



**Where I Am Now** is the debut LP from Chicago-based producer Area (aka m50) released on François K's Wave Music imprint. Featuring 12 tracks of pulsing, adventurous electronic music, of moody lows and exhilarating sounds burned into the ether, Area describes it as a "kind of geographical and emotional travelogue."

**Can you break down *Where I Am Now* for me? It's your debut LP and you only got one shot at one of those. How long have you been working on it and are you pleased with the overall result?**

I suppose there's some truth to the idea that you get to work for your whole life on your debut album, and that this accumulation can be an advantage for a first collection. This album is, for me, kind of a geographical and emotional travelogue.

On the other side, once I had the sounds put together, it's been material that François K and I have both had the opportunity to experiment with while on tour, so I'm at least pretty comfortable with the songs.

////// interview by terry matthew  
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**How important was it to craft something for those listening as well as for a night-dub crowd? Is it difficult to find a balance between the two?**

I'm not sure what to say about this. I don't think it's important at all. I write music that expresses where I am in the moment. Occasionally I'll also write songs with a particular future moment or space in mind, but I think it would drive me a bit crazy to have such a utilitarian approach to composition, to start from a position of that sort of compromise. And it's all a sort of experi-

ment. Maybe it would be difficult to find a balance between the two if one were to approach it that way.

**What gear do you find indispensable in the studio? The first track, "Cellious", has this hum to it that I've always likened to cosmic background radiation – it really adds to the overall ambient effect for listening. Was that deliberately added or a happy accident?**

I think the most useful thing is to get out of the studio, to listen to sounds in different spaces. The sounds we shape are so coloured by and informed by the means of reproduction and the listening space, so it's illuminating to hear them in different environments and contexts.

With "artificial" music, say, music constructed of sounds that aren't representative of traditional instrumentation and voice, when sounds are manipulations or found recordings or are otherwise without context, how they're heard is quite contingent on how they are reproduced. Especially when music isn't trying to replicate some sound in the world, the process of creating it or experiencing it afterwards is pretty subjective.

Maybe the track you mentioned is a good example of this. The original sketches for that track I made riding the L, so the odd overtones actually are the result of tons of frequency masking by the background noise. In that way, you could say the song will always sound different from how it was produced – unless you listen to it on a train as well.

**At the risk of having the man's email inundated with even more spam, is it true that François K signed you to Wave Music after hearing one of your tracks on Soundcloud?**

Basically yes. I connected with Brendon and François via sketches I'd posted on Soundcloud. I have been using that site almost since its inception. It's an unparalleled resource for sharing sounds and connecting with people. Soundcloud has developed into quite a sophisticated creative community. It has almost instantaneous listener feedback, which can be alternately encouraging and distracting. Regarding your spam comment, I actually didn't send Wave any material until they had already expressed an interest.

**You've released music on a number of labels. Wave actually seems to put forth a lot of effort to promote the individual artists they're working with.**

**and it rarely seems to be about "signing a hot track" rather than "signing a hot producer". Is this true in your experience, and have you found a similar approach elsewhere in your label dealings?**

For the most part, I've worked with a good group of small labels that have shown a lot of faith in my recordings. I don't feel like I've fallen in with any particular niche or subgenre style, so I guess that makes the kind of promotion that I think you're talking about difficult. This also seems to have meant that I've attracted particularly open-minded outlets.

**I want to talk a bit about media and the message. Your fourth EP on Kinochi had some touches that made it stand out, with a handpainted cover. I presume you chose to do that yourself? Why?**

For Kinochi Sound, I didn't have a lot of money to work with but I was trying to figure out a way to create a look and feel that would reflect the inspiration of the project. I have had the great fortune of working with Aaron Shinn, a designer I've been a fan of for many years, and together we have been working within those constraints to create personal and hopefully beautiful and evocative packages that fit together with the feeling of the releases. He was also commissioned for the album design layout.

**And before we finish off, I wanted to ask one of those insane questions – to get your thoughts on the Chicago scene, without any lead in or inspiring my own opinion. As a working artist, how do you find the scene at the moment?**

I think I get a lot out of the opportunities I have when I'm in Chicago. My work at WMUR has connected me with a wide range of people and given a lot of freedom for me to experiment. Over the past few years I've been able to perform and collaborate through the generosity of many unofficial performance spaces that have been receptive and encouraging even when there sometimes aren't easy outlets through official channels; the city has an embarrassment of talented, underappreciated artists. I'm grateful for the support that I've enjoyed through institutions like Gramophone & Podval, and just this year through the Synesthesia series and Crosstalk. •••

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**Where *I Am Now* will be released on March 6, 2012 from Wave Music ([www.wavemusic.com](http://www.wavemusic.com)). You can reach Area at [m50@act.net](mailto:m50@act.net).**

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