

ON A BLANK SCREEN

A block of ten or so computer-screen numbers flashes on, and a soothing MUSICAL NOTE plays. After a moment, another block flashes on, followed by another NOTE. Then a column of numbers scrolls up the screen, and a series of NOTES and CHORDS play. Over time, more and more numbers and NOTES appear and play. Then, the NOTES take on a rhythm and gradually start to sound like music. The MUSIC grows in complexity, as numbers flood the screen.

The MUSIC is strange, electronic, experimental, played in a weird scale and mode, with lop-sided rhythms and very unusual chords and timbres. It's not unpleasant, but it sounds mechanical, not artful. As it evolves, however, it becomes strangely engaging.

INT. NATE BUNDY'S APARTMENT - DAY

ANGLE TIGHT ON NATE as he stares at a computer screen O.S., watching the glowing numbers fly by. He's twenty-two and good looking for an MIT math major, dresses strictly for comfort, and grows a mop of unkempt hair.

ANGLE TIGHT ON MOVEMENT IN THE ROOM as his hands enter characters on a keyboard, lights flash on electronic music instruments, and his fingers play single notes on a music keyboard.

WE PULL BACK from Nate. His one-room apartment is packed tight with a haphazard collection of musical gizmos and racks of electronic gear, flashing in sync with the music - the room of a musical madman. It's late spring. The windows are open on a clear, fragrant day. Kids are playing and SCREAMING outside.

Nate stops the MUSIC, stares at the screen of numbers for a moment, enters more numbers into a complicated program, and then starts the MUSIC again. It SOUNDS different somehow, not necessarily better.

He turns the SOUND UP, then stands and paces, listening intently as the score loops and transforms. He stabs the air with gestures as if he is conducting the off-beat score.

Mixed in with the MUSIC, we start to become aware of a PHONE RINGING. Nate turns, looks for the phone, stops the MUSIC. He sits and spins around quickly to the desk. He unearths an open book buried under a pile of papers. As he does, a buried container of tomato soup spills. He stands. He slides a laptop out of the way, pulls papers and books free of the mess.

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The phone CONTINUES. He listens. RING. He digs for the phone on the other side of the desk, as tomato soup drips on the floor. RING. He finds it.

NATE  
(Low, into phone)  
Hello.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Where are you?

Where is he indeed? He checks the clock: 7:30 PM.

NATE  
Oh my God.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE RESIDENTIAL AREA - NIGHT

Old two-story houses and trees line the street. Nate is trying to keep up with SAM REASONER, his girlfriend. She is moving quickly down the sidewalk, face forward, carrying a big, wide cake box.

NATE  
I forgot.

SAM  
We talked about it this morning.  
How could you forget?

NATE  
I guess I wasn't awake.

SAM  
Well, what about yesterday  
afternoon? You seemed awake then.

NATE  
So what if we're a little late.  
It's just a party.

She stops and he runs into her.

SAM  
I can't believe you're saying that.  
I really can't.

She holds up the box.

SAM (CONT'D)  
What's this?!

NATE  
Oh yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM  
(Mocking)  
Oh yeah!

She starts walking again.

NATE  
I'm really sorry. Okay? I've been  
worried about finals.

SAM  
No you haven't. No you haven't. You  
never worry. I worry. It's easy for  
you.

NATE  
You're exaggerat-

SAM  
I have to practically lick the  
floors at MIT to get a three-five  
and you can't even fucking remember  
a fucking birthday party!

NATE  
That's not true.

SAM  
(Under her breath)  
Of course not.

NATE  
What?

SAM  
Fuck you!

She turns and walks up the path to a large three-story house.  
LOUD MUSIC is playing and people are partying inside.

INT. OLD HOUSE FRONT ROOM - LATE

The party room is dark, packed tight with spirited college  
students. Balloons and a "Happy Birthday Rex" banner festoon  
the rich, wood-paneled walls.

