



# SUMMER SUCKS

A second Sunsetters album by Blind Man's Book

(Jordan Dooling and Lindsay Taylor)

(Album art by Cadet, edited by Jordan)

v2

## LINDSAY'S INTRODUCTION

Here we are in *Summer Sucks*, the album which took forever to finish. As Sunsetters' first rock opera, it was always going to be a big deal both in universe and out, which meant that the music would have to be worthy of such status. This, of course, meant that we would have to be meticulous. To this end, we decided that Jordan would take the lead on creating the album, a process which, much like with perfecting 'Deep Cuts' in *Ancestor*, involved Jordan taking what I had written previously and making it all way fucking cooler. Except this time we needed a lot more material, which was a large part of why this album took so long to write, really.

As you might recall, the concept for *Summer Sucks* has existed for five or so years by now, though in the beginning it was really quite different from what it is now. I wrote a more-or-less complete first draft based on that concept, but we decided, as Jordan reworked the concept into something better, that we would also rework the music and lyrics and whatnot to go along with the changes to the story.

The final album draws a lot of musical bits from the first draft, but is written in such a way that those parts would be unrecognisable when compared to the first draft. Which is why this version is better than the first one.

God, it still hasn't really sunk in that we actually finished the album.

## JORDAN'S INTRODUCTION

*The Mythology of Empathy* welcomed us to the new fiction: Synthetic rock, synthetic musicians, synthetic record companies, synthetic magazine articles, promises of an entire fictional discography. The second album in the saga of the Sunsetters, *Summer Sucks*, has other goals. It must:

- 1) Be a rock opera / epic poem / single narrative.
- 2) Take elements of *Mythology* as the base for a more refined listening experience.
- 3) Follow certain essential "parallels" shared between *OH GOD THE RAPTURE IS BURNING* and *Topography Genera*.
- 4) Still sound like a cool and plausible album from start to finish.

Considering the album would have to be a mega-long complex of intricate composition balanced alongside a mythological monomyth, that premise definitely sounds like a tall order. To blur the lines between "rock album" and "symphony," leaning too far neither on one side nor the other, that's something rock bands don't *do* (beyond lip service), so what makes us think a couple of 20-somethings living an ocean apart could produce something like that from scratch?

Simple. We didn't think we'd finish the first album either.  
Enjoy.

# THE INFERNO BEGINS

(compositions by Lindsay, arrangement by Jordan)

**Lindsay:** ‘The Inferno Begins’ is a song that has existed since the first draft of *Summer Sucks* started back in, like, 2013. It was originally seven-or-so minutes, and was the midpoint of the album. The original version was very blatantly inspired by/a rip-off of Bathory’s ‘A Fine Day to Die’, with secondary influence from Lord Belial’s ‘Armageddon Revelation’. Narratively, as the centre of the album, the original ‘Inferno’ was the point where the story took its dark turn, so the music was supposed to be heavier than the songs that came before it; hence, overt black metal influence.

When the original *Summer Sucks* got scrapped, this was the only song to more-or-less entirely make it into the new version, though with added elements from some of the other old songs. ‘Inferno’ was the first song of the new album to be completed, and has pretty much existed in its current form since 2015, small edits notwithstanding. Several elements of the old album’s concept that both Jordan and I liked were added to ‘Inferno’, including the upbeat, pop punk-ish intro section (intended to be the opening track); the ballad section that follows the black metal section (intended to be the track before ‘Inferno’ and is still intact as its own song, and might see a release as a single or something); and the last section (intended to be the final track of the album), among others.

I’m honestly impressed that this song came together as fast as it did, and me being generally impressed with this album will likely be a recurring theme of this commentary; these five songs very likely are the best material Jordan and I have written yet, and will set the bar perhaps unreasonably high for material to come.

I also like the joke of this album starting the exact same way as *Mythology*, with an upbeat punk-influenced bit. As we might have mentioned in the commentary for that album, what became the opening for this track was originally intended for that album, and what became ‘Drowning Under the Influence’ was originally intended to be the title track for the first draft of this album. Was this needlessly complicated, in hindsight? Probably, but it’s still funny to think about.

