anyone reading this is especially interested in lo-fi horror, you should keep an eye out for our next feature, Homebody, which we shot last summer. That one was very intentionally done with a lo-fi aesthetic. The whole movie was shot on miniDV and in black and white. The goal was to make a movie that feels like the demo recordings of that band Teen Suicide—a sort of sadcore horror movie but with lots of gross practical effects.

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**Destroyed:** Were there any specific inspirations behind the film?

**Rachel:** We watched a ton of found footage movies while making it, and the idea for weaving in the footage from our lives had a sort of weird inspiration from Blair Witch. That movie obtained an authenticity by maintaining that it was 100% true, and building a marketing campaign around it, but you can't do that anymore because modern audiences are too savvy. But we figured the footage is real and some is fake and were left wondering where the line between reality and fiction is drawn, and that was the idea behind weaving in the old footage from our real lives.

There's also two specific scenes in the movie that were inspired by two incredibly divergent sources: The Royal Tenenbaums and Yoko Ono's conceptual art film Rape. For the opening of the movie, we knew we had a ton of exposition that would need to be frontloaded in order to provide context for who we are and why we bought this ridiculous duplex, and we were trying to think of movies that solved that kind of problem. We eventually landed on The Royal Tenenbaums, which has kind of a knockout opening montage with voiceover that explains all of the characters and everything leading up to the beginning of the story. So we tried to do a similar thing in our opening montage, complete with some very Wes Anderson-esque tableaux of significant items you'll see later in the movie.

Rape is a wildly different film where Yoko Ono and John Lennon supposedly hired a real film crew to follow a woman around with a camera for

no reason, essentially until she had a nervous breakdown. Nick brought this one up as a way we could interact with the people who stare at the duplex: they're staring at us, so we stare at one of them by following them around with a camera. And like Rape, that scene has proven to be pretty upsetting to some viewers.

**Nick:** I would also add

another movie

Rachel and I made

that served as a weird influence.

A few years ago

we made a short film

which is also sort of a

found footage movie

the whole thing is just a man being  
interviewed by an off-camera woman

but the woman never stops asking  
questions and the man never  
provides any answers

## This Goes On For 30 Minutes



We did something  
similar (though for not  
nearly as long) in the  
scene where Rachel  
attempts to get a  
response from the  
people staring at the  
duplex, who remain  
totally unresponsive  
no matter what she  
says or does.

Horror is  
a genre  
that often  
explores  
societal  
fears.  
What  
fears were  
you  
exploring  
with this  
film?

We  
weren't  
intention  
ally  
exploring  
any  
specific  
fears, but  
there's  
definitely  
some  
kind of  
unconsci  
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explorati  
on of our  
(myself,  
Rachel,  
and  
Christian)  
shared  
anxieties  
around  
the idea  
of being  
watched.  
On the  
one hand,  
we're  
filming  
each

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constantly;  
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other, there  
are all these  
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**Destroyed:** You've chosen to release the film exclusively through live screenings. What's the reason behind that? **Rachel:** It was an agreement Nick, Christian, and I made at the beginning of filming; we sort of roped Christian into this ridiculous project and he said he would only do it if we never released it online. But Nick and I also loved that because it gave us an excuse to be pretentious and contrarian. Because we made that choice from the beginning, we were able to have more freedom in what we included in the movie, stretching out scenes in ways that wouldn't work if you were watching on demand, where you can skip or pause or bail, but build a lot of tension for audiences watching it in theatres. We've also played with incorporating some

William Castle—

style hijinx when we attend screenings, which make sit feel even more like an event—

something you prepare for and look forward to—rather than content, which is ubiquitous and infinite and requires no risk or investment to watch (or keep watching) and as a result, might just live in your queue forever even if you theoretically really, really want to see it.

Also, it's our movie and we wanted to do it this way. So we did. **Nick:** I've been making movies for about 15 years, most of which are freely available to watch online, but it doesn't get any better than this is the only one that people have paid attention to. Is this because we released it in a

gimmicky way, or because all my other movies suck? All I know is that, for whatever combination of reasons, this one managed to find an audience.

**Destroyed:** How has the response been to this approach? Have you faced pushback from people wanting digital access?

**Rachel:** We have literally received hate mail for not releasing the movie online. If you look at some spaces on the internet – the comments section of our trailer on YouTube or the comments in any article about the film on Bloody Disgusting – it's essentially a non-stop hate parade.

On the other hand, there is a small contingent of weirdos who like what we're doing, either for the community-building aspect or because they want to support (or they help run) indie theatres or festivals or they're tired of the festival-to-streaming content mill or they think there's something punk rock about saying fuck you to a system that claims online distribution is the only way to get films in front of an audience and profit off of them or they like the weird anti-capitalist move of not giving a shit about whether we make the most possible money off this thing.

And weirdly, those things aren't mutually exclusive. We've had reviews where people said we were stupid for not releasing the movie online, but it was a unique experience so you should go see it anyway, or in one case, a guy who thought the distribution model was dumb but then spent multiple paragraphs talking about how he met a girl at the screening and ended up asking her out and getting a date, which obviously wouldn't have happened if he was watching the movie at home on Tubi or whatever.

