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A mantra:

Make things better.

The world would be better if:
[fill in the blank]

The world would be better if:
people listened.

The world would be better if:
people listened, musically.

We are sitting outside. There is coffee. We are talking. Not an interrogation – not yet. An... interview?

I have prepared some questions but [Robert Jarvis](#) offers more information than I ask for. He has thought through the process in detail. Details are important to Jarvis. He is good with names, and refers to people by both first and surname in anecdotes. He is proud of the careful way he has composed, not just the recorded sounds gently floating in the street behind us, but the relationships with seventeen shopkeepers on Sittingbourne High Street. It's like riding a bicycle, he tells me. At first all you do is concentrate on the machine. After you've been doing it a long time, you can start to enjoy the process of riding. He has been doing this a long time, is the implication.

'This' is a publicly installed sound piece, title [Streetwaves](#) that currently connects a series of shop windows along the High Street. The buzz of hair clippers and the clang of church bells and the tones of a choir are all minimally deconstructed. Jarvis's compositional interventions are subtle enough that happy synchronicities abound. As we are sitting at a table outside a local coffee shop, a bus passes by, and the whine it makes on its descent down the hill is perfectly matched by the slide of the choir's voices. We pause and listen.

It is important to Jarvis that all the sounds in *Streetwaves* have been generated from existing processes. He mentions a conversation with a journalist who offhandedly suggested that most public art is now focused on filling empty shops, while *Streetwaves* is concerned with the noises that are already there. That's it, Jarvis affirms. He relates an anecdote of a time when he sat for hours at a time in a certain district in Chongqing, a mega-metropolis in China. After listening in the space at every hour, he informed a group urban planning experts that the district was tuned to the key of E. Jarvis's mission, then, is to make people listen to their world as if it is already a score. This would change the world, he says. This would make the world better.

Jarvis narrates a bit of his career trajectory, from trombonist to composer to sound installation artist. At the heart of this progression seems a question of finding an agreeable space and audience, rather than a shift in intention or methodology. Jarvis seems to approach his work evangelically. He is called to promote a sonic language for space. Music and the technical production of sound are his 'first language. The language I'm using to speak to you right now is my second language,' he says. Out of context, such a statement might seem over-the-top, but I am inclined to believe him in the moment. Having found the music industry less amenable to his work than he would like, he is happy that his projects have found greater success in the public art realm. He has a perspective on his mission, though. He uses sound to make people more aware of their spaces. A mugging would do that, too, he admits.