**Jordan:** Inferno introduces us to the *Summer Sucks* war machine, throwing so many things your way and at times testing your endurance all in order to demonstrate that this isn’t your dad’s rock and roll anymore. But it doesn’t drop us into that right away-- first it has to let the midi rock play out a little bit, allow the reactionary cynic in all of us to pop his head and ask “oh, is this more of the same, more *Mythology*?” The Sunsetters collectively say “Guess again,” and they do so through their “instruments.” All of this goes on adjacent to a parallel battle: We’re here in real life pretending the Sunsetters are a real band, talking as if this is the case, and indulging in this while reactionary cynics prepare to dismiss us for it. These are to be framed as *battles*, with the album as a closed system, an engine of nothing more than rock and roll *ideas*, generating models of fiction one can live within.

Incidentally, I functioned as this song's arranger. I put the sections in the right places and made edits to heighten the flow. I also wrote the vocals. All of the work on this song was finished many years ago, even considering the revamps years later. Inferno was designed as an anchor; it sets some expectations for the rest of the album— even to us creators— and also it is probably the track that is closest in conception to Rapture. So I wanted there to be an amount of the “teenager” to Inferno, I wanted the work we set down at the very beginning, as young inexperienced songwriters, to stay there as a time capsule. The rest of the album has to build *from* something.

The plot, the “concept” of this album, is much like the music: it summons an aggregate of ideas and throws them against each other, letting their implications balance each other out. Many of these are obvious, like Yggdrasil, the Four Horsemen, or the viscerality that comes from the Predator's abstraction.

The protagonist's name, Lucius Sunsetto, covers a lot of ground. “Lucius” is a reference to *The Golden Ass* (the only novel in Latin from Ancient Rome that has survived, in a complete form, to our time), and elements from that novel find relevance in this album. “Lucius” is *also* a fainter reference to *MOTHER 3* (the Game Boy Advance Japanese RPG that deals with the introduction of capitalism into a peaceful village), and there's some cuter references to that in this album, though that touches on a broader intersection between Sunsetters and video games in general, a subject that's beyond the scope of this commentary. “Sunsetto,” also, has two meanings. As a word with a vowel at the end, it bears resemblance to Italian surnames, which was my way of bringing to mind Dante Alighieri, whose *Comeddia* was fresh in my memory while writing the album. As a dumb play on the word “sunset,” the name fits into a well-trodden tradition of prog rock stories about protagonists named after their own bands (Pink Floyd's *The Wall* protagonist is literally named Pink Floyd; Genesis's *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* has Rael, a play on singer Peter Gabriel). So, in choosing this name, I was able to encode a lot of subjects into whatever would come of the plot.

While I would find some enjoyment in earnestly analyzing the lyrics of *Summer Sucks* in full, that would be a big exhausting job, and I've got enough to do just getting all these albums out there. In the commentary for coming songs, I may touch on a concept, but I will leave a lot out.

# PIG BRUISER

(compositions by Jordan, based on material by Lindsay)

**Jordan:** What a journey this song has gone through. The last song to be written (though fragments like God Machine, Darkest Clowns, and Deeper have endured since near the beginning), this has gone through at least three major revisions. First it was just a bunch of fragments, then it was a bunch of fragments with a very slow second half (the Pig King was born here, with a sinister ballad in 15/16 that has been transformed in the final product), then it was rewritten from scratch to have a more hardcore first half (which the final product still takes as root), and then *all of it* was rewritten from scratch one more time when the rest of the album was further along. For all of *Summer Sucks*'s development, this song did not functionally exist, but for the last month when I just kinda... made it happen.

So what's the "idea" behind this song? After the primarily metal Inferno, I had it set in my mind that track 2 should instead revolve around a structure influenced by the conventions of electronica. The strained development history probably stems from attempts to mimic the *sound* of electronic music, but that never felt right in the context of the rest of the album. Eventually I realized the sound should be scrapped; so long as the structure takes after the genre, the bouncy continuous medley effect would still come across. Beyond that, as Pig Bruiser corresponds with Rapture's second act (and Genera's second movement), Pig Bruiser must give more of a focus to the antagonists as a general ensemble. In practice this requirement led me between hard rock and opera. (If you're interested in gaining insight on the concepts behind the lyrics, I recommend looking up Canio, and his relevance to Pierrot.)

It's weird. All this time, I'd assumed this song would develop to sound like some massive angsty Nine Inch Nails song. That's why the title had a bruised skin motif (pig bruise!). Instead it was a bouncing medley of hard rock.

**Lindsay:** 'Pig Bruiser' is the song that took the longest to actually complete, I feel. It and 'Tired Anthem' together are the reasons why this album took five years to write, really. I have a bit less to say about 'Pig' since it was almost entirely Jordan who wrote it. In fact, in terms of writing the album, I would say that the bulk of material that I wrote went into 'Inferno' and 'Found the Fountain of Mab', and perhaps also 'Tired Anthem'.