Either way, the joke's on our haters because every time someone shit-posts a mean comment about us online, it lights up the old internet algorithm and puts the article or trailer in front of more people who then comment on it because they want to join the hate mob, and so on, which is in no small part how we've managed to get so much attention for this very small DIY film.

**Destroyed:** Do you see a future where more films are released this way?

**Rachel:** I don't see anyone ever being dumb/masochistic/pretentious enough to do this again, but I guess you never know.

**Nick:** It would be hilarious if we had copycats who saw what we did and thought it was a recipe for success. If anyone wants to release their movie this way, I volunteer to host a screening in Kirksville!



**Destroyed:** Where's the weirdest place your film has screened?

**Rachel:** In a guy's driveway in Decatur, Illinois for 20 people.

If someone wants to host a screening, how can they do it?

There's a screening request form on our website:

[diediebooks.com](http://diediebooks.com).

(While you're there, you should also buy one of the books we publish.)

**As independent filmmakers, what advice would you give to others trying to make a horror film on a limited budget?**

**Start with the resources you have and consider how you can use them to maximum impact. In our case, we had a haunted duplex, a bunch of old footage of ourselves, time to paint a giant fuck-off hellmouth on a wall, and enough people in our small town that we could convince to stop by and stare blankly for half an hour.**

**Production value doesn't necessarily come from money; it can come from seeing the passage of time, or the amount of detail put into a DIY prop, or a cool-looking location that you found and were able to shoot at, or having a scene with 40 extras (who in our case didn't have to do anything but stand there), or doing something on-screen that most people would never be crazy enough to do (Nick's excellent for-realsies puking comes to mind).**

**I would also add: Stop asking for advice and just go figure it out. Our guiding principle is "Do everything wrong."**

How do you balance creative  
visions with financial and  
logistical limitations?

We build projects around what we're able  
to accomplish. We've essentially turned  
our lives into machines that produce  
books and movies. Part of what makes  
that possible is that we also work non-  
creative jobs. Then we save as much  
money as possible by living as cheaply as  
possible and put everything we can into  
various projects. Some people go on  
vacations or buy a second car; we buy  
abandoned duplexes and paint  
hellmouths.

Some People

go on

vacations

or buy a second ..

It's sort of a chicken-and-egg situation. Does the ethos come first or is it just that doing things yourself is the best way to guarantee that it gets done? I personally believe that culture bubbles up from the underground, as opposed to being doled out from on high by supposed gatekeepers, so I've never been highly motivated to try and get out of the underground. But I'm also cynical enough to recognize that this belief is self-serving. What I can say with some certainty is that, if we weren't willing to do things ourselves, this movie never would have been made. Also, the fact that we're involved with our local DIY scene meant that we had a network of people we could reach out to for help when we needed it.

Also also: I'm 100% aware of the fact that I might be the only person who still believes that "the underground" is a thing. I'm a hopeless case.

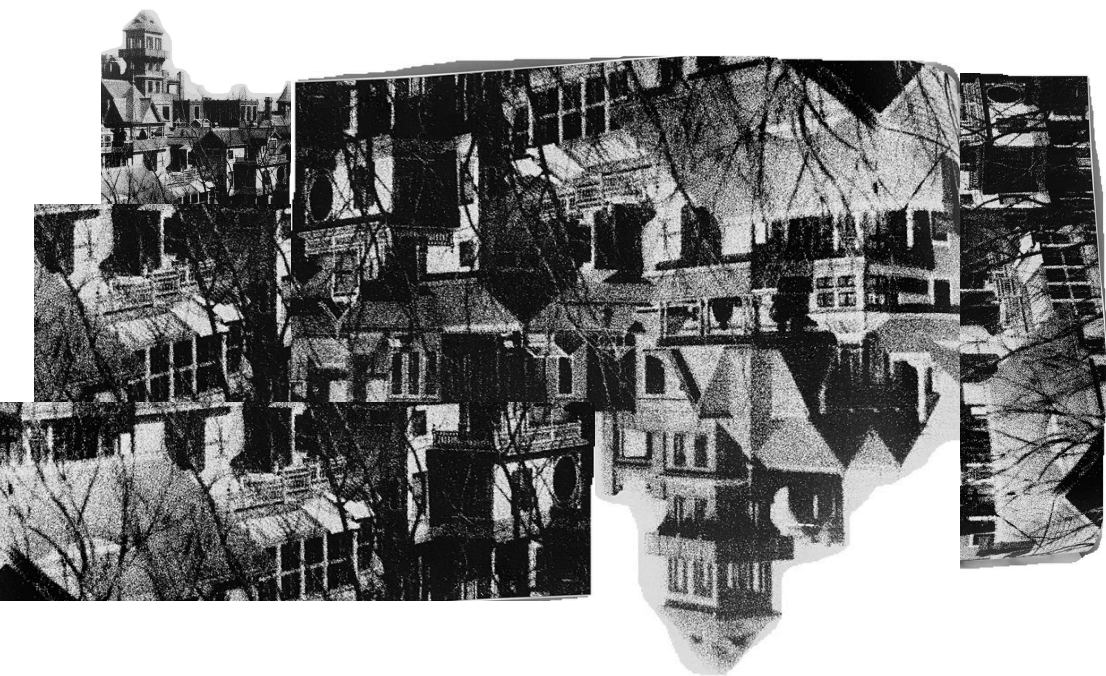
**Destroyed:** What's next for you? Any new projects in the works?