Nate is depressed, sitting by himself on one end of an old  
saggy sofa. He is holding a half-killed glass, focused on  
nothing off in the distance.

OLD HOUSE HALLWAY - LATER

He is standing, holding the beer, studying a picture on the  
wall - some Escher-like painting.

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A door opens next to him and a young woman comes out straightening her tee-shirt. She looks at Nate, then squeezes around him. A guy comes from the other direction.

PARTY GUY  
Are you waiting?

NATE  
No.

Nate is oblivious, as the guy squeezes into the room.

OLD HOUSE KITCHEN - LATER

Nate is refilling his glass from a keg, finding it more difficult to keep his balance. Without stepping away, he takes a long pull from the full glass. Another guest tries to grab the keg hose, but Nate beats him to it and tops off his glass again. Nate doesn't notice when the guy shoots him a dirty look.

Nate walks over to the chip table and starts stuffing his face. He is alone and in a daze. So far everyone has kept their distance. Then, MOE walks up and grabs a plate.

MOE  
How you doing, Nate?

Nate turns. His face lights up.

NATE  
Moe. Where the fuck have you been?  
Save me from this party, man.

MOE  
Where's Sam?

NATE  
Who knows? She's pissed.

MOE  
What did you do now?

NATE  
(Defensive)  
What do you mean, what did I do?

Moe smiles and pats Nate on the back.

MOE  
Nothing. Lighten up. Enjoy yourself. Mill around. Talk to people. You might learn something.

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NATE  
I doubt it seriously.

Moe looks Nate in the eye.

MOE  
Smile.

NATE  
No.

MOE  
Come on, big smile.

NATE  
Fuck you.

MOE  
No, you're not smiling. I'm not  
going to fuck you without a big  
smile. Come on.

That breaks through. Nate's face softens.

NATE  
Asshole.

OLD HOUSE DINING ROOM - LATER

CARL, an overweight man with thick glasses and a Star Trek tee-shirt, is talking to Moe and Nate, while they work their way along a food table. Carl's mouth is filled with food and spraying the air with organic matter as he talks.

CARL  
It was an object the size of a golf  
ball.

MOE  
A golf ball?

CARL  
One electromagnetic pulse that  
could conceivably contain enough  
energy to light Philadelphia for a  
month.

MOE  
Why Philadelphia?

CARL  
Possibly the whole east coast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOE

How can you tell?

CARL

We can't exactly, but it was travelling at light-year speed and there were so many of them, like spraying out of this super nova. It was fucking insane.

MOE

How can you tell what they are?

CARL

By analyzing data from radio telescopes.

MOE

Doesn't all that data analyzing take the sport out of astronomy? What ever happened to telescopes?

CARL

Using computers to grab and analyze data is far more precise and useful. Take math? Where would you be today if you were still bound to paper and pencil?

NATE

Better off.

CARL

You can't be serious.

NATE

All great thought originates in a great thinker's mind. Sifting through lists of computer data is work for Neanderthals, not mathematicians.

CARL

I disagree-

Nate turns and walks off before Carl can get a word out. Carl looks at Moe, appalled.

MOE

You know, I think computers are just great.

OLD HOUSE FRONT ROOM - LATE

The original tempo of the party is waning. Nate is still holding his beer, standing with Moe in a small group. He is distracted and bored, but the alcohol has loosened him up. STUDENT 1 seems to be the center of attention.

STUDENT 1

The 90's was the saddest decade in the history of music.

STUDENT 2

You could say the same thing about the 70's and 80's.

STUDENT 1

True, but at least there were attempts made. I mean who remembers Lennie Kravitz?

The group LAUGHS, except for Nate.

STUDENT 1 (CONT'D)

Music today is... is nothing. It's a commodity. It's controlled by a handful of multi-national corporations that decide what the world is going to hear. They alone control the future of music.

STUDENT 2

It doesn't mean anything anymore.

