

LOBE Finds Joy in the Unexpected on Debut Album, 'was that on purpose?'

Bay Area ensemble merges jazz, alt-folk and playful, nostalgic influences drawn from pop culture and childhood memory

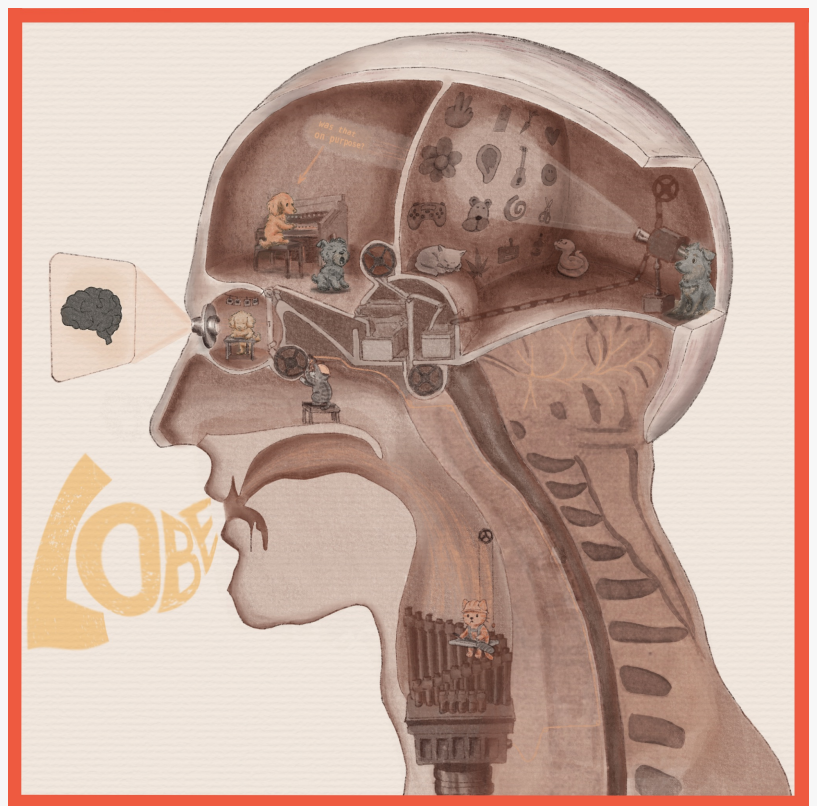
OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, October 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bay Area collective [LOBE](#) releases its debut album, "[was that on purpose?](#)" today, a nine-song collection celebrating the joy and unpredictability of improvisation, the beauty of the mundane and the friendships that have sustained the group since their time together in Stanford's jazz program.

Playful but rigorous, the record distills three years of collaboration into one project, merging contemporary jazz with folk-pop delicacy, disco exuberance, video game textures, and the wide-eyed wonder of childhood nostalgia.

The group is comprised of Daiki Nakajima (flute, bass, tenor/soprano sax), Sam Silverstein (violin), Ethan Buck (alto sax), Nolan Miranda (piano, synths), Mark Rau (bass, guitar), and Michael Hayes (drums).

What began as casual sessions quickly evolved into a collaborative practice where members discovered a shared love for rhythm-forward improvisation and experimental sound. Songs written with each member's voice in mind, like Michael's intricate polyrhythmic phrasing, Daiki's soaring flute, or Ethan's agile horn textures, took on new life in practice, evolving into music that challenged the band and deepened its bonds.

The album's nine chimeric works span a kaleidoscope of moods and influences, opening with



Album art for "was that on purpose?" by Whitley Wilburn

"Sucker Punch," a song that catches the listener off-guard by weaving between polyrhythmic, odd-time grooves and expansive, free-time improvisations, before moving into "Rain Pause (Rain Again)," showcasing Sam Silverstein's violin prowess. Next, "imperfect misdemeanor" takes listeners on a distorted, almost confrontational journey evoking a drum and bass-fueled video game fight scene that resolves into an ecstatic victory dance.

From there, the tone shifts as "Hummingbird Dances," a 2024 ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composer Award winner, sparkles with a joyful folk-to-electric shimmer. The Studio Ghibli-esque ballad "Moon Jelly" delicately floats until "parhelion" pulses with gaming energy, drawing from traditional free jazz in its composition, while "Set Time" showcases the group's breadth in a more traditional swing context.

Band image courtesy of LOBE



LOBE then reimagines the Beatles' "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," specifically inspired by a children's bossa-nova version Nakajima enjoyed as a kid—weaving the classic melody through multiple ways of feeling the underlying time in 11. The record closes by looping back to "Sucker Punch (Intro)," a nod to circular form and the improvisational questions at the heart of the album.

Despite their eclectic ingredients, each piece shares a structural DNA of delicately composed passages that expand with interactive improvisations, balancing precision with spontaneity. Unlike many ensembles driven by a single bandleader, LOBE composes with one another in mind and resists hierarchy, preferring to workshop pieces collectively until they blur the line between rehearsal and hangout.

The album's title nods to the unique, collaborative discovery of improvisation, where each musical coincidence is an unplanned yet inevitable result from years of deep practice, as animated by coincidence, chemistry, and the kind of surprises that happen only among close friends.

It asks the question at the heart of improvisation: how much is intentional, and how much is spontaneous? For LOBE, there is beauty in the tension between the crafted studio LP and the inherent surprise of live performance. That spirit runs through the album, delivering a lasting

record that highlights the fleeting, unpredictable magic of live performance.

The mixing and mastering of the album is supported by [YoungArts](#).

"Whenever I sit down to play with LOBE, I'm never concerned with the outcome," said Nolan Miranda. "We're there to communicate, discover, and meld our minds... I'm incredibly lucky to have found such a beautiful group of people to explore and grow with over so many years."

"'was that on purpose?' Maybe, maybe not, but there was intent behind it," said Mark Rau. "There is a certain trust, respect, and friendship in the group that allows us to try ideas without the fear of failure, pushing our musical boundaries... It has been a huge privilege to work on this project with LOBE, and I can't wait to have it out in the world."

Production credits:

Recording Engineer – Mark Rau

Assistant Recording Engineers – Daiki Nakajima, Nolan Miranda, Taylor Goss

Mixing – Jack Kelly

Mastering – James Clemens-Seely

About LOBE:

Emerging from the San Francisco Bay Area, LOBE is a collective of award-winning composers, arrangers, and musicians that lives at the confluence of intricate writing, dynamic improvisation and imaginative textures. Originally united through a common penchant for rhythm-forward contemporary jazz, LOBE quickly developed an interest in building on this aesthetic with dance, folk, electronic, and pop influences. Over many years of practice, friendship, and chemistry, the group came into its distinctive voice: whimsical and unhurried, challenging but inviting, time-bending yet always attuned to the here and now.

LOBE is excited to showcase the culmination of the past three years of collaboration in their full-length debut album, "was that on purpose?." Comprised of 8 chimeric original works and arrangements, "was that on purpose?" celebrates the beauty that arises from chance encounters, mundane experiences with friends, and musical relationships transcending the professional. With this release, LOBE hopes to spread the communal joy they feel every time they sit down together on stage, in rehearsal, and at the dinner table.

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