

# DISTRACT



## DISTRACT - VISIONS OF TOTALITARIANISM

### Project Overview:

Visions Of Totalitarianism (VOT) is a 10-track hardcore punk album that will be written, recorded, mixed, and mastered by myself. I had already begun the process of writing and recording basic demos for the LP at the start of the academic year, and plan to have the whole record finished and released publicly by April 2026. VOT will also be accompanied by a website, physical media prototypes and a tablature book featuring guitar playthroughs of some of the songs.

I have decided to take on this challenge as it will be my first time working as a purely solo artist; prior to this, I have always worked in bands which has meant that the workload has generally been split amongst most of the members.

### Aims and Goals:

My aim with this album is to produce a politically-charged, raw sounding record that encapsulates my own personal feelings and views of the current state of the world. This is important to me as my scene and the music I am already a part of, is very politically driven and stands to make a point about the planet we live on - this is my way of pushing my own thoughts out there.

Ideally, in the short term, I would like to be able to sell some (approximately 20) physical records and be able to piece a band together to perform VOT live. Over the course of the 12 months following the release date, I aim to have played at least one gig in Sheffield (where I



am based), and one gig outside of Sheffield - for example, in Leeds or Bradford, where the punk scene is relatively active.

I am used to live shows already, as I have been in bands in the Sheffield punk and hardcore scene for the last three years, and I will therefore be able to use my pre-established connections to help me find these opportunities for DISTRACT.

Additionally, I plan to release VOT on Bandcamp where people can find and stream samples of the songs for free, but then purchase and download a digital copy of the full album. I will be avoiding the big streaming platforms, such as Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music, as I disagree with them ethically, and they pay their artists a very little amount of money per stream [Ditto Music, 2025].

Having my release available on Bandcamp will mean that it is still accessible to my audience online, however I will be compensated more accordingly for my work (by being paid a price I can set) than if it were on one of the major streaming services.

My long term goals are less conclusive so far, however after the release and live demonstration of VOT, I plan on working on more records, possibly having musical and creative input from other musicians. In 5 years, I would like to still be able to perform with DISTRACT, whether it be a result of consistent growth from day one, or as a “throwback” show as a reminder of what I am capable of.

#### Planning and Schedules:

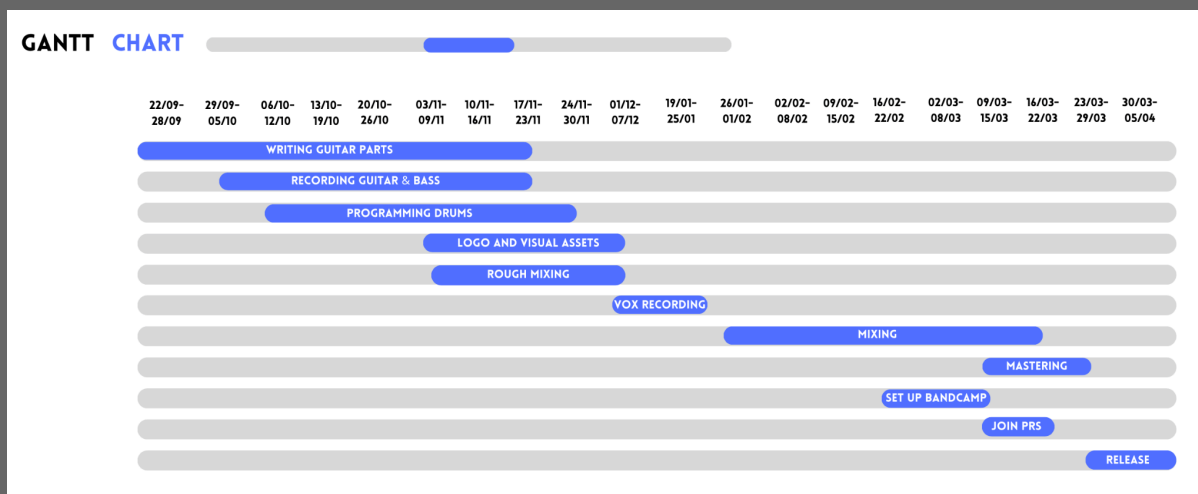
For weeks’ one through ten, my plan was to have all ten tracks written and recorded into my chosen DAW. I decided to write songs as I went, often recycling old riffs and structures that I had recorded on my laptop and adding extra parts on the fly. This resulted in a lot of reworking of my songs as I would not be happy with the final product - my aim was to capture an aggressive, emotional feel through these songs and I was dedicated to achieving the sound I wanted.

