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AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

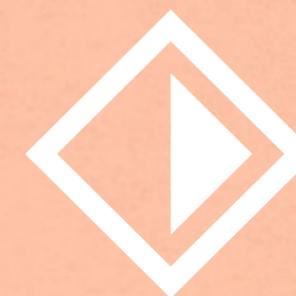
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ISSUE FIFTEEN, WINTER 2016/17

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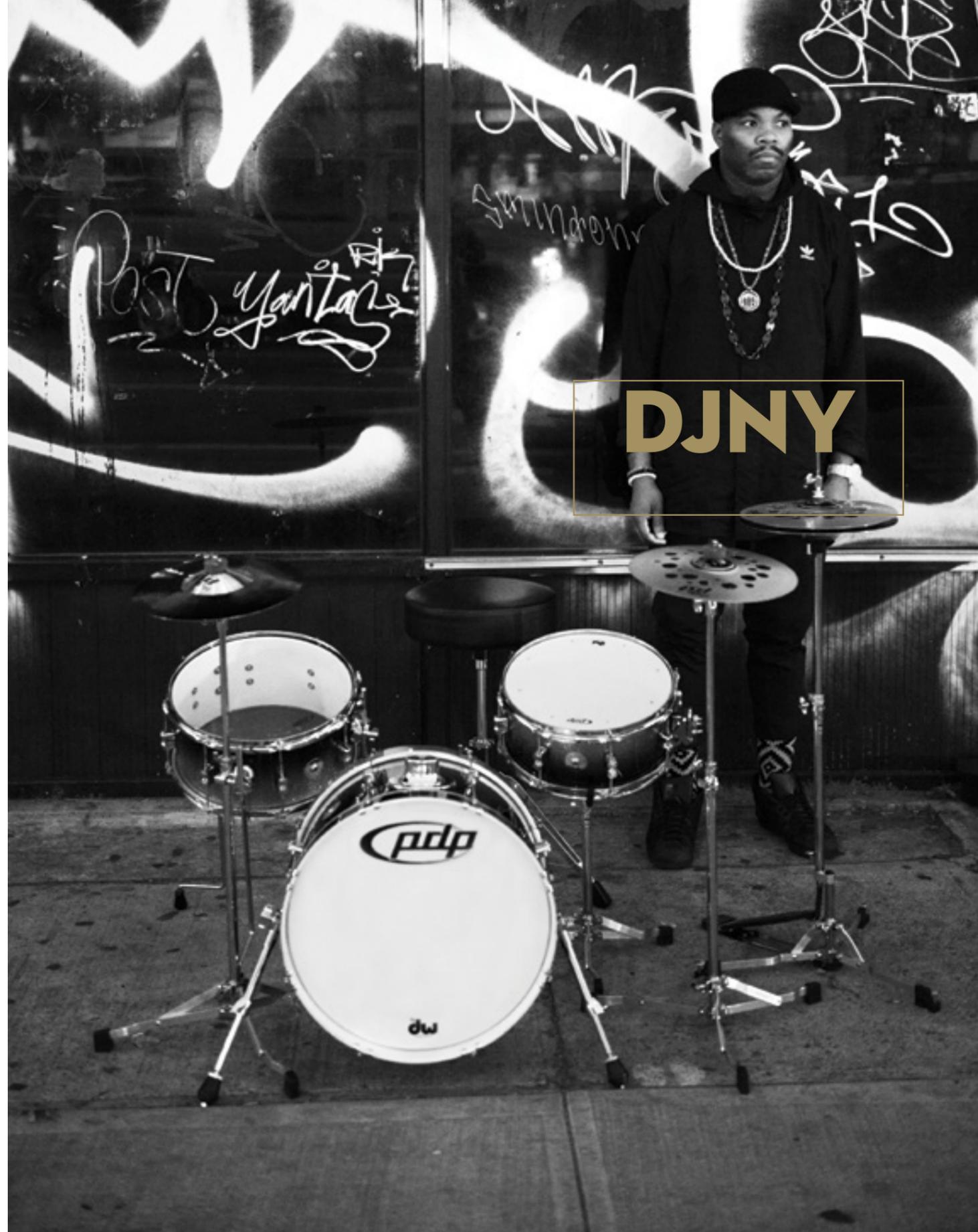
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EX SPECTATION

VOLUME THREE, *ISSUE FIFTEEN*

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One of the reasons this magazine exists is to try and do something a bit different. To go out on a bit of a limb and just see what happens.

Initially, we set our expectations pretty low, so anything that exceeded them was a pleasant surprise. It was also a handy excuse when we'd get knocked back by an advertiser or told that we couldn't arrange an interview with a specific person. Not only did we rest on our laurels, we slept on them. They gave us a false sense of comfort that we could hide behind if things didn't go our way.

Here's an example. One of the reasons we'd never approached Steve Gadd was because I was scared he'd say no. So we didn't even ask, purely out of fear of being shot down. Eventually, I realised we were being ridiculous. So what if he says no? So we put in an interview request. We were told "no." We just accepted this as fate. That was an error.

This issue is comprised of people who did not set their expectations low. This includes Steve Gadd. He dreamed about being a session player, then went out and did it. Alex Sowinski, drummer for BBNG, dropped out of music school to pursue music that he found value in even if his teachers didn't. Anna Prior, drummer for Metronomy, made her mind up she was going to be a drummer when she was 14 and would not be swayed otherwise.

Thanks to the person who emailed in and asked why Steve Gadd hadn't been in the magazine yet. It was during responding to you that I realised that my excuse – that we tried and failed – was a lame duck.

Do not set the bar low for 2017. It makes you more likely to accept fiction as fact.

Welcome to Issue 15 of The Drummer's Journal.

Tom



NO CONSERVATOIRE

BADBADNOTGOOD'S ALEXANDER SOWINSKI

Words by Tom Hoare

Photography by Ellius Grace



♦ ♦ ♦

“WE’RE NOT TRYING
TO SPEARHEAD A
NEW FACE OF JAZZ
OR ANYTHING,
THAT’S NOT WHAT
ANY OF THIS IS
ABOUT FOR US.”

♦ ♦ ♦

Disillusioned with their jazz conservatory program, three Toronto-based music students decided to drop out, opting instead to concentrate on their own project, a band called BadBadNotGood.

It’s safe to say BadBadNotGood aren’t really a jazz band, certainly not in a traditional sense. But they do possess similar traits to jazz bands of the past, insofar as they’re a group of musicians deviating from a norm. In the 1950s, extending a middle finger to the European, white conservatories was exactly what American hard-bop bands were doing, turning away from entrenched modes of playing and incorporating outside influence in the form of soul or blues. Art Blakey did it. Miles Davis did it. It’s a progression that underpinned the development of the genre.

