



THE MYTHOLOGY OF EMPATHY

A Sunsetters album by Blind Man's Book

(Jordan Dooling and Lindsay Taylor)

(Album art by Quinn Stickley)

v4

INTRODUCTION

Jordan: Hello, and welcome to *The Mythology of Empathy's* booklet! You can consider these the liner notes. The nonfiction ones, I mean.

It's worth explaining what, exactly, the Sunsetters are: Fiction. I write stories, and in my stories I like to sort of intertwine words and music, but there are these bullshit things called "copyrights" in this world, so over time I figured I could just *pretend* my words are based on musical things. For this purpose, I invented a rock band who exist in most of my works in some form or other, a rock band my characters can be fans of and quote lyrics from and whatever else is necessary. A good friend of mine, Jay, whipped up some album covers for this fake band, and I even dabbled in really dumb sample music (as in, ripped from samples) just to illustrate the point. For a long time, that is all that the Sunsetters were: A kinda cool idea, a fictional "underground 2000s prog metal band" that wrote songs about the dark gods I liked to explore.

Enter the friend, the myth, the legend.

Lindsay is much more musically inclined than I am, and at the time (roughly 2014) they were *considerably* more inclined than I was. They liked my stories, and they liked the idea of these Sunsetters guys, and they were bored high school senior, so they did what any rational-thinking human would do: They decided to write literally the entire Sunsetters discography.

At first, I helped tangentially. I did write "The Last Sunset" pretty early on, and amazingly the song hasn't changed much since my original demo. I also had a demo for "Perfection" at one point. But most of what I did was just.. look at Lindsay's stuff and wonder what it would sound like if performed by a live band; they did the bulk of the work. Then one day, we discovered that MuseScore, our writing software, has a playback function. And a versatile export function. And surprisingly customizable presets. There was actually *alot* that MuseScore could do. And I, having only a clarinet and a *Rock Band 3* keyboard to my name, could actually *experiment* with music.

The rest is boring and exactly what you'd expect: We worked a lot, editing single notes sometimes, entire sections other times, playing with presets and volume levels and panning, experimenting with post-processing, testing metadata, compiling songs again and again and again, compressing them, brainstorming, working on other albums and then coming back again and again and again, until eventually one day we just kinda... reached an end point.

There's an elephant in the room I must address. When we reached that end point, it wasn't necessarily what Lindsay and I had initially dreamed of; our "first album" was not the two of us forming a band with electric guitars and a drumkit, and we had not produced a rock album. Instead, we had, on our computer desktops, a bunch of mp3 files containing somewhat polished MIDI compositions in MuseScore 2's default soundfont. We had made midi music. We had, technically, produced electronic music that emulates the format of rock in a *conspicuously* lo-fi way. And the weird thing is, I.. loved every single thing about this. I think we still wanted this to lead to the two of us doing the album with real instruments, and frankly I expect there will be plenty of listeners who would agree with that. But circumstances did not lead that way, and rather than let this depress me (which, I did, for a while), I prioritized considering the midi music as its own end point. What were *its* strengths? How good could I make it sound?

This change of mindset was necessary for the production of future albums, and it also led to me taking on *amuch* more active role, sort of the general director of the Sunsetters project. It was my decision to let these albums "just" be midi, and so I wanted to take responsibility for that by learning the tools and honing the skills to make the midi as good as it could be. So, after taking two years to make *Mythology* in the first place (releasing it in 2016), we kinda kept on working on it, releasing "version 2" in 2018, "version 3" in 2020, and now in 2025 I've arranged for this one, "version 4." The album is done now. It's been cooked in the oven. It now meets, *evensets*, the standard for a Sunsetters album going forward.

Every song on this album has had *dozens* of hours of effort put in. Collectively, we have labored over every single note. Individually, I am proud to be able to say *I* have labored over every single note. This album is meant to be, fictionally, a cult classic, an impressive debut, an underground hard rock album from the year 2000. I earnestly believe the album you hold on your.. desktop(?) reflects that image.

Lindsay and I, collectively, are Blind Man's Book. Any music the two of us release will fall under that name. The Sunsetters are one specific project within that. A "[Sunsetters album](#)" is a distinct thing, it is midi art.