By the end of the first academic term, I had achieved my goal of having ten instrumental demos (nine originals, one cover) ready to start the process of recording vocals and finalising production in the second term.

On top of this, I have produced a logo, album cover and a website to accompany my final publication. I did not plan on this until much closer to the release date however once I was in the swing of things, it felt like the right time to create visual assets.

Week ten to twenty will consist of a strict schedule.

For the first two weeks, I will solely be focusing on recording vocals - this will take place between the WaterBear campus studio and Tecna Studios, both of which have ideal vocal booths.



This will then leave me seven weeks to exclusively work on the final mixes, listening tests across multiple environments and then mastering.

In the last week of term, I plan to overview and finalise all the platforms and specifications for release - such as making sure the website is laid out with all the necessary information, ensuring the BandCamp page is ready and that all the copyright and legal assets (PRS) are in place.

#### Strengths:

- I am a capable bassist and guitarist and have been a songwriter for the last seven years
- I know my way around my chosen DAW
- Have released music before so I am familiar with the general process
- I have worked on the production of my own music in the past [Hatebomb, 2025] and know enough to release music in a professional capacity



#### Weaknesses:

- VOT is recorded with programmed drums, with which I have little experience. This being a first for me, I have done some research to make them sound as best as possible however, I worry that my lack of expertise with MIDI instruments will show on the final release.
- My graphic design skills are limited, again, through lack of experience. I still plan on using my own visuals but they make appear less professional than desired.
- This will be my first completely solo release, I will likely make some mistakes.

#### Opportunities:

- The hardcore punk scene in Yorkshire and Manchester is decently active in recent times [Welcome to Yorkshire, 2022] so my music will be fitting into a preestablished crowd.

- I am heavily involved with other musicians in many aspects of my life - multiple bands, studying at a music university, having musician friends - this gives me the chance to have feedback from like-minded people.

#### Threats:

- Hardcore punk is, ultimately, an underground genre of music [Care, P.D, 2024]. This may make it difficult for my music to reach a large audience and earn income.
- The live music scene on the whole is struggling due to the cost of living crisis and the rise of AI.

#### Research:



The idea behind DISTRACT is to replicate and reflect the sound of late 80s to 90s crust and hardcore punk. My chosen case studies throughout feature iconic hardcore punk bands such as Discharge, The Exploited, Doom, Napalm Death, Black Flag and Suicidal Tendencies. These bands have been a massive influence on the writing process behind Visions Of Totalitarianism. Bands of this era, those listed in particular, featured minimal production [Leader A. 2018] on their records, often due to low budget and limited availability (crust and hardcore punk lifestyles were often led by way of poverty and even homelessness [Brenden, 2018] and so access to professional equipment was lacking).

The aesthetic of messy, chaotic looking flyers once appealed to me and I have since been a part of my local (Sheffield) crust and hardcore punk scene for the last three years.

The music itself, particularly in crust punk, is often very politically charged, featuring topics such as nuclear war, overthrow of government and animal & human rights [Melodigging, 2025]. Being a politically active person - what with attending protests and demonstrations in my local and surrounding areas - this was also an important influence on my music and how it evolved.

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I have chosen these particular graphics as, I feel, they are appropriately similar to pre-existing crust and hardcore punk graphics. The DISTRACT logo, consisting of a basic, black font takes inspiration from Discharge's simple, one-word banner and the 'Old English' font that I used is also often sighted throughout the extreme metal genre [Bathory, 1983] [Gorgoroth, 1992].

Other visuals such as the DISTRACT FLY are mimicked around the idea of bands having recognisable icons.

