Final Project: The Elements

With this, the final project of the semester, my aim was to create a composition for Electric Guitar, where all the sounds heard come in one form or another from the guitar. Using Logic's built in effects and audio processing capabilities, I was able to make from one guitar, a wide variety of sounds and rhythmic devices in order to achieve this compositional goal. The Elements is a piece which seeks to explore the deeper elements of music and nature, through entirely processed and electronic sound. It uses the natural sound produced by vibrations across strings, and transfers it across wires and circuits until all that's left is a digitized representation of the sound. What is more elementary? The basic vibrations of the strings, or the binary form which it is translated into? This is what this piece seeks to explore.

The composition, as one might traditionally think of it (i.e. the harmonic and melodic structure of the piece), was my starting point. The different sections of the piece build on one another thematically, but are each distinct and held together by slender threads. In the first section, there is minimal processing, and what processing there is aims to show the transmutation of the original analog signal into its digital representation. Towards the middle, new layers are added in, with much of the sounds heard coming from other recorded guitar sounds. There is a rhythmic, drum-like pattern which emerges, and a high crystal-like chime which, together, make a bright and full texture out of basic elements. Finally, the piece moves to the final section and more layers are added. Much is added in the way of guitar harmony, but also in the way of processed guitar sounds. This certainly has the overall feel of a traditionally composed piece, but is deceptively more. Taking the basic elements of the guitar, stripping them down, and building them back up again, one can see there is truly more there than meets the eye – and so it is with music, nature, and life.