If you’ve ever felt that you’re becoming musically anaemic, BadBadNotGood is an intravenous injection of jazz infused hip hop; a reminder that music worth its salt is still plentiful, even if the music media make it seem like we’re swimming in saline solution.

What began as recording instrumental hip hop interpretations in a basement and uploading them to YouTube branched into backing the likes of Frank Ocean and Tyler, The Creator, as well as releasing five of their own critically lauded albums in the process.

We picked up the phone and chatted to the band’s drummer, Alexander Sowinski.

The Drummer’s Journal: Was leaving school an obvious decision?

Alexander Sowinski: It wasn’t obvious. At the time we were still in that in-between stage of being a real band and actually playing shows and having an income. We knew it was going to be tight, that it would be a risk.

I only ask as I guess you’ve wanted to be a drummer since you were a kid?

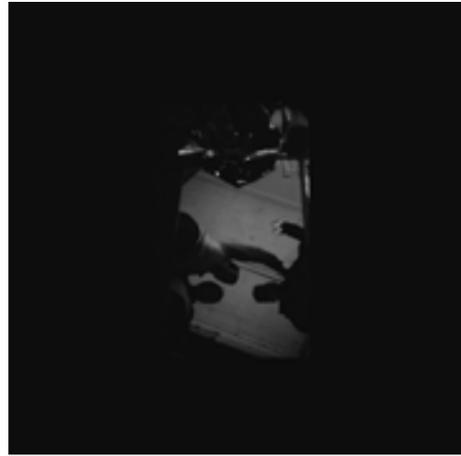
Yeah, I think so. I didn’t really have a plan how I was going to do that, though.

How did your jazz professors react when you left?

We did a performance at the end of the year, and there was a bit of a disconnect between what we played, jazz and rap sort of arrangements, and what the school maybe expected us to play. Whatever it was, the meaning of the melodies, the simplicity of some of the forms, it was a huge disconnect. But we were enjoying what we were doing, it created a bit of a buzz, so we thought, “Well, let’s take a risk and pursue it.” And that meant leaving the school. So we started to record some more, began talking to managers and taking some legitimate steps towards being a band. The whole industry is still pretty much create your own career. Work as hard as you want to work, travel as much as you want to travel. You build with opportunities and take risks.

Did you grow up with jazz music?

Not my entire life, but in high school, I found a lot of love for it.



BADBADNOTGOOD DISCOGRAPHY:
 (LEFT TO RIGHT)
 BBNG (2011)
 BBNG2 (2012)
 III (2014)
 SOUR SOUL (WITH GHOSTFACE KILLAH) (2015)
 IV (2016)

Has how you perceive what jazz music is changed over time?

Yeah, totally. The school thing is quite a heavy, rigid way of being taught. It was like, “This is the way this person does it,” or, “This person uses this technique.” I had to balance between learning about something I really love and trying to find my own voice and developing as a musician.

I feel like you learn more about music the more you experience it. The more experience you have recording in the studio, writing music, or contributing to a session, then you appreciate certain things more than if you were just a listener.

Are people’s opinions on traditional and contemporary jazz becoming more polarised?

I don’t know how to describe it. It’s funny, but jazz is still associated with cocktail gigs, or wedding bands, or these corporate events where it’s just background music. But it’s also an expressive, evolving art form. It has been for so many years. There are some younger groups trying to recontextualise jazz and music scenes in general. There’s this group called the Honest Collective in New York who are a younger generation of musicians who back different people and do different sessions. There is a lot of positivity going on which helps it develop.

Do you ever think about why you became a drummer?

I don’t know really. I just like doing it. I like using my own creativity. I see all these other

people who are so much better from a technical perspective, but I try just to enjoy the way I do things.

Did you have a rough idea of what you wanted the band to become?

We didn’t have a plan, we weren’t trying to be anything specific, we were just having fun working on music and releasing little tidbits of our ideas. The fact it grew and had a buzz to it was way beyond our expectations. We’re not trying to spearhead a new face of jazz or anything, that’s not what any of this is about for us. I’m not really going for the Modern Drummer cover. Seeing good people do amazing stuff, being inspired by the creativity of others is important to me personally. Does that make sense? I could just be talking about nothing...

No, that makes sense.

[Laughs] Ok, that’s good as sometimes I think I’m not great at explaining things clearly.

Before the band took off, did you have an idea of what it was going to be like to play music as a career, and has that matched up?

I had no idea. I knew about people who are professional session drummers and just go to sessions all the time, or people in touring bands. You just hear about it and you’re like, “Oh, maybe I can do that one day.”

Drums play such a massive role in hip hop. Does this get overlooked?

I’d agree that drums are so important in hip hop. Also, there’s a big difference between using



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...

♦♦♦

“I’M NOT REALLY GOING
FOR THE MODERN
DRUMMER COVER.”

♦♦♦



samples, using programmed drums, using breaks, or using live drummers on sessions. There are so many applications, which is exciting, creatively speaking.

Traditionally hip hop has not shied away from being critical of itself...

I think it’s all been progressive, it’s all been moving forward.

You’re so diplomatic!

[Laughs] I don’t have any negativity to the old school or the new school, it’s all just amounting to different tastes and expressions of music that you can either vibe with or not. In rap right now, I think we have such a diverse amount of flavour between trap music and dance, electronic rap, gangster rap, old school soul, jazz progressive, there is so much out there. I’m a big fan. Everyone is pushing each other to make deep, expressive music, between both the beats, lyrics, production and rapping. It’s exciting.

Do you see any parallels between what’s been going on politically in America for the last few years, and the output of socially conscious music?

Totally. We all know what’s been happening in the last few years in terms of violence and police officers, and you see and hear this in specific music, but especially in US hip hop. That’s important.

♦♦♦

Mark Colenburg &
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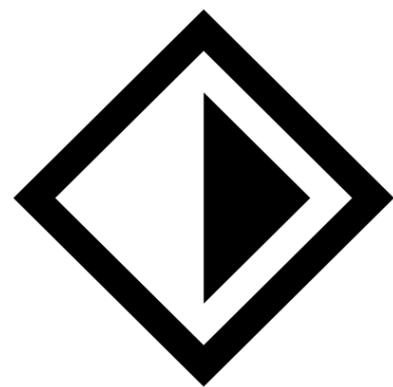
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STEVE GADD

ACCESSION

Words by Tom Hoare

Photography by Bex Wade



About seven years ago, I was sitting in a damp basement flat in Glasgow. If you've lived somewhere where it rains routinely, you'll be familiar with that overwhelming greyness you get on rainy days in the city, desaturating everything in sight.

