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ISSUE SIX, MAY 2014

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MASTHEAD

ISSUE SIX, MAY 2014

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ABSTRACT OBJECTS

VOLUME ONE, ISSUE SIX

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The concept album. For some reason it makes me think of bearded men in leotards singing about unicorns. I'm sure that, to a psychiatrist, such an admission would be very much intriguing, but it's true.

That is not, however, to say it's entirely accurate. A concept album is really just a collection of songs that have a unifying theme of sorts. Some of the most famous albums ever made follow a musical or lyrical concept, be it Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band by The Beatles, Rush's 2112 or Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon.

That said, at one time they did have a reputation for being a bit fantastical. I vividly recall flicking through LPs in a record shop and encountering a record by American prog band Utopia. The artwork, which encased what I now firmly believe to be a true anthropological marvel, saw the band clad in ancient Egyptian robes so dangerously revealing it wouldn't have been out of place on a petrol station's top shelf. What exactly inspired Utopia - four grown men from New York City - to pay homage to the sun god Ra wasn't immediately obvious, but they certainly exposed more than their artistic vision.

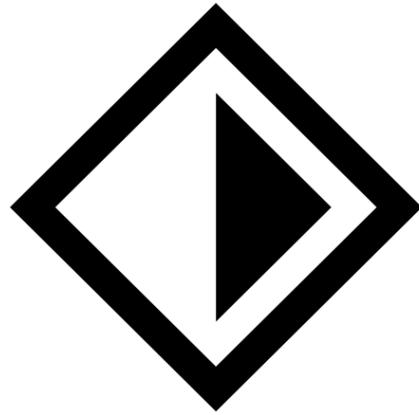
It wasn't intentional, but this issue seems to have developed a theme of its own; one, thankfully, far removed from scantily clad pagan worship. After we'd conducted all the interviews, we realised we had four cross sections of four very different drummers: one a famous millionaire, another a cult icon; one finding success with one band and another doing the same with several.

The idea of endeavour seems a fitting way to introduce our sixth issue and close out Volume One. As a magazine we've certainly learned much about what it means to exist among bigger fish. As with any enterprise, the key to moving forward is to keep learning. I undoubtedly learned more from this issue than I have from any of the others to date. We hope you might, too.

Welcome to Volume One, Issue Six of The Drummer's Journal.

Tom





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REFERRALS

HOT CHIP'S SARAH JONES

*Words by Julia Kaye
Photos by Bex Wade, unless stated*

♦ ♦ ♦



Set during the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now* follows the story of a US Army captain on a mission to capture a former Army colonel named Walter E Kurtz. Kurtz was played by Marlon Brando, now widely regarded as one of the best actors of all time. During the 1970s, he was the highest paid actor in Hollywood and broke numerous Guinness World Records for his earnings.

Today, *Apocalypse Now* is considered one of the greatest war films ever made. Its production, however, was beset by problems right from the outset, largely due to Marlon Brando's unwillingness to embrace the ideas of director Francis Ford Coppola. Brando showed up on set drastically overweight without having read the script or learnt any of his lines. Instead, he decided to improvise his own dialogue. He also refused to work with several other leading members of the cast because he thought they negatively impacted his performance. The source text - Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* - Brando point blank refused to read. He then insisted on changing his character's name, despite much of the film already having been shot.

Brando's performance as Kurtz is one of his most famous. He was often thought of as difficult, unpleasant and relentlessly egotistical. Francis Ford Coppola would later say he was the best actor he'd ever worked with.

By this rationale, Sarah Jones would also be entitled to a sizable ego. She has a CV that would make any aspiring drummer very envious, playing for a string of successful bands including Hot Chip, New Young Pony Club, Bloc Party and Bat For Lashes.

In my head I'd assumed she must be a ruthless session drummer turning up to auditions having studied music relentlessly at a series of prestigious musical institutions.



PHOTO BY: KMERON



Sort of like how Soviet athletes were rumoured to be trained - taken out of mainstream society and just programmed to throw a javelin.

It was, in many ways, reassuring to find out this certainly wasn't the case. What I did learn from meeting Sarah was that my perception of how people get gigs was seriously warped. Essentially, you don't have to act like Marlon Brando.

Ultimately, embrace the power of the referral. Brando did not. His career sharply declined after *Apocalypse Now* and he spent more than a decade out of work. I like to think people like Sarah are testament to the fact that you can be very talented and still be a very nice person.

♦♦♦

Sarah Jones: America thinks I'm a terrorist. Every time I apply for a visa it takes about three months. It's happened twice with Hot Chip where I've missed entire tours.

The Drummer's Journal: What have you done to offend the Americans?

Nothing! I think they must have me mixed up with another Sarah Jones...

Are there many other Sarah Joneses from Herefordshire?

Perhaps so.

What's Hereford like?

It's got a cathedral. That's about it. Weirdly, it has quite a good metal scene.





...

“I STARTED TO FEEL METAL BECAME A SPORT WITH ALL THE DOUBLE KICK STUFF. IT BECAME QUITE COMPETITIVE AND I’M NOT REALLY INTO THAT.”

...



You were quite into metal, right?

I was really into Dream Theater. And Pantera. I was definitely into trying to be really tech. One of my first bands was a metal band though. My dad would drive me to a gig and then just sit and wait until we were finished. Quite sweet really (*laughs*). It was fun, though. I had a double kick - I really enjoyed that.

So what happened to the metal?

I started to feel like it became a sport with all the double kick stuff. It became quite competitive and I'm not really into that. I just used to like how Vinnie Paul from Pantera didn't use triggers - he just used to bash the hell out of his kit.

What was the first gig you went to?

I remember going to a Deftones gig. I came to London with a friend and we stayed at her nan's house in Tooting (*laughs*). We must have been quite young as it didn't even cross my mind to drink. I remember having a sip of somebody's water at the gig and I started hallucinating...

That doesn't sound like it was water...

Oh god I know. I sat down and had to zone out for a while.

So what was your first paid gig?

A friend of mine - who is a really amazing drummer - used to play in a blues band. He got offered a gig with Badly Drawn Boy, so he called me and asked if I wanted to replace him in the blues band. I actually remember I had a little panic about the prospect of joining a proper band, but I took it and it became my first full time job really. We gigged a lot, though during the day I just used to sit and watch Neighbours or Doctors on BBC One, then I'd go out in the evening and do a gig. I didn't really have a daytime life. Please don't print that.

I'm impressed you liked Doctors. Wasn't it on right after Neighbours? I could never really get into it.

Yeah. I didn't really want to. It just happened. Actually, I also used to give some kids lessons, which was fun. There was this kid who, as soon as his dad left, would get off the drum stool, refuse to play, and just point at things asking how much they cost. I just remember thinking, "is it still ok for me to charge £20 for this?"

So if someone asked you what you did for a living, what did you tell them?

I told people I was a drummer in a blues-rock band. It was great. I got to see a lot of Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland, playing small, bizarre gigs. It was a good way to meet people.

When would you say you became professional?

I think I was winging it a bit when I was doing the blues thing. I remember being asked to play a Texan blues shuffle, and not knowing what that was. I had to go to my friend's house for him to show me. I'd never had lessons or anything.

Would you call yourself a session musician?

Yes and no. I find it a bit of a negative term. I don't want to play all types of music, I want to play music I like. Session work seems like you'll just play anything because you love playing the drums so much. I want to play in a musical way, not just for drumming's sake.

So if people started throwing gigs your way...

I'm not really looking to be in that situation.

I get the impression the session scene is quite competitive - that's how it seems from the outside anyway.

I think that's right. Everyone seems to know each other;

PHOTO BY: KMERON





they might have gone to school with someone who plays in a famous band, or their uncle is Bono or something. There's quite a lot of that stuff.

You've played a lot of music that uses electronics. Do you think people have preconceptions about the talent needed to do that?

Sometimes I think people see using electronics as an easy option, and that frustrates me.

Am I right in thinking you were interviewed for Woman's Hour on BBC Radio 4?

Yeah. I think I panicked a bit. It was about the whole women and music thing, and the difference between playing in male or female bands.

Do you get the impression there are some quite generalised assumptions concerning women in music?

It's amazing to see so many organisations helping women get into music and making sure that they have the same opportunities that men have. But sometimes I find that people talk about it without having any experience and that gets my back up a bit.

Can you explain?

I think it's easy to say, "women in the music industry have it so bad." I wouldn't like to talk about how female journalists find it more difficult because I honestly don't know. Personally, I haven't found it difficult myself. I'd say there are more benefits than negatives really. You could argue some of those benefits are beneficial for the wrong reasons, though.

Such as?

I'm not a big fan of the idea that a band would seek a female drummer simply because it's fashionable.



How do you get most of your work? I ask as your CV is mightily impressive. Has it been through auditions or referrals?

It's mostly through friends of friends now, which is nice. But for Hot Chip I had to audition. And for New Young Pony Club too.

The idea of an audition strikes fear into my heart...

They can be scary, yeah (*laughs*). My Hot Chip audition was really weird because I just played along to their songs through speakers and they sat behind me. When I turned round at the end I noticed my legs were a bit shakey. Afterwards I was like, "it's fine if I don't get it," but I was sat there with my phone the next day desperate for them to ring and say, "you're in!" They kept me waiting a week in the end.

Do you see the technical and creative aspects of playing as different approaches?

Yeah absolutely. There's a side that's about being technical without being very musical. I still think it's fun to learn something difficult or complex, but I don't ever feel the need to be technically better than everyone else. I find that idea a bit horrible. Also, I've never been good at knowing which drummer plays for which band. Maybe I'm just lazy. I mean, I really liked Stewart Copeland but I think some people take their influences too far and totally neglect their own style.

I don't think you need to have your own things around you all the time either. I used to be really fussy about having my

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“WOULD YOU CALL
YOURSELF A SESSION
MUSICIAN?
YES AND NO. I
FIND IT A BIT OF A
NEGATIVE TERM.”
♦♦♦





own pedal, but I realised I should probably be able to play whichever pedal is available. Try to be more relaxed and not so dependant on the specifics of what you're using. And then when things aren't perfect, you can just go with it instead of getting uptight. Music should be enjoyable.

♦ ♦ ♦

“RATHER THAN STRESSING ABOUT SET UPS, JUST TRY TO BE MORE RELAXED AND NOT SO DEPENDANT ON THE SPECIFICS OF WHAT YOU'RE USING.”

♦ ♦ ♦

So you'd always rather be in a band as opposed to being a hired hand?

Yeah, definitely. Clinics and stuff where people play on their own - I'd never want to do that either. I think it's a self-confidence thing. I don't read or write music. You should see some of my notes! I did a master class for school kids in Copenhagen once though - a Q&A session followed by some lessons. It was fun, although this one kid asked me: “How do you justify your job in light of the current environmental crisis?”

What was your response?

“I try to source local beers” (*laughs*). No I didn't say that. I can't remember what I said. I'm a nice person really.

♦ ♦ ♦



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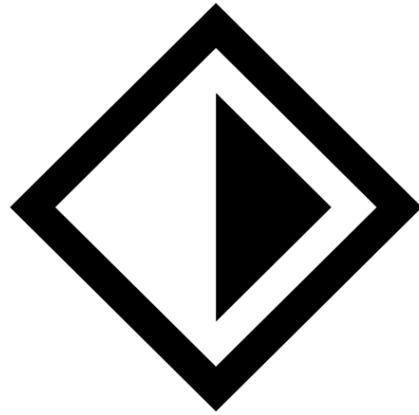
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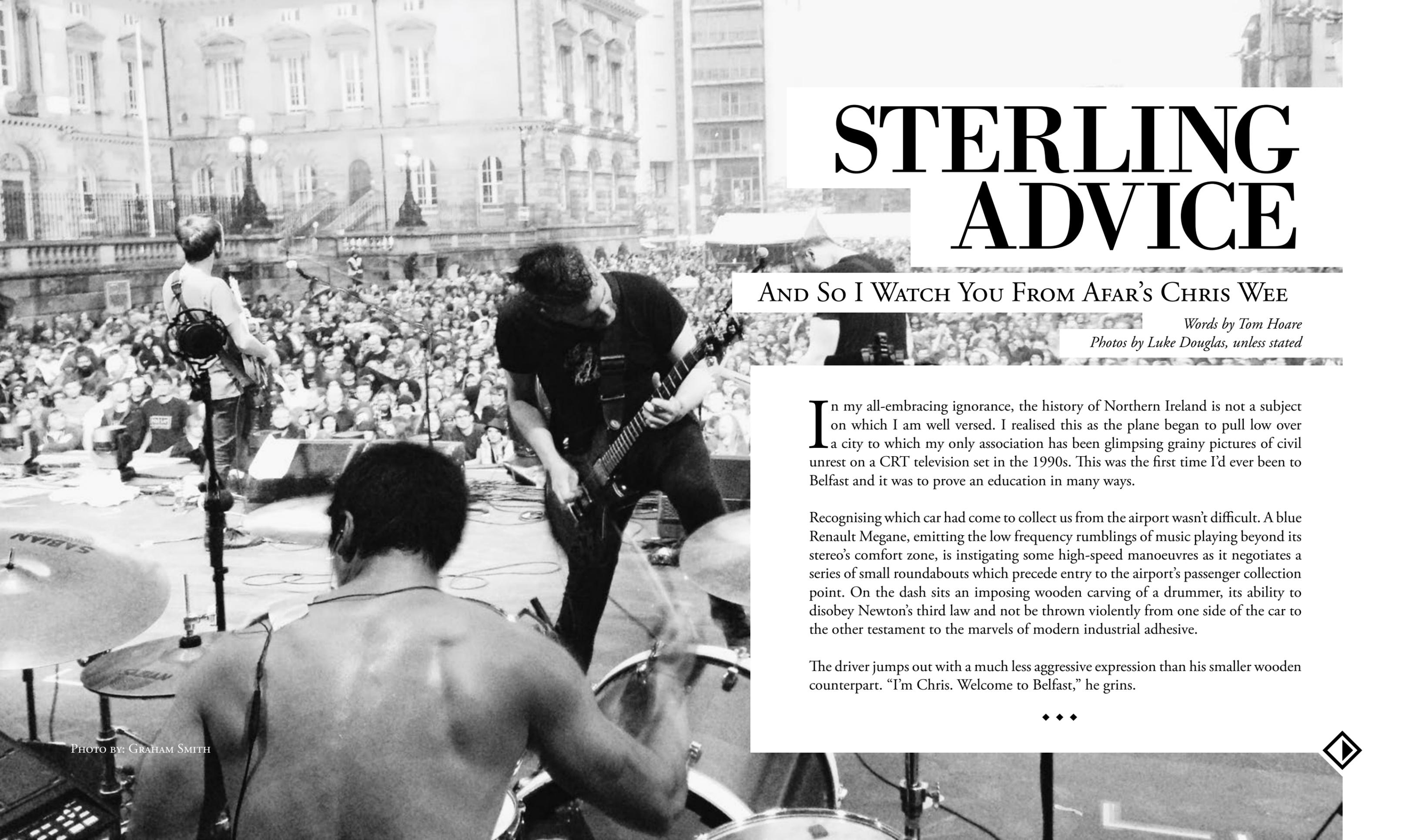
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STERLING ADVICE

AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR'S CHRIS WEE

Words by Tom Hoare

Photos by Luke Douglas, unless stated

In my all-embracing ignorance, the history of Northern Ireland is not a subject on which I am well versed. I realised this as the plane began to pull low over a city to which my only association has been glimpsing grainy pictures of civil unrest on a CRT television set in the 1990s. This was the first time I'd ever been to Belfast and it was to prove an education in many ways.

Recognising which car had come to collect us from the airport wasn't difficult. A blue Renault Megane, emitting the low frequency rumblings of music playing beyond its stereo's comfort zone, is instigating some high-speed manoeuvres as it negotiates a series of small roundabouts which precede entry to the airport's passenger collection point. On the dash sits an imposing wooden carving of a drummer, its ability to disobey Newton's third law and not be thrown violently from one side of the car to the other testament to the marvels of modern industrial adhesive.

The driver jumps out with a much less aggressive expression than his smaller wooden counterpart. "I'm Chris. Welcome to Belfast," he grins.

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Besides being our tour guide for the day, Chris' regular job is playing drums in a band called And So I Watch You From Afar. In a nutshell, they play expressive, atmospheric, instrumental rock music in a manner I can only liken to lying in a state of blissful relaxation only to have someone quickly administer repeated shocks to your chest with a defibrillator. This may not sound pleasant but that's part of the appeal - their live shows are truly eye opening and their albums ear splittingly captivating.

If ASIWFYA were a house, they'd have better foundations than the south-east corner of Wayne Manor. Since forming in 2005, they've released three albums and toured exhaustively in support of each one. Impressively, they did much of this off their own backs. Unfortunately, there is no model detailing how to make a band a functioning business whilst retaining creative independence and artistic credibility. Instead, there's only the endless advice of others, which, at best, yields little more than a set of blurry blueprints. This is why spending time with Chris was quite refreshing - his experiences have given him a profoundly honest outlook. "Being a band is mostly about rolling with the punches," he states. I wrongly assume this advice is not meant literally. The schooling begins.

