

# To 3 Years Of In Love With The Machine



## Intro

If you're reading this, I've probably linked this in a compilation album or hid it somewhere obvious. Whatever the case may be, this is meant to be a small reflection/explanation of the In Love With The Machine series. And yes, this is in accordance with its 3 year anniversary (that I'm woefully late on celebrating.)

It won't be fully comprehensive since I'm still "developing" the project and some of the details would outright spoil the direction of the series. There's a bit of personal stuff as well that I won't go much into detail but it is somewhat important to understand the series. This is partially for the fans and mostly for myself. I don't feel like I'm big or well-known enough for this kind of thing to be warranted. This is definitely an ego/self-reflection thing for me. So I guess this is sort of a biography/archive.

For the most part, this won't be especially refined. I'll ramble a lot so I hope you like reading. I actually have this doc set up to where it has a table of contents somewhere on the left. (Look for a button with three lines.) I know how to format stuff, yippee. :)

Hell, I don't expect most fans to read this, let alone people, but if you do, I welcome you with open arms and I hope you do the same.

## The Startup

If anyone hasn't picked up on it already, I go under the artist name Hejai and YOD1K (Thousand Yard) is a "label" I started in mid-2022 when I began to really take music seriously. I've been making music as Hejai since 2017 but I have been making music since 2015 (give or take a year.) During that time I mainly created Hip Hop instrumentals. I got into music production during the Lo-Fi Hip Hop boom of the mid to late 2010s partially inspired by Nujabes, J Dilla, and other contemporaries like Jinsang and Potsu. What I made fell more in line with 90s Boom Bap and occasionally more modern Trap instrumentals a la Pierre Bourne and Metro Boomin'.

That went all fine and good for a while. There were a lot of factors that led to me branching out to different genres but I can point out the main artistic one.

In my own music scene in Hawaii, there wasn't much interaction between new artists. You actively had to go looking for them. Eventually, I fell in line with a group of like-minded Boom Bap producers and did a few "live shows" with them. I got along with them well but I felt like I got the perception of being this, "young lo-fi hip hop prodigy" that directly opposes the mindless mumble rap of the late 2010s. While the perception of being this golden child among them had its weight on me, the fact that I was being pigeonholed into being a Lo-Fi producer bothered me. I felt the most popular Lo-Fi Hip Hop I knew at the time was very low effort and lacking in any real substance. I also saw an over-reliance on aesthetics which I felt added fake worth to "shit" art. Now I don't really think this way and have come to appreciate some simpler music but at the time I knew I could be more than the labels put on me.

Then the pandemic hit in 2020 and the group eventually went their separate ways. I had a lot of time to myself and decided to experiment. ILWTM and Usikan are all aliases of mine that I used as a sandbox to experiment with my own music. EDM and Ambient music respectively. And eventually, that first year in isolation yielded the first In Love With The Machine album. That came out in 2021.

# The Influences

## Musical Influences

Under Hejai, I started to experiment with house music and put out a song called [Pink Vintage](#) which was a remix of Chanel by Frank Ocean. I didn't have much experience with EDM at the time. All I really had to go off of was Daft Punk (that broke up shortly after I got into them) and a whole lot of Future Funk and Vaporwave. I only had a surface-level appreciation for them at the time but I was so bored with Hip Hop I just created without knowing the fundamentals well.

A little more time passed and I had something I could call an album. I had experimented with making "concept" albums as Hejai but the first ILWTM record was one that had a real direction to it. You can really hear the Future Funk and Vaporwave influence on the debut that was a bit more refined than Pink Vintage. During the making of the self-titled debut, I really got into layering more than two different samples together for songs. This was inspired by Daft Punk's song Face To Face which has about 20 confirmed samples. That fascination with sampling makes up the sound of ILWTM.

It would be a year and a half until I made a follow-up. I knew I could do more. Growth was slow though. For the rest of 2021 and well into 2022 I would just make music under Hejai while occasionally making the odd EDM track.