Black Flag, The Misfits, and Ramones each have their own noteworthy, easily spotted logo that can be used

on T-shirts, or even as tattoo designs [Dolf, 2013]. My choice behind using a fly, of all creatures, is the idea that flies are often small, irritating animals that, while being relatively insignificant, can get in the way of day-to-day life and cause distractions. This represents the fact that whilst VOT is only one album, and I am only one person in the grand scheme of the whole population, this piece can cause distractions from day-to-day activities and bring attention to the injustices throughout the world that I think should have light shed on them.



Another key element of DISTRACT's graphics is the actual Visions Of Totalitarianism album cover. The cover itself is made up of the logo, the title of the album and kept very dark and monochrome throughout. This is a key factor of crust punk artwork as it mimics the dark, bleak outlook that this style of music has on the world.

The most important feature of this cover however, is the chair in the centre. I have decided to lean into the 'shock' factor with this idea - a punk characteristic most notably popularised by Sid Vicious [Evans D, 2025] - by using a photo of Jeffery Epstein's own dentist chair. This image was released as a part of the "Epstein files" scandal that became widespread

this year (2025). An image with particularly dark connotations and an equally as grave history, I felt, was a good choice for my album cover. Tied with the recurring tagline "they are trying to distract you" throughout several pieces of DISTRACT media, the photo instantly highlights the fact that VOT is a political piece and conveys a "no holds barred" feel in regards to lyrical content. The aim of this graphics was to signify that this record will be dark, bleak, and aggressive - in my opinion, the choices I have made, suit my goal very well.

My target audience is very much focused on the Sheffield Punk Scene. In particular, venues like The Lughole are essential to the continuation of live punk music in Sheffield. Their annual weekend festival Noise Annoys results in a mass gathering of punks from around the country [Lughole, 2025a].

This is the scene I am focusing on the most because they are often dedicated to their chosen sound, and share the very classic punk characteristic trait of supporting their local

artists and venues. My attention will be on in-person fanbases and being able to build a repertoire with people face-to-face, whilst Visions Of Totalitarianism will be available on BandCamp, the true experience is designed to be the live performance. Meeting people in person, through gigs and selling physical media, gives me a chance to build a repertoire with potential audiences and fans and in turn, expand my crowd.

I am hesitant to list other bands as “competition” as such, because in my scene, and the punk scene on the whole, bands are celebrated and not often “competed” with (in the true sense of the word), however there are bands within the Sheffield punk circuit that are currently very active, and so if I were to land the opportunity for DISTRACT to work with them, it would benefit me in terms of widening my audience.



First of these bands would be Rat Cage. I would describe them as a band that is “10-steps ahead of me.” Rat Cage have been active in the Sheffield Punk Scene for at least three years [Yellow Arch Studios, 2022] and have performed at multiple venues across the UK [Suddaby, 2020]. My main pull factor to Rat Cage is that it was also originally started as a one-man DIY project. Bryan Suddaby was originally working as a solo artist under the pseudonym ‘Rat Cage’ and produced a full-length studio album - “Screams From The Cage”.

This has clearly been a huge inspiration for me, with the purely solo production of Visions Of Totalitarianism, and so Rat Cage are likely my nearest competitor.

Contrary to this, rather than competing, it is essential to bear in mind that my goal is not to “beat” any other band, but work with them, through supporting them at shows, joint tours etc. in order to benefit everybody involved.

Cacophony are another band that have a very similar sound to DISTRACT. We differ on the basis that their outfit is composed of three members, not just the one, but both artists embody the crust-punk’s raw, energetic, metal-meets-punk [DIY Conspiracy, 2020] sound. Cacophony are one of the newer bands in the Sheffield Punk Circuit but seem to have had a successful beginning, playing gigs as large as aforementioned Noise Annoys [Lughole, 2025a]. I consider this band to be around “two steps ahead of me” which means I am aiming to be in a similar position to where they are now, come a year’s time.