I was unemployed and filled my days with video games and half-arsed attempts at trying to learn new rudiments on a practice pad. That might sound great, but the reality of it was anything but. It felt utterly pointless.

To offset my failing job search, I decided I needed some sort of project in an effort to do something constructive. So, for reasons that are still not entirely clear, I decided the best use of my time would be to learn how to play Aja by Steely Dan.

I didn't know much about Steely Dan at the time, other than people online constantly raved about what a great album Aja is. I think I read an article about the top ten drumming performances of all time and Steve Gadd's performance on Aja was number one. My decision-making process was that fickle.

I downloaded the charts and set about trying to decipher them. I sucked at reading notation so it took me an absolute age. I listened to the song so much it absolutely ruined my desire to ever hear it again.

Up until this point, it was conceivable that I could never have touched the drum set again. Every time I played it I failed to see anything of value in my

own ability. Whereas playing had once made me feel good, now it was just a constant reminder that I was below average, at best.

As pathetic as it sounds, learning Aja was the thing that stopped me selling my kit and giving up altogether. It took me months. By the end of it, I could sort of play a bastardised version along with the track itself. It felt pretty good; it felt like an actual accomplishment.

There's a rumour about Steve Gadd's performance on Aja, that he did the whole thing in one take. At the time, I struggled to comprehend how that could be true. I thought it would be humanly impossible for someone to simply sit down and play it, off the bat, and not fuck a single thing up. Then I learnt more about Steve Gadd. I probably took longer than the average person to realise he's one of the greatest drummers to have ever lived.

In a London hotel, we're sat in a little booth in the restaurant, which, at 11 am, is pretty much deserted.

From where I'm sitting, I can see the reception



◆◆◆
“I USED TO DREAM ABOUT BEING A SESSION PLAYER. I DIDN'T KNOW IF I COULD EVER DO IT.”
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desk. There's a queue of flustered people waiting to check out. Someone is speaking in quite a loud voice to the concierge, who seems to be having a bad morning.

Steve peers around and observes the minor commotion, reclining back on his seat, looking quite comfortable. He lets out a small chuckle and takes a sip of coffee. "Poor guy." He nods his head toward the concierge.

◆◆◆
 "IT'S ABOUT GETTING
 THE GROOVE FEELING
 SO GOOD THAT YOU
 FORGET ABOUT ALL
 THE BULLSHIT."
 ◆◆◆

Steve has a quiet, kind, and considered demeanour. It might be possible to mistake this for shyness. He also looks like someone who knows how to take it easy. It's hard to imagine him getting stressed about anything.

His arms are covered with tattoos, and some of them have that green tinge signifying they've been there for a while. He spots me surveying them.

"Thirteen is my lucky number," he begins, gesturing to a Japanese numeral on his arm. "This is 13 in Japanese."

"I thought 13 was usually considered an unlucky number?"

"For some people, maybe, but for me, it's always been pretty special."

"How old were you when you got your first tattoo?"

"Early 20s, I think."

"Were you in rebellion?"

"Looking back, I guess so." He pauses in contemplation. "Actually, I know exactly why I got my first tattoo. Someone told me that I was incapable of making any permanent decisions, so I thought, 'I'll show you a permanent decision!'"

Mickey Mouse

"I read that you were a bit of a child prodigy..."

He grins. "I don't know about that."

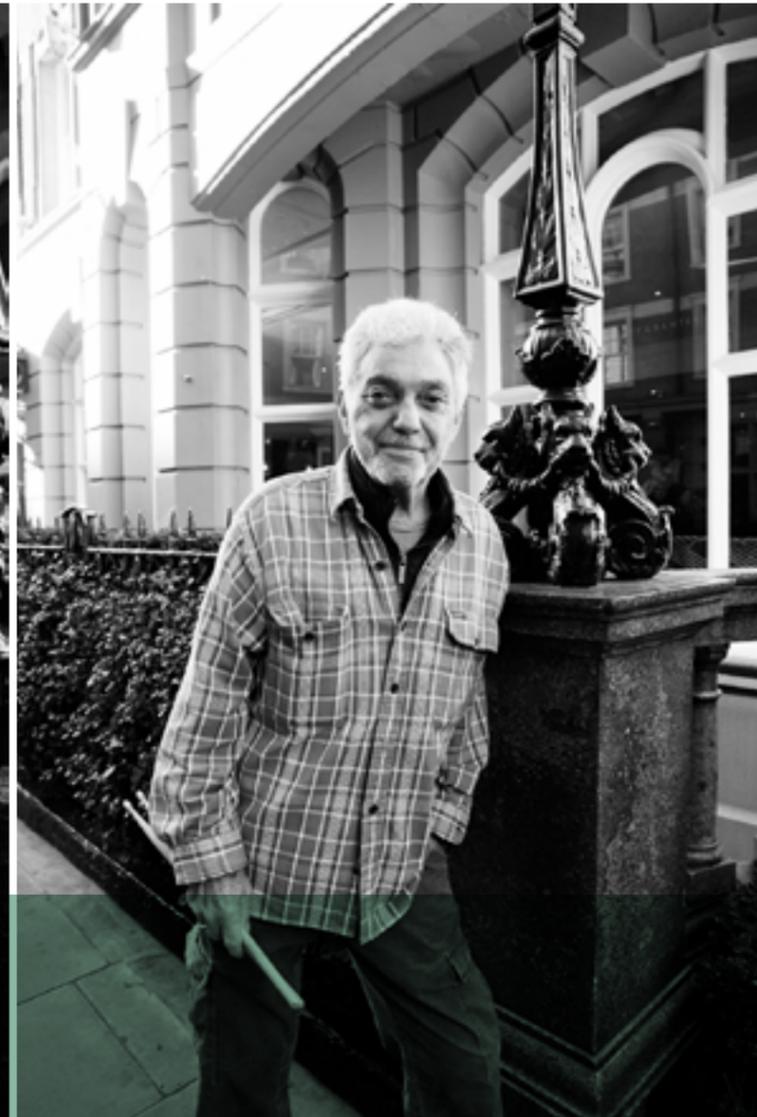
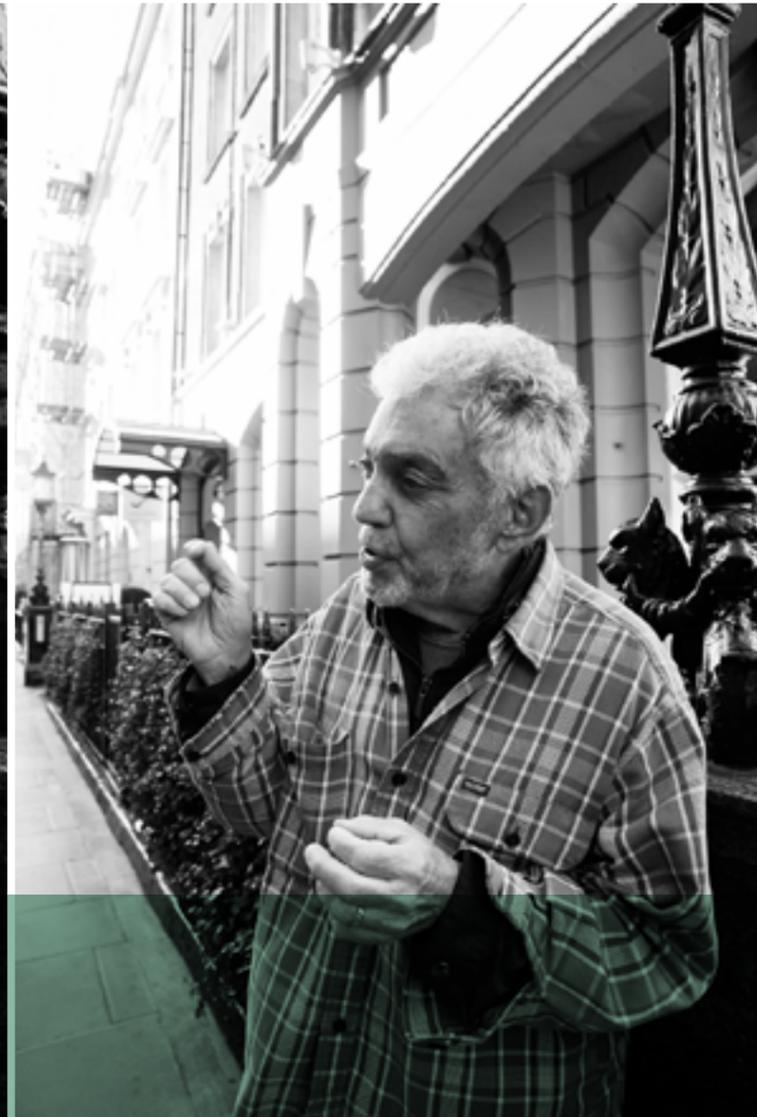
When Steve was nine, he appeared on a TV variety show called The Mickey Mouse Club. It was a show mostly featuring kids who had prodigious talents. It launched the careers of a vast number of child stars. More recently, it's associated with people like Ryan Gosling and Christina Aguilera.