Let *The Mythology of Empathy* demonstrate.

Lindsay: As of this 2025 release of the album, it's now been twelve years since I started writing what would become *The Mythology of Empathy*, and let me tell you I never expected it to turn out this good. When I started doing this, I knew nothing about music theory, songcrafting, how to actually play bass, anything that one would need to be able to write good prog. The one thing I did have was dear ol' MuseScore version 1, and also a tonne of free time. And as it turned out, not knowing how to write music or how guitars work ended up being helpful; because I wasn't restrained by reality, I could write literally anything, no matter how impossible it would be to actually play in real life, and as long as it sounded good, it could be used.

This latest iteration of the album isn't as drastic a change in content as the previous rerelease that added vocals to the songs. We've mostly just done various tweaks to bring this album's quality up to par with the later albums without changing the overall Feel of the album. This is, after all, Sunsetters' debut album; we didn't wanna make this album retroactively Better than the ones that follow.

It took a lot of work, but the first release of *Mythology* turned out pretty good. Then the rerelease a year later turned out even better. Then the second rerelease turned out even better than the first one. And now this third rerelease is even better than the previous two.

Also, to address the elephant in the room, myself: the end goal, or at least my end goal, with writing Sunsetters music like this, in MIDI form, is, and I think always has been, to, one day, be able to perform this music in real life, with real instruments, possibly up to and including live concerts with a proper band. In the years since we started writing all these songs, I've been learning the process of self-recording guitars and even been in at least one band (technically two, though both projects involved all of the same people), though, sadly, real life issues ended up preventing much from coming of it.

It will happen, though. Some day.

DROWNING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

(composition by Lindsay, lyrics by Jordan)

Lindsay: This was originally my second attempt at writing 'Summer Sucks', my take on writing a punk song, and infinitely better than the first attempt. After Jordan and I reworked the tracklist for *Mythology*, we decided that this would work as a good album opener, so it became 'Drowning'. The instrumental came together in, like, half an hour, while the lyrics went through a number of drafts before completion. I like how the title kind of foreshadows both 'Rise of Her Rain' and *We Excavate*; don't remember if that was intentional or not, but I feel like it probably was.

Jordan: I remember, the moment I heard this one, I absolutely loved it. It's short, it's catchy, it's badass, it's fast, it's to-the-point. The lyrics, I was bored at work one day and wrote a first draft of these along with Burning Books. These lyrics are loosely based on James Joyce's short story "Counterparts," which for some reason was the only thing I could think of when looking at Quinn's gorgeous album cover.

For v3, I added vocal lines to match the lyrics. For v4, I did some simple cleanup.

Worth mentioning: We were originally gonna preface this album with an EP titled *Drowning Under the Influence*, which would have had demos of some *Mythology* tracks and also "Interpolation of Memory" (which is a poem and not an actual song at the moment-- that is why we haven't done anything with it). Quinn's cover was actually done for this EP and then reworked for the album. Because one debut is enough!

BURNING BOOKS

(composition by Lindsay, flourishes by Jordan)

Lindsay: The first Sunsetters/Blind Man's Book song. I started with the drum line, 'cause I had only been playing bass for a few months and didn't really know how to write sheet music for it (or how music worked at all, really). At the time I pretty much only listened to metal, so this was a product of that influence. The original arrangement was way too repetitive; the final arrangement is basically the same as the original except shorter, and the song is much better for it. Once the rest of the instrumentation got written, I wasn't really happy with it, though I warmed up to it a lot after a while, and now I think it's one of the better songs on the album.

It is here that I have a confession to make: I haven't been terribly involved in Sunsetters for the past few years, probably since the beginning of the 2020's. The entire extent to which I have contributed to these 2025 editions of all our albums has pretty much been working on the guitar solo in 'Lowest Point', on *We Excavate*. What is probably the main reason for my lack of involvement is a fair bit of burnout and a lack of confidence in my writing ability that has been slowly simmering since the release of both *Summer Sucks* and *We Excavate* in 2020. Speaking frankly, I'm not a good guitar player, and am probably average-at-best as a bass player, but nowhere near good enough to be able to play any of our more complicated sections, which makes it difficult for me to come up with anything, I guess, worthy of being used for this big prog project. Honestly, I've burned out so hard I haven't even really listened to any of these 2025 rereleases.