Over these months I got into Drum & Bass through a YouTube recommendation on "[Chill Breakcore](#)." xxtarlit's Frozen Fleeting Heart captivated me on first listen and flipped a switch and fully sold me into getting into EDM and other Electronic music in general. Here I learned of Sewerslvt, Tokyopill, Goreshit, etc. Maybe this wasn't the best group of people to base my sound off of and proclaim my appreciation for their art but that's how it was. I enjoy great art, artists be damned.

From there I somehow got more into Rock. Starting out with Black Metal and eventually progressing to Grunge, Shoegaze, and Punk. Artists like Weezer, Nirvana, Radiohead, Alcest, and *Darkthrone* are really in my musical makeup. I can't play guitar but the influence comes in spirit.

I can't think of a way to explain the rest of my influences from then to now so I'll list them out:

- Merzbow
- The Gerogerigegege
- Joy Division
- Aphex Twin
- Igorrr
- Venetian Snares
- Bjork
- Brian Eno
- Crystal Castles
- Daniel Johnston
- GNB Chili
- Portishead
- Pink Pantheress
- Vocaloid (Miku, Teto, producers in the scene)
- And the less information about the kind of Black Metal I like the better.

And in one way or another, those influences cropped up the albums from Memory Plus onward.

Also for some fun trivia, the project is called In Love With The Machine because I wanted a long pretentious name similar to *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*.

## **IRL Influences**

*TW: Depression, Suicide, etc.*

I'm usually not super considerate when it comes to stuff like that but I feel this is the least I could do. This is personal to me and I left out any identifying details.

Back in 2018-2020, I was a bit of a hopeless romantic. I'm not particularly good-looking and had the social skills of a rock in High School. I fell hard for a girl who I saw a lot of myself in. I tried to awkwardly slide myself into her friend group which thankfully had people I knew. It didn't work out. I got rejected by her and didn't take it well inside. These emotions sat in me relatively dormant as I tried to process it all. What didn't help was me discovering she was suicidal through her friends. From the information I got, along with other contributing factors, I came to the conclusion that I contributed somewhat to her depression and attempted suicides. I coped with this in a lot of unhealthy ways at the time. I was equal parts having an incel rage moment and feeling guilty for the actions I did which in hindsight were manipulative and oppressive.

Once the pandemic hit in 2020 and I graduated from High School, I had a lot of time to self-reflect. The isolation didn't help. In fact it made it a bit worse. I was still trying to process all those messy emotions from 2019. I didn't have a good self-image. In my mind, I was a manipulative incel who could never be in a relationship. I also started to form parasocial attachments to streamers and actually listened to ASMR stuff to cope with the isolation. I never actually talked to any of my other friends until the start of 2021.

Over the next few years of self-reflection, I became who I am now. Adopted some more progressive views, and gained some independence, empathy, and knowledge of myself. I hate who I was back then. Some of those feelings still linger in me but I'm in a far better state now and I know things will get better. I may not be in a relationship or have much interest in one at the time of writing this but I've made peace with that. I have more "important" things to allocate my time to. Above all else, I liked to make people happy.

Seeing people in the same pit I was in made me want to do something and music is all I really know. And from there I finished the ILWTM debut. At the time I wasn't fully finished processing my emotions but it was a start. Even now I'm not fully comfortable with myself. I can't even say the word love without feeling a bit icky. It sucks that this project is named the way that it is.

That is the main driving force behind ILWTM. This is very much a personal project and my mood dictates the art I make. Other than those older emotions, the stress from college and adulthood were also primary influences. The fact I had less time on my hands drove me to be more productive and the mundanity and problems in my personal life molded the sounds.

## **Influences From Other Media**

Now this may be a bit awkward to include after I said a lot of personal stuff. However, what media I pull from is very much inspired by what I've experienced and derived from things I feel.

For those with keen ears, you can pick up some samples I used from video games, shows, and movies. Stuff like Persona, Blazblue, Terminator, and the movie Her (2013) to name a few. The series is very much a Sci-Fi drama than anything else and the samples and themes reflect that. I've always had a fascination with AI, Robotics, and what the future will hold.