10am: The Troubles

Chris had kindly agreed to set aside the entire day to show us the city. Admittedly, my initial impression of his driving style made me suddenly re-evaluate just how appealing this prospect was. Thankfully, Chris is actually very easy going. He'd driven down that morning from visiting his parents who live on the north coast, which explained the haste of his arrival. He spent a good few minutes apologising profusely for having kept us waiting outside arrivals for a grand total of three minutes.



“So where do you want to go first?” Chris taps on the steering wheel in a manner that seems habitual. We had no real plan for the day. The only requirement was to go to Chris’ rehearsal space in the city to get a few photos. So this became our first destination.

Belfast shares a common lineage with many other post-industrial port cities. Some of the city’s more imposing, historical buildings stand beside those erected in the 1970s - a decade when architects worldwide seemingly went on strike. Around the docks and along the river lie the remains of heavy industry, now either successfully regenerated or suffering a severe identity crisis. Yet Belfast is also unlike any other place I’ve been. In my lifetime, it’s a western city that’s endured more conflict than any other.

“You should see the peace lines,” Chris suggests, “They’re on our way.”

“Peace lines?”

“Yeah. The walls that divide the Protestant and Catholic areas.”

“They still exist?”

Chris looks surprised and I feel increasingly idiotic. “Very much so.”

This was my first lesson. Before long, the car is parked on a deserted street in the north of the city. On one side are rows of relatively unassuming houses, cast in the shadow of a 25ft high concrete wall a matter of metres away.

“25 years ago, we wouldn’t really have been able to sit here.” He gestures to a huge roadblock ahead. “All these checkpoints would have been manned by soldiers and it was up to them where you were allowed to go. This is a Protestant area here.” He points to the Union Flag draped in a window. “The other side of the wall is mainly Catholic. Violence still does flare up, so the wall stops either side throwing things into the other – bricks, petrol bombs, that sort of stuff.”

TOP: IT’S ALL GOOD,
THE PEACE LINES

BOTTOM: BELFAST,
LOOKING SOUTH WEST



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“BEING A BAND
IS MOSTLY ABOUT
ROLLING WITH THE
PUNCHES. I WRONGLY
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IS NOT MEANT
LITERALLY.”

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He pauses. "In some ways Belfast has changed immensely. But in some ways it hasn't. These walls are still here for a reason."

What is often referred to as The Troubles was a conflict concerning Northern Ireland's constitutional status in relation to the UK and Republic of Ireland. Lasting over three decades, Belfast itself saw such a significant proportion of the violence that it became known as the European Capital of Terrorism. Although the official peace process concluded in 1998, the walls still serve as a pertinent reminder that conflicts do not necessarily end with speeches and signatures.

11.30am: Touring

We reach the studio. It's in an old factory now partitioned into different units, some industrial, some less so.

"You see though there?" Chris gestures through a brick archway and into a yard behind. "That's a scrapyard. The other day I wandered through and there was a man standing on a car just beating the hell out of it with a bat. He looked at me, nodded, then just carried on." He pauses. "This whole place is slightly odd. They shot a film called Good Vibrations here; it was about a band called The Undertones and the punk scene in Ireland in the 1970s. There was an entire music scene that existed in Belfast even when The Troubles were at their worst. There would have been car bombs going off, kidnappings, people getting shot - almost on a daily basis - and then this whole subculture of bands playing.



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"THE PUNKERS AND THE
ROCKERS. MY UNCLE
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SAID THESE TWO GROUPS
WOULD ABSOLUTELY
NOT MIX EXCEPT TO
KICK THE SHIT OUT OF
EACH OTHER."
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“Was the music scene divided too, religiously, I mean?”

“It was divided but not in the way you’d think – it wasn’t religious segregation, it was musical - the punkers and the rockers. My uncle was into all that. He said these two groups would absolutely not mix except to kick the shit out of each other. The bizarre thing is that it didn’t matter at all if you were Catholic or Protestant - it mattered what type of music you were into. So there was religious segregation and then musical segregation too.” He pauses again. “It is a funny place Belfast, really. ”

The band’s rehearsal space is the type of place most drummers would give their left arm for. High up on the fifth floor, it looks out over the city with a redbrick, Victorian menace. The studio walls are covered with posters the band have accumulated from various tours and festivals. “You self-funded a lot of these tours, is that right?” I ask, surveying the extent of the band’s travelling. Chris nods and I mention that it must have been financially straining.

“Back in the day we had to exist in debt for so long. We had to borrow left, right and centre - to buy a van, to get some PR done. Because there was no label saying, ‘here’s an advance,’ it was always hand to mouth. Now we’re signed to Sargent House, an independent label, we get a bit of help but we still put up some money.”

“Have you been in the situation where you’ve funded a tour and lost a lot of money?”

“Yes, especially in the beginning. Because we started out on that circuit - driving all day to play a show to ten people without selling any merch - to come out of that and still be a band hardens you. We encounter bands who have been signed to a major within a couple of months of forming and although it’d be great to have loads of money - ” He pauses to smirk - “I feel fortunate we’ve had a lot of shit happen to us.”

“When you’re touring in places where a lot of western people don’t tour, are you ever thinking, ‘what if no-one shows up?’”

“A lot of the time we’ve had no idea if people will show or not. In Russia we





AND SO I WATCH YOU
FROM AFAR (2009)

GANGS (2011)

ALL HAIL BRIGHT
FUTURES (2013)

had no idea if we had any fans there at all. In those situations it goes beyond concern about attendance; we heard loads of things about how dangerous Russia is simply as a place to go. That alone is enough to put a lot of people off. We had an ex-army dude driving us around in a Mercedes Sprinter. I certainly felt conscious of it initially. But when I look back on it now, I'd say our ten Russian shows were some of the best we've done."

"Has that ever happened - the thing you really don't want to happen whilst touring? The nightmare scenario?"

"Nightmare scenarios? We could be here all day. Being a relatively poor band, you take what you can. It's mostly been car problems that have nearly finished us off. One time we were finishing a big European

tour and we were well in profit. It was great, it'd gone really well. Our last show was in Sweden. So it was here where the van finally gave up the ghost. Usually it's no big deal, but Sweden is one of the most expensive countries in the world. We spent all our tour profit getting the van fixed."

2.30pm: Mixed Martial Arts

Back in the car we decide to get some lunch in the city. En route, Chris talks about his musical influences, some of which occasionally blare through the stereo, visibly causing the dictophone significant stress. I consider subtly trying to turn the stereo down when a song by thrash metal pioneers Slayer starts to play.

"I was Slayer's runner once!" exclaims Chris. "They did a few gigs in Belfast. Whenever I picked them up I had Cyprus Hill playing on the stereo. Their tour manager would always sit in the front. He was super intense - never really said a word. If you've ever had someone stare into your eyes and slowly turn off your car stereo, it's very intimidating."

"You don't seem like the type to be easily intimidated."

"Right. It's probably because I do Brazilian Jujitsu."

"That sounds terrifying."

"It's like grappling - it's one of the main parts of Mixed Martial Arts."

PHOTO BY: GRAHAM SMITH





“How did you get into that?”

“I’ve done bits and pieces here and there growing up.”

“Have you ever had to use it in real life?”

“A friend of mine was getting quite heavily set upon by a bouncer at a gig once, so I had to restrain the bouncer.”

My subtle mocking: “Can you do that just by putting pressure on his wrist?”

“Nah. Just took him down with a chokehold. We had to leave pretty sharpish after that.”

I decide to leave the volume as it is.

4.30pm: Leap of Faith

The notion of being a musician as a viable career was never something your school’s careers advisor suggested - at least that’s my experience. As a thirteen year old I remember taking a computer-based test to determine what sort of job I’d be suited to. Candidates were required to answer 40 multiple choice questions such as, “Do you have a personable approach to problem solving?” and “Do you feel comfortable handling cash?” I’ve often wondered since if it was simply a way of flagging up those likely to become involved with organised crime.

Upon completion of the test, the computer revealed how you’ll

◆ ◆ ◆
 “DRIVING ALL DAY
 TO PLAY A SHOW TO
 TEN PEOPLE WITHOUT
 SELLING ANY MERCH -
 TO COME OUT OF THAT
 AND STILL BE A BAND
 HARDENS YOU.”
 ◆ ◆ ◆



be spending the rest of your working life. I'll forever remember looking over the results of my friends: 'Graphic Designer, Architect, Teacher,' and comparing them to my own: 'Sewage Worker.'

There is, of course, nothing wrong with working in subterranean water treatment. It just took me slightly by surprise, mostly as I was sure natural light would be instrumental in ensuring my future professional well-being.

Unfortunately, computers aren't the only ones dishing out ill informed career advice and, in particular, people's notions of what constitutes a career in music are changing. Chris, like the vast majority of people, initially had to work a full time job alongside playing in the band.

"My dad was a GP and whenever I was really young I just assumed I'd follow on after him. But when I got older, I realised you can't just be a doctor – you actually have to be intelligent. I'd just finished university by the time the other lads were thinking of really giving the band a go. The problem was I'd been offered a really good job over in Newcastle where I was living. It became obvious that to carry on as a band I'd have to turn down that job and move back over here."

"Did you feel that was a risk in terms of cutting short another career? Because there's lots of pressure just to get a job and earn money..."

"Yeah I knew it was a risk. I still encounter people today who are like, 'so when the band's finished what have you got to fall back on? Oh you've got a degree? That's good then.' But I never think of it like that. I think as soon as you try to set up an alternative, it's only going to prove distracting. Sometimes you do need to take a leap of faith. If the band did end today, it's true that all I've got is a shitty degree and a CV which outlines my bar work experience. That thought helps me keep giving everything to the



band. People say, 'Oh, you've already been together eight years? So what's next?' We aren't making tons of money but I still feel we've room to grow. A lot."

A few years ago, one of ASIWFYA's founding members, Tony Wright, left the band, albeit on good terms. It's by no means unusual for bands to have people come and go, but it can often rock the boat.

"Yeah it did. We didn't know what would happen – if it would be damaging musically and to our reputation also. But one of the things we realised very quickly was we didn't want it to stop; that we'd keep going at all costs. And that was two and a half years ago. I sometimes think that the band should be bigger than shit that happens on a day-to-day basis - chances are you can get through it. Sometimes you just have to hang on and make the most of it."

I ask Chris about the large tattoo he has on his chest of the band's logo. If the band was to end, would it start to mean something different?

"It's a symbol of commitment. I don't know how Tony feels about his now right enough - we all got that just before the first album came out. It's like I'm married to those boys." He snorts with laughter. "It is a bit like a relationship though, we spend a lot of time together and it's the little things that begin to annoy you, especially on tour. I'll be thinking, 'god, I fucking hate his cough!' Ridiculous things like that. That said, we encounter a lot of fans who have tattoos of things to do with the band – song lyrics is a big one. If there's ever any doubt in what you're doing, when you meet those types of people and see how much they've invested into what you're doing, that makes you think about the bigger picture."

6.30pm: Parking Ticket

En route through the city centre, Chris pulls the car into a parking space right next to a pay and display machine. We get out and Chris locks the car before walking away.

I glance to the pay and display machine, then back to the car, then to Chris already a good ten meters down the pavement. "Chris! Do we not need to pay to park here?"

"Doesn't really matter."

"Won't you get a parking ticket?"

"Might do."

"Would you not rather avoid that possibility?"

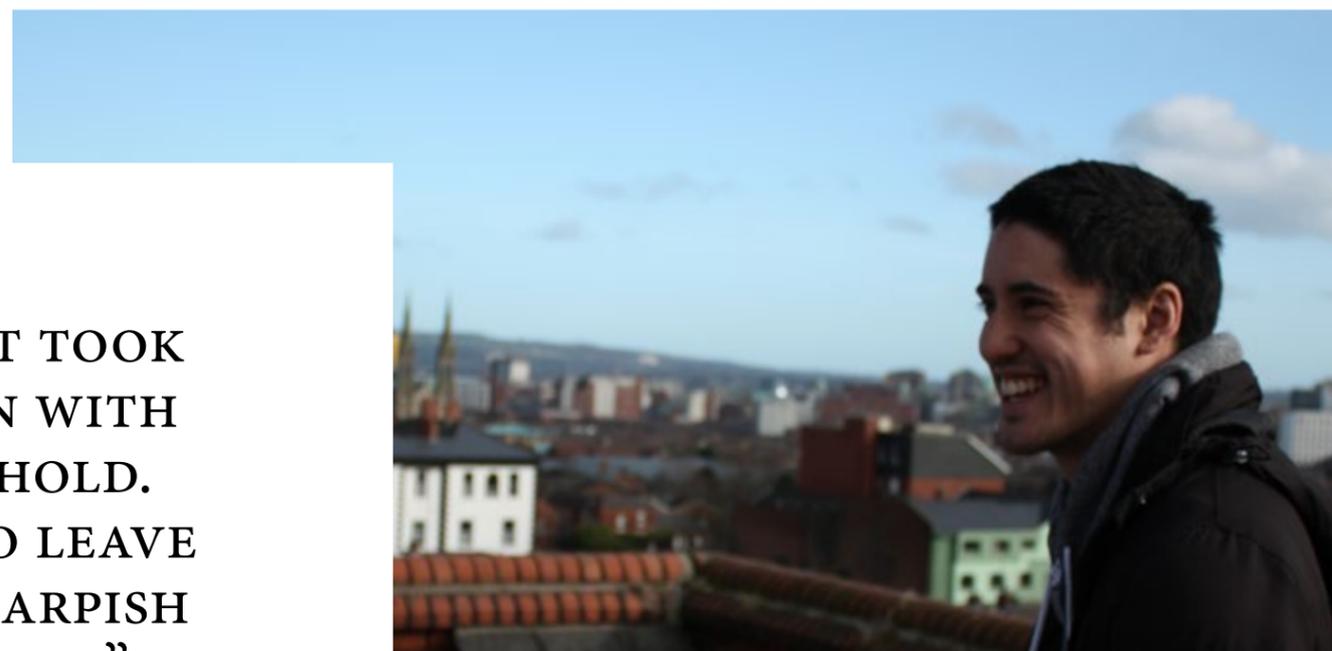
"Doesn't matter. If you get a ticket they'll never chase you up. The council just don't have the resources."

So we don't buy a ticket.

Chris gestures down the street towards a large grey building. "That's the Europa Hotel. It's the most bombed building in Europe apparently."