All that said, I have been making slow progress at coming up with material for the follow-up to *No Entry*, and I think what I've got so far for that is pretty cool, but it's hard, you know? And you can't force it, especially if it doesn't come naturally.

Jordan: The first draft of this was longer. Some sections repeated more. One day I asked Lindsay if I could prune it, and we really liked the end result. For v3 I added little touches here and there to emphasize the melodies and rhythms a bit more, and the end section was my creation too. Came from a ditty I made in GarageBand for *Topography Genera*, a ditty called "Blood of the Queen." In v4 you can't hear the melody anymore (and you won't until "Reverie"), but that ditty was way too long and with a silly drum beat. I do not miss the GarageBand days.

Version 4 of Burning Books is perhaps one of the bigger overhauls. The fundamental song is the same, but I got my hands in every beat of those drums and bass, making them more intricate, shooting for an "organic" rhythm section that punctuates the great chords Lindsay had written so long ago. While Drowning Under the Influence is the first song a listener will ideally hear, Burning Books is the song that's meant to wow them. I've always loved this song, and I wanted to make sure the listener did too.

HIDDEN IN THE TREES

(composition and lyrics by Jordan and Lindsay)

Lindsay: I started writing the music for this a few months into my first year of uni. It was originally an eight-or-so minute thing, but we decided to split it into two tracks right at the end; having Memento Mori as its own thing helped the album have a better progression. Also the lyrics got rewritten again, and they're even better than before.

Jordan: In every draft of this album, Hidden was the song that gave probably the most trouble. You can find a number of renditions on [my YouTube channel](#) by now, all of which are mostly identical aside from, like, tweaked melodies. The original piece was very repetitive, with a bunch of different sections in different styles. One day I was in the mood to severely edit something, I got Hidden out, I spent a very long time taking it apart, changing rhythms, changing emphases, making it feel a lot jazzier in an attempt for cohesion. Every reprise was now a variation in some way. That was v2. Then v3 received *even more* editing, now informed by a bit more experience in making a song somewhat cohesive and glued together by vocal lines. Version 4, then, was rewritten from scratch. It took multiple days of 12-hour sessions as I struggled to find a song that no longer *attempted* but *achieved* cohesion. There was no profound secret I can put into a cute sentence. It was just focus, work, and reappraisal, in a constant loop.

This feels like a good time to go into the editing criteria a bit. I genuinely don't think Lindsay is capable of writing a bad song; that's not why I edit their stuff. I edit their stuff because 1) they give me permission, and 2) when you change a song's *context*-- e.g. put a bunch of songs into an order, calling it an "album"-- the way you approach the *content* of an individual song changes. I feel like Hidden was a song that could afford to be more playful than it was, like this was part of how Mythology as an album would introduce itself. It just took me many years to get to the point where I could attempt to do it that service.

This song is meant to be an adaptation of/homage to LizardBite's [Hidden in the Trees](#), a story about a man who serves the Slender Man for better and for worse. I am pretty sure, when I first decided this would be a cool idea, I had not yet *read* that story. Whoops! I have since rectified that. At least he gave us permission to base a song off of it. He's a cool dude, one of the founders of the Fear Mythos. The lyrics I went with were based on a weird poem I did in free verse not long after making [Viceking's Graab](#). I combined them with some of Lindsay's lyrics and ultimately produced a bleak, existential mood.

MEMENTO MORI

(composition by Lindsay, jam by Jordan)

Lindsay: This was largely inspired by both the ending of Dream Theater's 'Dark Eternal Night' and Lord Belial's 'Prolusio: Acies Sigillum'. It was a repetitive, heavy thing, which fit the mood of the song, 'cause Stew dies at the end of the blog, spoilers, and I had pictured this as battle music for his fight to the death, or something. It became livelier when we made it its own thing and added variations and whatnot, and I love it.