"Yeah, I was on the show," he nods. "Disney would go across the country and have these little talent contests and the people who got picked could appear on the show. I got picked."

"And you got to meet Mickey Mouse?"

"Yeah. I got to meet Walt Disney."

"Didn't you also meet Gene Krupa when you were quite young?"



♦ ♦ ♦
“IT WAS LIKE I’D
BEEN PRACTISING
MY WHOLE LIFE FOR
THAT REASON, TO
DO WHAT I DID ON
THOSE RECORDS.”
♦ ♦ ♦

“Yeah. He was my hero.”

“Were you more excited about meeting Mickey Mouse or Gene Krupa?”

He leans back and smiles. “It was all exciting. When you’re a kid everything is exciting. But meeting Gene was special for me for sure.”

“Up until I was three, my mom, dad, brother and I all lived with my dad’s parents. There was a lot of support and love. My grandmother kept horses, so in the morning we’d go out to the barn and tend to the horses, then we’d go back into the house and put on records. It was a great way to grow up. I had a lot of love in the family.”

“It sounds pretty idyllic.”

“It was. My uncle was a drummer in high school. He’d been in the army, and when he got out, I went to see him march in a veteran’s parade. That’s the first drum I ever saw: a red parade drum. I’ve been playing drums ever since.”

First Draft

We chat about Steve’s early career. He graduated from Eastman School of Music at the time when the Vietnam War draft was at its most voracious. The draft was supposed to be a randomised lottery requiring citizens to enlist in the armed forces. For a supposedly randomised process, it was an odd statistical anomaly that kids from rich, white

families were drafted far less than those from lower socio-economic classes.

During the Vietnam War, on average, 11 American soldiers died per day for 19 years. Steve graduated college in early 1968. This was the bloodiest year of the war, with 16,000 US casualties alone. Your chances of being killed as a US soldier were 181 to one. Those are not good odds.

“Was the prospect of being drafted not absolutely terrifying?”

“Yeah. I did get drafted. As soon as I graduated from Eastman I got my draft papers.”

“How did that feel?”

“I knew I was going to get them. Everyone got them. If you didn’t move to Canada, or have a medical exemption, or were married with kids, everyone had to go. Knowing that, my teacher, John Beck, arranged auditions for some of the military bands in the Washington DC area. The guys in those bands don’t usually have to go overseas. As soon as you get out of basic training, you’re making Sergeant’s money. I didn’t want to be in the army, but it was pretty good duty looking back on it.”

“What was your perception of the war at the time?”

“I didn’t want to fight. I didn’t want to shoot anybody. But I couldn’t exactly just move to Canada. Instead, I thought, ‘I could still serve and have some control over what I was doing.’ That’s what I did.”







“When I got out of the army, I went to New York and stayed with my friend Tony Levin. We went to college together and graduated at the same time. He’d had a medical deferment and hadn’t gone to Vietnam, so he’d been in New York for the three years I’d been in the army. I ended up living with him and his wife and collecting unemployment. It turned out he’d gotten to know a few people in the industry. He introduced me to Mike Mainieri. That’s how I got my foot in the door. It was sheer luck, really.”

“That’s how you first got work as a drummer?”

“Pretty much. The transition was good. It just went from there.”

“Was there ever a period where you were out of work?”

“You go through periods where you’re not as busy as you could be. The trick is, instead of getting nervous about it, try to start enjoying the time you have when you’re not working. When you’re freelance, you’re constantly waiting for the phone to ring. You can waste a lot of energy worrying about that. But there was always something to keep me going.”

“I used to dream about being a session player. I didn’t know if I could ever do it. The deal in those days was that you just wanted to be able to make a living. It was before people were making millions of dollars as musicians in this industry.”

“When you look back over your career, do you feel

like it’s been a constant upward progression?”

“I don’t just look at my career, I look at my life, and I’ve realised it’s a process and not an event. You’re constantly trying to go a certain direction and it’s inevitable you’ll run into some bumps in

♦♦♦

“THERE ARE THINGS
I’D DO DIFFERENTLY.
IF I’D KNOWN WHAT
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
WOULD HAVE DONE I
WOULDN’T HAVE GONE
NEAR THEM.”

