

# WORKING WITH SIRIUS

CREATING TRACKS FOR THE DOG DAYS



CYGNUS ONYX FLAME

RANDOM TRANSMISSIONS #3

*Random Transmissions* is a sporadic digital publication for presenting random thoughts, research, and interviews created or facilitated by Cygnus Onyx Flame of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

*Random Transmissions* #3 is dedicated to:

- Explorers and Expressers of cosmic aural strangeness.
- All those who feel incomplete and who feel an incessant “restlessness” to create music and sound art.

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## Remember the Dog Days = Remember Your Self

This *Random Transmission* is going to get a little odd. I'm going to take you on a deep dive into some ideas I have about the psyche, inspiration, creativity, the Self, and the Dog Days. Hang on tight.

The term "Dog Days" usually implies a period of discomfort and stagnation and a connection to Sirius. Looking at the etymology we see this root:

*"period of dry, hot weather at the height of summer," 1530s, from Latin dies caniculares, the idea, though not the phrase, from Greek; so called because they occur around the time of the heliacal rising of Sirius, the Dog Star (kyōn seirios). Noted as the hottest and most unwholesome time of the year; often reckoned as July 3 to August 11, but variously calculated, depending on latitude and on whether the greater Dog-star (Sirius) or the lesser one (Procyon) is reckoned.*

*The heliacal rising of Sirius has shifted down the calendar with the precession of the equinoxes; in ancient Egypt c. 3000 B.C.E. it coincided with the summer solstice, which also was the new year and the beginning of the inundation of the Nile. The "dog" association apparently began here (the star's hieroglyph was a dog), but the reasons for it are now obscure." <https://www.etymonline.com/word/dog%20days>*

While Sirius is interesting from an astronomical perspective, it is even more interesting from a cultural/mythological perspective. It is this mythological or archetypal perspective that I, and others, find deeply inspirational. For example, the *Iliad* has this wonderful citation (lifted from Wikipedia so translations will vary):

*Sirius rises late in the dark, liquid sky  
On summer nights, star of stars,  
Orion's Dog they call it, brightest  
Of all, but an evil portent, bringing heat  
And fevers to suffering humanity.*

How cool is that!?

We could accept that the Dog Star is a portent of "evil". However, like most things in our lives, we can decide how to define our experiences. For many years I have set the Dog Days aside as a time for creativity and creative expression. For example, in 2018, I created the drone EP *Sirius XVI: Transmissions* over the Dog Days. Most times I engage in a solo project but this year I also participated in a larger project with like minded friends.

The larger project was presented to me, and I paraphrase here, like this:

*Your job is to remember yourself in the present moment, and then craft an audio artifact to send to your future self.*

*The artifacts produced will be compiled into a virtual album to utilize whenever there's a need. The idea is to create an artifact that one can return to and that will eventually take a life of its own. And also something that, if we find it useful, can add to or reuse.*

Oh Hell yeah.

We can view our creations in a static and linear manner along the lines of this:

1. We have an idea.
2. We work out how to translate that idea into sound.
3. We create that sound.
4. We (may) record that sound.
5. We (may) make the sound available for others to hear.

That all makes sense from the perspective of the artist looking at the process of creation. However, if we think of imagination as not being limited in space or time then this is only one possible perspective. I'm not talking about some fancy complex quantum theory...I have grade 12 general math...basic arithmetic is a challenge for me. Rather, *if* we are bold enough to perceive our own imagination, dreams, and fantasies as ontologically *real* (at least to us) then we have a vast realm of reality to work with. Let's take a glass of red wine as an example. Granted, a lovely and tangible glass of red wine is more "real" than an imagined glass of red wine. The smell and taste of the wine, the feel of the bottle and the glass is very different when comparing the physical and the imaginal wine. However, the physical wine can only ever *be* wine. The imaginal wine can become something more. For a fun example, the imaginal glass of wine could become the "Sublime Elixir of Musical Inspiration". It won't taste the same as the physical wine but the imaginal wine provides a transmission or a signal to the psyche that the physical wine is unable to provide. An even better approach would be to accept the physicality of the glass of wine while simultaneously infusing *it* with the imaginal power of the imaginal Sublime Elixir of Musical Inspiration. We would literally transform our wine into something which is *in between* the wholly physical wine and the wholly imaginal wine. We can create that Sublime Elixir of Musical Inspiration by willing it to be so.

The Dog Days are like that. On the physical plane, a particular star in a constellation is notable in the sky during the Dog Days. Those days also seem to correspond to people acting a bit bonkers. Nothing in astronomy will explain the mythological power to us and that is great news. I want astronomers to do what astronomers do. However, we can take that physicality and manipulate it for our own subjective use. We can start by doing some research (preferably beyond the level of Wikipedia and flashy new age web pages) and through that research we might find that various cultures and myths have focused on Sirius in various ways for millennia. During our research, let us say, we happen to find something that resonates with us. Something that relates a sense of

*mystery* or provides us with a heightened sense of curiosity within us. That sense of subjective mystery or curiosity becomes our own, personal, and unique gateway to interacting with Sirius. That gateway is the link that brings together the physical world (Sirius as star) and the imaginal world (Sirius as subjective mystery). We, as creators, stand between both worlds. We are in a space that is not a space in a time that is out of time. In other words, the Dog Days can be a source of deep inspiration because we can resonate with that archetypal world and, in turn, create something in the material world that reflects that connection. It's like some surreal FM synthesis where imaginal carrier sine waves and the modulator waves of physical reality enter into some inspired dance of creativity...or the other way around. Whatever.

