



FINAL PROJECT · SELECTED WORKS · 2026

SYNTHETIC SOLITUDE

Emotional alienation in the AI era
through popular music and sonic
worldbuilding

HOUKAI(CHRIS) LAO

Composer · Producer · Sonic Worldbuilder

The project in one clear idea

PROJECT STATEMENT

[This practice-based composition project explores how popular music and sonic worldbuilding can communicate emotional alienation in the AI era. The outcome is a five-track concept EP combining R&B, hip-hop, electronic production, processed vocals and cinematic sound design. Rather than using AI only as a futuristic aesthetic, the project examines how digital systems affect intimacy, identity, agency and perceptions of reality. Across the EP, a consciousness moves from artificial companionship and online self-construction towards repetitive labour, emotional emptiness and the loss of a stable identity. Familiar hooks, grooves and repetition remain accessible while being disrupted through fragmented motifs, changing structures and vocal manipulation. Composition experiments, reflection and listener feedback will evaluate whether these techniques successfully communicate alienation.]

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How can
immersive sonic
worldbuilding
through popular
music
communicate
emotional
alienation in the AI
era?

CONTEXT

AI era • Digital
identity • Synthetic intimacy

METHOD

Composition

Five stages of alienation

The narrative moves from technological seduction to a crisis of emotion, identity, agency and meaning.

01 BOOT / WELCOME HOME

ENTERING THE SYSTEM

System voices, advertising-style reassurance, electronic noise and a recurring motif establish the world. The rhythm gathers until: “Your personalised experience is ready,” seamlessly opening AI Companion.

02 AI COMPANION (DESIGNED AFFECTION)

ALIENATION FROM EMOTION

A warm R&B love song masks calculated care: love becomes a personalised service and comfort a commodity. Its final reveal of artificiality leads into Persona.

03 PERSONA

ALIENATION FROM SELF

Labels, algorithms and image management repeatedly repackage the protagonist across three choruses. The focus turns from whether technology is real to: “Was I ever really me?”

04 EXECUTE / ROUTINE

ALIENATION FROM AGENCY

Work, update, publish, complete, repeat. The EP’s hardest and most mechanical track exposes a promise of freedom that work continually postpones; Persona’s notification becomes a command.

05 AFTERIMAGE

ALIENATION FROM MEANING

The emotional centre asks why companionship, attention, identity and efficiency still feel unreal. Expansive synths, intimate emptiness, unresolved harmony and a delayed climax dissolve into a Mike Dean–influenced synth solo.

LISTEN

https://soundcloud.com/chris_lao?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

[FILM PROJECT TITLE]

COMPOSING FOR SCREEN · ORIGINAL SCORE



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This was a title-sequence scoring project for the Composing for Screen module. I created an original score for Crumbs, using sustained textures, sparse melodic ideas and gradual layering to reflect its surreal, post-apocalyptic world.

CREDITS

Film: Crumbs

Music composed, produced and mixed by Chris Lao

[2026]

[<https://youtu.be/PfEfxsVi6M0>]

Composition that builds worlds

BIO

[I am a composer, producer and sound artist working across hip-hop, R&B and cinematic sound. My practice explores sonic worldbuilding, digital identity and emotional alienation through atmospheric, narrative-led music. I am interested in collaborating with filmmakers, game developers, visual artists and creative technologists on music production, screen scoring, sound design and audiovisual projects.]

SELECTED SKILLS

Composition
Music Production
Film Scoring
Sound Design
Vocal Production
Mixing
Sonic Worldbuilding
Logic Pro

PROJECT CREDITS

Written, composed and produced by Chris Lao

CONTACT

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Available for composition, screen-scoring and interdisciplinary collaboration.