

My Journey in Music

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My body of work is a series of charcoal portraits on MDF board (60x 81 cm) featuring Eddie Vedder, lead singer for Pearl Jam, Kurt Cobain lead singer of Nirvana, Anthony Kiedis, lead singer of the Red-Hot Chili Peppers and singer songwriter Jeff Buckley. These artists were chosen due to my personal connection to their work. I have always been fascinated by portraiture, and artists' ability to create such a strong likeness, independent of their style. I was influenced by the charcoal works of Damian Goidich and Mary Borgman as well as the South Australian artist Robert Hannaford in the process of developing understanding of portraiture conventions and aesthetics.

I challenged myself to upscale my work in recent years from A4 hyper realistic portraits to realistic portraits with more expressive line markings, on larger surfaces. I did this to hold the audiences' attention and be more expressive with my artwork. I began each piece by blocking in a layer of white acrylic paint. I decided to do this after experimenting on the medium and concluding that it would create the most contrast in my final. I added to the white background by sketching in the outline of the facial features with a HB pencil, followed by a 4B light charcoal pencil that I used extensively for finer detail in each piece. Larger charcoal sticks and white chalk were employed to create contrast and shading. As well as fine detail, I utilised these materials by turning them on their side and creating long thick strokes for hair and long dark areas.

This was an affective technique that I learned from Damian Goidich, creating the feel of hair with its delicacy and texture. I also utilised a smudging stick to create shading and contrast that bring the portraits to life. My goal was to give my portraits similarity, whilst they could be a stand-alone piece with their individuality, but together, they complement each other and build on a strong theme to create a body of work. Composition played a major role achieving my planned feeling from each piece. Each piece bears an important word, connecting to a song name that relates specifically to the artist and my journey in music. My work attracts music lovers that draw an emotional connection to their favourite artists.

The portrait of Eddie Vedder features the word 'Release' this is referencing one his songs 'Release'. The song describes Vedder's longing to be released from prior pain. My composition of the portrait has Vedder holding an intense and stoic gaze at the viewer, seemingly hesitating from being vulnerable with people, whilst also being years past writing the song, proud of who he has become and how he has been released. I composed this portrait with Vedder's head slightly smaller than the others, as if he is standing back and looking at his life with contentment and intensity in his eyes. I utilised white chalk and white pencil to create the wet look, referencing the line "Ill ride the wave Where it takes me". I made long strokes with the charcoal sticks to create the flowing wet hair.

The writing in this piece resembles a wave, placed in an unpredictable way with a jagged and rough but also calming font. This, along with him being wet and slightly smaller, differentiates this piece from the others. Kurt Cobain features the word 'Lithium' underneath the portrait.

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This song was very key in my musical journey and is a very important song when it comes to Nirvana. The song tackles mental health, psychotic breaks, and drug use lyrically, while also doing this through the structure, with manic choruses and calm, articulate verses. I referenced this with the font and composition of the writing, being unpredictable and manic, juxtaposed by the calm and collected nature of the realistic portrait.

Compositionally, the face is placed engagingly, with the head tilted slightly, inspiring curiosity. The sunglasses offer a sense of mystery in the portrait reinforced by the word and font. The same techniques were utilised in this portrait although I employed black paint to block in strong dark areas like the sunglasses. This was useful in creating contrast with the white face. Anthony Kiedis's portrait beholds the word 'Aeroplane'.

The Red-Hot Chili Peppers describe their song 'Aeroplane' as "tak(ing) them to a higher place". I replicated this by making the text slowly ascend in tonal quality as it rises. The font of the word is strong, reinforcing the strong side profile composition of the portrait. The nature of this portrait's composition separates it from the others. I intentionally made Kiedis the only side profile, as well as making his head slightly larger than the others, demonstrating his large and immovable personality. The same techniques were employed in this portrait, with a strong focus on the facial features as the side profile requires strong accuracy in the face. Jeff Buckley has been one of the biggest influences on my musical journey, I paid homage to the late musician by creating a delicate portrait of him sporting the word 'Grace', the name of his only studio album.

I composed Buckley slightly smaller, tilting his head, to give a delicate and peaceful feeling. I achieved smooth texture in his skin by ensuring clean white brushstrokes in the first stage of the work. I matched this with smooth charcoal strokes in the hair, reinforcing the graceful feel. The word 'Grace' is barely visible. This was purposeful, to add mystery and continue the theme of delicacy and peace within the portrait. I am very pleased with my body of work.

I feel I have achieved individuality in each portrait, whilst keeping a common and clear theme but it was through experimentation that I found my own style and way in communicating the mood of a person in a series of portraits, demonstrating their impact on me as I aspire to one day be accomplished enough to put my own portrait amongst the body of work.