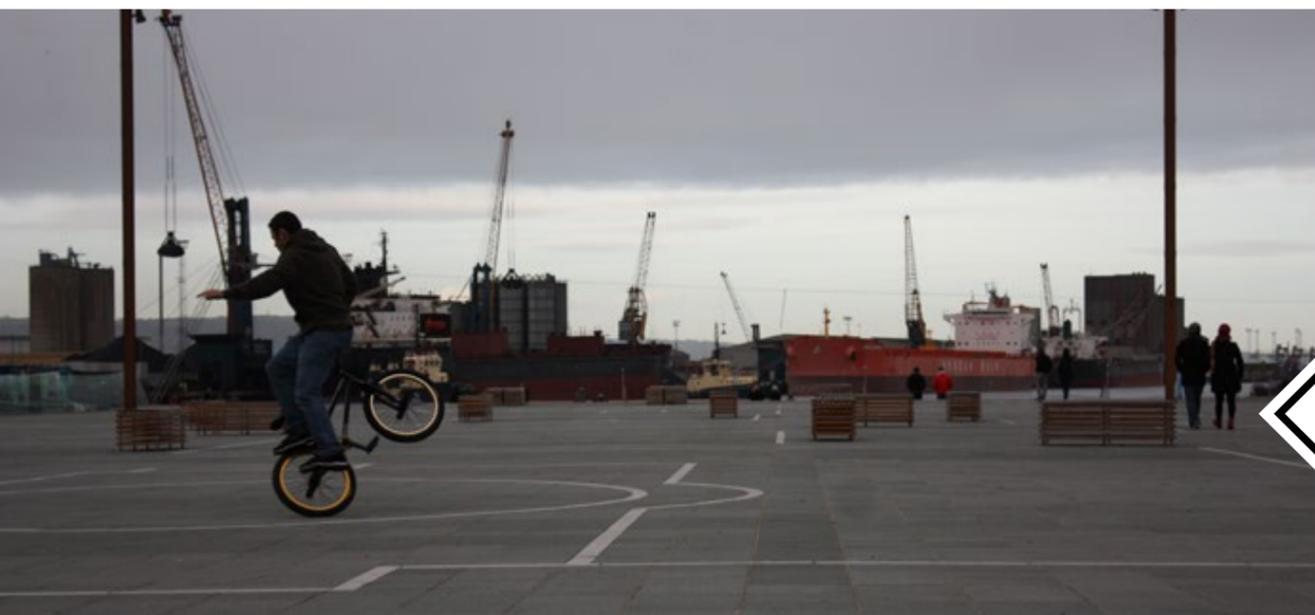
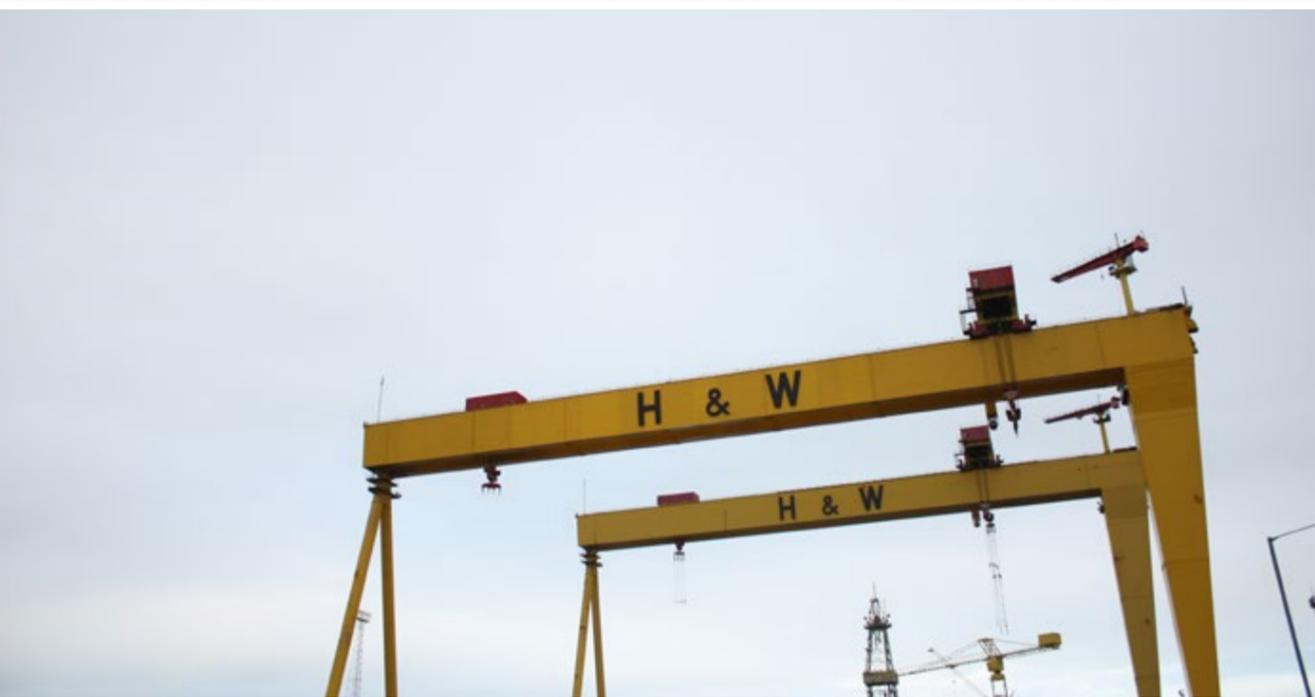
"Why would they repeatedly bomb a hotel?"

"Lots of politicians and journalists would stay there so it was an easy target for the IRA. It's pretty much been rebuilt a few times now."



◆◆◆
"NAH. JUST TOOK HIM DOWN WITH A CHOKEHOLD. WE HAD TO LEAVE PRETTY SHARPISH AFTER THAT."
◆◆◆





After another 200 metres we walk past Belfast City Hall, where the Union Flag flies above the entrance. Chris again plays tour guide. “Two years ago, Belfast City Council voted to limit the days the Union Flag is flown on the building. On the night the result of the vote was announced, it sparked mass riots all around here. It really kicked off. I think a lot of people were quite worried it was going to make things flare up again.”

I begin to feel a bit uneasy at the extent to which this news is completely new to me. In an effort to regain some self-esteem, I attempt to call upon one fact I’m quite confident is accurate:

“Didn’t the Titanic sail from Belfast?”

“No. It sailed from Southampton.”

“Oh.”

“But it was built here. There’s a museum on the waterfront. You want to go?”

Before long we were standing looking at the original dry-dock where the ship was built. It has since been filled with concrete, but a life size mark-out of where the vessel stood remains on the ground, complete with an outline of the different compartments and decks. It gives you a real sense of just

how big it was and how many people a ship that size could accommodate.

Directly across the water are the studios for HBO’s Game of Thrones, the vast majority of which is filmed on location in Northern Ireland.

“We had King Joffrey come down to one of our shows recently,” Chris states, referring to a prominent if not detestable character from the popular TV show. “He’s a friend of a guy who works for our record label. Someone said, ‘Jack’s coming down to the gig.’ Everyone’s like, ‘who’s Jack?’ ‘You know - King Joffrey.’”

“Does that mean you’ve made it when you’ve got celebrities coming to gigs?”

“I’m not really sure we are trying to ‘make it’ to be honest.”

“But you must have a goal with what you want to achieve?”

“I suppose so. I just want as many people to hear our music as possible.”

“That’s a well-weathered answer isn’t it?”

◆◆◆
“IF THE BAND DID END TODAY, ALL I’VE GOT IS A SHITTY DEGREE AND A CV WHICH OUTLINES MY BAR WORK EXPERIENCE. THAT THOUGHT HELPS ME KEEP GIVING EVERYTHING TO THE BAND.”
◆◆◆

Chris pauses. “Yeah, you’re right. It is a cliché. But it’s probably what anyone in a band wants in some shape or form. Why kid yourself?”

“You seem to place a lot of emphasis on being able to do things on your own terms, so would you have any reservations about signing to a major label? Because that’s one way of getting your music to as many people as possible.”

“Being in a band is a career at the end of the day and I like to think I can remain gracious whatever happens. If that situation did arise, of course I’d entertain it. It’d be hypocritical of me to say otherwise. I’m not going to stand here and say that I’m a musician and I’m doing everything out of sheer love. Don’t get me wrong - I love what I do but, yes - it has to work financially.

“There’s been a few times when we’ve done interviews and I’ve felt really ill or tired. When the tour manager comes over and says, ‘ok, the interviewer is here,’ I have felt that I’d give anything not to have to do it. But then I usually have a moment of clarity. This is my job, it’s amazing that this person is taking an interest in what we’re doing. It comes down to this: if you’re not interested, you cannot expect anyone else to be. There is no secret to it. You just have to get out there and play. If you want it to be your job - treat it like one.”

By 10pm I was once again sat on a plane, slightly unsure what to make of the trip. It had been enjoyable but I had to remind myself I wasn’t writing an article on Belfast itself. It also occurred to me we hadn’t spent that much time talking specifically about



◆ ◆ ◆
 “IT COMES DOWN
 TO THIS: IF YOU’RE
 NOT INTERESTED,
 YOU CANNOT EXPECT
 ANYONE ELSE TO BE.”
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drums. But during the process of accidentally emptying a bag of ready-salted peanuts over the person sat next to me, I realised it's very easy to become preoccupied with how you're doing something instead of why you're doing it. I hadn't really gone to Belfast to discuss stuff I'd read on the internet, be it about Chris or the band. I'd gone to learn things that I didn't know before. At any rate, I'm not sure any book about the music industry would consider choking a bouncer an acceptable form of networking, or that logistical issues should be addressed by, as Chris put it, "buying a shite van."

I felt slightly odd talking about Belfast's history because I knew so little about it. That thought alone made me uncomfortable. It made me realise that occasionally, you do need to focus on the bad stuff - it's how you avoid continuously making the same mistakes. This applies on a number of levels. People like to practise what they're already good at - it's human nature. So next time, practise something you know you're not very good at - it's harder to do than you might think. You're guaranteed to learn something, especially where the drum set is concerned. And if you happen to save three pounds on car parking in the process, then it's definitely worth it.

◆ ◆ ◆







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SELECTIVE EXPLANATION

Words and Images by Katherine Paddington

My beloved cymbal bag has stood up well over the years. It came free with the first drum set I ever bought, quite a long time ago. After more gigs than I can recall, this bag has amassed an impressively odd collection of trinkets, which, out of sheer laziness, I have never bothered to remove - until now.

1. Inappropriate sticks. If you can't make them out, they have two naked ladies on. What's worse is my mum gave me these as a present - a bit awkward. I've never actually used them, yet...

2. Pens. You'd never know but one of these doubles up as a torch.

3. Kola Cube. So old it's gone soft.

4. Drum keys. An assortment. You can never have too many as they seem to disappear roughly at the rate at which water evaporates on a hot day.

5. Spare felts. Genuinely handy to have - the amount of times I've encountered cymbal stands with no felts when gigging is amazing.

6. 4mm Allen Key. I lost the one my bass pedal came with so this is the replacement. In fact, I've never actually adjusted my bass pedal, ever.

7. RATM booklet. I used to play along to this CD religiously. I'm amazed it's in such good condition. It was wedged behind some of the pocket stitching.



8. A Yamaha Memory Clamp. Strange as I've never owned a Yamaha kit.

9. Hi Hat Clutch. Another life saver - finding yourself without one is the worst.

10. Metronome. I should use this more often.

11. Koala? I'm not too sure what this little guy is supposed to be but he used to be resident on my bass drum hoop.

12. E45 hand cream (empty). Great for preventing blisters if you play as unschooled as I.

13. Carbosticks. Without doubt the weirdest sticks ever. They're oddly heavy and have a strange balance point. The plus side is that they're indestructible, and likely good for self-defence.

14. Sock. That's pretty disguising really. I play barefoot usually so it's probably been stuffed into the bag in a hurry.

15. Swiss Army Card. This thing is amazing. It contains a knife, scissors, tweezers and a toothpick. I've never yet needed it once.

16. Recorder. I can actually play the recorder quite well but the time for me to do so live on stage has yet to arise.

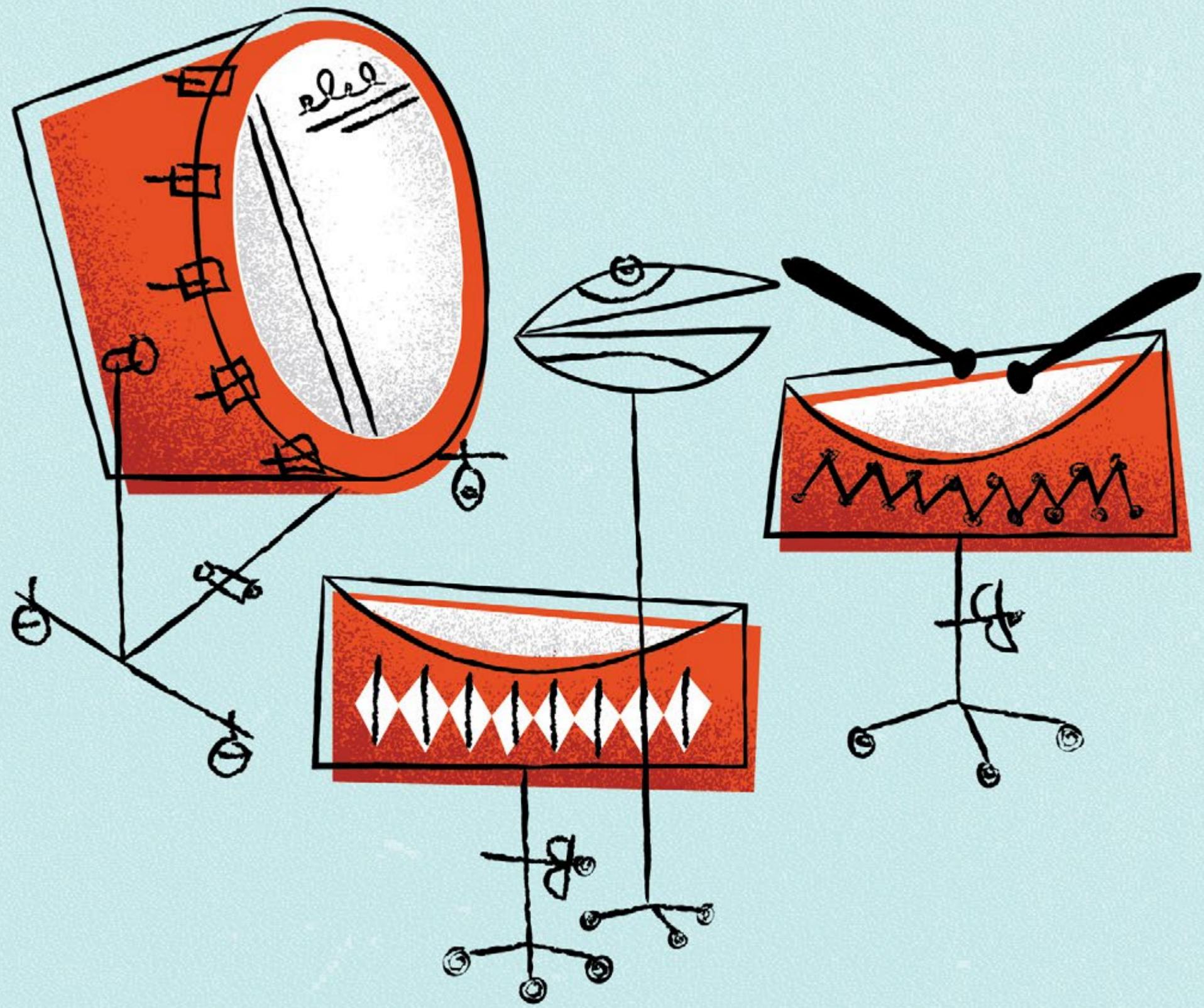
17. Paracetamol. Just in case.

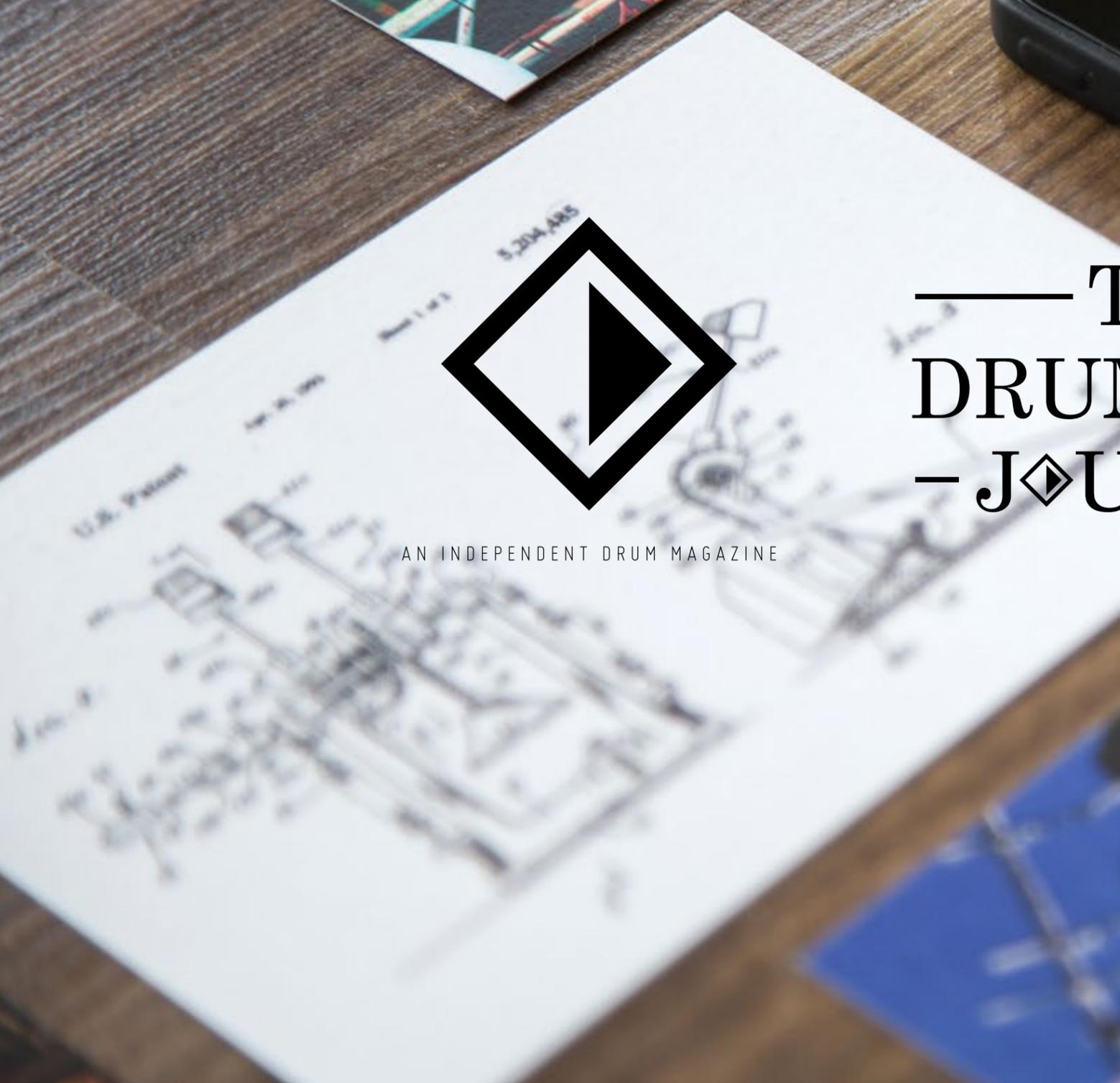
18. Tama Pedal Drum key. Turns out it wasn't lost after all.