	Your Business - Disarm	Competitor 1 - Rat Cage	Competitor 2 - Cacophony	Competitor 3 - Chained Up	Notes
Feature 1	DIY	✓	✓	✓	
Feature 2	No live			✓	

	experience				
Feature 3	Niche, underground genre	✓	✓	✓	
Feature 4	Dedicated audience	✓		✓	
Price	£0 - £10 per item	≈ £10 - £15 per gig/item [Lughole, 2025b]	≈ £10 per gig	£0 (disbanded so no physical media or shows, only available on streaming platforms)	
Audience Satisfaction	****	*****	***	**	



DISTRACT is an idea based on pre-2000s aesthetics and ideals but I have had to bring these aspects to a collection of modern platforms. Features such as social media pages have been kept in line with a lot of these ideas - for instance, the DISTRACT Instagram bio consists only of my tagline “THEY ARE TRYING TO DISTRACT YOU” - similar to that of The Exploited’s page which states “Punks Not Dead” - their iconic tag line and name of their first album. Keeping this minimal is a key element of punk advertising and, in my opinion, is a way of keeping advertising and marketing clear, yet concise. A repeated slogan gives your brand an

identity [Wilson A, 2023] and allows your audience to easily identify you on, for example, a gig flyer or album cover.



The idea behind the sound of Visions Of Totalitarianism was purely and simply - keep things simple. Throughout the recording, the small details have remained the same: the same guitar and bass on each



song; the same amp-plugin settings; type of compression plug-in, equaliser plug-in and reverb unit. All the instruments have been tracked on one channel each: MIDI drum kit, bass guitar, rhythm guitar, lead guitar, vocals with minimal post-processing. I wanted to capture the sound of raw 80s punk records by achieving a tone that I was happy with before



recording. Whilst the record has been recorded digitally, the fact that production has been kept relatively barebones furthers the idea that it sounds like it was recorded, produced, and released during the same time period of the older albums that I take influence from. As previously mentioned, punks had limited access to professional equipment, therefore, VOT sharing similar traits - like the same compressor on each channel etc. - will

continue to facilitate the 80s/90s hardcore punk sound that I so desire.

Additionally, in regards to the mastering, I plan to use an Analog Tape Emulator plug-in that will degrade the quality of the final product and enhance the 'vintage' feel, as music from the 1980s and 90s was often recorded to tape [Dana, J. 2025].



With this being a purely bedroom DIY production, there have been zero costs in regards to the start-up costs. All music is recorded by me, on instruments I own, in my own flat, with hardware and software that I already own.

I was originally planning on working with fellow student and bandmate Andrew Kiyani for my visual assets, however with deadlines, he didn't have the time, so instead of paying somebody to produce graphic designs, I made my own.

VOT will earn income from BandCamp (which is free to use), physical media sales and T-shirts.

With TapStitch, T-Shirt printing will cost approximately £4.99 per shirt. With 20 being printed, and each shirt being sold at £20, I should hopefully see a profit of around £300.



With [pressonvinyl.com](http://pressonvinyl.com), vinyl printing £7.98 per disc.

Selling 10 copies of VOT at £15 each will result in a smaller profit of roughly £30. I am less bothered about profits from physical media - the focus of this is to push the music further out and to give my audience a chance to have a real copy of an album.

Tapes and CDs are also in the works for VOT. I know people who make their own copies of tapes and CDs so my budget for this type of media is very little, with the selling price also being low - likely £5 each. Again, the focus here is not on profit, but on expanding my audience.

My other main financial consideration is travel costs (petrol, train tickets etc.) when it comes to live shows. I'm hoping that my day-job will be able

to fund this upfront and that I can make my money back (and ideally, profit) through payment from my performance.

It is tricky to state an overall budget but with all the physical media being taken into consideration, I would look at holding around £250 for everything. After the first month or two of VOT being released, I would like to start seeing the merchandise pay for itself.

Overall, I am happy with the progress that I have made and look forward to the final release and publication of Visions Of Totalitarianism. I am excited to see the impact that my album will have on my local scene, and wherever it may take me once it is out in the open.

## **THEY ARE TRYING TO DISTRACT YOU**



## Appendix & Bibliography

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