Jordan: The music was originally one cyclic riff (a descending riff three times) with no variation. It was *crushingly badass*. But after we split it into a separate track, I kept wanting to do *something* with it. For v2, I made it a sort of "jam." Just tons of arpeggios, inverted rhythms, and interpolation. Sounded kinda circus-y. Still pretty badass, just in different ways. But then, for v3, I redid the "jam" to bring it more in line with the original tone, exchanging a bit less improv for the structure speaking for itself. And v4 is only changed in minor ways, some individual notes that had always bothered me.

(I *believe* the actual reason we split it into tracks was this: We were getting tired of referring to that riff as "the outro riff from Hidden," we wound up nicknaming it "Memento Mori" after the title of the final chapter in LizardBite's story, and then we were like "actually it would be kinda cool if Memento Mori were technically standalone so it could be played live out of context." This kind of logic is rampant in Sunsetters production.)

PERFECTION

(music and lyrics by Jordan)

Jordan: This song started with a demo I did in GarageBand, one of my better products of the time. I was messing around with the software's built-in electric piano I could play on my qwerty keyboard, and I found a chord progression and accompanying rhythm I really liked, so I turned it into a vamp and based an entire song around that one single goddamn vamp. Only variation was in tempo, to mark the points where choruses started and stopped. Lyrics, for once, were written at the same time as the song. I just followed the rhythm and wrote about what I imagined the song would be about: Domestic abuse. I sang for this too, put it up on YouTube, it doesn't sound too terrible, I can imagine it being a full band song of sorts, very simple, maybe something some angry punk band would make. But in the end I wasn't happy with that demo, not totally. And in the end I wanted to make a MuseScore version, to keep a consistency in sound across the album. In the process of making that version, I made it a lot more 2000s alt-rock, a lot more catchy, more exciting, and then for version 3 of the album I redid it from scratch *again* to sound more like the original. Though it sounds kinda new-wave at times, with those synths. Still angry, riff-heavy, and the guitar ostinatos in the solo are unchanged from v2. This is the only song on the album that received no changes for v4, as this song has always been vivid and simple for me to produce.

Fun fact: "Your present's empathy, so enjoy all the self-doubt" is the origin of the album title. ...oh yeah, I took that line out of the lyrics. Well, that fun fact just became a lot funnier.

Lindsay: This one was all Jordan. At one point I was going to take Jordan's GarageBand demo and arrange it for a rock band, but I never actually got around to it. By the time I stopped procrastinating on it, Jordan had rewritten it on his own, and it turned out a lot better, I think, than if I had just rearranged it. Like, the original demo is a fine song, but it didn't really lend itself to being a full-band thing, really.

IS THIS ALL?

(music and lyrics by Lindsay)

Lindsay: For 'Is This All', the lyrics came first, then the music, which is generally opposite of how the songwriting process usually goes for us. I wrote the lyrics in about five minutes, and apart from, like, one minor change, the lyrics are pretty much the same as they were when I first wrote them for [Terrence Anathema's Poetry Blog](#). The music came, like, a day later, and like the lyrics, I wrote it surprisingly fast, over the course of half-an-hour, I think. It was originally supposed to be a My Amontillado ¹ song, but Jordan liked it and thought it would fit on this album, so we included it.

Then several years later, in late 2024, I was playing it on guitar, just kinda messing around with it, and accidentally came up with a cool-sounding lead that's vaguely inspired by the band Boris for the first section, and so decided to make the first section longer to accommodate, before also extending the final section and including a second lead there.

In retrospect, I wonder why it took us so long to try putting in a second guitar part. Like, there are five people in Sunsetters, but for the longest time this song only had four instruments in it. There could be any number of In Universe reasons, maybe Degan presented the band with a fully recorded demo track that they just kinda put on the album as-is, maybe Remy just wasn't in the studio the day they recorded the song, or other similar Fiction reasons, but I really couldn't tell you why Jordan and I decided to keep it as I originally wrote it.

Jordan: I generally did not touch this. For v3, I added the vocal melody. By which I mean I added about ten notes to the whole thing. Went a little Tool with it, since Lindsay told me this song was partly inspired by "Lateralus." A more significant change I made was turning that final section into a heavy climax. By which I mean I clicked on some measures and changed what kind of soundfont they'd use. Added a pitch bend or two, this was the time when I went crazy with pitch bends in every song. ..which I still do. What I'm trying to say here is Lindsay deserves the actual credit, this is a beautiful song, one of my favourites to listen to on this album. Very calming.