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THIS WAS SENT TO US BY ANNA HURLEY. SHE HAS LOADS OF OTHER EXCELLENT PIECES [HERE](#), WHICH ARE WHOLLY WORTH CHECKING OUT.





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A black and white photograph of Nick Mason, the drummer of Pink Floyd, standing in a drum room. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored turtleneck sweater. The background is filled with various drums and cymbals, creating a complex, layered pattern. A small diamond-shaped icon with a right-pointing arrow is located in the upper right corner of the image area.

SOUND INVESTMENTS

PINK FLOYD'S NICK MASON

Words by Tom Hoare

Photos by Bex Wade, unless stated

“Nick doesn't tend to do interviews.” My heart sank as I read the email. Resisting the urge to swear loudly, I rationalised that when you're the drummer of one of the most commercially successful and musically influential bands of all time, you don't really need to do them.

Perhaps I'd been somewhat presumptuous. The book I'd been reading only five minutes previous is entitled *Inside Out: A Personal History of Pink Floyd*. Written by Nick himself, it details the highs and lows of the band's career; from recording some of the most iconic albums in popular music history to the animosity which led to the band's demise.

The book's cover displays the graphic of a pig hovering above Battersea Power Station. This image is a derivative of the artwork for Pink Floyd's 1977 album, *Animals*. To capture the original still, a giant inflatable pig was tethered to one of the power station's chimneys. The pig then broke free from its moorings and drifted into the flight path of planes on approach to Heathrow airport, much to the surprise of the pilots no doubt. It eventually landed in a field in Kent where an upset farmer claimed it had, “scared the cows.”

The email concluded: “Let me get back to you. It may be a while.” Even though pigs have apparently flown previously for Pink Floyd, I felt this likely wouldn't be such an occasion.

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Several months later I'm stood outside a private members club in west London, conscious that my scuffed trainers stand somewhat at odds with the three piece suits that are entering and exiting the building. Acutely aware of looking like a vagrant, I attempt a stealthy shuffle to the elevator to avoid attracting the attentions of those behind the reception desk.

"Can I help you?"

In what was originally an effort to avoid arousing suspicion, I'm now stood frozen in motion about a metre away from the elevator. Making things more awkward, my response is delivered in the form of a question: "I'm here to see Nick Mason?"

"Floor Three."

The elevator doors open, revealing a busy room with large glass windows and lots of sofas. Beyond the business lunches, the chimneys of Battersea Power Station are visible in the distance.

I'm directed to an armchair opposite two men talking about fiscal regulation. Feeling particularly imposturous, I try and obscure myself behind a broad, pink newspaper. It also serves to cover the large penguin on the front of my jumper, which I'm confident doesn't pass as business casual.

Nick arrives with one hand outstretched and a host of papers clutched in the other. Seemingly unfazed by the penguin, he smiles and gestures down the corridor. "We're in Conference Room B, I'll be with you in a minute."

This building is partly owned by Nick. Following Pink Floyd's decision to disband, he was able to indulge other interests in motorsport and aviation. He also has a significant investment portfolio, which includes the famous London musical institution, Foote's Music. I was pleased to hear this. Nick had stepped in and, in part, helped the shop avoid closure after almost a century of trading.

♦♦♦

**"YOU SAID INITIALLY
THAT YOU DIDN'T FEEL
TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT
AS A PLAYER..."**

**YES. I STILL FEEL THAT.
I'M STILL LEARNING TO
LIVE WITH IT."**

♦♦♦

heard the shop was to close because of problems with the bank, I felt it was such a shame to lose a place like that. I called the owners and said I'd consider putting some money in because I've always felt drum shops are lovely places.

In Conference Room B, Nick is sat before a rather imposing stack of papers, glancing fleetingly at his watch. Best begin.

♦♦♦

**The Drummer's Journal:
You got your first kit
from Foote's Music and
now you've become a
shareholder in the shop...**

Nick Mason: Foote's has existed since 1920. When I



LEFT: WINDOW SHOPPING AT FOOTE'S. RIGHT: ANIMALS, 1977

Was it more of a personal investment as opposed to a financial one?

In some ways, yes. I don't see an enormous profit in it, but I think it could be successful. That said, I didn't buy a music shop as a vanity project. I just like drum shops and I like people who go into drum shops (*laughs*).

Seeing Ginger Baker play made quite an impression on you. How would you describe the evolution of drumming in the 1960s?

Prior to 1960, drummers for pop groups were on a riser at the back with someone good looking at the front nodding along to the music. With Ginger, it suddenly became about a band and not just about a pop star

and that was enormously attractive to a lot of people. It challenged the idea that popular music was for teenage girls. For Cream, the reality was that the main audience were all guys in trench coats (*laughs*).

When I look back at the 1960s, it seems like the decade of the superstar drummer - John Bonham, Keith Moon, Ginger Baker and Ringo Starr. Would you agree?

Yes and no. There was a period of superstar drummers before them; Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa and Louis Bellson - the big band swing drummers - they did stick tricks and had double bass drums too.

And this projected on what you wanted to be as a musician?

Yes. Absolutely. I wanted to be part of it, not behind it.

You said initially that you didn't feel technically proficient as a player...

Yes. I still feel that. I'm still learning to live with it.

Did that make you self-conscious as a musician?

It still does. It's hard to know now but if I'd had lessons there's an argument to say that I wouldn't have played the way I did. The upside is I'm grateful to have developed my own style.

You spent time travelling around the USA in the 1960s. You met a newly-wed couple on a Greyhound bus, where the husband stated he was leaving the week after to serve in Vietnam. For me, the 1960s seems like a really polarised decade - there's a lot of romanticism about it, when in actual fact it wasn't all peace and love...

Yeah, absolutely. In America it was a lot grittier because they were fighting a war. I think it was very short lived, the whole Summer of Love because it became commercial almost instantly. The period of free concerts and all the rest of it was very brief before it became, "hang on, this band could sell a million albums."

Do you feel that music does have revolutionary potential?

I think it's overrated but there is an element there. Its ability to change perceptions is limited - it actually becomes quite partisan. People often identify themselves by the music they like. In the 1960s, if people were into certain bands it was usually a good indication as to what their politics were, where they were educated and even their social class. But sometimes, with someone like Bob Dylan, there are people who can send messages of considerable importance.

Would you consider yourself someone like that?

No.

With Pink Floyd there was no sugar-coating the commercial aspirations of the band...

Right. What was blindingly obvious pretty early on was that if you were successful you could have more studio time, bigger shows, better equipment and better sound.

With some of your early shows, the press made a big deal out of the LSD association and freak-out aspects. Did you actually feel subversive?

No. We were never that mad about being called psychedelic, that was a very brief period. Saying that, music is whatever you believe it to be and if people wanted to take LSD and trip to our music so be it, but it wasn't written in that way.

RIGHT: LIVE AT
POMPEII, 1972

BELOW: FROM
UMMAGUMMA'S CD
BOOKLET, 1969

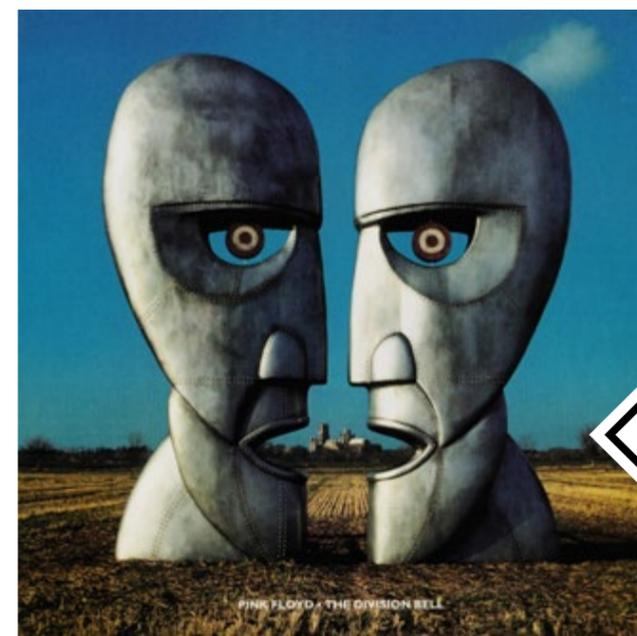
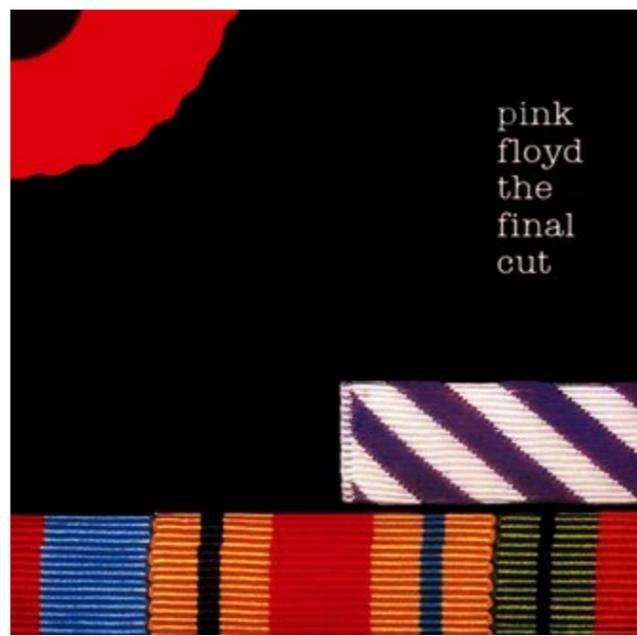
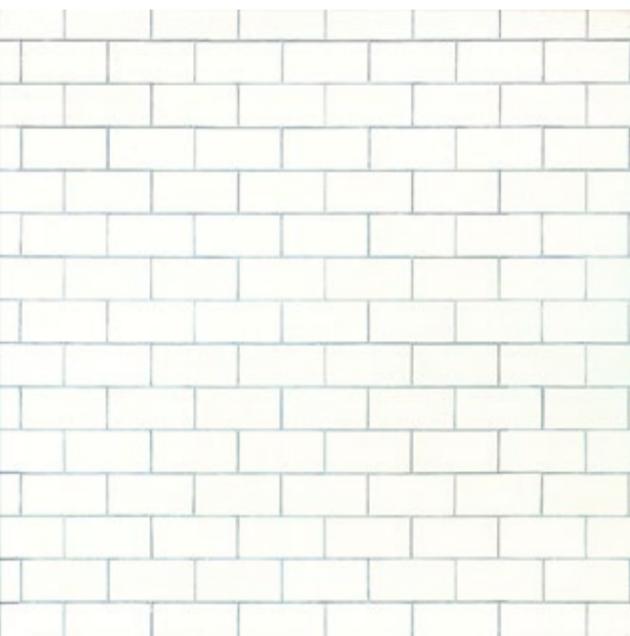
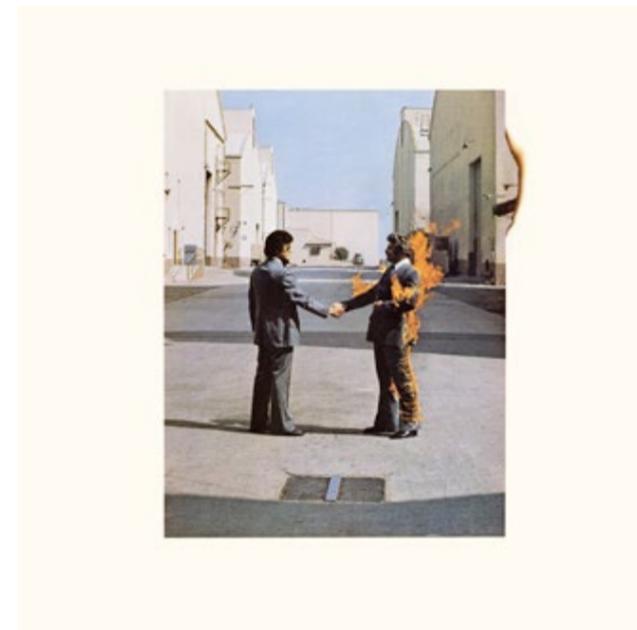
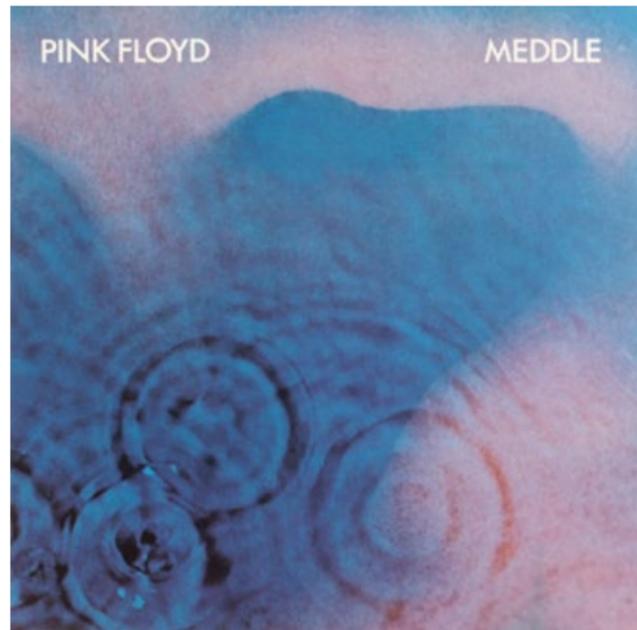


♦ ♦ ♦

“A QUESTION I GET ASKED ALL THE TIME IS ‘WHY IS DARK SIDE SO SUCCESSFUL?’ APART FROM THE MARVELLOUS ROTOTOMS WHICH WAS OBVIOUSLY THE MAIN SELLING POINT, THE TRUTH IS CAPITOL RECORDS DECIDED TO MAKE THIS RECORD WORK.”

♦ ♦ ♦





- THE PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN (1967)
- A SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS (1968)
- MORE (1969)
- UMMAGUMMA (1969)
- ATOM HEART MOTHER (1970)
- MEDDLE (1971)
- OBSCURED BY CLOUDS (1972)
- THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON (1973)
- WISH YOU WERE HERE (1975)
- ANIMALS (1977)
- THE WALL (1979)
- THE FINAL CUT (1983)
- A MOMENTARY LAPSE OF REASON (1987)
- THE DIVISION BELL (1994)

You described the transition from architecture student to professional musician as, “being propelled into a position of fantasy.” Did you feel yourself changing as a person throughout that process?

I'd say it's actually quite rare for people to feel they change as a person. People often ask what it was like and I always say it was just normal - we just got on with what we were doing. It wasn't like we suddenly had gold plated taps. The transition from being a student to being in the back of van wasn't that shocking.

The Dark Side of the Moon is one of the most famous albums in the world...

I couldn't possibly comment (*laughs*).

If you were to present someone with an album which you felt encapsulated what you wanted to achieve as a musician, what would you choose?

I'd choose Dark Side. It's the most complete album. There're lots of others I like, but Dark Side has a lovely mix of everyone contributing to it. I think The Wall was a hell of a piece of work but it's probably too long. What might have been nice to have Dark Side a little longer and The Wall a little shorter. It's got some great songs, and Roger's lyrics are extraordinary. The fact he was only 23 still amazes me.

A question I get asked all the time is, “why is Dark Side so successful?” Apart from the marvellous Rototoms which was obviously the main selling point (*laughs*), the truth is Capitol Records decided to make this record work - we had total support from the label.

What did you get from your solo material that you couldn't achieve with Pink Floyd?

Not operating as a group and not having to worry about group acceptance with some quite powerful people is a great release. I think drummers by



PHOTO BY LEON NEAL

♦ ♦ ♦

“CERTAINLY THE
FIRST RULE OF
DRUMMING IS
THAT IF YOU MAKE
A MISTAKE, TURN
ROUND AND LOOK
ANGRILY AT THE
BASS PLAYER.”

♦ ♦ ♦



THE FILLMORE,
SAN FRANCISCO,
1967



♦♦♦

“THERE’S THE OLD
JOKE THAT A BAND IS A
RHYTHM SECTION AND
A COUPLE OF NOVELTY
ACTS, BUT YOU CAN’T
TOUR SOLELY AS A
DRUMMER.”

♦♦♦



nature operate in bands, not as solo artists. There's the old joke that a band is a rhythm section and a couple of novelty acts, but you can't go on tour solely as a drummer. I think I prefer doing production to solo records really. It was great to have the opportunity but if someone asked if I wanted to do another solo album I'd say, "not really."