♦♦♦

the road. All of these sayings like, ‘Slow growth is good growth,’ or, ‘Three steps forward two steps back,’ we all go through those things. I feel like I’ve continued striving to get to where I want to be in terms of taking care of myself physically, mentally and spiritually. That’s what my goal is, to find inner peace. You get yourself to a point where things start to flow. You find the eye at the centre of the storm, and sort of ease though what’s going on around you.”



“Would you say you’re a spiritual person?”

“I think I am. I don’t know if I’m as spiritual as I could be but I’m trying. I think it’s important because it’s what unites people. I try to find the little spark of light that’s inside me, and try to connect with the little spark of light that’s inside all of us.”

“Is this why you’re a musician?”

“I’d say it certainly has something to do with it. It’s not really about performing, it’s more about getting the groove feeling so good that you forget about all the bullshit.”

The Hits

Steve’s career is emblematic of a period when the recording industry was booming. It’s often referred to as the “album era,” a time when albums and not singles became the driving sales force of the industry.

As a heavily abridged overview, Steve was the go-to guy for the likes of BB King, Charles Mingus, Chick Corea, Steely Dan, Simon and Garfunkel, Eric Clapton, James Brown, Kate Bush and Paul McCartney. The truly impressive thing isn’t just the scope of his work, but the fact that so much of it is now iconic. There are still some sessions, however, which still tend to stand out.

“You made a record with Paul McCartney in 1981. It was recorded only two months after Lennon’s

assassination...”

“Those were crazy times. We did that record in Montserrat. Ringo was there. I’d gotten to know him a bit as we’d worked together before. I got to know Paul, Linda and their kids too. And George Martin.

“What was the atmosphere like?”

“There was no escaping what had happened. There was a cloud hanging over the sessions for sure. There was some security around. I think everyone was still in shock really.

“My wife had worked with John too. She used to manage studios and worked on a few projects with him.” Steve pauses and rubs the back of his neck. “It was just a tragedy really.”

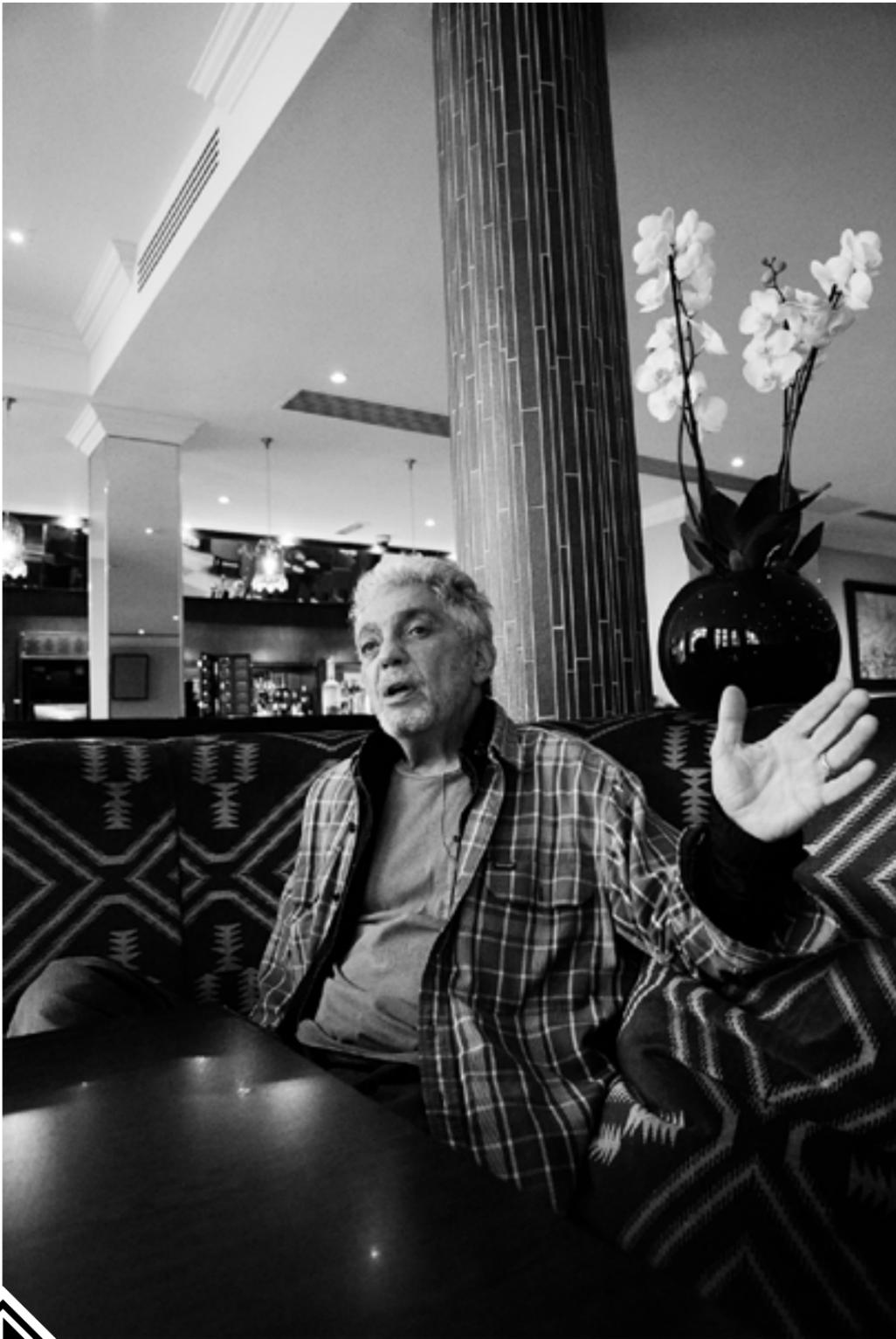
Some of Steve’s most well-known work was with Steely Dan on *Aja* and on Paul Simon’s *50 Ways To Leave Your Lover*. They would become not only career-defining for Steve but also for the artists themselves.

There is a sizable body of writing devoted to exploring Steve’s experiences on these tracks. I imagine he must have been asked about them relentlessly over the years. Instead, I wondered what these sessions had come to mean to Steve, given they’re commonly regarded as his magnum opi.

“It was like I’d been practising my whole life for that reason, to do what I did on those records. It was like a light went on, the door opened and I walked into







another world. Stuff started happening, one thing after another. It was a lot of work. It was also a lot of fun. We were partying and playing some good music. It just felt good. I can't really explain it. All of a sudden you're working and it doesn't feel like work because you're doing something you like."

