

CAN'T HELP falling in love

Story & design by Hope Van Riesen

Math teacher Zachary Barnes shares his love of creating music and how to appreciate past projects for what they are.

If you walk into Zachary Barnes' math classroom before the school day has started, he's got music loudly playing on the speakers as he fixes up the room for the beginning of class. If you've taken math with him, you'd know he often references and plays music through the period.

It probably comes as no surprise that Barnes' love of music extends beyond just listening. He began his music career in 2012 with a friend of his from college, Steve Lichtenstein, on a project called Touch Screen, but soon added a third member, Paul Gaffney. From there, Premium Luxe was born.

Although they began in person, the pandemic hit and everything was forced online.

"We did a Zoom meeting a week to talk about overdubs and suggest [edits]," Barnes said. "If you're all in it together to make the song work, it's a beautiful thing."

On March 30, 2022, Premium Luxe finally revealed their hard work on "Let's Say It's Solid," an album of ten distinct songs all with their own unique differences.

For Barnes, the process of accepting and loving your creation as it ages is just as important as the actual creation.



(right) FOR THE FIRST time in years, Barnes, Lichtenstein, and Gaffney get together at their studio to play music and catch up.

"Once you make a creative project...you begin a process of 'how can I love that project and love the person I was back then?'" He said. "When you record yourself, there's no lying about it...for someone who's self critical, it can be kind of a painful process."

Although Premium Luxe hasn't released anything since then, they still trade tracks every once in a while and get together when they can.

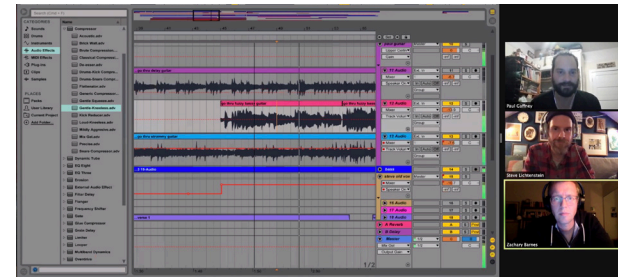
"Everybody make as much music as possible," He said as his last piece of advice. "There's never enough music out there; and we want to hear your music."

"If you're all in it together to make the song work, it's a beautiful thing."

ZACHARY BARNES



(left) AN IMPROV SESSION was held in Barnes' classroom before school, in which he played with other students on the drums and bass, making new music or put spins on songs they all knew.



(left) THE INSPIRATION FOR the album cover for "Let's Say It's Solid" was the lyrics in many of the songs; Lichtenstein, a collage artist on the side, digitally created the image from magazines, books, and other elements. (above) RECORDING THEIR RESPECTIVE parts, Barnes, Lichtenstein, and Gaffney work until they're satisfied with the overall sound. Photos courtesy of Zachary Barnes

SOUND it out

Words to know if you ever take Mr. Barnes' advice!



tape/track: a recorded segment

overdub: transferring a track onto another recorded tape

bouncing: exporting a full song - typically into a simple audio file like an mp3

mixing: combining multiple recorded tracks and adjusting the audio levels to create a balanced track.

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