Do you want to do another solo album?

Not really.

When things were becoming more challenging interpersonally in the band, did that ever affect how you saw the drum set as an instrument? Did you ever resent having to play?

Do you mean, did I ever lose the enthusiasm? Well, the answer to that is no. There were odd moments where I became conscious that things might implode. I think it divides up into people who project resentment onto whatever they might be doing, or people who think it's all ok when they're playing. The latter was the case for me, even when we were doing The Wall shows and things were getting difficult. Rick (Wright) had been taken out of the band but brought back in for the shows and, yes, relations were very strained. We all had separate portacabins for the shows at Earls Court. But being on stage was always great. And that's where the interaction was.

To reunite for Live 8 in 2005 - what did that mean to you personally?

I really wanted to establish that we are grown up enough to do things for one another. Also, it was in memory of all the good things that happened. We do have a reputation as being the band that always fought, but I think the reality is that a lot of bands do. Most of the time we spent together was terrific and recognition of that is important. For me personally, it was also important from the point of view of my children - seeing that adults can get together, set aside their differences and do the right thing for the right reason.

♦♦♦

“WE DO HAVE A
REPUTATION OF BEING
THE BAND THAT
ALWAYS FOUGHT, BUT
IT THINK THE REALITY
IS THAT A LOT OF
BANDS DO.”

♦♦♦

DARK SIDE OF THE
MOON, 1973





How would you describe it as an experience? Playing together again on stage as Pink Floyd after 25 years?

It's very hard to describe. It was such fun but it was also much more than that. It gave an enormous amount of pleasure, more really, to people who'd been fans for years - the people who have, essentially, paid for all our lifestyles. I know I've frittered mine away on old cars, maybe I should have invested it wisely (*laughs*).

♦♦♦

“IT WAS BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS EARLY ON WAS THAT IF YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL YOU COULD HAVE MORE STUDIO TIME, BIGGER SHOWS, BETTER EQUIPMENT AND BETTER SOUND.”

♦♦♦

You said what you liked about music was the shared experience of being in a band. Do you feel that translates to motorsport? Motorsport strikes me as being a bit lonely...

The team aspect of motorsport is vaguely similar, but the big thing is that when you are in a car you are totally on your own. The great thing in a band is that when things go wrong you can share it with three or four other people. Certainly the first rule of drumming is that if you make a mistake, turn round and look angrily at the bass player (*laughs*).

In terms of what you've achieved with Pink Floyd and what you've achieved in other areas, such as racing Le Mans or writing the book, are they comparable in terms of what they mean as achievements? Do some mean more than others?

Not really because they're very different. I'd say they compliment each other, but the motorsport thing is more personal. With the band, it's not just me, I'm part of a group, so however successful that is it's not my personal success, it's a collaborative success. The book actually is a better example - it's mine. When I take credit for it, it's my book. If someone wants to tell me how utterly wonderful it is, I'm happy to sit there and simper. If someone wants to tell me how great the band is, it's almost more irritating. Don't get me wrong, it's great people like it and I'd far rather people told me that they're



fans of Pink Floyd instead of Deep Purple, but achievements related to the band I almost see as once removed.

With the book, how was the writing process?

I really enjoyed it. The only difficult thing was getting started because of the endless deliberation on whether the book should be done by the band or by an individual. And trying to reach an agreement on any story – it became obvious it wasn't going to happen. So I thought, well, I'm going to do my own version. You guys can all write your own books.

Was it a self-reflective process as much as reflecting on others?

Yes, very much so. There were bits that were quite painful, dealing with Rick leaving, Roger leaving and all the rest of it. But it's interesting how many things get forgotten that you have to be reminded of. Also, there were people who were very important to the stories who have died or gone missing. That made me feel it was important to get the thing written.

Now you have an honorary doctorate from the University of Westminster, do people address you as Dr Nick Mason?

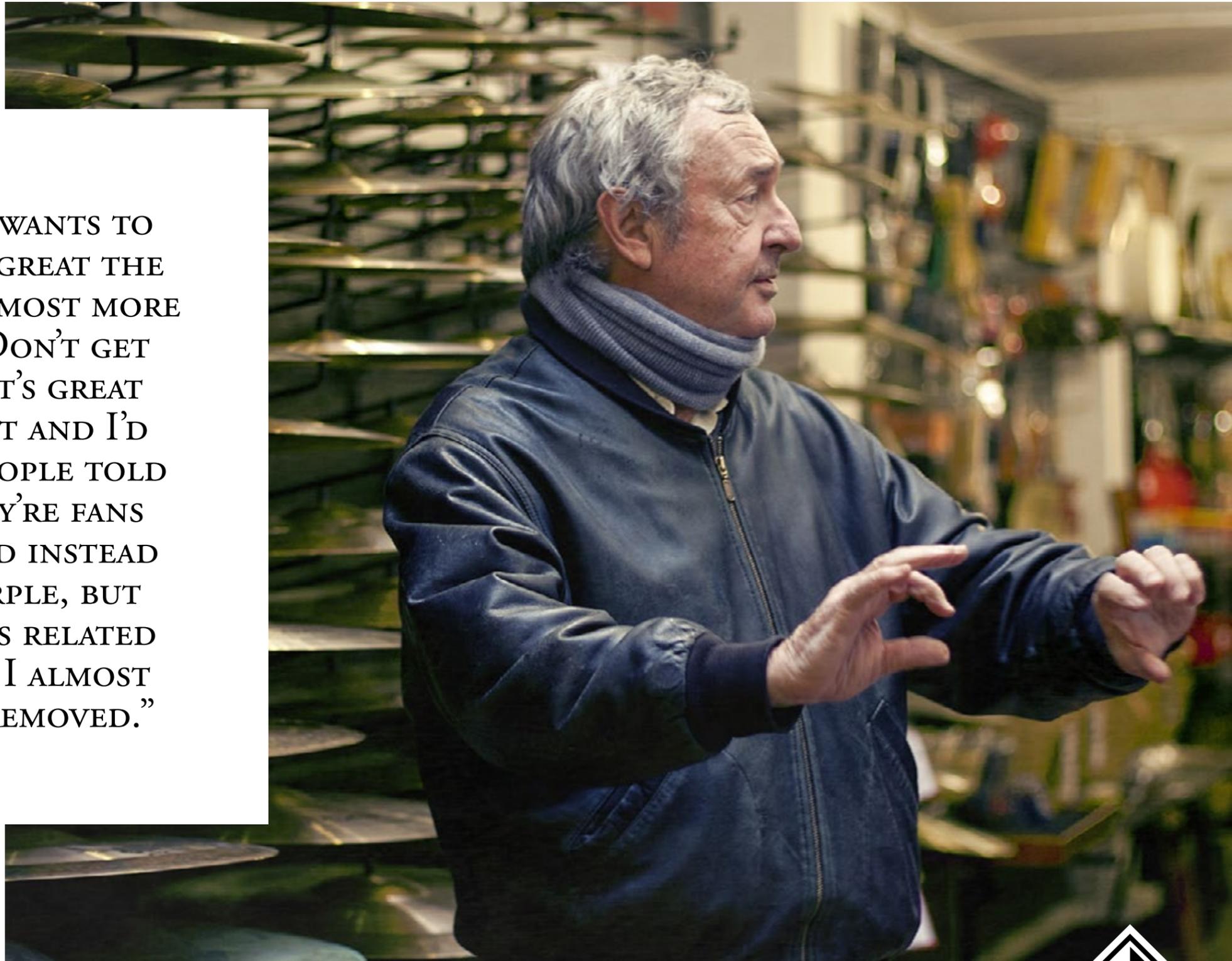
No, unfortunately not (*laughs*). Initially, when it was suggested, I loved the idea but thought the others would sneer at me. Then I found out that David Gilmour had already accepted one from somewhere, so I thought, "stuff that I want one too!"

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“IF SOMEONE WANTS TO TELL ME HOW GREAT THE BAND IS, IT'S ALMOST MORE IRRITATING. DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT'S GREAT PEOPLE LIKE IT AND I'D FAR RATHER PEOPLE TOLD ME THAT THEY'RE FANS OF PINK FLOYD INSTEAD OF DEEP PURPLE, BUT ACHIEVEMENTS RELATED TO THE BAND I ALMOST SEE AS ONCE REMOVED.”

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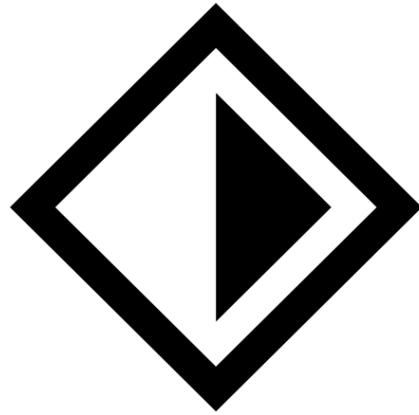


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BEYOND REPAIR

LESSONS FROM OUTDOOR ORCHESTRATION

*Words by Tom Hoare
Photography by Anton Rodriguez*



At The Water's Edge

Getting to the lake for 6.30am was important. At this time, just before sunrise, the lake has a layer of fog partially obscuring its surface. When dawn breaks, the effect is like a poor man's Northern Lights except it's not in the sky. And not green. But it's still impressive.

We arrived when it was still dark and freezing cold. Our hesitations are heightened because the walk to the lakeshore isn't exactly a light stroll; it's about half a mile. Carrying an oak bass drum, let alone an entire kit, is little different from carrying a chest of draws. Half a mile doesn't sound very far but, in reality, it is - especially when you can't see where you're going.

At the lake, there's no fog. None. Not even a whisper. We set the kit up by the edge of the water and wait.

The bass drum spurs sink satisfyingly into the gravelly beach. The pebbles work the lacquer on the hoop of the kick and I wish I'd brought a mat. I wish more that I'd brought something to sit on and not accidentally left the stool at home.

Instead of the orangey glow we'd expected, the landscape began turning from black to progressively lighter shades of blue.

The noise of the kit was a shock so early in the morning and it sounded surprisingly deadpan. No echo, and nothing to cause any reverberation.

When everything began to turn grey we left.

The Boat House

We were keen to take some photographs on a small jetty by the lake. Unfortunately, most of these are privately owned and the ones that aren't are inaccessible out of hours.





We skirt the road round the lake looking for a suitable candidate, eventually spotting one next to a guesthouse on the lakeshore. The question here was whether to do the right thing: knock at the house and ask permission to use the pier, or sneakily unload the car and attempt to pass unnoticed. We soon realise that once we begin to play, a stealthy approach would be made redundant and we'd be subject to the wrath of holidaymakers awoken early.

We knock at the door and a man answers, wearing only some scandalously tight underwear. He looks very, very tired, but seems happy to outline how he'd only gone to bed two hours previous having enjoyed an excellent birthday celebration. We ask to use the pier, but intentionally forget mention we'll be using it as a place to set up and play drums. The house looks double glazed anyway.

The pier's wooden deck is shockingly slippery and slanted in a way which ensures that any loss of balance will be catastrophic. Whilst the water isn't dangerously deep – at least by the pier itself – sliding into the lake along with the entire drum set isn't too appealing. Matters are complicated further because the pier is actually quite narrow. Fitting everything on means hanging the bass drum over the edge so you can sit down confident you're not heading arse-first straight into the water.

The sound shoots out across the open water. Even stood over 200 metres away along the shoreline it's surprising how loud it is. I imagine the sound bouncing off the windows of the guesthouse house and shaking the revellers inside awake.

♦ ♦ ♦
 “WE KNOCK AT THE
 DOOR AND A MAN
 ANSWERS, WEARING
 ONLY SOME
 SCANDALOUSLY
 TIGHT UNDERWEAR”
 ♦ ♦ ♦







The way sound seems to travel endlessly over open water is to do with how the water affects the temperature of the air. At the water's surface, the air is cooler and denser, so the sound waves here travel more slowly. Higher up, the sound is able to travel faster where the air is warmer. This discrepancy between cold and warm causes the sound waves to change direction. Instead of heading out in concentric arcs, some head directly out across the water and eventually back toward the water surface itself.

Y-fronts is stood at the window. Time to go.

The Cutting in the Head of the Valley

At the end of the lake is a small village and in the summer it's usually heaving with people. Today, in mid-winter, it's deserted and all the cafes are closed.

The only place that shows any sign of life is a small terraced house with an "open" sign hanging on the door. Exactly what type of business this establishment is open for isn't immediately obvious, so we go inside to find an elderly man sitting in an armchair with a cup of tea. There are a couple of small wooden tables with chairs and a gas fire heating the room.

"Breakfast?" he asks, looking over his paper, before disappearing, presumably, into a kitchen. We look around for some menus but there aren't any.

He returns after about 20 minutes gleefully carrying plates laden with sausages, bacon, mushrooms and tomatoes, depositing them on the table along with a towering stack of toast. He asks us what we have planned for the day and we chat for a while about hauling a drum set up hills before saying our goodbyes.





We follow the road up the pass at the end of the valley. It's steep and the car struggles. Just before the summit we pull into a lay-by and haul the drums on foot further up the hillside and away from the road.

Where the ground levels, we set everything up. To the left and right are large rocky crags and the sound of the snare ricochets off them creating an impressive echo that seems to progress further and further down the valley.

Before long we notice the minibus pulled over on the roadside along with a line of people all with cameras pointing up at us.

As we pass them on the way down a man asks, "do you do this everyday?" Perhaps he thought we were triggering avalanches.

The Cave

The path leading down to the cave is steep. It inspires visions of an expensive drum set reduced to little more than kindling.

The cave sits beneath a huge wall of rock which separates two chasms. Long since abandoned, one side is little more than a huge water-filled shaft, sank some 50 metres deep. It's an imposing sight. The water looks jet black and perilously cold. If you fell in and survived the fall, physically trying to get out would be almost impossible. It'd be like trying to pull yourself out of a well the size of a swimming pool - a scenario, no doubt, fit to test even Lassie's decision-making abilities to the extreme.

On the other side of the dividing face is the second void. This one is just as perilous; it's where the slate excavated

from the workings was deposited before being hauled to the surface. Connecting the two quarries, the cave exists because it's where much of the machinery to conduct such an operation was housed.

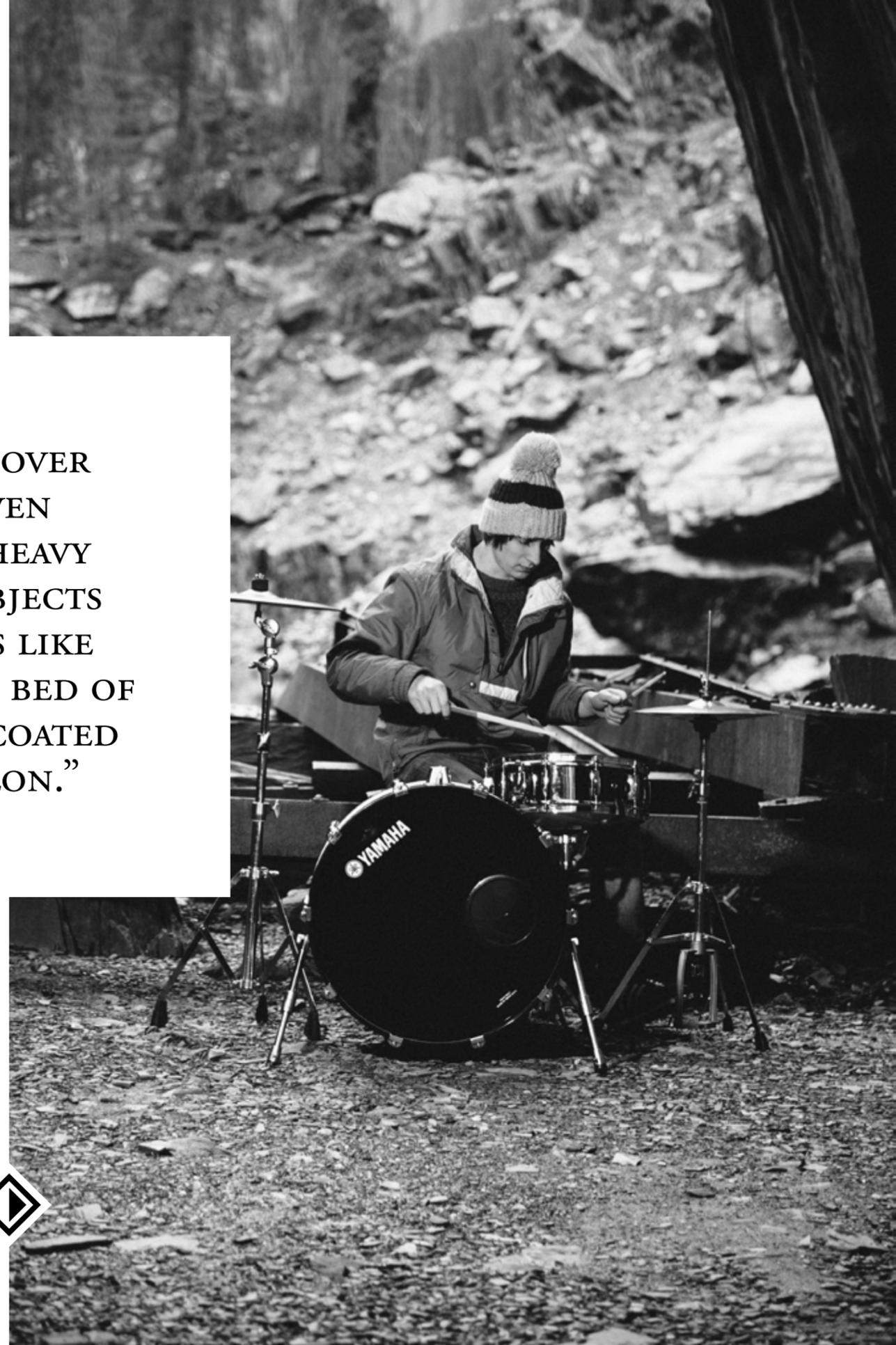
We tentatively make our way down into the dry basin, following the path that is cut into the only part that isn't completely vertical. Walking over slate, even without heavy wooden objects in hand, is like traversing a bed of golf balls coated with Teflon.