For v4, Lindsay sent me an extended version of the song, and I may have touched that one a little more than I'd otherwise done before, but all my changes were cosmetic, just making the midi itself sound better. Lindsay's composition is class.

One of my favourite fun facts about this song: I included the lyrics in the *Topography Genera* novella, as it ended with the whole album's lyrics, and in the copyrights page I credited that page number to Lindsay, but at some point I added more content to the book and never remembered to correct the credit's page number. So this song is responsible for the *one* genuine mistake you will find in that book. Thanks, Lindsay. (You're welcome, Jordan.)

¹ My Amontillado is the Sunsetters guitarist's side band. Degan Allen's, specifically. Lindsay has written a couple of songs under that name over the years, but we've yet to do anything with the idea.

THE LAST SUNSET

(music and poem by Jordan)

Jordan: This started as one of the sample things I did back in the day, this was under a different name. It was something about the Blind Man (it was not “Unknowing,” that’s fiction-only). But that thing had no actual *point* to it. One day I decided the song should be called The Last Sunset, and I wrote these lyrics to go along with the sample shit. Then I dumped the sample shit and played with GarageBand’s electric piano. Came up with the arrangement that still stands to this day. I think I was unintentionally (albeit somewhat predictably) channeling Genesis’s *How Dare I Be So Beautiful*, off of “Supper’s Ready.” Beautiful movement, haunting sustained chords that seem to fade away into the abyss, I don’t often hear music like it, certainly not in rock or metal. The lyrics I had written for the sample shit, I really liked out of context, thought they sounded like a really bleak melancholy poem. So now these are officially the lyrics to be printed, always, with the song. Even though the song is an instrumental. I like that.

(Yes, we did try to fit the lyrics to the song. Never really worked.)

There was once an arrangement that used a pretty little choir-y soundfont. I think the *only* reason I reverted to an electric piano-y sound is because I thought that would make more sense for the Sunsetters to do? I can’t see them using, like, synth-driven choir effects.

Version 4 received minor alterations, fixing some single notes that had always bothered me.

I wish I understood enough about music theory to know why I like the sound of those chord progressions. It’s probably something, like, contrapuntal. Wait, no, that doesn’t make sense in this context.

Lindsay: This one was all Jordan, again. I recorded spoken word vocals for this once, so did Jordan, and also Danny, though the vocals never really worked. I love how this works as a sort of prelude to ‘Rise’; it reminds me, to bring up ‘Supper’s Ready’ again, of how ‘Horizons’ is a sort of prelude to it.

RISE OF HER RAIN

(compositions by Lindsay and Jordan, lyrics by Jordan)

Lindsay: The second Sunsetters/Blind Man's Book song ever written. Well, the second one I started writing; wasn't at all the second one finished. A lot of this song was inspired by one of Jordan's aforementioned songs made of samples; he made one of 'Rise of Her Rain' and one called 'Empty Cities of Blue', not on this album. I again started 'Rise' with the drum line, but I also started writing a guitar line based on the one from the sample-song. The first complete draft was seven-and-a-half minutes, the second shortened to five, the third extended to twelve or so, the fourth is a tweaked version of the third, and this fifth is a further tweaked version of the fourth. The first draft of the lyrics is completely different from the final one; I think the first draft is fine in its own right, but I do still prefer the second one.

Also it's five movements now. When the 7/4 dance section got added, it was part of movement two, which made movement two be about half the song's length. So now the dance section is its own movement, movement three, making the song, which is the eighth track, have five movements. I remember back when we were doing the previous version of the album, we consciously decided to avoid eight-and-five references, but this one, at least, turned out to be unavoidable.

Jordan: The second and third movements are what took years. The rest of the song was pretty much *always* final. (Except for synths in movement one. Took *ages* to get right. And v3 proved that even more true.) The changes in v4 were almost strictly cosmetic, or else terribly minor.