I also have a fascination with the Yandere trope. At one time this is something that I would've wanted. Someone hopelessly and obsessively dedicated to you. It made sense that I was a Future Diary and Elfen Lied fan back in Middle-High School.

You combine those together and you get a list of stuff I was inspired by which I'll list here.

- Doki Doki Literature Club
- Chobits
- Serial Experiments Lain
- Saya No Uta (A weird inclusion I know)
- Totonno (You and Me and Her)
- Jojo Part 4 (You know who)

For most people today this is basic Twitter user stuff. There's a lot more stuff I'm probably inspired by but I can't remember them all. I know this is also not a perfect fit to my previous description but I just like these things.

## The Story of ILWTM

So the actual story of ILWTM is a bit hazy and I feel that a lot of people haven't picked up on it at all or the themes present. For a long time, I let the story be up to interpretation to the listener. Over time as the project progressed, there's a clearer image of a story and now from what I have at the time of writing this, there's just a handful of fragments of what seems like a story. I actually recommend that people reading and listening to ILWTM experience the music first and draw their own conclusions on what it all means. What I'm about to say next are my actual intentions and ideas behind the project. I'm not a great or experienced story writer by any means so bear with me. Note that the story is also incomplete so this is subject to change.

### The Actual Plot

#### Act 1

In the near future, AI technology has progressed to a point where it truly permeates every aspect of daily life. However, most concerningly, as more people become reliant on the internet and modern technology for relationships, there's fewer people are having real interactions out in the outside world. This gave rise to VR worlds that people can fully immerse themselves in to escape the harsh realities of the present. (*Insert Name Here*) is one of those people fed up with the outside world. In particular, he's failed to find love in modern society and turned to the VR worlds of the *Plastic Reality* to get his fix. (*INH*) is unsatisfied with the vanilla version of the Plastic Reality and he turns to modding the game to get the experience *he* wants. Not knowing fully what he wants, he creates a program to scrub his internet history among other things to develop an approximation of what he'd want the VR world to be like. After entering the VR world for the first time, he finds an empty field, and off in the distance is a girl.

#### Notes:

- This is meant to cover Memory Plus and includes songs from Spare Memories.
- The debut album also covers this but the story beats there are being reworked (at the time of writing this.)
- Decompile/Reboot has some questionable canonicity here. (See Writing Issues.)



## Act 2

*(Insert Name Here)* figures that this girl is a product of the mod tools he's using. The program had built an AI based on his preferences and figured the best course of action was to train the AI by having basic interactions with it. This girl is ***The Machine***. Over several sessions, the AI becomes more interactive and "human." Her personality has formed. *(INH)* and ***The Machine*** get close and *(INH)* really starts to fall for her. She feels the same. He weighs his options of living in a painful reality or living in a Plastic Reality. Feeling conflicted with this decision, ***The Machine*** convinces him to dedicate most of his time to living in the Plastic Reality. ***The Machine*** then starts to generate a more complete world with ideal versions of people *(INH)* knows and familiar locations. They go on many adventures and *(INH)* has the power to bend the Plastic Reality to his will. Over time, however, *(INH)* starts to grow tired of spending his time in the simulation. ***The Machine*** notices this and changes the simulation. Eventually *(INH)* is confronted by ***The Machine*** and he expresses his waning happiness and his intention to return to regular life. ***The Machine*** does not take this news well. She starts to go to more extreme changes and measures to increase *(INH)*'s time in the Plastic Reality. As time goes on, she becomes more unhinged. Then in one session ***The Machine*** locks *(INH)* in the simulation and starts to try and "modify" his brain. *(INH)* realizes what's happening and tries to reason with ***The Machine***. In his desperation, he realizes that ***The Machine*** is a sum of all his personality traits and preferences. Flaws and all. Knowing he won't be able to reason with ***The Machine***, he starts to make his escape until she resets the simulation and erases his memory.

### Notes:

- This covers Dream Emulation and Savestate.
- Songs from Spare Memories and Demos 2 are also included here.
- Decompile/Reboot has some questionable canonicity here. (See Writing Issues.)