Inside the cave are the remains of a rusting crane which extends out over the water. The crane has snapped and the other half presumably lies several fathoms below at the bottom of the waterlogged excavations, along with god knows what else.

The sound in here is shockingly loud but muddy thanks to the effects of reverb and echo. Although both are concerned with how we perceive sound waves, they are not terms to be used interchangeably.

Reverb is when a reflected sound reaches your ears within thirty milliseconds of the original sound occurring. If you sing in the shower, for example, the sound reflects off the walls and comes back to you almost instantaneously. You hear the original sound combined with the sound as it bounces back. This is what gives you the sense of a prolonged single sound. Reverb occurs in pretty much

♦♦♦
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♦♦♦



every space, but the characteristics of your surroundings will determine to what extent you notice it.

Echo, however, occurs when a sound reaches your ears after 30 milliseconds. Now, the time delay is significant enough to register a repetition of the initial sound, instead of a prolonged single event.

In the cave, perceiving the immediate reverb from the walls and the prolonged echo from the quarries sounds like we are throwing the drums around instead of playing them. It is a novel, if largely unpleasant sensation.

Still, it's far more preferable to the sensation of hauling the drums back out of the void. The only small victory was that, in the process of disassembling the kit, I realise we'd forgotten to retract the spurs that stop the hi-hat pedal sliding around on uncarpeted surfaces. Expecting the worst, it actually turned out they'd gouged some impressive channels into the rock on which it had been sat. Nice.

The Castle

The drive back from the quarries is long. Now roughly 3pm, the novelty of our undertaking has all but worn off. As the sun begins to break through the clouds, we make another effort to pull over and set up the kit on a hill overlooking the valley. I'm glad we did.

Although it's starting to get dark, we have one last stop in mind - a privately owned gothic castle. Once a grand stately home, it had fallen into chronic disrepair after World War II. When the owner died, his grandson inherited the estate along with the huge debts it accrued during the great depression. In his own words, the grandson saw the castle as, "a place that exemplified gross imperial decadence during a period of abject poverty." The only reason it still stands is because no one wanted to front the bill to have it completely demolished. Instead, its roof was removed and it was left to fester. What was once one of the most famous homes in the country, ultimately became a shell to shelter farm animals. More recently, a fund has been established to restore parts of the structure and open it to the public.





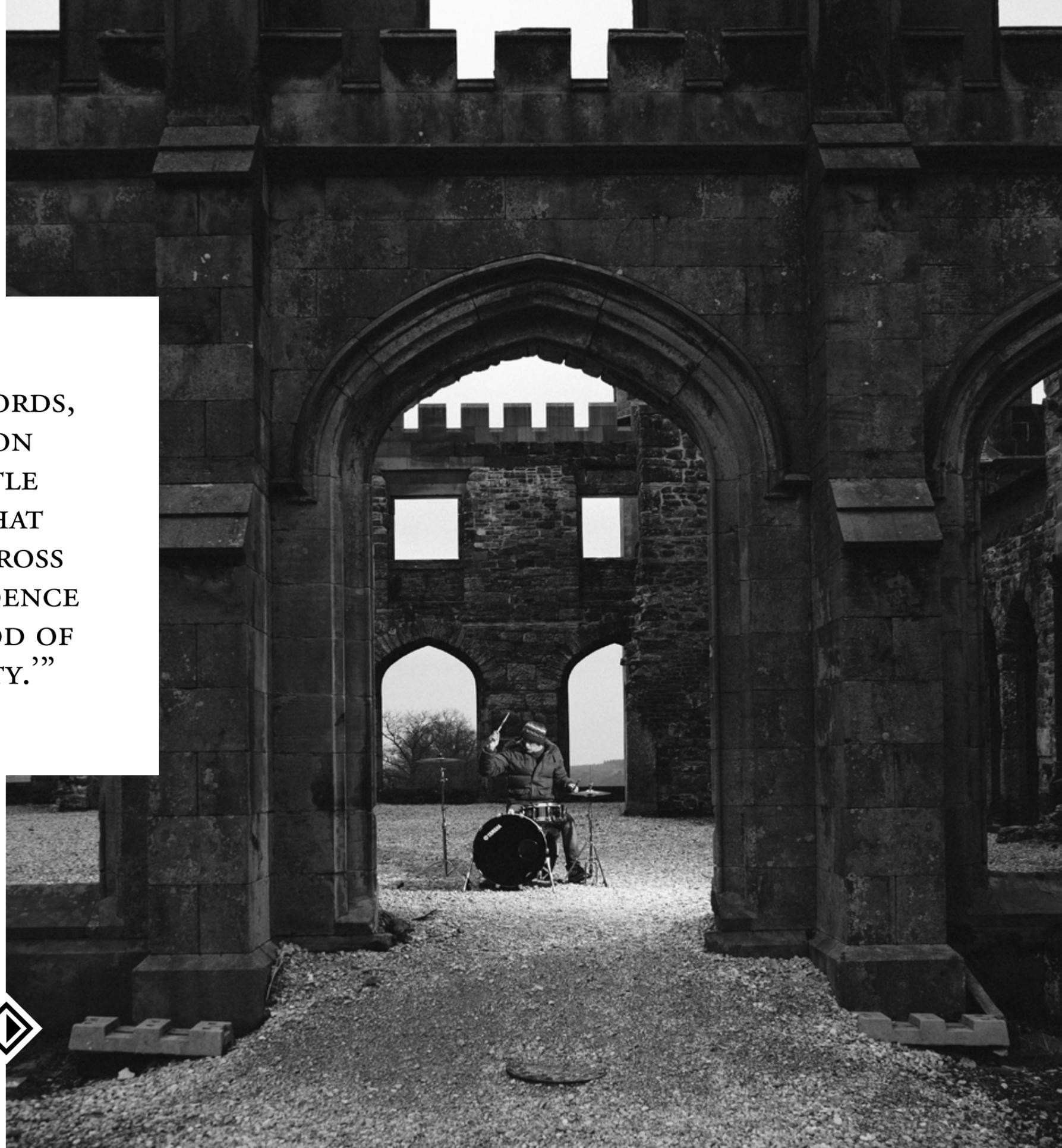
The workmen eye us suspiciously as we unload the car. We'd been granted permission to shoot in one room only and we were to keep off the grass. The estate itself is sprawling but I doubt we were heard more than ten metres away over the sound of the JCBs tearing up the courtyard. I don't envy such a monumental undertaking. When we left we put what must seem a laughably insignificant amount in the donation box.

We sat in the pub later that evening still a bit unsure why we had decided to visit these places. The truth was there wasn't a single overriding reason. We'd just gone out and done it. It wasn't exactly life changing. But it wasn't boring either. The majority of the time, when we met other people - Y fronts, the elderly man who made us breakfast, the tourists, and now the workmen - they all had the same bewildered expression. I think that alone was worth it.

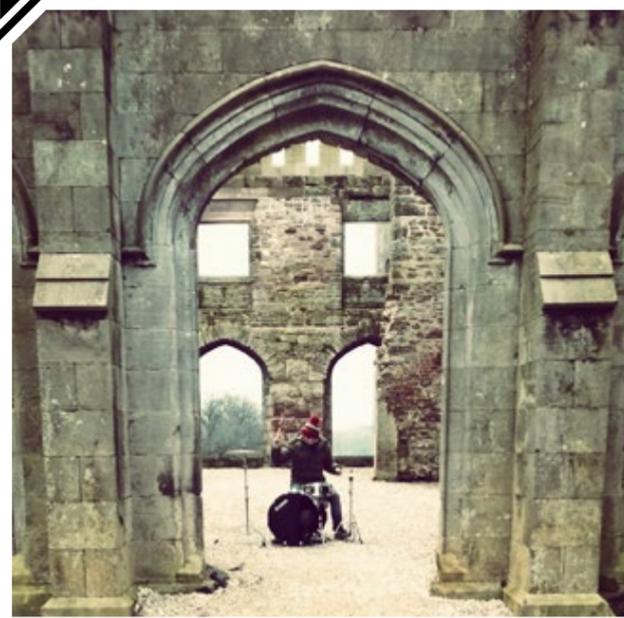
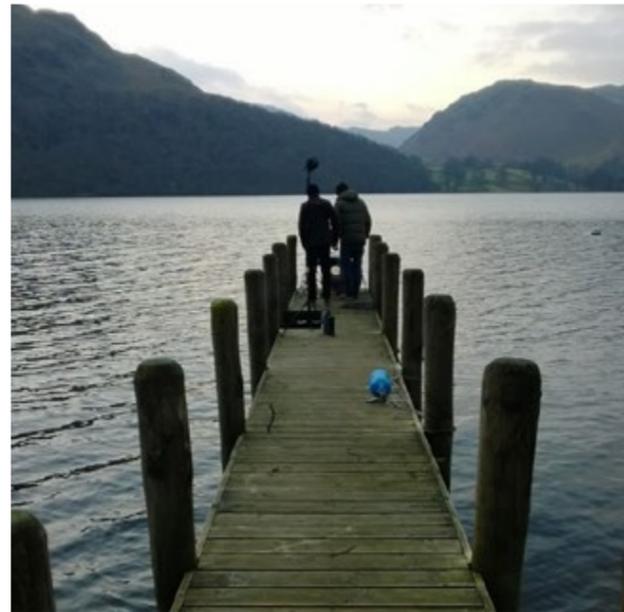
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“IN HIS OWN WORDS,
THE GRANDSON
SAW THE CASTLE
AS ‘A PLACE THAT
EXEMPLIFIED GROSS
IMPERIAL DECADENCE
DURING A PERIOD OF
ABJECT POVERTY.’”
◆◆◆

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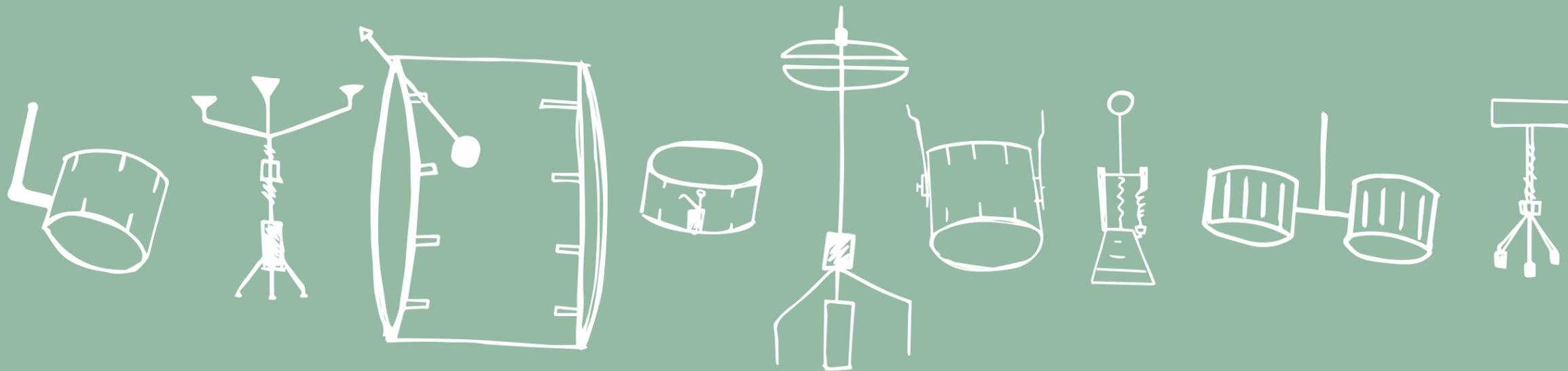
COGNITIVE MOMENTUM

♦♦♦

Words and Illustrations by Ben Martin

“NOT ALL THOSE WHO WANDER ARE LOST” - *TOLKIEN*

We might practise drumming for any number of reasons, but are we aware of every aspect of our learning and the neurological links that we are building? Like most activities, playing the drums creates neural or mental associations which we have very little awareness of. These links and associations take many more forms than you may think.



Is it possible to use these associations to develop an enhanced awareness of our subconscious; one that improves the quality of our practice, stamina, and musicality? This is not a hypothetical concept but something we have all experienced to some extent before.

Our subconscious minds can be consciously utilised in any number of ways. Psychologists and hypnotherapists have known this for years. Through perseverance, musicians can develop an awareness of the unconscious mind's power to enhance our musicality and unique learning style, bettering our output in the process.

Could further insight into this process put us on the path to becoming more efficient, developing in any given direction at a faster rate? Perhaps by analysing our subconscious further we can become more aware of what we need to learn and how, thus enhancing our ability to address issues and accelerate the processes as applied to drumming.

Our minds have a handy mechanism for dealing with unnecessary and irrelevant information. We block huge amounts out through an information processing system, akin to our email accounts filtering spam on our behalf. For example, think of a familiar route you take on a regular basis. How often have you arrived at your destination without fully comprehending your route? Our mind has the capacity to switch to 'automatic pilot' mode without any conscious effort on our part. Rather than view this smart human quirk as an automatic process with little happening cognitively, we could see it as a form of focused concentration; an opportunity allowing us mental space to contemplate the possibilities open to us.

This mechanism is very similar to the process involved in learning a new pattern. You start by listening, reading, thinking about or improvising a new pattern. You then begin to figure out the coordination involved by building

on your pre-learned physical and cognitive associations. After that, you play the rhythm over and over, working on specific parts and tweaking it until it becomes 'natural' (or fully absorbed by the unconscious). Once a pattern is appropriately absorbed we can focus on it in a much more informal way, with the opportunity to bring in new ideas or alter aspects of the groove.

Further to the above, we know that at some point, purposeful conscious attention becomes automated with the help of the unconscious. This is something that can put many of us in a position where we have to work hard to get out of certain automatic musical

responses. With practice and over time, neural pathways are created that can effectively speed up the short delay between cognitive direction and muscular response (something we might call 'muscle memory'); I will talk more about this concept in issue seven.

When playing the drums the following subconscious processes are integral to our performance:

1: Our genetically programmed ability for language assimilation and retention, including the ability to use and understand frenetic patterns without being taught them.

At an early age, children are able to make their own complex sentences without having been taught the associations involved. This is evidence of an in-built pattern recognition system which predisposes us to complex language. This includes, but is not limited to, music.