As far as I can tell, very little, if any, material from the old Summer Sucks went into this song. No, this song pulled instead from other unreleased material; for example, the Darkest Clowns riff came from an unfinished draft of a song called 'Railroad to Metropolis', which has a second draft started, but is, like the first one, nowhere near completion.

# FOUND THE FOUNTAIN OF MAB

(compositions and arrangement by Lindsay and Jordan)

**Lindsay:** 'Found the Fountain of Mab' is a song that has, like 'Inferno', existed for a long time. Though it wasn't finished for as long 'Inferno' was, the material that had existed had been polished enough to appear at the end of *The Mythology of Empathy* as a bonus track. It has since been expanded well beyond what it was when it first saw the light of day.

I love this song a whole lot. The beginning section and its reprise are some of the most explicitly beautiful material on the album, along with the first few sections of 'Tired Anthem'. They demonstrate a versatility in songwriting that was missing from the first version of the album, a growing maturity as writers that was, simply, impossible for 2016 Linz and Jordan to achieve.

In a way, 'Fountain' was our coming-of-age as writers, and I think it is so in the best way possible, even moreso than us actually finishing the album, really. I say so because, while *Summer Sucks* was a long time coming, it would not have been possible for us to finish it without first growing as writers. This might sound obvious, but it bears mentioning because, for a time, I was to some extent worried that we might not ever finish the album. Though, that said, I probably wouldn't have regretted never finishing because 'Inferno', 'Fountain', and the first fifteen-or-so minutes of 'Anthem' were strong enough that, even unfinished, I could be proud of them.

All that said, I am, of course, glad the album got finished.

... also, now is a good time to mention that, while all of the final lyrics were written by Jordan, I had had a go at writing them in, like, 2016. Fragments of mine remain here-and-there, but that's about it. I bring it up because my attempt at 'Fountain' was actually pretty good and has been poached for *My Amontillado* (remember them? They did 'At Least We Have Each Other' back in the day. Never stopped writing material for them, something might be coming for them some time soon, maybe).

And thus we come to the end of disc one of *Summer Sucks*. Up next, of course, is disc two.

**Jordan:** Fountain had to be the staggeringly pretty one, the emotional low point, the climax in a classical sense, a midpoint extreme featuring behaviour and passages which exist only in this section and do not come up again. I have no idea how or why Lindsay came up with the acoustic guitar opening passage, but it was the first thing to be written for this song (it predated anything from *Pig Bruiser*), and it nailed the tone. I didn't dare touch it. When I finally did, years later, I found I suddenly and inexplicably understood harmonies-- I added all the stuff that wasn't guitar.

My pride, though, my pride is the tarantella in movement two. The Egg Dance, I call it privately (I can easily imagine a grotesque Dr. Eggman dancing along to the sinister beat). The root arpeggio is

Lindsay's (it's basically The Arpeggio of the album), but I added all the trappings, all the rhythms, that big booming countermelody ("when, how?"). The tarantella is the cornerstone of the plot, a crucial symbol, and an evocative one for a music album to have. Its presence in this song is a necessity.

The middle of the song developed in a way similar to *Inferno*, arranging Lindsay's material and fleshing out the rhythms and motifs, but as the centerpiece of the album, I'd find some surprising musical ideas that I knew would not come up again until the final song. These are mainly focused around movement five, "I'm A Good Joke." But then, *also* as the centerpiece, I knew there would be something that *only* appears here and sees no reprise elsewhere. This has something to do with why, in this new version 2 of the album, I elected to feature a swing rhythm at the end of this song. It sounds good, okay, and it brings depth to a passage that was previously rushed. "Passerine," the final movement, is a study in grace. It steps from moment to moment, letting each voice say a paragraph or so, and then moves on. Originally the end of this song stopped "talking" and started "mumbling" until it just stopped. Now it continues the dialogue instead, better leading us into the song to come.

The lyrics here perhaps came the easiest out of all the songs, as they have this depressed wandering quality to them that my many stories had gotten me good at. The Dream is one big riddle, I had a blast coming up with that. And the River Mab *sounds* like a mythological thing, but truthfully I didn't know any definition of "mab" when I made this, and I had developed my own sense of the word as meaning "to grab something in your mind, to comprehend totally." Or, to be cute about it, "to mind-grab." Mind-grab, mab. I found out later, through *Moby Dick*, that there is in fact a Queen Mab in English myth who is the queen of dreams. The compatibility of these ideas pleased me.