## Project One: *Please Don't Forget Me*



The project with the group of friends and colleagues, *Sirius XVIII - Crafting Future Remembering* was the first one completed during the Dog Days. I started the track before the Dog Days but listened to it intently during those days. When I listened to the track I sat in the present moment while simultaneously imagining myself in the distant future. The message was created in this space and this time but the intended recipient was not of this space or this time. The imagination provided the matrix for that communication to occur.

The funny thing is that we spend a lot of time in a day assuming we are awake and aware. However, that is very rarely the case. Our mental focus is often anywhere but where we are. Try this exercise to get a sense of what I'm talking about. Commit to a week where every time you pass through a door you mentally, silently, affirm to yourself "Here now". Be aware of how many times you pass through a door *without* being aware of it. *Please Don't Forget Me* was an exercise in being present by mindfully creating a track with a specific meaning behind it. At the same time, the creation was a message to myself to be mindful in the future. Now anytime I think about that track or hear it or talk about it I will be reminded to be present.

The track is divided into two parts. The first part is more structured. It has a very basic and repetitive beat and improvised note pattern. The use of distortion and repetitiveness is something I am currently working with. I love the way simple, repetitive

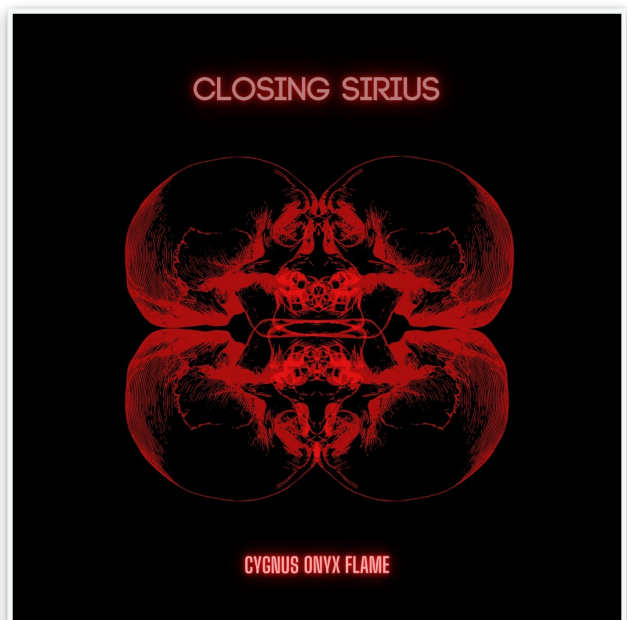
sounds can be used to enhance imaginal exploration. I suppose that's why I also love drone and, to a lesser extent, drone metal.

A couple of samples from [freesound.org](https://freesound.org) were used as part of my message to my self. This more structured side of the track is my present self sending the message to my future self. The second part of the track is a drone inspired track made with my Digitone. This message is an inspired message from my future self to my present self. It has no overt structure but ends with a sample from the first half thereby linking the two parts together. Taken together, the track is meant to represent a two-way conversation with my self.

You can find my track, *Please Don't Forget Me*, [here](#) and the other tracks [here](#).

## Project Two: Solo Tracks

I also created two solo tracks. The first was *Good-bye to the Stars*. It was a return to my passion which is just creating improvised dark ambient tracks. I used a vocal sample from the same pack I used in *Please Don't Forget Me*. The second track, *Closing Sirius*, was also an ambient track using one of my favourite lines from the 1970's movie *The Dunwich Horror*.



## WTF Are You Talking About?

When I decided I wanted to write about my use of Sirius and the Dog Days I had to think about how to relate my thoughts. I could have playfully and simply said that I felt an urge to create a few projects during a certain period of time. I could have avoided talking about imagination, inspiration, and red wine. However, that wouldn't have been accurate or truthful. My point in laying this all out is to highlight the fact that we can create in many different ways and that we, as individuals, are the ultimate arbiter of what is valuable and meaningful to *us*. No one has the right or power to dictate what is meaningful in our lives...unless we consciously or unconsciously grant that power to others. I don't expect people to actually conduct the door exercise given above. Nor do I assume that the door exercise will improve musical and artistic creations. However, for *me* the activities of mindful awareness, using imagination to add layers of subjective meaning to objective reality, and throwing thoughts and creative impulses into the universe to foster connection and collaboration, are all part of my ongoing creative process. It is my hope that others will also share their own version of this Cygnus Onyx Flame manifesto either through *Random Transmissions* or in some other way.

Be weird...  
Stay weird...  
Spread the weird...  
Everywhere.

## Random Transmissions to Come

The next issue of *Random Transmissions* will likely be another *Inspired Ottawa* edition of interviews so reach out if you would like to reply to the Six Questions!

Until the next issue, thank you for reading and keep the Flame of Creativity burning within you and around you!