**Rachel:** We're in post-production for *Homebody*, which is the movie we originally bought the duplex for. It is very, very different from *It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This*, which is a very manic movie; *Homebody* is the sort of depressed counterpart to it (I have bipolar disorder, so this sort of weirdness is kinda baked into my writing). The movie is about a young widow who is spiralling into depression and then finds a way to connect with her husband's ghost by doing some really, really fucked-up shit that gets more and more fucked-up as the movie progresses.

We're also in pre-production for a movie called *Scary New Year*, which I describe as *Dawson's Creek* meets *We Need to Talk about Kevin*. It's a slasher movie about a teenage girl who learns that her childhood best friend is a sociopath who is planning to turn their annual New Year's party into a real-life slasher movie with her cast as his final girl. It's (hopefully) very fun and very funny, and we're (also hopefully) going to get some actual funding for it, which will come in handy, because we want to shoot on 16mm.

Basically, every horror movie I write is about the existential dread of some girl getting everything she ever wanted as her closest relationships implode in unexpected and fucked up ways. Nick calls it my "emotional apocalypse" trilogy.





**Destroyed:** Last question, if your film were a zine, what kind of zine would it be?

**Nick:** My base impulse is to say something edgy like “the kind of zine that would have gotten Peter Sotos arrested in the 80s,” but that would be pretty aggressively off-putting. The good angel on my other shoulder says “the kind of zine that would require marshalling the help of our many talented friends.”

# **A Handful of Found Footage Movies I Recommend**

## **Murder Death Koreatown by Anonymous (2020)**

A creepypasta supreme; interesting meditations on gentrification and the prejudice that comes with it. Huge 4chan paranoia energy.

## **End of Watch by David Ayer (2012)**

I can't help but love the elevated DTV energy of David Ayer. Here, he is at his best, with a libertarian copaganda power fantasy that's as engrossing as it is ideologically offensive.

## **Trash Humpers by Harmony Korine (2009)**

A datura hangover of a movie. Harmony Korine's most alienating—yes, even more so than the virtual reality tone poem Aggro Drift. Somehow, a director who's been institutionally validated was able to shrug and make something disgusting, hilarious, and totally DIY.

## **The Mask by Connor O'Malley (2023)**

Connor O'Malley has taken the Million Dollar Extreme formula—a post-Adult Swim hyper-online nihilism with an obsessive attention to microscopic detail—and coerced it into something far less cynical, though also less transgressive. The Mask is a painstaking freefall into delusion stemming from rejection-by-institution. Beautifully anti-Hollywood.

**Man Bites Dog by Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, and Benoît Poelvoorde (1992)**

Perhaps more of a mockumentary than found footage, but nonetheless: the black-as-night nihilism of a Bret Easton Ellis novel with the New Wave (or New French Extremity, if you will) artistry. A classic “let’s watch a fucked-up movie” sleepover flick. Think Haneke’s *Funny Games* with the misanthropy cranked up to eleven.



**Unfriended: Dark Web by Stephen Susco (2018)**

One of very few screen-life movies. I wish this found footage subgenre had taken off more—wherein the whole movie takes place on a computer screen—but maybe it was just a tacky novelty that ended with *Searching* and reminds us too much of COVID. Regardless, *Dark Web* takes screen-life to its logical conclusion: maximum camp. Misunderstandings of cryptocurrency, Tor, live streaming, and the like deliver this asinine and beautiful weed-smoke of a flick. The first one is great too.

CUSTARD

CUSTARD: blue chair

✂ P IIIII CUSTARD CHAIR

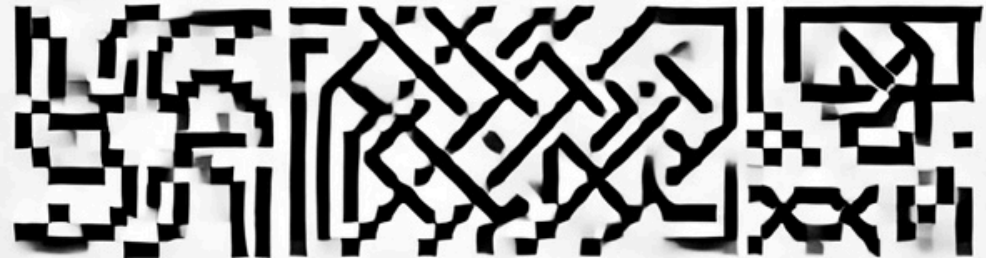
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# CUSTARD.

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4 EGG (LARGE)

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BOIL MILK

INFUSE VANILLA

WHISK EGG + SUGAR

TEMPER EGG W/ MILK

RETURN TO HEAT

COOK TO THICKEN



