

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." – Confucius

Forgetting is incredibly vital to our everyday experience of life. Our minds record so many memories; but when we go to retrieve them they are always colored by our own personal narrative. We capture memories in the form of words, photos, paintings and video; but music captures things in a different way, leaving out the details of people, places, words, things and smells. Often times all that remains are the qualities that might have gone unnoticed in even the most detailed description of events. We are left with the essence of that narrative spin the mind puts on things, the rhythm of human thought; and the rest is discarded and forgotten.

Monk said, "The *inside* of the tune (the bridge) is the part that makes the *outside* sound good." A jazz tune is a structure involving the repetition of a main theme, with a bridge somewhere in between. After the bridge, the initial theme is restated, but it takes on a different meaning because coming back to a theme gives a different feeling than getting hit with one out of the blue. It is now colored by the information we have gathered from the bridge. The same process happens on a larger scale within a tune. When the melody is restated after the solos, it takes on a new meaning based on what's been established in the improvised section. This push-and-pull of statement, abstraction or forgetting, and restatement gives us the sensation of movement in music. It is this kind of movement that conveys thoughts and feelings to the listener, the feeling of *being moved*.

To feel a certain way about something in the past is to have a simplified memory of what it was – simplified in the sense that *it was* a series of events over time and now it is flattened into the past. The way these memories are stored has a lot to do with our emotional thought process. In "Funes the Memorious" Borges writes about a man, Funes, who perceives everything in vivid detail, and forgets nothing:

It was very difficult for him to sleep. To sleep is to turn one's mind from the world; Funes, lying on his back on his cot in the shadows, could imagine every crevice and every molding in the sharply defined houses that surrounded him. (I repeat that the least important of his memories was more minute and more vivid than our perception of physical pleasure or physical torment.) Towards the east, along a stretch not yet divided into blocks, there were new houses, unknown to Funes. He imagined them to be black, compact, made of homogenous darkness; in that direction he would turn his face in order to sleep. He would also imagine himself at the bottom of the river, rocked and annihilated by the current. . . . To think is to forget differences, generalize, make abstractions. In the teeming world of Funes, there were only details, almost immediate in their presence.

Every living creature filters the world in its own distinct way, and that process is directly tied to what ends up getting left behind as the residue of experience. A big part of why music is so important to me is that it is a way of practicing the art of how things are experienced and forgotten. Everything forgets. Playing with great musicians, there is an amazing feeling of levity. Everything unimportant is quickly forgotten, giving one the sensation of being alive and hurtling through time. It is a release from the world somewhat like Funes at the bottom of the river of his imagination, "rocked and annihilated by the current." This is the feeling I am going for in music. I hear and I forget.

This album was made during a time of extreme catharsis, and the two sessions represented on this CD reflect two very different and important periods of my life. The process of selecting the best takes, editing and mixing them, and weaving them together to tell a story was an experience not unlike what the brain does as we form memories. Moments in time can't be repeated in real life; but the ability of music to recreate thoughts, emotions and the feeling of movement through time is truly astounding.

You are holding in your hands the distilled spirits of a year of my life, shaped by the musical contributions of some of my closest friends. Drink up.

Ryan Blotnick
Brooklyn, May 2009