

## ON RECORD

“A Giant Bay,” a 31 song album written by band sophomore **Kai Watson**, includes influences from folk, punk, and Chopin’s nocturnes

*By Ben Seelig*

The banjo’s strings buzz against the neckboard, holding the last chord in the air. Without warning, the drum machine crashes in with a wave of distorted Casio keyboards and strings, laying down a dance groove. “Cellophane Flowers” is one song on Watson’s first full length album titled “A Giant Bay,” under the alias of “A Giant Day.”

Before he was born, Watson’s grandfather, a professional singer-songwriter, passed away. Although there were no recordings, Watson used his grandfather’s notebooks of compositions to understand who he was as a musician, and a person. He was Watson’s introduction to music, as well as his first inspiration.

“I was left with four of his guitars, so from a young age, I was like, ‘What are those? Can I mess with those?’ That’s what started the whole music thing. And now, it’s almost an addiction,” Watson said. “I owe a lot of my music now to him, because without those few guitars, I probably wouldn’t have played.”

Many of his compositions were recorded on this trumpet through voice memos, such as the album, “Closer,” a 12 minute funeral march also featuring tuba, trombone, and saxophone. He said the piece “symbolized change through the phases of life.”

“I mainly write for myself,” Watson said. “I have tried to write songs for other people in the past, and they don’t come out sounding like what I want to hear. They don’t sound like me.”

Although most of the creative direction was his, he reached out to close friends for their input throughout the process from demo, to master track. One friend, visual junior **Addison Chernow**, was someone he bonded with over their shared love of alternative music.

“He'll send audio messages of guitar riffs, little melodies, or him playing the banjo. I always give feedback and try to encourage him to bring it into his studio and record it,” Chernow said. “I think it's awesome that he’s, what, 14? 15? and he is already uploading music on every platform.”

It was difficult for Watson to finish a mix that was completely to his liking. If the song was not where he wanted it to be, he would scratch the file completely and start anew.

“Being someone who's always been self-critical, it leads me to a lot of frustration and emotional drain,” Watson said. “When I record, it has to be a very slow process.”

Music was an outlet for him, often “turning his emotions into dissonant harmonies.” The previous title of the album, “And the World Still Spins,” referred to the fact that music was an unchanging constant in his life that kept him grounded.

“Even though all this stuff has happened, the world will continue spinning. That's something I've had to remind myself a few times in the past,” Watson said. “I use songwriting as a therapy tactic to help me get things out. They come out easier that way.”