"You talked about how you dreamed of being a session musician. Did the reality of it match up to what you'd imagined?"

"I couldn't envision it. I couldn't imagine it. It was at a time when the industry was changing incredibly fast.

"In the late 60s, the music industry was booming. Record companies were signing a lot of artists. I got called to play on a lot of those sessions. It was the old and the new coming together. That era had a life of its own. That's run its course now. It's just how things go."

"You don't feel sentimental about it?"

"I feel nostalgic if I look at pictures or see old friends, but not really about the industry itself. I certainly don't feel nostalgia in a way that I wish I was back there. I mean, there are things I'd do differently. If I'd known what drugs and alcohol would have done I wouldn't have gone near them. Today, I don't really think about that. I focus more on the fact I've got a lot to be grateful for. I'm alive and healthy. My family is alive and healthy. I'm playing music. I'm good. I don't really think about the past and I try not to project about the future."

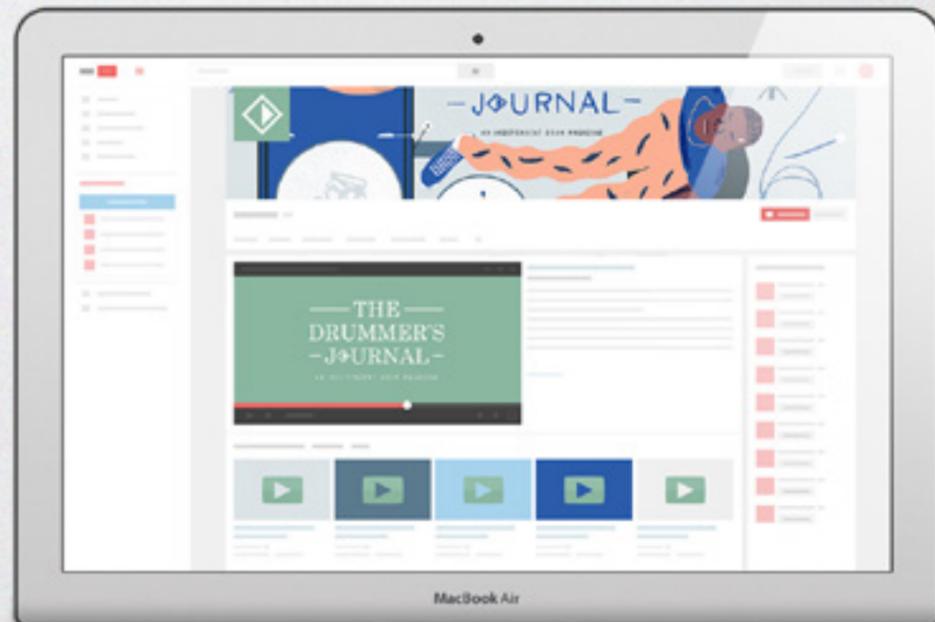
Later that evening, Steve played a gig with his own band at Ronnie Scott's jazz club. After the show, he hung around for ages talking to people at the bar. Many waited in line to shake his hand or have him sign a CD. He must have spoken to pretty much every person there. It dawned on me that he commands a lot of respect not just because of who he is, but how he treats people. Most importantly, it made me realise you don't have to sit down and learn to play Aja to appreciate Steve Gadd.

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by Reid Chancellor and Tom Hoare

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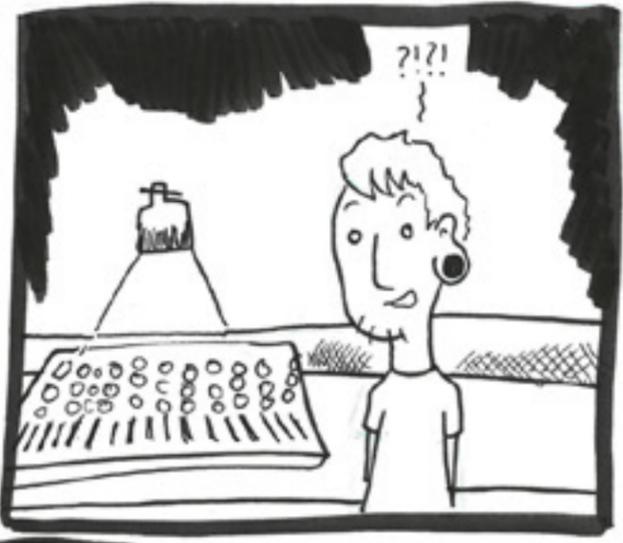


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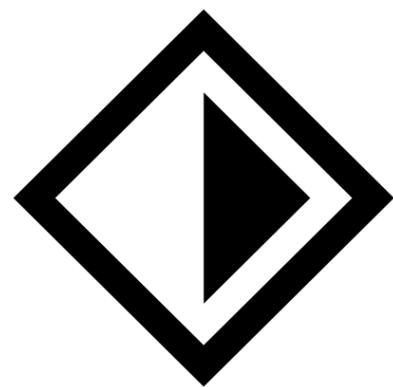
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ELBOWS & APPENDAGES

RICHARD JUPP

Words & photography by Tom Hoare

It's a cold, clear night in northern Manchester. The street, lined with redbrick Victorian houses, curves into the distance like a corridor where you never seem to reach the apex.

Streetlights are intermittently dotted along the verge. They put out that orange glow that's symptomatic of the suburbs at night. The way they vaguely resemble warmth somehow makes me feel even colder.

I cross-reference the number on the front door with the address written on the back of the supermarket

receipt in my right hand. The fact the address is scrawled in pencil makes it blend into the receipt's small print nicely. A sentence about consumer protection is camouflaging the second digit of the house number. It could be a six. It could be an eight. I look back and forward between the two houses in front of me. 56. 58. It's one of these two. My hand has drained of any colour and gone full Voldemort. I wonder if this is the onset of frostbite.

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Both houses are in complete darkness. With nothing to distinguish them, I choose number 56 and knock at the door. Nothing. I knock again. Nothing. I go next door to 58. The process repeats itself.

I use my phone to try and call the number I'd been given. It rings out.

Number 58 has a high wooden fence which obscures the view round the side of the house. This fence is about 7ft tall. I decide the best thing to do is jump up and down in an attempt to try and peek over it. I discover I can't jump very high. But I see the roof of what appears to be a large shed in the garden. It looks like there's a light on inside it.

There's a gate in the fence but it opens from the other side. I retreat back onto the driveway and stand looking at the house, unsure how to proceed.

