

Cameron Harris
Blend fit operand (2021) 7'

In the summer of 1956 Joderell Bank Observatory in the English Midlands picked up a distant signal from deep space that seemed to contain spoken language. This phenomenon continued for a number of months, seemingly due to unusual atmospheric conditions. The signals were all carefully captured on a 3M reel-to-reel tape recorder – a quality machine of the time.

After intense analysis, some three years later it was ascertained that the recordings contained speeches made by alien politicians on some yet unknown planet. As a result, all the recordings were wiped as it was concluded that the speeches were even more vacuous than those produced by politicians on Earth. As the speeches were devoid of all content it was considered that the expensive magnetic tape could be better put to use recording other things.

In late 2021, celebratory physicist and erstwhile musician Brian Cox stated that combatting climate change was vital because otherwise human life may not survive. The logic follows that humans, politicians included, may be the most intelligent beings in existence: Extra-terrestrial life may not exist, and if it does it may not be as sentient as us. Without Earth, and without humanity, meaning in the universe may be lost – it is a striking thought.

Also in 2021 it emerged that one single reel-to-reel tape of the 1952 recordings survived. It was discovered being used as a stand in for a hubcap on a Volkswagen Beetle which was still being used in a Cheshire village not far from the observatory that first detected these mediocre signals. The tape contains a particularly banal expostulation concerning an offset scheme for some toxic chemical that mercifully has not become known to man. The tape is presented here in full.

While the substantiation for some of the above may be hazy, it is well known that feedback delay using reel-to-reel tape was a key inspiration for Louis and Bebe Barron. The duo were given a 3M tape recorder as a wedding present and are best known as the creators of the iconic score for the movie *Forbidden Planet*, which was coincidentally also released in 1956.

Blend fit operand experiments with the idea of looped feedback delay and takes the mysterious pulsating sounds that result as its starting point. As such it is a modest homage to the music of the Barrons, who changed the palette of electronic music forever.