

A large, dark, moss-covered rock is the central focus of the image. The rock has a rough, textured surface with visible vertical fissures and is heavily covered in green moss. It sits on a bed of moss and is surrounded by a thick layer of fallen autumn leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and brown. The background is a soft-focus forest floor with more leaves and some green foliage.

OCTOBER MUSIC

a voiceHOUSE
experience

ECLIPSED BY THE SUNN O)))

It descended like a maelstrom, from the first note. Apprehension, then cast into a storm. A tormented Ahab's sea of violence. Looks of dismay, excitement and terror were exchanged amongst the audience as foam plugs were deposited into ear canals. Two hooded figures, obscured by fog, with guitar picks raised to the sky as if conjuring the Earth-shaker, stood before us and claimed responsibility for the menace of thunder at once unleashed from the stack of amplifiers behind them. Myself, I played the only logical move at my disposal and resigned to what confronted me. I batted down my eyelids, and I listened.

For several years leading up to the night of October 12, 2026 at Paradise Rock Club I had been using the music of Sunn O))) as a kind of portal into meditative states. I discovered their 2019 album *Life Metal* thanks to an old friend who made the recommendation based on his knowledge of my predilection for Al Cisneros' band OM. My trusted compadre insisted I would fall in love with the poetry of "Between Sleipnir's Breaths", and made the audacious claim the drone metal record was Steve Albini's finest work as an engineer. My friend is a gear freak and attempted to explain the physics at play behind the work of Sunn O))), but discussions on the topics of antinodes and harmonic dissonance are beyond my ken. After I purchased the record, I increased the volume on my humble sound system as the vinyl spun, and I connected with what I heard. When their self-titled 2026 release appeared, I decided it apt for one of Rothko's field paintings to appear on the cover. Monolithic. Jarring. Sublime. After I relayed my appreciation for turning me on, my friend asked me to promise if I ever had the chance to see Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson live, nothing should prevent me from doing so. Thusly, I consented to his request.

As the waves of sound gained amplitude and tore through the room, I knew what I had come for, and I wasn't going to forego the opportunity to go inward. I remained with my eyes shut for the next hour and a half, or two hours, or ten years- I couldn't tell you how long the show lasted, because I lost complete sense of time. I didn't check my phone. I didn't worry about how I might appear to the other concert goers. I didn't concern myself with anything other than the physicality of the sound which filled the space, which distorted it, transformed it. As Sunn O))) played, I breathed, within the darkness of myself, inside the storm, until I found a quiet.

I'm no metalhead. I'm not a member of any scene, nor am I a poser. I am a sober, recovering alcoholic, an indentured professional, and a father of four young children who rarely has the opportunity to stop, breathe, and experience a moment of repose, to be alone, to exist inside a silence. Which presents a challenge for me, because as grateful as I am for my life and my current circumstances, I am also a seeker.

A paradox of sorts, to search out tranquility via a deafening encounter with a band notorious for its apocalyptic, world-engulfing guitar riffs? But that is why I am here.

I am a seeker.

Unfortunately, I am also (partly) a product of this culture, a modern person, amidst modern people, wirelessly fixated, preoccupied, unable to be present, to rest within a moment, to breathe, to be localized, distracted, blue light reflecting off our dim eyes, off pinpricked pupils, the vacuum of our thoughts halflistening, halfhearted, kinsmen to nothing, we click ourselves into frenzy, our frictionless lifetimes free of conflict and without barrier, in perfect union with our desires, delivery drivers and packages of denim blue jeans. We can't be bothered, we won't tolerate pain, we reject the limitations of the physical world. Ours is a curated experience, designed by marketing firms and approved in executive boardrooms, we don't live so much as we adopt lifestyles, buying the gear, the plane tickets, taking the pictures. Nothing of communion, or community. Nothing of concord. Isolated, stimulated, intoxicated. Insane. This is who we are. This is what we do. We ask no questions because we have all the answers, instantaneous. Like a horse flicking its tail while grazing, we happily participate in the culture of non-participation. Willing prisoners in our synthetic prisons.

For better or worse, the only way out requires extremes. Extreme circumstances. Jolted out of our slumber. Psychedelic substances. Humbled by airbag deployments, cancer diagnoses. Loss. Suffering. The death of a loved one.

With that in mind, the paradox I mentioned earlier may seem more approachable, and less ridiculous.

Behold the formula, as much as I can decipher of it: in order to destroy the peripheral 'clatter' which marks the vast majority of conscious states (e.g. inane ego prattling, self-talk, self-loathing, future-tripping, petty judgements, ceaseless distractions and demands, *temps mort*, etc.), the proximal environment must be flooded with a more arresting, physical 'sound.' A matter of volume, and sheer force. But for all the brutal science, art too is required. Mysterious ingredients, as the 'sound' must also be engaging, stirring, inviting i.e. musical. Beyond immersion, in order to tame that rascal monkey mind of a modern, wireless citizen, the quality of such music must truly inhabit the listener. Frequencies obliterate. Movements shift like tidal surges. Erosion. Dissolution. And through this action, by means of the flood, a silence may emerge, a locus.

