



To Make an Album in These Troubled Times, Joywave Looked Toward Space For Inspiration



On Christmas Eve in 1968, Apollo 8's astronauts were orbiting the moon when they read a passage from Genesis in the Bible. Towards the end, they said, "Good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas, and God bless all of you -- all of you on the good Earth," which, to [Joywave](#) frontman Daniel Armbruster, seemed strange, given that this was also the same riotous time where nobody felt like anything was going well on Earth.

"But they have this perspective when they're the furthest away that mankind has ever been from the Earth... They are able to look back and say, 'Wow, our problems really aren't so big from where we're sitting,'" Armbruster says. "I wanted a little bit of that on the record.

Possession, Joywave's third album, is perhaps their boldest yet - and certainly their most political. But no matter your party affiliation, it bears a message that many can relate to [in the present climate](#).

"Externally, every time I walk by a TV screen it's like, 'You're gonna die! North Korea is gonna bomb us! There's a virus!'" he says. "Whatever it is, it's just always constant annihilation everywhere. It reminds me of the 1960s -- like the whole world is about to end."

Inspired by the wider universe and how it relates to today's tumultuous events, Armbruster, who produced most of the album, decided to use audio from Voyager's Golden Record -- a golden disc curated by Dr. Carl Sagan and designed by NASA in 1977 to communicate what Earth sounds like to extraterrestrials who discover the spacecraft in the far corners of the cosmos.

"That's, like, 14 billion miles away. That's the perspective that I want right now," he says. "Everything is so polarized... I want to go as far away from that as possible and look back and say, 'Everyone just take a deep breath.'" So that's exactly what the singer-songwriter did when he produced *Possession*, out today (March 13), in the band's hometown of Rochester, N.Y.

With *Possession*, the group was able to use the Golden Record's audio in several songs, like "Blastoffff" and "Mr. Eastman." On the title track, listeners can hear the sound of a heartbeat, also from the Golden Record. It makes for one of the most vulnerable moments on the album.

Furthermore, "Coming Apart" begins with a Korean greeting from the Golden Record, which felt natural since it came after the somber album opener, "Like A Kennedy." "I was writing the song at peak North Korean nuclear fear news cycle time," Armbruster recalls of "Coming Apart." "It's, 'Hello, how are you?' Which is totally innocuous, but met by a loud irrational scream as soon as the song kicks in."

But it's "Like A Kennedy" that holds a special spot in Armbruster's repertoire. On it, he questions: "Do you think they'll [build the wall](#)?" and "My TV's talking to itself again/ Do we shoot 'em all dead?/ Or should we let 'em all in?"

"I always think of the first song on the record as like, 'You have to pay attention to this one.' It's the one that's most likely to get listened to, so I wanted to make the statement," says Armbruster. The accompanying video references the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy, and while it [drew some controversy](#) for its sensitive subject matter, Armbruster stands by his creative efforts.

"There have been some people, I'll say over the age of maybe 45, who really, really did not like the video," he says. "They felt like it was sacrilegious because they remember that day [Kennedy was assassinated] and they feel like it shouldn't be touched. But it is very much like, 'Hey, we have this insane problem with gun violence and it's cyclical and it's been happening for a really long time.'"