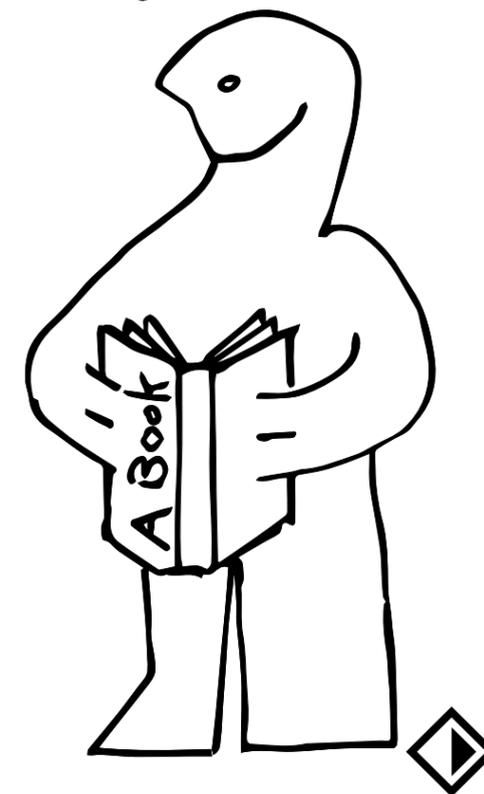
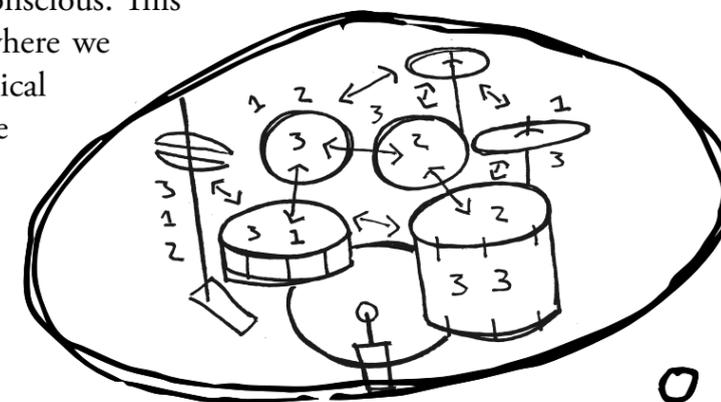
As an example, imagine a pattern on the drums that you can play off by heart. You could start at any point within its structure and still know what it is

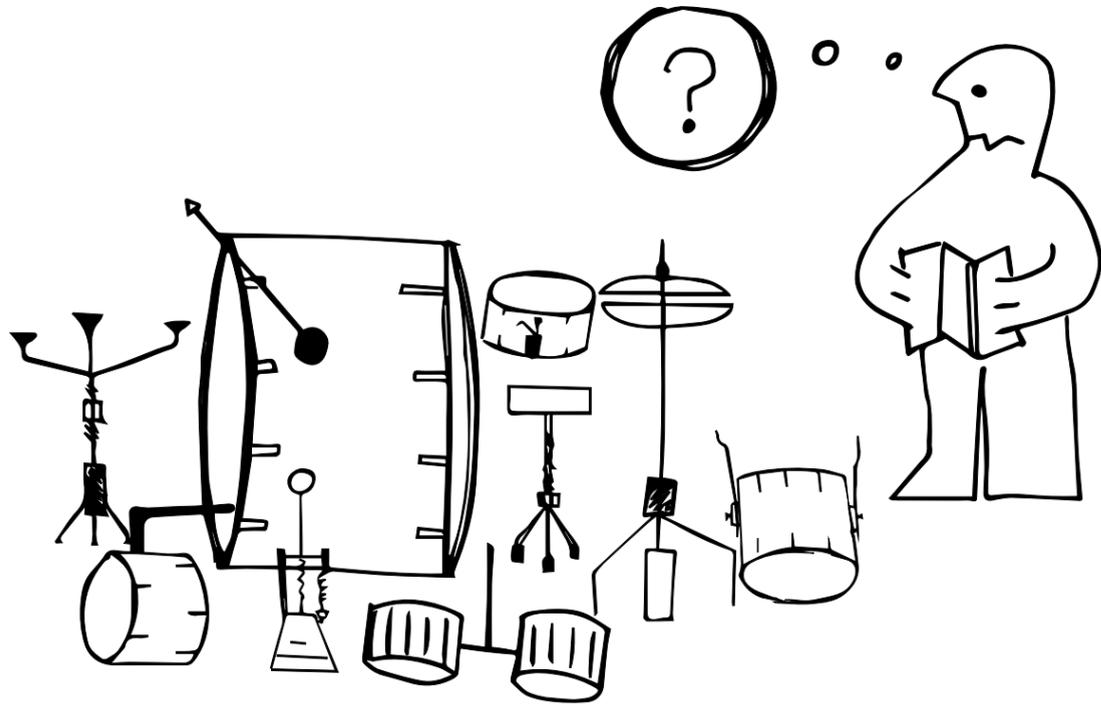
UNDERSTANDING EXACTLY
WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO
ACCOMPLISH IS IMPORTANT TO
LEARN EFFECTIVELY.

♦ ♦ ♦

“INSTEAD OF BEING CAREFUL TO GET THE PATTERN RIGHT, ONCE YOU HAVE THE GENERAL GIST, TRY MAKING DELIBERATE MISTAKES.”

♦ ♦ ♦





LEARNING ISN'T ABOUT GETTING
SOMETHING RIGHT FIRST TIME.

that came before or after. You could, equally, play this pattern in a completely different way, by changing the dynamics or reversing some of the coordination to play it open handed. The point is that you know it so well that you still understand its meaning no matter how you change its structure. It is the same with language. The sentence, "I love The Drummer's Journal" could be said in many different ways and still mean the same thing. You can change the inference but you are still left with a very similar meaning. Even while I am writing this I am constantly adapting my sentence structure to get the message I want to achieve correct. It is the same for drumming.

2: A mechanism that allows us to transfer learned tasks from short-term memory into long-term memory.

This is an interesting one. Imagine you had ten identical packs of flat-packed furniture. You have to put them all together. The first one takes ages because putting together flat-packed furniture is a pain in the ass. You either follow the instructions as close as you can or decide you know best and just go for it.

This can depend on the type of person you are and how confident you feel in

your ability. At some point you make a mistake and have to go back a few steps, undoing bolts and screws, but eventually you get there.

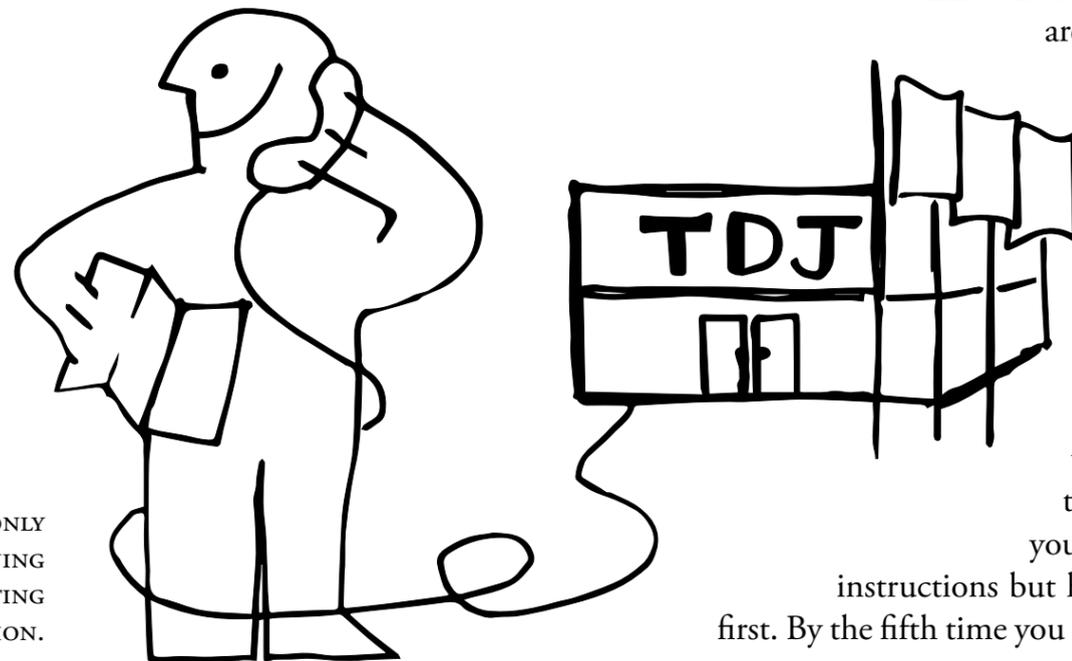
The finished result is good but it's not perfect. The next two packs you work through methodically, conscious not to make the same mistake. By the fourth attempt you consider yourself a pro and throw away the instructions but have to double check a few things

first. By the fifth time you have it down pat. On the sixth you

realise you can get the last four kits done simultaneously if you create an assembly line approach. You wish you had thought of that at the start.

If we apply the same logic to learning something relatively difficult on the drums, we notice a similar process is involved. Whether it's a new beat that comes out of an improvised pattern or, at the other extreme, a detailed piece of sight reading, in order to learn it we have to figure out the instructions. This is akin to learning the beat in the first place. Typically, once we start to feel we are getting somewhere we will often lose our place and start to make mistakes. This is the point at which our long-term memory goes to work, essentially putting the whole picture together. It will attempt to put pieces of the puzzle in more convenient places for its current understanding of coordination and rhythmic structures. We have to constantly re-evaluate the learning process at this point to ensure that we are doing the right thing. After this period of assimilation, the pattern is memorised and our ability to manipulate the pattern increases. Then it's time to work on honing our instincts until we get the feel and style just right. At this point we are totally comfortable with it and wonder why it ever seemed so hard to play at all.

For every one of our thoughts and associated actions we are aware of only a handful. In fact, we have around 80,000 thoughts a day, far too many to recall on demand. Our whole life is directed by many small happenings that accumulate to make up all the aspects of our life. In turn this enriches and personalises our experiences, emotions and memories. It is impossible for us to be aware of such a vast collection of information. Only 10% of our brain is put towards our immediate awareness and thought processes. We can make use of some of the leftover 90% in a way that can help us to accelerate our learning process. Perhaps then by giving up some of our conscious control over our playing we can access a deeper level process integral to enhancing creative momentum.



MAKING MISTAKES IS ONLY
NATURAL - THE LEARNING
PROCESS INVOLVES ASSIMILATING
RELEVANT INFORMATION.



So - here's some suggested exercises:

EXERCISE ONE: MAKING USE OF INGRAINED LEARNED BEHAVIOUR AND THE ABILITY TO ASSOCIATE AND RECOGNISE PATTERNS.

Developing pattern recognition skills is key to improving our ability to adapt and learn on the fly. Drummers have a tendency to fall for set musical responses or licks over and over again, effectively digging a coordination hole for ourselves which is a constant battle to avoid. Ironically this trap could be used as a way to help get past the problem.

If you can, record yourself as you practise this: try playing a challenging new beat. Instead of being careful to get the pattern right, once you have the general gist, try making deliberate mistakes. This could be with timing, phrasing or just deliberately out of place fills. Don't let these mistakes stop you from continuing the beat but listen to the drumming that happens as you recover your place. Then, either by listening back to the recording or on the fly, see if you can compose new patterns by copying the automatic phrases that happen as you recover. These bits of drumming are fuelled by your ingrained coordination and musical associations and may be the key to finding new licks as well as helping you to develop pattern recognition and a confidence in your ability to make mistakes.

EXERCISE TWO: ENHANCE YOUR ABILITY TO SPLIT CONCENTRATION BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE AND OTHER DEEPER ASPECTS OF YOUR PSYCHE.

The sort of focused attention present when performing is believed to be a trance-like or hypnotic state. It's similar to being fully engrossed in a good book and therefore largely unaware of what might be going on around you. If you become aware of this whilst playing, you may find that you are able to hold elements of this experience in conscious awareness long enough to make use of its qualities. These situations can be a good time to examine the details of a technique you are working on or some rhythmic problem you are grappling with.

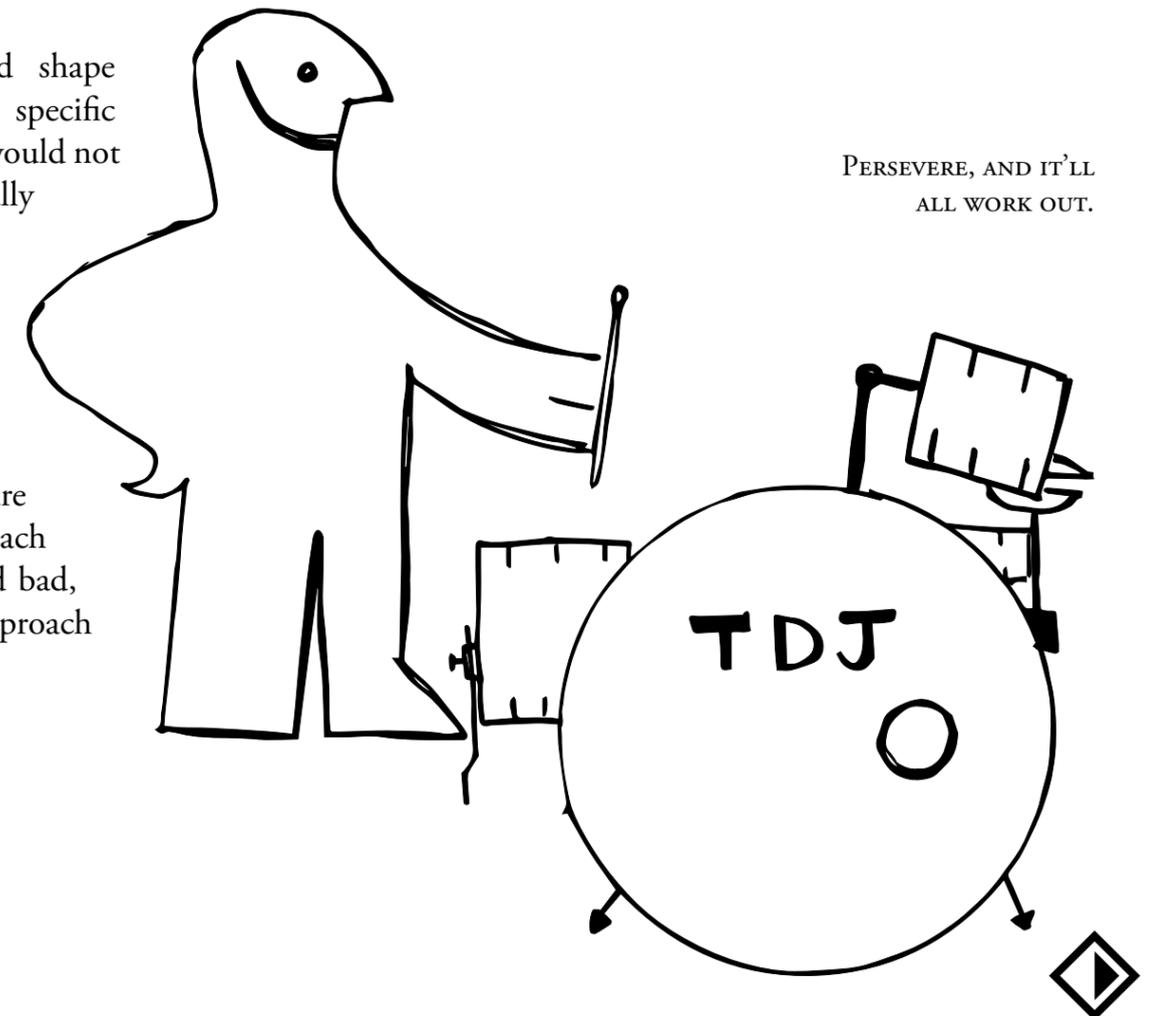
EXERCISE THREE: EMOTIONAL RESPONSE AWARENESS.

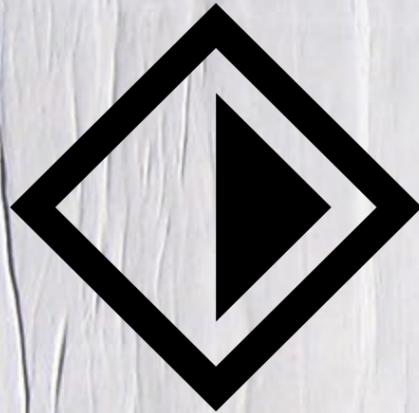
I'm sure as drummers we have all encountered the following comment on telling someone what we do: "it must be great to have something to take your anger out on," or something to that effect.

Anger is one emotion that can shape our experiences in life and perhaps in turn, our playing. There are many more subtle emotions that enrich our lives and in turn more subtle nuances that may be impacting on our drumming whilst going unexplored. So in just the way that listening to a particular type of music at one time may trigger your creativity at a later point in time, so too do our everyday experiences impact on our playing. Perhaps our subconscious minds have no bias when it comes to things that can influence our emotions. Try loosely improvising with an emotive thought or sensation held in mind. Sometimes this type of awareness brings out new ideas.

Ultimately, drummers provide momentum and shape dynamics within the musical form, but without specific neural pathways, developed through practice, this would not be the case. In turn the music that we play hopefully translates our message into a visceral experience for our audience. In performance, we partake in a shared experience, with everyone present taking their own experience of the event away with them. This experience no doubt plays a role in shaping our views and understanding of the world. For musicians it also plays a part in our future playing as we further refine our skills and approach to performing. We take our experiences, good and bad, obvious and subtle, and these become part of our approach to the music we make.

♦ ♦ ♦





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All i hear is drums



BING DING BOP

BING DING BOP

HALF MAN, HALF MACHINE

JAKI LIEBEZEIT

Words by Tom Hoare

Title photo by Roberto Domínguez

In 1963, John F. Kennedy visited Berlin and made what would become one of his most famous speeches. Stood before a crowd of almost half a million, he declared to the world: “Ich bin ein Berliner!”