I can't decide if I dislike these final lyrics, or if that's just a case of me disliking *most* song lyrics. Song lyrics can afford to be shallower than, say, modernist poetry, because poetry doesn't have to dedicate itself to rhythm in quite the same way that song lyrics do. Like, in a song, a line like "How are human minds biggest / When nothing does not exist?" has *delivery* to complicate it, whereas reading it here by itself, it feels flat. It is the context of the line, its accompaniment by music (and the metafantastic vortex of context that is the overall Sunsetters project), that gives it much more meaning.

Rise was always going to be the *big* one of the album. We'd decided that when we said "This will be an EAT song, pretty much the final song, of this cool album." With a premise like that, it was inevitable. How did it turn out? Well. I wasn't sure before, but ever since v3 I think we've hit an arrangement that I absolutely adore. Even the 7/4 dance number, what was once a strangely mixed middle is now a vital part of the journey that ties it together. So maybe I see Rise as the litmus test for this bizarre writing experiment: If it's possible to listen to Rise while thinking "How did the Sunsetters do this?" (instead of "How did Lindsay and Jordan do this?"), then we're onto something.

For the record, the lyrics are based around three things: My grandmother's death (and how I reacted to it), Chemical Brothers lyrics, and James Joyce's "The Dead" (both EAT songs on this album are based on Joyce stories, this was intentional).

REVERIE

(music and editing by Jordan)

Jordan: I threw Reverie together in a few hours, or at least the first draft. We needed one last thing to end the album, and I suddenly decided “What if we had a faux-orchestral rendition of Blood of the Queen, to sorta reprise Burning Books?” I half-assed a little guitar-and-synth duet to preface it, and that is the story of that. In v2, I expanded the guitar section (technically the expansion was “spatial”) into a melodic sequence of arpeggios, and in v3 I tweaked the melody to make it more pronounced.

Here in v4, this piece is substantially different, almost unrecognizable if not for the orchestral Blood of the Queen ending. The first half of the song is the Noise Half now, mainly using guitar sounds with heavy reverb and maximization in LMMS. There’s also a direct quote from the end of “Burning Books,” and a *very* faint distorted recording of my voice saying some cryptic words. This rendition of the piece is more or less what I’d always wanted from it.

Also, it is definitely “Reverie” singular, not plural. I haven’t been consistent with that in the past. But officially the song *is* a reverie-- a light instrumental written to evoke “dreamlike” atmospheres.

Lindsay: I had tried my hand at writing ‘Reverie’ at one point; it was a little solo guitar bit, and it sucked. Then Jordan wrote the first draft of this version quite a while ago. His second draft was an extended version of the first, and it worked a lot better, though I do agree with Jordan that the new Noise section at the start makes it way better than it was before.

Sunsetters are:

Ganymede “Degan” Allen

Guitars

Paul Blackwood

Bass, Backup Vocals

Elsie Carr

Vocals, Keys

Fin Jensby

Drums

Remington Larson

Guitars

Blind Man’s Book are:

Jordan Dooling

*Arrangement, Composition, Lyrics,
Production, Design*

Lindsay Taylor

Arrangement, Composition, Lyrics

Quinn Stickley

Visual Art

& Knuckles

All Instruments

Special thanks from Jordan to:

My many computers, that weird sample program I found all those years ago, GarageBand and its beautiful musical typing keyboard, FMMIDI for teaching me to experiment with soundfonts, BeFunky for being a convenient and free online image processing program (that has come in handy here in ways I didn’t expect), LMMS for 2025 sound editing, Audacity for the versatility in post-processing and metadata, and MuseScore 2 (and 3) for being seriously the best free music composition/music theory self-education software imaginable. Also Audrey, for being our #1 fan. I *guess* I should thank Lindsay too. Her name is now attached to the most obscure possible subgenre of electronic music ever: Synthetic Metal.

Special thanks from Lindsay to:

That old Dell desktop that I first wrote this shit on, my current laptop which 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), the North Springs Charter High School band programme for getting me good at music, Michael Brown for being the best band teacher, 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. And Audrey again, for being our #1 fan. And I guess I should thank Jordan too. His name is also now attached to the most obscure possible subgenre of electronic music ever. Also he created the original Sunsetters concept, that’s also a touch important.

See you next album!