The music of Sunn O))) focuses, and demands, presence. And since the music does not fall subject to typical cultural interpretations, because there are no characters or choruses, because there is no reference point to begin a reductive assessment, a Sunn O))) performance unfolds on its own terms. It invites the listener to simply experience each moment as

their glacial arrangements pass along. And that experience is what brings about a kind of transcendence. When you, as a member of the audience, return to the place where you are, who you are, alive, breathing, confronted by the flood, the real is touched. The here and now. The elusive purity of being which seems to escape us, which seems to move further and further away from our grasp, which seems to be more of a collective memory than an actual possibility- we encounter it. In ancient times, people may have permanently been in such a state of total presence, in the present, but for us meta-moderns, it is nothing short of miraculous.

And I encountered the miracle.

After images and words and impressions like alien encounter intimacy, power tool overdrive, surgical extraction, fallout debris, scattered ruins, the density of neutron stars.

After more breathing, more focus, more letting go.

After questions like am I a good husband, am I honest with myself, am I connected to my heart, am I on the path home, is there anyone else here, with me?

After more breathing, more focus, more letting go.

After considerations on the machinery of the universe, the nature of the cosmos, ponderous with birth and death and rebirths, with atman energies and Jesus' eternal kiss and no-soul Buddha blinking goodbye truths of existence.

After more breathing, more focus, more letting go.

In the depths of the maelstrom, I found refuge. A cavern of silence inside a mountain of fuzz. I had found what I had come for. Presence. Reality. My breath. The vibrations running through my body. Listening. Feeling. Alive.

There were no words or images required of me, no questions to find answers to, no universe to unpack- I simply was, being.

I had read of others' experiences at Sunn O))) concerts, and several described it as an ordeal, anguishing, an endurance test. I couldn't disagree more. I felt no relief when the final note evaporated from the air and the room filled with applause. Immediately, opening my eyes, clapping my hands with everyone else, I craved more. I had been exiled from a place of solace, from a ground of stillness, the void from which all forms arise. My connection had been severed, and I felt nothing but melancholy while exiting the venue, back to the world, back to 'reality.' So the search for this seeker continues.

For lifeboats, for peace, for silence.

A dead thing

A dead thing isn't a tortured thing, it doesn't hold grudges or resentments, it harbors no fear or regret/ A dead thing possesses no soul bound for heaven or hell, it isn't worried about judgment, it makes no plans/ A dead thing is a quiet thing, peaceful and calm/

A dead thing cannot misunderstand, or be misunderstood, it doesn't apologize for mistakes, nobody yells at a dead thing/ A dead thing isn't sad, depressed, it doesn't itch and crawl and scream silently, it requires no medication/ A dead thing is static with no memory, no future, thus it is complete, finished/

A dead thing isn't a dying thing, it doesn't writhe in pain, it doesn't gurgle with last breaths/ A dead thing pays no taxes, no bills, it isn't concerned with bank statements or interest rates/ A dead thing owes nothing, it asks for nothing in return/

A dead thing isn't an excitable thing, it isn't wound up, it doesn't punch holes in walls/ A dead thing can't gasp itself awake from nightmares, it can't be haunted or bothered by ghosts/ A dead thing is irreducible, settled/

A dead thing isn't an underappreciated thing, it doesn't have a chip on its shoulder, a dead thing doesn't care/ A dead thing won't lie to you, it has to tell the truth/ A dead thing returns back to the earth, where it belongs, where it came from/

A dead thing isn't a complicated thing, you don't have to study it, gauge its reaction/ A dead thing has no reason to be suspicious or cruel/ A dead thing is hidden away, but it isn't offended/

A dead thing isn't a motivated thing, it doesn't track Election Day results, it doesn't finger through a newspaper anxious for a box score/ A dead thing isn't calculated, it doesn't wonder to itself what's in it for me/ A dead thing will never reveal the secrets you tell it/

A dead thing isn't an insane thing, seized by madness, preying upon innocents/ A dead thing never drinks too much then drives its automobile into a woman and her child, murdering them without warning/ A dead thing is a perfected thing/

A living thing

Breathing, a breath
A being
Brought
Inside a cave of bones
A room
Inside a universe
Inhaling, within
Alive
A breathing thing with its breath
Drawing inwards
The stars, their dramas
The ocean, his rapture
The earth, her warmth
A breath
Captured, then released
Held
Then returned
Outside of a body
Out into the night
To dream