Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

Hrishikesh: Coming up next time on Song Exploder, for the final episode of this first year, The National deconstruct their song "Sea of love."

("Sea of Love" by THE NATIONAL)

Hrishikesh: Don't miss an episode, subscribe to the show on iTunes, SoundCloud, Stitcher, or wherever you download podcasts.

("Sea of Love" by THE NATIONAL)

(Music fades)

("Awake" by TYCHO)

Hrishikesh: Tycho is the project of Scott Hansen, along with guitarist Zac Brown and drummer Rory O'Connor. For this episode, I spoke with Scott in front of a live audience in San Francisco. Coming up, he'll break down the title track from the 2014 Tycho album, *Awake*, including a note he misplayed, and a vocal part you aren't really supposed to know about.

("Awake" by TYCHO)

Scott: I'm Scott from Tycho.

(Music fades)

(Guitar)

Scott: I think I was really intimidated by music. Like, you know, a couple of my friends had guitars and like, I don't know, it just seemed like you had to be the guy who had the guitar to play guitar [laughter]. You couldn't, like, get into it. For me, it was just like, that's not something I do. I do, you know, I was a visual artist, but I've always had a really close relationship with technology and computers. And

so it took a piece of equipment like a drum machine for me to realize like, "Oh, this is something that, at least, I

(Drum machine joins)

Scott: can just approach this from a technical perspective, and just learn this machine." And there isn't some attached meaning to it like, "Oh, you have to think you're an artist,"

(Guitar ends)

Scott: or, "You have to think you can do anything good with this music," but you can actually just figure it out.

(Guitar with drum machine)

Scott: And so, that was the jumping off point though, is because once I started learning that interesting things started coming out, I was like, "Okay, I feel like this is something I can do," you know?

(Music ends)

Scott: The first thing that was written was by Zac who plays guitar and bass. We went up to Tahoe, and we were in a cabin for a few weeks, and just recorded all sorts of material. I was going through these stems, and, at the end of this one song, we'd stopped recording. And I found, just Zac was just sitting there, messing around.

(Guitar)

(Guitar ends)

Scott: And I was like, "Wow, that's amazing." And so, I cut that out and just started looping it. And then, I picked up my bass, and started recording the driving bassline.

(Bass)

Scott: That's when I first got an electric bass, because I'd used synth bass up until then. But the weird thing is I was always trying to make my synth bass sound

like a guitar bass. So I realized why don't you just get one [laughter]? And that take sounds nothing like the original [laughter], that's pretty chopped together. Most of everything I do is the result of cutting every individual note, and then rearranging in some way. I always like things to be very, like, robotic almost, because then I try to put things that aren't so robotic over the top, and have those juxtaposed, and I feel like that makes for a nice relationship. Once I had that down, the whole thing kind of came pretty quickly.

(Guitar joins)

(Guitar)

Scott: So that other guitar track is me playing. I tend to play like a more muted, picked sound. I like round sounds. I usually play acoustic guitar on the songs, but that was one of the first electric guitar parts that I did.

(Guitar)

(Guitar ends)

Hrishikesh: The song is an instrumental, but there is a track in here that's

Scott: [laughter]

Hrishikesh: called "Vocals."

(Vocals)

Scott: Ah, you weren't supposed to get that one [laughter].

(Audience laughter)

Scott: I used to always hide vocals in my songs, because I worked with this girl. But like, I wanted to try, like, a male vocal, and I didn't have one, so I did it.

Hrishikesh: So this is you.

(Vocals)

Scott: Yes.

Hrishikesh: OK.

(Audience laughter)

Scott: [laughter] Unfortunately.

(Vocals end)

Scott: You know, I'm always using different synths. I have tons of synths, but I make them all sound [laughter] exactly the same.

(Synth)

Scott: "I got a new synth, man. It's, I got this Minimoog. It's going to be totally different." No, it's the same damn sound. So everything's kind of in this midrange-y space where they're very round, and a lot of reverb, a lot of echo. And I realized there's a note on every measure

(Beat joins)

Scott: that's out of time that got played wrong, and I accidentally left it in, and copied and pasted it.

(Synth with beat)

Scott: You hear that? Oh. The second to last note was early. Listen.

(Synth with beat)

(Audience laughter)

Scott: [laughter] You can't unhear that. You'll always hear it from now on [laughter].

(Audience laughter)

Scott: [laughter] That's the problem with editing that way by copying and pasting, and not just doing like full takes is that, if you screw up, it's in the whole damn song [laughter].

(Synth with beat)

(Music ends)

Scott: I let the edit dictate the flow of things. You just kind of follow the path that starts to appear before you. And that's the same way I approach design. There's like a precision

(Synth)

Scott: and a textual element to it that are common to each. You know, like my design always has a very analog, noisy, textured, yellowed, aged layer to it. Even though the things below it are very digital, very modern, and very like clean. But you're looking through this lens almost. That's how I approached creating sounds for the records as well. Is even though it might be a modern synthesizer, I'll spend a lot more time working on the filtering and the processing of it, to make it feel like this memory or something like that. You know, like through like a yellowed lens or something.

(Synth ends)

Scott: Interpol was like one of my favorite bands, and particularly

("PDA" by INTERPOL)

Scott: just these really specific moments in their music where they really like to break things down, and turn them into an instrumental. And "PDA" is one of the best examples where, at the end, the song basically stops, and then becomes this whole other thing. And it's just really pretty, and that's what really influenced me.

("PDA" by INTERPOL)

(Music fades)

Scott: You know, it's really hard to find, especially for instrumental music,

(Guitar)

Scott: something that encapsulates the idea of it. But, for this, it felt like an awakening, or like a moment where I felt for the first time, like this is what I was supposed to be doing, or this is what I wanted to be doing, and what I was going to pursue. Because with *Dive* and all that stuff, it was just, you know, I was a graphic

designer by day, and mess around with music at night. And this is the first time I'd ever put this much of myself into anything. And I felt like this was the moment where it all came together. And so, it was like, "Awake."

(Music ends)

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Awake," by Tycho, in its entirety.

("Awake" by TYCHO)

Hrishikesh: To learn more about Tycho, including a link to buy this song, visit songexploder.net. My thanks to the folks at Noise Pop who organized the event where my conversation with Scott was recorded.