STUDENT 1

It was sold out like Christmas and everything else.

Nate is sick of the conversation and the people.

NATE

Most people have no idea what the meaning of music is.

All eyes turn to Nate. Who is this guy?

STUDENT 1

(Politely)  
Right.

NATE

What do you think it is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STUDENT 1

(On the spot suddenly)

What do I...? It's uh... different for everyone, but for me it's, uh... I don't know. It's art. It touches me. It stirs my emotions and memories. I don't know. It doesn't have to have a meaning.

NATE

Everything has a meaning. Just because you don't know what the meaning is, doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

STUDENT 1

Okay. It has meaning. I just don't-

Nate rattles through his explanation condescendingly.

NATE

Music is simply a series of complex tones. When the tones are played, they act on the mind. They evoke emotions, cause the mind to change, fire different sets of neurons, whatever.

He pauses to see if he is getting through.

NATE (CONT'D)

It's another form of communication. That's all music is.

STUDENT 1

(Sarcastically)

I think you've missed the whole point. Music isn't supposed to be analyzed to death. It is made to be enjoyed.

NATE

It can be. Music can also be made to disturb. People choose not to listen to music that disturbs, because they choose to block the truth. They hear only what they want to hear, to pretend the truth doesn't exist.

STUDENT 1

Wow. If that's all music means to you, then I feel really sorry for you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STUDENT 1 (CONT'D)

Composers don't write tones to control people's minds. The whole point-

NATE

They do though! But they don't know what they're doing, because they choose not to think. They say music doesn't have to have meaning and crap like that, because it's difficult or unpleasant. They write music to be enjoyed because they don't have the mental capacity to envision anything beyond the obvious, and all they want to do is please the masses and get rich. Art is bullshit. There's no such thing. Art is... is people saying that something doesn't have to have meaning, so it's priceless and beautiful, but they don't know what priceless and beautiful are because they've shut down their minds. They've built this religion around music. We're all supposed to buy into this religion and believe music is like God. They say it doesn't have to have meaning. It just is, and...-

STUDENT 1

Hey, hey calm down, okay? Jesus.

NATE

And we're not supposed to think about it or analyze it or question it because then...

STUDENT 1

We're just having a conversation here! If you don't enjoy music, fine, but-

Sam approaches the group, worried about what Nate is doing.

NATE

I do enjoy music. You don't know what enjoying music is because you don't take the time-

STUDENT 1

You are so full of shit!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATE

That was brilliant! Is that all you have to say?

STUDENT 1

No. I can say this.

Student 1 shoves Nate, who is taken off guard and falls back on the floor spilling his drink all over him.

The two Students walk off, talking about Nate behind their backs.

MOE

(To Sam)

He's the life of the party, as usual.

SAM

I can tell.

(To Nate, miffed)

Maybe you should hold off on the alcohol, bud?

NATE

(Knowing he's going to get it anyway)

Ah, you people. You use less than 1% of your brain. The rest is filled with Gummy Bears, like a big piñata.

SAM

I don't need to say what yours is filled with.

NATE

Fuck you. Isn't anyone here interested in what's really important? The fucking bombs are falling from the sky and everyone is sitting around talking about liposuctioning their asses.

SAM

You know. You're getting just a LITTLE tiresome. Why don't you give it up for awhile and give us all a break?

NATE

No, I can't. Uh-uh. There's no time for parties and lies. No time.

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CONTINUED: (4)

SAM

Yes there is. You know what?  
There's no time for you. That's  
what there's no time for. Why don't  
you grow up-

Nate is hurt.

MOE

I know. Why don't I take Nate  
outside for some air?

SAM

I'm sorry, Moe.

Moe grabs Nate and pulls him away. FRED, another student,  
approaches Sam.

FRED

Who's that guy?

SAM

Oh, that's the famous Nate Bundy.

FRED

What's his problem?

SAM

Pretty much everything.

FRED

Wow.