I turn around and notice that someone across the street is peering out of an upstairs window, watching me. I realise what they have likely just observed is not entirely normal behaviour. As an effort to dispel any potential concern, I wave at them. They do not wave back.

I turn back around to face the house. I now feel very self-conscious. A dog in number 54 is barking loudly. Some builders, who were loading tools into a van further up the street, are now pointing at me. I manage to suppress the sudden urge to leg it. Fleeing would not be a hallmark of innocence.

The garden gate of 58 opens suddenly, and a man

strides towards me. I imagine the observer in the house behind drawing breath, priming their phone in the hope of capturing footage of a homeowner about to beat up a potential thief.

For a second, I actually think this is about to happen. Richard Jupp, the man doing the striding, is an imposing figure. Certainly not someone you want accusing you of trespass.

For 26 years, Jupp was the drummer for a band called Elbow. They released six albums and won widespread critical claim, amassing a global following in the process.

Elbow play atmospheric rock music that easily lends itself to introspection. What set them apart from countless other bands were songs that didn't shy away from dealing with, and evoking, emotion. The music is inherently textural; strings, brass, piano. Sometimes ethereal, often cascading, they became known for lyrical discernment and a sculpted approach to songwriting.

Elbow achieved a great deal. They won the Mercury Music Prize, a Brit award, and sold millions of records. But they once occupied a sort of underdog stature in the British music scene. They were signed and subsequently dropped, twice. It was certainly not an overnight success. Instead, their early album releases, over time, reached more and more people until *The Seldom Seen Kid* propelled them into the mainstream.

In March 2016, Jupp left the band. It felt a bit like the end of an era, likely for both him and his band mates.

I wondered how such a decision affected his interest in playing music.

Jupp is incredibly approachable. He has a genuine passion for drums that's infectious. The garden shed I thought I'd glimpsed is actually a self-contained teaching studio. We sit in here and I feel my hands slowly defrost.

The studio is a single sound-conditioned room that's pretty much every drummer's dream. He has his laptop open on a shelf next to his kit and there are countless YouTube browser tabs open. "I probably spend a bit too much time on there," he muses.

He tells me he's in the process of setting himself up as a teacher. I imagine he'd be good at it. But it's a different career from touring your latest top 40 album. It's likely not as glamorous. And probably not as profitable. But the excitement with which he talks about it is impressive in itself.

Ultimately I was struck by the idea of spending your life working towards a common goal, achieving it, then simply starting again.

The Drummer's Journal: First things first. Why did you become a drummer?

Richard Jupp: I just had this sort of gravitational pull into the music world, and I don't know where

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the reason for playing drums came from. We weren't really a musical family. The only real thing I can think of would be seeing U2, looking at Larry Mullen Jr and thinking, "I want to do that."

You've known your former band mates since you were in school, right?

Sort of. I've known Pete [Turner] the bass player since I was six years old. We would just hang around, riding BMX, getting into a bit of trouble here and there. Mark [Potter, guitar] was in the same school. He was a bit of a rocker. He was kind of like the bad guy in school, or at least, he had that image.

What were you like?

Quite studious, I wanted to do well. Got into trouble occasionally. I did my homework. I did alright at GCSE. A levels went a bit wrong.

Wrong?

Because of the band. We were trying to write our own stuff, record demos, and it sort of took over everything. Initially, I think they thought I was going to quit and go to university. It didn't happen, though. I remember Guy being quite happy that I'd fluffed my A levels. In some ways, that made the decision to stick around for me.

I read you were a metalhead when you were younger?

I suppose. I was listening to Anthrax, ACDC, Slayer, that sort of stuff.

Which is a radically different style of music from what you ended up playing...

Yeah, very. It was just a massive learning curve; listening to different stuff, different drummers, different

rhythms. We went on one of our first tours and I was listening to African percussion music. And the lads would just take the piss. For me, I just kept falling in love with drums. There was always something else interesting to learn or listen to. This sounds really cheesy. Is it cheesy?

Er... well...

It's true, though. That outlook helped me grow as a musician as opposed to just being a drummer. I wasn't taught to play or anything.

What did you do when the band wasn't earning anything?

Worked in bars. But I've done stints in factories, the shit shift work, and the agency work. I was doing it for a reason, so I could afford a new cymbal or new snare drum. Drum gear costs so much bloody money.

Did it feel rocky when you started?

We started out doing blues covers and...

Sorry, I meant was it a bit touch and go...

Oh! Yeah, massively. It certainly wasn't easy. We had a few put downs.

What made you realise it might be possible?

We did a gig in Bury at a place called Monty's. It was packed and my mum and dad came down and they saw me play. They were just like, "You should go with it." I think they could see I was enjoying it. And as a drummer, that feeling is just everything, where you can lose yourself when playing.

That's what it's all about?

I think it is for me.

Mark Potter said he never doubted Elbow would be a success. Did you feel the same way?

Ultimately, I felt that it was going to happen, yeah. The reality of the situation was a bit up and down, though. We had a lot of self-belief because we hung out together, and when we weren't hanging out we were working to be able to hang out as a band. That sort of mindset was almost secondary to the success factor, we just wanted to earn a living by playing music.

Back when you were just another band on the circuit, what took the band's profile up a notch?

As soon as we got Phil Chadwick on board, our manager, lots of things changed. We were trying hard to get a record deal. It didn't happen. But every time something bad happened, Phil would just say, "I'll sort this out." And he did.

Did you have a backup plan in case things didn't work out?

Not really, even when things were pretty bad. We got a record deal with Island Records, but within a year we got dropped because they were bought out by Universal. And it was just like, "Fucking hell!"

That must have felt shit...

Yeah, really shit. I really felt like I'd been kicked in the bollocks. We'd recorded this album, hung out with the great and the good, people we'd looked up to like Peter Gabriel. It was amazing. Then we got dropped. I just remember Phil saying, "I'll get a loan, it'll keep

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“THE STAR-QUALITY THING. IT WAS A GOOD TIME, DON'T GET ME WRONG, BUT THINGS ONLY SEEMED TO BECOME A BIT CLEARER ONCE I STOPPED DRINKING.”

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“IT’S BEEN A GREAT
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us going for another six months, leave it with me.” So we did. After a while, we got signed to V2, and then they ran out of money. That felt like another massive kick in the teeth at the time too. When I look back on it today, though, I’m glad we didn’t make it on the first album. There was always something that happened that kept pushing us forward. There was always something else on the horizon.

That’s how you honestly feel?

Yeah. [Pauses] It’ll be weird to hear the new stuff, but we’ll see what it’s like. I’ll have to go down in disguise.

The Seldom Seen Kid was a breakthrough album in many ways for Elbow. What do you associate with that album now?