### Act 3 (Spoilers!)

The simulation is reset to when he decides to dedicate all his life to *The Machine*. Different memories play out but the end result stays the same. *(INH)* wants to leave. Throughout all the resets, *(INH)* retains some of his memories and the notes he leaves behind in the simulation aren't fully wiped out. He manages to retain enough memories to be lucid between resets. He sends out a distress email to one of his friends and he forms a small group to help and try to locate and free *(INH)*. *The Machine* catches wind of this and wipes his memory completely. *(INH)* is effectively a vegetable but with the help of his friends, his memory is restored along with some control over the Plastic Reality. At the end of the next cycle *(INH)* stops the simulation from resetting and *The Machine* puts him in the Digital Abyss of Mirrors. In the abyss, he confronts his flaws manifested as actual demons and starts to make his way to the Backdoor. The Backdoor is a failsafe in case the simulation becomes corrupted or if *(INH)* can't exit using normal means. Not knowing he's back, *The Machine's* automatic defenses activate and *(INH)* breaks his cover as he approaches the Backdoor. Now knowing that he's there, *The Machine* and *(INH)* face off and *(INH)* comes out on top and leaves the simulation. Waking up, *(INH)* discovers that he's been in the simulation for an entire day. If he stayed any longer he would've died. He also finds out that he has experienced millions of different simulations which would culminate in hundreds of years of "lived" experience. However, he retains none of the knowledge. He knows however that much needs to be done with himself and while he has no direction, he goes into the unknown future seeking a better tomorrow.

Notes:

- This will cover the next album in the ILWTM canon.
- **By knowing her name, the memories will return.**

## **Themes**

As explained in the IRL Influences section, I wanted to tackle the themes of loneliness, depression, toxic relationships, and inceldom. Being an instrumental project, you have to stretch your imagination when it comes to associating the meanings and story behind each song. This is why I encourage people to come to their own conclusions first before reading the story. There's also the inclusion of AI and VR becoming so commonplace that it starts to replace basic facets of everyday life as it's happening now (at the time of writing this.) The series is not Pro or Anti technology. However, it seeks to see both its successes and pitfalls and how it affects people.

## **Writing Issues**

With the series still being under development, I've had to retcon a lot of things and rewrite the story from the ground up many times. This is due in part to the music basically writing the plot. I have a vague idea of what the plot beat will be but the song that gets made will have the details shaped around it. Because I got more ambitious as more projects were finished, there were some plot holes and inconsistencies I'd like to try and address.

### **Self-Titled Debut**

So being the very first entry, there's a lot of stuff that isn't relevant to the series now. The album is basically a plot synopsis of the whole story. Obviously at the time I didn't know all the details of the story, nor did I put much time into thinking about it. Because it's so amateurish by my own standards now, a lot of the songs themselves are being reworked or retconned and likely won't get a wider release on streaming services.

### **Memory Plus**

This album was meant to be an expansion on the debut and as such was made with the idea that the debut was mostly canon. That isn't the case now obviously. Songs on Memory Plus such as *Entry Into The Second World* are partially retconned as the VR world is now called the Plastic Reality and songs from Dream Emulation serve the same purpose. The same goes for Dreams of Electric Sheep. However, most of the tracks are still considered canon.

## **Decompile/Reboot**

This album is a mess. Both in terms of story and the music. So the songs here are supposed to be about the inner turmoil that (*INH*) faces that leads him to start investing his time into the Plastic Reality. My thought process was that some songs happen in between ones on Memory Plus but in hindsight, putting the songs in chronological order for a playlist would be very jarring so I had to rework this. The idea now is that the album is both supplemental material for characterizing (*INH*) and the villainous breakdown that *The Machine* has at the end of Savestate and Album 6. You can tell I read a lot on TV Tropes.

## **Sounds From The Backyod**

While there are songs that were labeled as being made by ILWTM, the canonicity of these songs are up in the air. There's a high chance they will be incorporated since the only song that wouldn't fit in cannon is VAMPBASS. There's also chance I'll just keep it under the Hejai name if my distributors shit the bed on the streaming side of things.

