The book *1984* was written by George Orwell in the late 1940s as an alarm for his readers. He warns them by presenting the dangers of a totalitarian society. In the novel, a futuristic London has been taken over by Big Brother – the head of society that censors everyone's behaviours, thoughts and actions. Fear has been instilled in all citizens, and severe punishment awaits those who defy the Government. The city is under constant and intensive surveillance, and in every room Telescreens are installed whereby Thought Police are able to monitor the actions of citizens 24 hours a day.

**Environment:**

For this exercise, I have taken a portion of the environment in the book *1984*, and set it up in an apartment block in which every room has a huge Telescreen monitoring citizens' every activity. I have designed a comprehensive alarm system with specific functions and graded levels of urgency. There are a number of speakers set up in each apartment: the Telescreens have in-built speakers, there are 4 elevated speakers in the corners of the room, and there is a sub-woofer speaker at floor-level to the front of the room. There are also large loud-speakers set up in the hallways and extra rooms of the apartment block.

There is not excessive background noise – cars and people may be heard in the distance, and residents may hear the alarms of neighbours through walls and doors.

**ALARMS**

[The alarms were created in Logic Pro using synthesiser plug-ins with added EQ/BandPass/Reverb.]

**Alarm 1**

In *1984*, there is a high emphasis on all of the citizens following the rules, and this alarm is meant to remind them to do so at all times. I wanted to create a continuous, background alarm that would be heard almost subliminally – so this alarm has a low, pulsating tonality, and is repetitive and drone-like. It is low urgency, and could continuously exist in an environment without imposing on the everyday. It is intended to induce a constant mild state of tension. At all times, all citizens in the building are enveloped by the hypnotising alarm. It would sound from speakers positioned all around the building, as well as from each apartments' Telescreen speakers, elevated speakers, and sub-woofer speakers positioned at floor-level.

**Alarm 2**

Citizens are constantly monitored by Telescreens and cameras, and spied on by secret agents that may be undercover as peers and neighbours. All around the city are signs that read “Big Brother Is Watching”, a gentle but firm reminder that, at any given time, you are being watched. The second alarm works to serve the same purpose as these signs. While subliminal, with its slow, low-pitched, and repetitive quality, Alarm 2 is slightly more noticeable than Alarm 1: it is mildly faster, harsher, and includes wider intervals. The alarm sounds irregularly throughout the day, each time scattered around to the different speakers in the apartment.

**Alarm 3**

All citizens are expected to perform specific duties and activities as part of their daily routine. Wake-up alarms spout from workers' Telescreens, before they are prompted to engage in early
exercise sessions and get ready for work. Alarm 3 prompts the citizen to perform each duty at its rigid scheduled time. The alarm is the first to interrupt the subconscious: it is of mid-urgency level – higher in pitch, sharper in tone, and faster in rhythm. The alarm is regular, thus relatively easy to adjust to: this makes it ideal as a prompting alarm for workers who are on-task and diligent in completing daily activities. It is heard from the speakers of the Telescreens.

**Alarm 4**

Negligence in performing duties of the strict routine mentioned above may be seen as an offence against the Party, and may possibly lead to prosecution. An alarm will sound to warn citizens that they are falling behind on their tasks (if they are running late or not performing their tasks quickly enough). The medium-to-high-level urgency of this alarm is intended to induce stress and shock the worker into better performance. It is bright, high pitched, and fast paced. The alarm is discordant – it has an irregular pitch and rhythm – and this maintains interest and attention. Alarm 4 is heard loudly from the elevated speakers in the corners of the room. Citizens are aware that if Alarm 4 is heard too many times from their room, neighbours may become suspicious of their behaviour.

**Alarm 5**

If citizens are suspected of acting against the Party, they may be arrested and interrogated. This often leads to severe prosecution and tortuous punishment. This is the citizens ultimate nightmare. Alarm 5 will sound if a citizen in the apartment block is found to be actively working against the Party (or at least suspected of doing so). The alarm indicates that soldiers are on their way to arrest the offender. The alarm is high-urgency and intended to induce high levels of stress in every citizen in the apartment block. The alarm has disturbing tones, and its layered screech-like quality is harsh and intrusive. It is repetitive and high-speed. Alarm 5 is the loudest alarm, and is heard not only from every speaker in each room, but also from speakers placed in the hallways and extra rooms of the buildings.

**SCENARIO**

• A worker is sleeping in his apartment. Alarm 1's continuous sound (low urgency) is heard all around the room from the very beginning: it is part of the environment in which the scenario takes place.
• Alarm 3 (mid-urgency) sounds loudly from the Telescreen at 6am, and the worker is appropriately roused from his sleep.
• Shortly after the alarm ceases, Alarm 2 (low-urgency) sounds from a speaker to the worker's left, a reminder that at that moment, the Thought Police may be monitoring him. While Alarm 2 would not normally alarm the typical law-abiding citizen, this particular worker becomes panicked at hearing its sound: He fears he is being watched due to his recent involvement in a conspiracy movement to bring down The Party.
• Alarm 4 suddenly sounds to warn the worker that he is falling behind on his duties: he realises in a fright that he has stayed in bed too long, caught in a web of paranoid thought. He should be getting dressed for his exercise session at 6:15am. The worker falls out of bed, and realises that he is shaking from fear and dripping with sweat. His state worsens as he realises that, if being watched at that moment, the Thought Police would perceive his behaviour as being suspicious and a cause for concern.
• Suddenly, and excruciatingly loud, Alarm 5 screeches throughout the apartment block. The worker is frozen by fear, certain that he has been found out. However, time passes and the alarm ceases. The worker realises that it was not for him – someone else in the building has been arrested. The worker's terror remains, and he decides to abandon the conspiracy movement, with a feeling that he has experienced a kind of 'near-death' experience.