# TIRED ANTHEM

(compositions and arrangement agonized over by Lindsay and Jordan)

**Lindsay:** As I mentioned while talking about 'Fountain', the first fifteen-or-so minutes of this song have existed in a polished state since, like, 2017-18, and were some of the most beautiful material that had been written for the album. The joke of this song, of course, is that it's a thirty-four minute song that comes after two fifteen minute songs and a twenty minute song. Hence the name 'Tired Anthem'; the listener is supposed to be tired by the time this song starts. The effect might be somewhat weakened on a CD release of the album because this song is on the second disc, with the first ending with 'Fountain', but the effect remains fully intact through digital, which is good.

This is the song that has the most of my lyrical contributions in it, I'm pretty sure. That isn't to say there's a lot of my lyrics in it, but the general structure of the lyrics is to some extent derived from my old one, if expanded.

Does this song hold up as the culmination of everything in this album? Probably, yeah. Is it tiring to listen to it after listening to the first three songs all in one go? Definitely, yeah. Was it worth it? Absolutely.

**Jordan:** Tired Anthem, at 34 minutes, is the longest song we've written. It's also pretty diverse, with ten movements pulling from different styles. Movements 1, 3, and 5 were drafted earliest. Movement 2 is another of those passages I'm really proud of (and, by mentioning the "Invisible Jester," it fits into a 'Sunsetters reference' that had been in Rapture). Movement 4 is Lindsay and I working in tandem for a peaceful synthesis. Movements 3 and 5 had Lindsay's compositions as the base, and I did my thing to sculpt a flow from them. The latter half of this song was *basically* all me, though, and it.. took.. *work*.

Movement 6 is named after a particular *Super Mario 64* level, and I will not elaborate on why. The music has had a couple forms over the years, and I had to develop it into a bit of a frantic dance. The choir of bass voices is the core idea of the composition, though, and I love the effect it has.

Movements 7 and 8 are an extensive hodgepodge of reprisals and variations on previous material, letting the ideas collide until some poetic images entered my head and, of course, a flow emerged. The poetic images I went with were generally Hindu-Buddhist, and this is why the action takes place atop Mount Meru. I have actually read more Buddhist source texts than I thought I would, and so I did get *some* foundation from that, but you can safely figure out much of what I was trying to say through comparing with Wikipedia articles.



Movement 9 was a big deal for me, as it was a reprisal not of anything on this album, but of “The Last Sunset” off of *Mythology*. To bring a vibrant and elaborate variation on a previous album’s song here— *here!*-- 80 minutes into the next damn album, that’s a *statement*, that’s saying.. *something*. So I wanted whatever was being said to be “The Last Sunset.” That was my first ever song, it is the most explicit reference to sunsets in a Sunsetters song, it was in fact a general inspiration for the concept of *Summer Sucks*, and I wanted to see how far I’d come as a songwriter. Turns out, I’d come very far.

Movement 10 has received some revision with version 2. It’s still fundamentally the same, a return to the start of the whole album, and then something completely different to bring us forward even when we thought there was no farther “forward” to go. I do think the original rendition of movement 10 was rushed, though, and it doesn’t help that MuseScore struggled with the sheer *size* of the score by that point. Anyway, so, there’s more rhythmic information now, and a little more depth to what’s there.

God, this is long. Tired Anthem is long. I love listening back to it, like I get really into it, but talking about it is.. hard.

I find it exhausting to watch movies, to read books, to play through a video game, even to listen to an album all the way through. I understand, though, that that feeling of tiredness is relative to my own body; attention is relative and can be trained. I consider it the ultimate test of integrity, whether for the piece of media or for myself, if I can stay engaged through my own restlessness. It can be argued that on the other side of that intimidating wall of restless potential boredom is a personally fulfilling meditative state. I certainly believe in this, so long as the activity being pursued is one you are doing volitionally.

It can also be argued, following the former, that this makes tiredness and boredom proportional to awe. Awe, as I have come to understand it, is the sensation that cuts through your doubts and brings you to take in as much information as possible. It is traditionally associated with bolts of lightning, with the relentlessness of nature, with works of such complexity as the Bible. Now, this song is not the Bible; that can be demonstrated. But it is ambitious, mysterious, and, I hope, beautiful. We were going for “awesome” in the same sense that a high schooler might think of a classic metal album he hasn’t heard, we were going for a song that reaches for the potential we would often imagine rock as having. In order to do that, we had to try and summon some genuine awe.