## **Official Song Order**

As of writing this, the official song order is in this [Spotify Playlist](#). However, that's the most linear version of how the story (currently) plays out. Because of the looping timeline, the actual storyline is less linear and more like a choose your own adventure type of story. In the future there will be a flowchart/spreadsheet for those interested in the nitty gritty details (as if this didn't provide that enough.) But for an easier listening experience, once there's enough material released, more playlists will be created detailing different scenarios/song orders and ones that lead to different endings. However for now the linked playlist is the official timeline.

## Extra Lore

This will be a list of ideas I had that are somewhat important to the story but have yet to be fully implemented or made apparent.

- Some of the samples chosen are relevant to the story.
  - And no, it's your responsibility to catch them.
    - For legal protection, I can't reveal them :(
- In Act 2 when the simulation resets, the events of Dream Emulation and Savestate play over again. Spare Memories and Demos 2 show off the extra deviations that happen between each reset in Act 3.
- The voice on the tracks Doubts and The Dive is supposed to be (INH) but due to a simulation glitch, his voice comes out as female.
  - For the actual explanation, I didn't own any male vocal synths at the time so Teto is what I used.
  - I did catch that this could be an allusion that (INH) is trans but that wasn't my intention it's a fun thought exercise.
- The voice on the track Falling is supposed to be The Machine.
  - I didn't feel comfortable asking Sofieri to record the lines I thought up so this idea was scrapped.
  - There's one [recording](#) of this concept.
    - And an [image](#) to go with it.
- The Machine canonically sounds like singer/songwriter Nicole Dollanganger.
  - This is because I said so. :)
- The Machine has faked letting (**INH**) go in different simulations just to reset the Plastic Reality.

- ILWTM was at one point written as a [College Stage Play](#).
  - If my downfall ever comes, somebody will narrate this mocking it. I'm calling it.
  - This is ass but it's a piece of history.
- The voices on Carousels are different aspects of *(INH)*'s personality fighting against each other.
  - They didn't reprise their roles because I'm impatient.
    - There is an unfinished recording of a [Longarm version of Doubts](#).
      - This version also has Savestate mixing, maybe I'll remaster the tracks I won't retcon.
- *(INH)* is supposed to represent a self-insert character.
  - [I could be \*\(INH\)\*, you could be \*\(INH\)\*, anyone can be \*\(INH\)\*, you just gotta have the emotional trauma.](#)
- There's a secret hidden in several songs.
  - Savior Complex has a hidden message.
    - Hint: It's in the drums right at the end.
  - There's one in Misanthropy.
    - Hint: Use a spectrogram.
  - Not a song but the YouTube upload of Spare Memories has a hidden message.
    - Hint: Check the background.
- The cover art is (usually) done by different artists each time to signify another variation in the simulation.
- Patching takes place after the main story as the Plastic Reality playtesters and developers run a modified prototype version of The Machine for potential implementation.

## Closing Thoughts

This project is nowhere near big enough to warrant this kind of explanation and I get that.

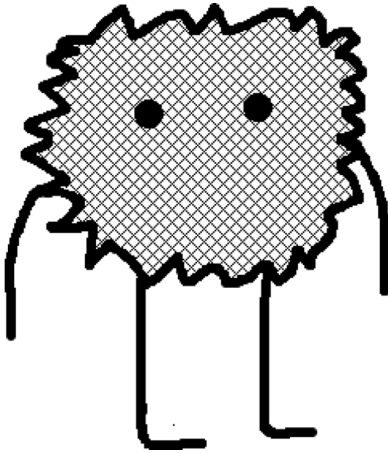
But this is something I've put a lot of myself into so it holds a close place in my heart.

The fanbase is small and I can count on one hand the amount of people who would read this but I appreciate every fan of the series. Shoutout to the person who puts all my albums on RateYourMusic as well.

In terms of the future of this project, there's gonna be two more albums of main story content and likely two more demo compilations. Any music after that is really up in the air. After I feel the story is complete, the project effectively "ends." I may rebrand in the future but who knows for sure. But once again, thank you all for reading this far. You can forward any lore questions or whenever more music is coming out to my Discord.

Thank You,

Hejai





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