

Song Exploder
Daedelus - Experience
Episode 6

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.

("Experience" by DAEDELUS)

Hrishikesh: In this episode, Alfred Darlington, who's better known as Daedelus, takes apart his song "Experience." This early track of his is made with only acoustic sounds, but Alfred still considers this a piece of electronic music.

("Experience" by DAEDELUS)

(Music fades)

Alfred: My name is Alfred Darlington, and I record under the name of Daedelus. We are going to get into the song "Experience," which comes from my debut record *Invention* from 2002. It is a melody that was haunting me throughout my college career. That was at USC, the Thornton School of Music, where I was studying Jazz Bass. It's hard to describe, necessarily, how a melody comes to us. For me, it just was out of the blue. I don't come from a background in keyboards, and the song came out of just fidgeting, literally sitting around in like, I think, it was a Piano 101 class, trying to figure out how to play, and this strange, little rolling melody came out. It haunted me for years. And then, finally with my first record, I knew I had a chance to express something.

(Plastic record player)

Alfred: OK, so the intro is an example of a Fisher Price plastic record player, but I'm playing it wrong. I'm not using a plastic record on the player, I'm actually playing the stylists of the Fisher Price plastic record player.

(Plastic record player)

Alfred: It's like a music box. I'm one of those players, there's kind of no wrong notes, it's just a scale, so I'm plucking the times that would normally be hit by the pips on the plastic record. You can hear little resonances kicking around itself, and those are the things that I was aiming for. Like the little weird sounds.

(Automatic harmonium)

Alfred: That's the piano 101 part. So this is this automatic accordion kind of instrument. This is like a harmonium, basically, but automatic. So rather than having to bellow it with your knee or with your arms, somehow it just bellows for you. There's another part, that's the counterpoint.

(Automatic harmonium)

Alfred: That's just like a little fugal figure, just back and forth. It's very repetitive.

(Automatic harmonium)

Alfred: There's other versions of this song, there's primordial versions that are more like on MIDI keyboards and all these other instruments. And, in the end, it was best served where I played the melody first in this kind of weird instrument that only would be in tune with itself. So I had to play the next part of the melody or that kind of counterpoint on the same instrument. And then no rigid, tuned system would work. So no MIDI keyboards, no synthesizers that were on like a standard scale would work. So, saxophone made sense.

(Saxophone)

Alfred: And if you listen carefully, you can hear the little break of the edit mark, where the breath is interrupted.

(Saxophone)

Alfred: It's one of those things where it's not perfectly done. The player is amazing, this guy, Ben Wendel. He's a phenomenal saxophonist. I am not using his best take. Yeah, I'm sorry, Ben. I am using [laughter] a vibey take, which is important. And then, the other saxophone part.

(Saxophone)

Alfred: So in that same spirit of things that aren't quite right, but are right for the song, I do some vocals on the track.

(Vocals join)

Alfred: In isolation, I mean, I don't know if I even could bear it, I sing on other tracks, but this was really early on for me. And it was definitely one of those things that it was unconsciously kind of in the background, and recorded, and then sewn in, so, so like, so buried in the mix that I wasn't as sweating it.

(Music fades)

Alfred: The way it repeats and loops and kind of refrains, it's like an electronic song. It's like this chunk that then progresses, and it opens up a little bit, but then it quickly dies off. It doesn't have a traditional song flow. And a lot of times for me, electronic music is about subverting expectation. So even though the song doesn't use synthesizers or drum machines, to me, it's about these kind of soundscapes. I wanted to be an electronic producer, so it's like aspirational, but is it electronic? Well, not really, but aspirationally, it is. So let's say that.

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Experience," by Daedelus, in its entirety. Stay tuned after the song to hear what happened next with it.

("Experience" by DAEDELUS)

(Music ends)

Alfred: This song is remarkable for me for a number of reasons. And some of them have to do with the before, and some of them have to do with the after. The strange world we live in with music means that your legacy isn't something you always choose. Sometimes it's chosen for you. My very first record was remixed, a different song, "Playing Parties" was remixed by Madlib. Unbeknownst to me, at the same time he remixed that, he remixed other songs off the record. Years went by, and then suddenly this record called "Madvillain" was released, and it featured kind of, without my knowledge, this remix of my song.

("Accordion" by MADVILLAIN)

Alfred: So "Experience" became "Accordion." And although there is the accordion sound played by me, it's not really an accordion per se, but then you have MF Doom rapping about it being an accordion. So suddenly it has this life outside of my intention.

("Accordion" by MADVILLAIN)

Alfred: I've actually performed this song on stage with MF Doom and Madlib on a few occasions. And now it's been recorded by so many other people: Drake.

("The Grind" by DRAKE)

Alfred: Kitty Pryde.

("Accordion" by KITTY PRYDE)

Kitty: My name's Kitty. My version of "Accordion" was like one of the first songs I ever made at all. I was really into, like, MF doom, Madlib, and I never thought about what the sample was or anything. I just assumed that all of those guys found old vinyl records and took little pieces of them. Daedelus went on tour with my friend, Ryan Hemsworth. I had never even heard of him. I was, like, listening to all of his music because I was, like, really intrigued. It was really pretty. And then, it started in with that accordion. I was just like, "Wait, wait, wait. I know this." That's definitely my favorite Daedelus song. I mean it's, like, so beautiful.

(Music ends)

Alfred: All these other people put their spit into it. I'm the only sample credited on the Madvillain record, and that's partially because they just gave me that opportunity to kind of decide how I wanted [laughter] to be billed on that one, which is really nice of Stones Throw, who originally released the *Madvillainy* record. Over time now, it's been sampled by other people in very different ways. It's gone into R&B songs.

("Accordian" by TORY LANEZ)

(Music fades)

Alfred: So it's almost like you have like three lifes for this song: you have the original life on the *Invention* record, and then you have this very beefed up version with Madlib's bassline and the vocals of MF doom, and then, kind of subsequent versions that were so remarkable. And then, now a third version that just totally puts into outer space, and makes it seem like an electronic composition. It really feels like it's gone full circle. All my early work is very short, because I didn't have the confidence to make a song that was longer than two minutes. The song goes by way too fast. It doesn't really even barely break into a memorable

tune this way. I am amazed and honored, again, that it was sampled by somebody else, because it actually has a longer life than being a 1 minute 30 second song on a record that was from 2002.

("Accordion" by MADVILLAIN)

Alfred: It's just not mine anymore. It's in the world, but it's really nice to look back at it.

("Accordion" by MADVILLAIN)

Hrishikesh: Visit songexploder.net for more info on Daedelus. You'll find links to all of the different songs that sampled "Experience," so you can hear them in full.

(Music ends)

Hrishikesh: You can find all of the past episodes of the podcast and subscribe to future episodes at itunes.com/songexploder. You can also find Song Exploder on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. I send out mixtapes on Fridays on my newsletter. You can find links to all of these at songexploder.net. Song Exploder is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.