# CLOWNS WHO SET THE SUN

(composition by Jordan, based on material by Lindsay)

**Jordan:** So, Clowns. The skeleton for this song was written many years ago, and while the final version is a from-scratch rewrite (with a new post-rock first half that was originally twice as long before Lindsay reminded me this song was supposed to be under ten minutes), the general structure remains. Here we see some final reprisals of motifs from across the album as the sound progresses into the only resting place that felt appropriate: An energetic fade-out. The *Summer Sucks* machine never stops; we just stop listening.

And hey, for version 2, I kinda rewrote huge chunks of it from scratch *again*. The idea of this song is unchanged, as it was vivid, but I had learned some things over the years and wanted to try again to write music *about* suspense. There's richer beats this time, and a deliberate structure that builds a profile of noise. And the Kirby thing is now replaced with O Immature Amateur!

(Kirby has *something* to do with Summer Sucks in such a way that I was okay with having a strange Kirby reference in a previous draft. This is one last poetic idea that must be reconciled with one's understanding of the whole album. There's an intersection, I tell you, between Sunsetters and video games. I think it's a deeper thing that's gonna need some more years– and albums– to flesh out before I can talk about it myself.)

There's a new world out there. Lucius may be condemned to dance forever, but at least he'll watch over us and make sure the Clowns are still delivering the sun safely on its course across our sky. What will this new summer hold for you?

**Lindsay:** I pretty much had nothing to do with this song, really, in every draft of it. The most I contributed to it, like with 'Pig Bruiser', is that Jordan based it on bits that I had written before. This means that I can look at it with an ever-so-slightly less biased opinion of it.

My ever-so-slightly less biased opinion of it is: It's a killer song. Especially the last movement. That part has always been the highlight of the song for me, and it's been the part of the song that has been consistent with every draft, as I recall. It was always really good, but the drum freak out in it that got added in the last draft makes it even better.

It's probably the perfect closer for this album, being the only song under ten minutes (which is part of the overall joke of the album).

Thus we come to the end of disc two of *Summer Sucks*. ~~Up next, of course, is disc three.~~

## Sunsetters are:

### **Ganymede “Degan” Allen**

*Guitars, Voice of Pig King*

### **Paul Blackwood**

*Bass, General Vocals, Horns*

### **Elsie Carr**

*Voice of Lucius Sunsetto, Keys, Saxophone*

### **Fin Jensby**

*Drums*

### **& Remington Larson**

*Guitars, Strings*

## Blind Man’s Book are:

### **Jordan Dooling**

*Arrangement, Composition, Lyrics,  
Production, Design, Visual Art*

### **Lindsay Taylor**

*Arrangement, Composition*

### **Cadet**

*Visual Art*

### **Hex**

*Yggdrasil Art*

### **& Knuckles**

*All Instruments*

## Special thanks from Lindsay to:

My current laptop which still somehow hasn’t broken since 2013, MuseScore version 2 for being free, MuseScore version 3 for also being free and being more versatile (even though I never use version 3), bands/composers who I borrowed liberally from in my own compositions, Sega for creating Sonic the Hedgehog, Archangard and Magreat for writing cool blogs, the Dead Fear Group for assimilating Arkngard and Magreat, SlenderDown for writing my favourite Slenderblog, Terrence Anathema for making that elaborate ‘the slender man is a vampire’ joke last year. And Audrey, for being our biggest and possibly only fan. And Jordan, for doing all the work; love you.

And everyone who listen to the album. We hope you have enjoyed listening, and that you continue to do so.

## Special thanks from Jordan to:

MuseScore (versions 2 and 3 were used here) is goddamn legendary to me at this point, it carried this album and means Summer Sucks exists in an entire score of sheet music as well as mp3 format. Paint.NET provided wonderful image processing software. Sony VEGAS Pro 15 handled the lyric videos and, in fact, some mp3 post-processing-- so the thank-you goes to Humble Bundle for offering a dastardly cheap opportunity to get a copy. Audacity was also a necessary part of the post-processing, for complicated reasons. VLC Player handled metadata. Thank you James Joyce, William Blake, Dante Alighieri, Samuel Beckett, T. S. Eliot, Peter Gabriel, Shigesato Itoi, and whoever the heck I can credit for Buddhist cosmology; you were all deeply inspiring. Finally, thank you Lindsay, for your beautiful compositions and world of patience. It took me a long time to finish this album. I hope people will listen to it. I hope people will like it. Love you too.

## See you next album!