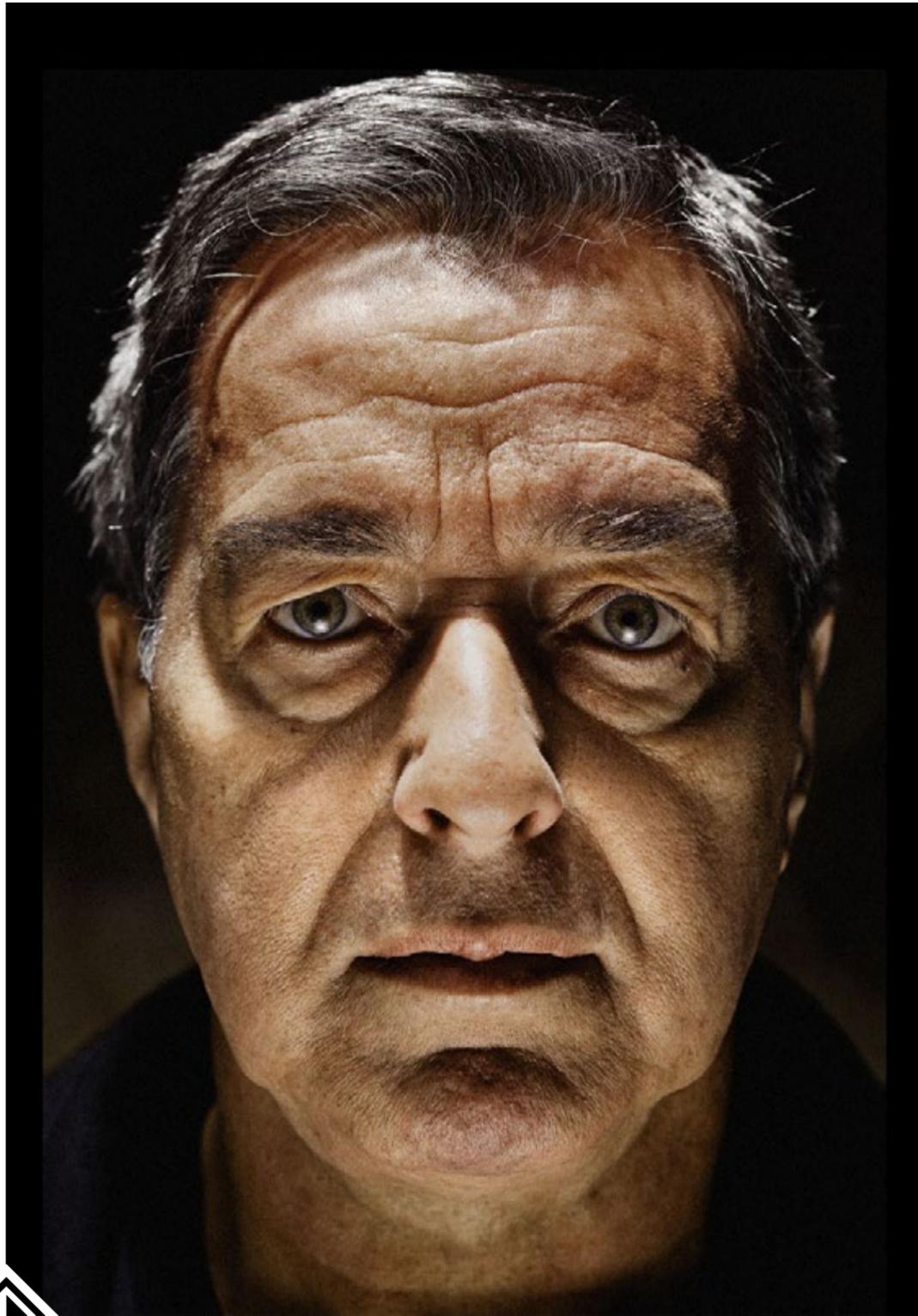
At this time, Germany existed as two separate states, geographically divided into the communist East and the democratic West. Kennedy’s speech was, ultimately, a message to Nikita Khrushchev - an assertion of Anglo-American foreign policy against that of the Soviet Union.

By 1968, the voluminous export of British rock music was in full swing. Having already made a considerable impact in the US, continental Europe

also became a target market. Whilst many British rock bands would be well received in West Germany, some felt there was little truly progressive about what such music offered. The British Invasion, despite its success across the Atlantic, fuelled a growing disquiet that German post-war culture was being imported as opposed to being created organically by the German people. One such sympathiser was Jaki Liebezeit, a founding member of Can - one of the most influential German bands ever to have existed.

♦♦♦





Can helped establish a musical movement the British press would label as krautrock. The music was experimental, improvisational and infused with an electronic sensibility. It verged from funky breaks to chaotic frenzy. Quite importantly, it was unlike what any Anglo-American blues-rock bands were doing. It was, instead, a distinctly German approach.

Jaki's drumming is wildly distinctive. Having become disillusioned with free jazz and latterly the form of the modern drum set in general, Jaki brought to Can more abstract notions of composition and performance. As a result, talking to Jaki about rhythm is intimidating. Although he's one of the nicest people you'll ever meet, it's his understanding and conceptualisation of music in general which goes beyond what the average drummer can likely comprehend. This is, in part, what made Jaki's playing so iconic. He is, ultimately, a virtuoso musician of the highest calibre.

The Drummer's Journal: How would you describe music in Germany in 1968 when you formed Can?

Jaki Liebeck: It was quite bourgeois. 1968 was a period of revolution in Germany - a student revolution against old states of mind left from Nazi Germany. People grew their hair long to look different, and that's why we started Can.

Because you wanted long hair?!

No! Because we were not satisfied with the music we were getting. People were bored of classical music. For me personally, I had played free jazz and felt I had to do something new. And then all this electronic music started, and that's how we came together.

How was the public response to Can, initially?

At first I think people did not like it and so there was some difficulty, yes. But we solved that because we were very enthusiastic.

Progressive rock music was becoming very popular in the UK at that time, but you had an aversion to it?

Ja. There were lots of other German bands copying English bands. They sounded like English bands, they looked like English bands, and when they went to England nobody took any notice of them. They sounded English but with a

German accent (*laughs*). We tried deliberately not to sound English and so when Can went to England we sounded very different. At the same time in Germany, everyone thought, "Can can't play properly because they'll never be able to play like English or American bands."

Did that bother you?

Not especially.

♦ ♦ ♦
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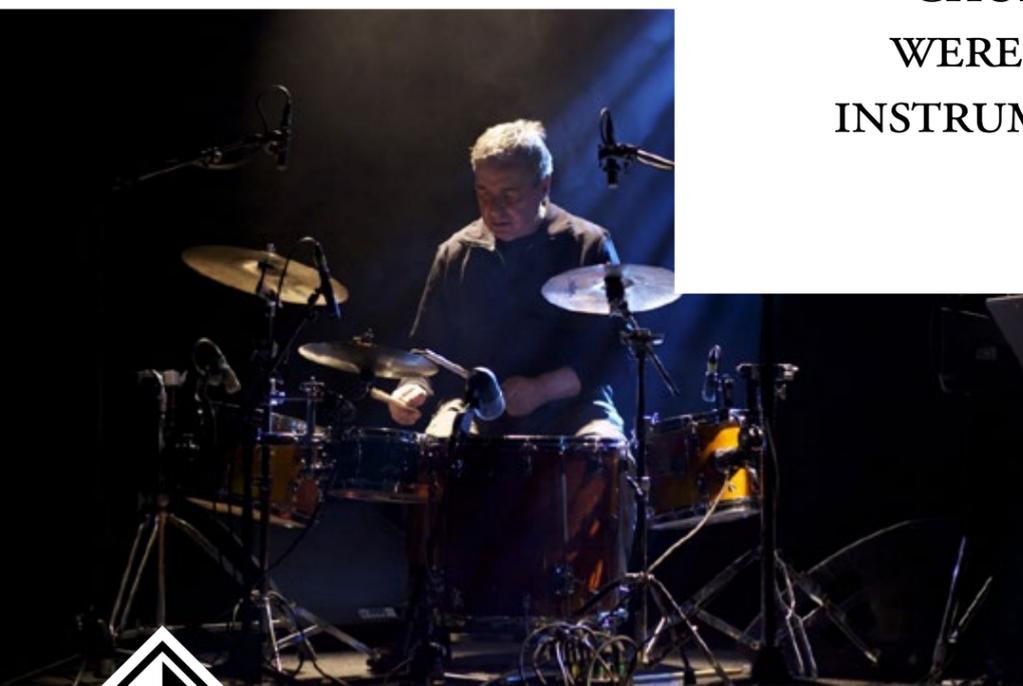
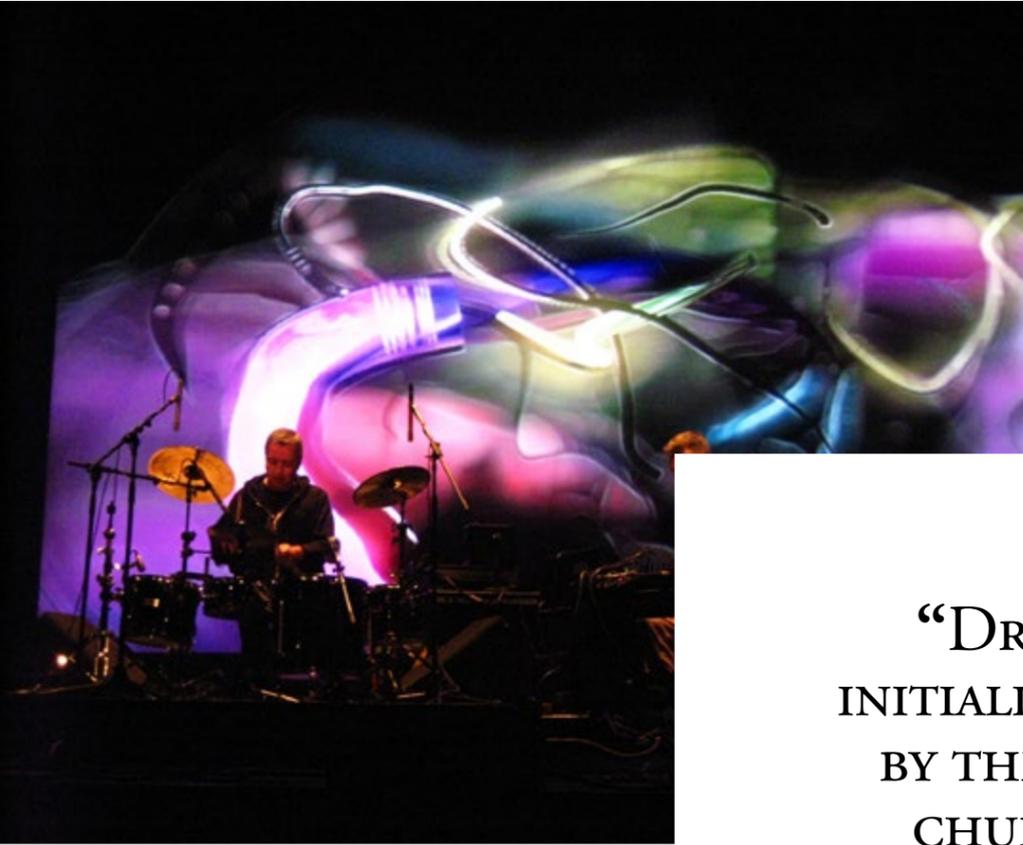


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“EVERYTHING THAT CAME OUT OF GERMANY WAS LABELLED KRAUTROCK. TODAY, I DON'T MIND THE LABEL. TO BE HONEST, I DON'T MIND THE WORD KRAUT ANYMORE EITHER, IT'S THE WORD ROCK I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH.”

♦♦♦





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“DRUMS WERE
INITIALLY FORBIDDEN
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How did you feel about the krautrock label used by the British press? The word makes me a bit uncomfortable to be honest.

At the beginning I didn't like it. "Krautrock." It reminded me of World War Two – don't mention the war (*laughs*)! Kraut was a name for the Germans because the world thought we ate kraut all the time. But today it has changed and it's more positive - people don't think of a kraut as a German soldier anymore. But the other problem was that everything that came out of Germany was labelled krautrock. Today, I don't mind the label. To be honest, I don't mind the word kraut anymore either, it's

the word rock I have a problem with. Rock is dead and it doesn't mean anything anymore. It has lost its message.

Why is that?

It is so common now. You can use it for everything. Even the right wing radical rock in Germany - Nazi bands use hardcore rock music now. In the beginning there was a revolutionary leftist character, but that has all gone.

We interviewed Bill Bruford a while ago. He said rhythm was becoming homogenised in Popular Music. Do you agree?

Ja absolutely. It's also the reason why I haven't used a normal jazz or rock kit for the last 20 years. I don't use a hi-hat or kick drum anymore. I was influenced very much by techno music in the 1990s. Back in the '70s, I was influenced by drum machines and sequencers. I thought the drum kit was not made for that kind of music, so I adapted it.

In its basic form the drum set hasn't changed too much over time, would you agree?

I think for rock and jazz, the drum set is very much ok as it

is. But in the 1990s, I think music changed very much and I knew the traditional drum kit, so to speak, wasn't made for new music. I was listening to a lot of African, Indian, and Turkish music, much of which does not require a drum set as such.

Is it true drums were initially thought of as an unchristian instrument because of the Catholic church?

Yes - drums in music were initially forbidden by the Catholic church. That's why flamenco music has no drums and instead involves clapping. They were seen as an instrument of sin, used to make people move in a way which was sinful. They thought it was the instrument of the devil. In Europe, the drum was properly introduced by the military and the Church couldn't forbid it. The modern drum kit has its origins in Turkey. Cymbals and bass drums were used to make soldiers march and fight.

So what about the future of the drum kit?

I feel very confident about the future, I don't think the drums will ever die out, they have survived for millennia. They might change their look a little it, but they will stay forever. I'm optimistic.

You're often referred to as a human drum machine. Is that a compliment - do you see yourself as a machine?

Ja - when I play I program myself. I know what I can and cannot do. Although the difference, of course, between me and a drum machine, is that I can listen and I can react.

And you don't have batteries.

Ja (*laughs*). I don't. But there was a list recently on the internet of the 100 best alternative drummers - I don't know what they meant by that - but a Roland drum machine was in the list and I thought that was funny. It was the Roland 808.

Didn't you appear in that list too?

Ja. In quite a good place, I believe...



ABOVE: JAKI AND ROBERT COYNE.



Go on -

I was fifth (*laughs*).

Do you consider yourself an alternative drummer?

There were lots of famous drummers on that list. In first place was the drummer from Nirvana. And Bernard Purdie – he’s one of the most recorded drummers ever. He played for everyone in America. I met him once when he came to Cologne.

Do you still practise?

Oh yes. I practise a lot. I’m always in search of new rhythms. I have strange systems of constructing rhythms, but I like to use ET code mostly.

ET code?

People think of Extra Terrestrial when I tell them that, they think I’m mad.

So it’s not to do with aliens then?

(*Laughs*) No. It’s to do with the letter E and T in Morse code. The letter E is a dot and the T is a dash, and from that you can make all sorts of rhythms. It’s like the binary system of numbers.

Where did that inspiration come from?

I was listening to some Morse code and I found it interesting because it’s so rhythmical. It’s basically two elements and by combining them you can make all kinds of rhythms.

For me to understand this you’re going to have to afford me a very, very basic explanation.

Ok - so take the two main rudiments of drumming - the single stroke roll and the double stroke roll. A single stroke would be the dot, and a double stroke would be the dash, so you can make all

kinds of rhythms just from these two things - infinite combinations really. But I’ve done this for a long time.

How did technology impact the studio environment?

If you make good music, technology won’t really help. But if you make bad music, then technology can help a lot. Today you don’t need big studios and lots of staff anymore. When I record today we have a computer, microphones and the interface and that’s it. Reverb and distortion can all be added on.

Omar Hakim said technology replaced the social scene in studios because people didn’t have to get together to record...

We had that problem with Can. When we started, studio technology was very basic. When we got multi-track machines and overdubbing, the band didn’t need to play together like in the beginning. So one



PHOTO BY
ROBERTO DOMÍNGUEZ

person at a time could come into the studio to record their parts and the other members of the band could stay at home. That was not good for the band, and finally the band was finished because we never played together anymore. It was not very good for the music.

Do you collect vinyl?

Yes, I prefer vinyl of course. I don't like CDs. They are garbage (*chuckles*). But vinyl - it's coming back very much. It sounds better than CD. It's like a book, having something nice in your hands. I always compare them to microwave food and normally cooked food - I prefer the real food cooked in a pan to microwave food.

♦ ♦ ♦

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Your other group Drums of Chaos has been performing since 1982, but it's only now you've decided to make a record?

I like playing live music and I was worried making a studio record would seem artificial, but I think now it's time. Also, there's no hope really to sell any records today so the motivation is missing. If you put all that work into a recording and it doesn't sell, it's not really worth it. There's more money playing live now I think.

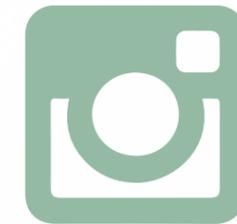
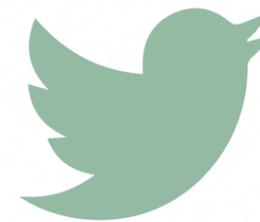
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