

Ghostwriters

The door was closed, which meant that Mr. O’Leary was working. An array of devices colonized the room: keyboards, processors, speakers, microphones, switching panels and mixing boards. And there was the low hum of 5 computers, and a graph on a screen that was sound waves of notes of a very short tune.

Wearing his big black headphones, Mr. O’Leary bent over a mixing board, his empty glance stabbed the air, and his eyebrows were bunched in concentration. Mr. O’Leary was composing. The graphs on the screen tremored; jutted sharply into jagged peaks of sound waves.

Replay

Replay

Replay

The song was waiting somewhere. It was too long, and then too short. It was dull, it was boring, it had no teeth, and it needed claws.

There was nothing to it of course. A melody is merely a succession of notes, a simple arithmetic; a basic pattern that is, figuratively speaking, already outlined. In that realm of possibilities, the melody is already composed, O’Leary reminded himself. He needn’t create it. Perhaps *expose* it would be a better fitting word. He just had to bring it to existence.

He always believed in the notion that the laws of physics, mathematics, and all other fields of science, were not invented, but rather discovered, and that we were mere observers in this world. If Nikola Tesla hadn’t developed the key concepts of alternating current, then someone else would have eventually. Or, if Alessandro Volta hadn’t developed the first electrochemical cell in 1792, which led to the development of the battery in 1800, then someone else may or may not have conceived of the idea, but the prospect of it would have still been there.

Painting and music, and all things artistic are not an exception. *I am nothing but a translator*, Mr. O’Leary thought to himself; an interpreter of motifs that already exist. He only has to line up a few notes and stitch them into a tune to which concept, the blueprint, the possibility, is already laid out- and then to spice it up with some palatable harmonies

in the background, add on strings perhaps, or a line of trumpets. And that is all. A simple recipe for the successful jingle.

He arranged a refrain and disarranged it back to scratch. He composed a new tune, his ears tasting the new flavor, and then quickly buried it away.

At length, he assembled sounds into a final formation: a succession of 7 notes. A very short melody indeed. Played in the key of E major, he opened with a harmony of F and E in the bass, followed by sixteenth notes of E and B. He then doubled the A to an octave, descend a fourth, ascended a second, and sustained the B with bass octaves in E. “There,” Mr. O’Leary leaned back, smiling, “that’s nice.”

That was back then. A long time ago.

These days Mr. O’Leary is not much of an enthusiast anymore. He never gets lost in whirlwinds of notes anymore, he doesn’t fall into the quicksand of music, never gets caught in a loop of a loop of a loop of the same melody, trying to find what’s missing.

The door is never closed anymore.

By all regards, people should recognize him, should point at him in the street, crying, “Look! It’s Mr. O’Leary!” But, nobody knows who he is.

He is quiet these days, prefers solitude. So, he takes long walks at the park, and works on his puzzles. He has a collection of old movies, and a passion for baking. And of course, there are also the Monday nights at the “TS OTWIATLTTEU BNKNCWTA” club. Which is an abbreviation for ‘The Society Of Those Who Invented All The Little Things That Everyone Uses, But Nobody Knows Nor Cares Who They Are’ club. Or, The Society, in short.

The Society’s club is located in a dark underground facility, and its existence is, well, non-existent- that is- known only to members. And the members, if already mentioned, are usually not the boisterous kind, and they do not dabble often with bold

activities (i.e. partying, dancing, bowling and so forth). Affiliates, on a normal basis, would usually sit in the dark corners (the Society's club is dimly lit), and converse quietly, or play a board game of sorts.

Back in the day, Mr. O'Leary was habitually a social entity. These days however, he usually keeps to himself, alone and contemplative he is bent over a hot cup of tea, at the Society club's saloon.

Last week they accepted a new member. Some kid from some small town. That kid, he sat himself next to Mr. O'Leary at the bar last Monday night, throwing a friendly "hey" into the air. Indeed, it was an inspiring, yet deplorable concept; the enthusiasm that still resided in the minds of the youth, the inexperienced. That admirable, mockable notion that one can change the world. *No, my dear lad, the world changes us. Look at me, look at them.* There was a volcano of ideas still burning behind those buoyant eyes.

"I'm Reed. Chip Reed," the kid introduced himself.

"Mr. O'Leary."

"How long have you been a member?" the kid asked.

"A while."

The kid looked around. "What about all these people?"

Mr. O'Leary sighed, "You see the one over there at the corner?" Motioning with his head, he said, "That's Chapel S. Carter, he invented the nail clipper. He's been here quite a few centuries."

"And that lady over there?"

"That's Pepper. The bathroom plunger. Been here probably a hundred years. And that bunch-" Mr. O'Leary paused, "that's Spencer Silver in the middle there. You know, the post-it note fellow." Mr. O'Leary shook his head. "Sad folk. Always talking about parades and demonstrations." He sighed again, "They're at the wrong club. Still stuck in the 60's."

"I see."

"Those over there, at the table with the Scrabble-" Mr. O'Leary looked at a table in the far corner of the room, "the black-haired lady is the antenna, and that old chap is the funnel. They never make any problems. Quiet ones."

“And who’s that one?” inquired the kid.

“Which one?”

“That person with the long coat and the low hat, at the end of the bar.”

“Well,” whispered Mr. O’Leary, “that is,” he lowered his voice even further, “that is the red button guy.”

“What do you mean, the red button guy?”

“The red button, you know, the one that always blows something up when you push it?

That’s his invention.” He whispered, “He never talks to anybody. Strange character.”

“Gee whiz.” The kid turned back to the bar.

“You have a long way to go,” Mr. O’Leary said.

“I am not planning on staying here for long.”

“Yeah,” Mr. O’Leary laughed, “that’s ok. Maybe in a hundred, two hundred years you’d finally change your mind.”

“No chance of that,” said the kid.

Mr. O’Leary shook his head, “So what’s your story then?”

“The Be-Global ring tone. Ta ta ta ta ta ta... you know?”

“Yeah, I know. Too bad nobody knows it was you. Sad world we’re living in,” Mr.

O’Leary said. Sliding off his chair, he plunged into his long brown coat.

“I could have been you,” he smirked, placing his gray hat low above his eyes.

“What did *you* do?” asked the kid.

“Oh, me,” said Mr. O’Leary, “I put some notes together. 7 notes.” He chuckled. “You know that little jingle that plays when you turn a PC on? You know, the Wintoes tune? That’s me.”

“And nobody knows it was you...” mumbled the kid.

“Nobody knows.” Mr. O’Leary shrugged his shoulders. Smiling wearily he walked to the exit, chuckling to himself. “So long” he said to the kid.

“I’ll be the exception!” the kid cried after him, “I will reclaim our dignity. I’ll be the one.”

Oh, the passion of youth. It is endearing indeed, sometimes, endemic. “Perhaps,”

mumbled Mr. O’Leary, “perhaps.”