Winning the Mercury Music Prize. That was intense.

You’d been a band for 18 years before you won the Mercury Music Prize. What did winning it represent?

We were a 20-year overnight success. There was a lot of mixed emotions, to be honest. Part of me was relieved and the other part was like, “Oh fuck!” It was a bit like being a rabbit in the headlights because suddenly people were taking photographs of us and inviting us to awards ceremonies. That’s when the fun bus pulled up and things started to get a bit more intense. For me, at least. I got a bit carried away with it all as opposed to thinking, “Ok, the hard work starts now.” I think I could have handled it better.

Better in what sense?

The “star-quality” thing. It was a fucking good time, don’t get me wrong, but things only seemed to become a bit clearer once I stopped drinking. I’d had a good

run, and I realised I needed to do something else.

Will it be strange seeing the band perform? How does it feel thinking about it now?

I don’t really feel anything in the best possible way. The reality of it will be strange I’m sure, but I’ve a lot going on at the minute so I haven’t given it too much thought. I know that sounds like a cop-out, but I’m exploring what I can bring to other people because I’ve been in the same band forever. I know they’re using a guy called Alex Reeves, who played on some of Guy’s solo stuff. He’s a great guy and a cracking drummer. In many ways, I’m looking forward to it.

Has how you feel about playing drums changed?

My playing has come on so much. It’s been a great chance for me to sit and play and just not think about how it’s going to fit into something, or how someone is going to react to it. I’m very lucky in the fact that I can do it.

From my perspective, your current situation is quite odd, because you’ve spent 25 years doing what most people strive to achieve, and now you’re going back to the start in some ways...

Yeah. I’m 43, so I’m still relatively young.

How did you know the time was right?

I knew if I didn’t do it now, we’d do another record and it’d be another two years before I could think about it again, because of the recording and touring. Then I’d be 45. I just saw that pattern continuing.

How was it as a process to make that decision? Did you feel like you knew what you needed to do or were you going back and forth about it?

I knew I needed to. I didn’t really go back and forth about it. I just thought about it a lot, then made a decision.

I’m the opposite. I seem to exist in a constant state of indecision...

I know what you mean. It was scary in some ways, but when you know, you know. Sometimes you just have to trust your instincts.

Going into teaching, there’s already a lot of people doing that, and doing it well, especially online...

I look at stuff online, and some days I think, “I’m a fucking joke, I can’t do that. I’ll never be able to do that.” But then I’ll sit and play, and something will happen and I’ll come up with something. Then I’ll work on a few tracks, and by then I’ll have forgotten whatever was making me feel shit earlier. I wanted to be more of a mentor as opposed to just being a teacher.

I’ve always been drawn to these independent, solitary activities, like surfing, and I suppose drumming can be one of those too. I teach some music therapy classes, and that sense of being aware of your own body is important. With music, that translates into coordination, musicianship, and groove. These are things that aren’t necessarily a technical skill, but make so much difference to how a person plays. That’s what I like most about the drum set. It still excites me.

♦ ♦ ♦

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ANNA PRIOR

How To ICE BISCUITS

Words by Tom Hoare



Anna Prior, by her own admission, does not suffer fools gladly. I don't doubt it. At her flat in south London, there are boxes piled up in the hallway. A house move is imminent, partially fuelled by some sort of dispute with the neighbours. I felt it polite not to ask.

On the wall in the living room is a poster for the band in which she plays drums: Metronomy.

Since the release of Metronomy's debut in 2006, their melodic, electronic pop music has slowly but surely carved out a sizable hollow in the chalky bedrock of the British music scene. They occupy that grey area between the mainstream and the underground; a position that seems deliberately stand-offish. They opted not to tour following the release of their most recent record, which isn't exactly standard practice, and instead took a year off.

The release of Metronomy's third LP, *The English Riviera* (2011), won them critical acclaim. It was a sleek, down-tempo blend of funk, soul, and new wave synth, with tight, poppy beats alongside much looser, fatter grooves evoking Jabbo Starks.

When Anna was 14, she decided she wanted to be a drummer for a living. Two years later she already had her first paying gig. Two years later and she'd made it into the NME.

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The Drummer's Journal: It's a shame what happened to NME...

Anna Prior: Yeah. You can just pick it up for free now. It's not what it once was.

Did you used to buy it?

Yeah, I always did. When I was a bit older, I joined some proper bands





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“I USED TO WORK IN A
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with management. You'd get wind that an NME reviewer might be at your gig, and I'd be like [drastic increase in pitch, fluttering hand motions], "Oh my god I'm so excited!" Then I'd go and check every week to see if we'd made it into NME.

And did you make it?

Yeah! I think I've been in it three times. I've kept every single clipping. Somewhere.

We should probably backtrack a bit. Are you from Yorkshire?

I grew up in Doncaster. It's an old coal-mining town. There are some super-creative people from Doncaster. But otherwise, you've got shitheads like Jeremy Clarkson.

I had no idea he was from Doncaster.

Unfortunately. His parents owned a Paddington Bear factory there.

I did not know that.

Diana Rigg – was once a Bond girl and was more recently in Game of Thrones - she is from Doncaster too.

What was your first band like?

In school, I was in a Silver Chair cover band called Ignition.

Wow. Silverchair. They were huge in the 90s.

We also played a couple of Nirvana covers, like you do. Touring bands never really came to Doncaster, though. Occasionally Keane would play at The Dome, and it'd be like, "I don't really like Keane that much."

Poor Keane.

Then I moved to Leeds for a bit. Then I ended up in London.

You said once that moving to London was the best decision you've ever made...

It was because I met Joe Mount [of Metronomy]...

[Anna's phone rings, brief intermission]

Sorry about that. I volunteer at this place down the road, and they always need drivers. And it's driving these big vans around London. I'm always up for it. I can drive anything.

What are you delivering?

It's for a charity called Fareshare. They take donated food from Tesco and Waitrose and distribute it to homeless shelters. They do a lot of good.

Sounds like a good gig.

Yeah. I've had some pretty bad jobs in the past, though. I used to work in a biscuit factory icing biscuits. It was mostly loads of pissed off art students wearing hairnets and little pinnies, icing away. I think because I'm from the north, I've got a really good work ethic. If I need money then I'll just get a job. I also worked in the Science Museum. It was quite fun.

That does actually sound fun.

It was pretty low pressure. I'd just stand there with a radio and a name badge and be like, "Hi!" There was an IMAX screen there too so I'd stand in there for health and safety, in case there was a fire or whatever.

Did you have to clear up the popcorn that people seem to throw around like confetti?

You couldn't buy snacks because it was all educational. It was all 3D dinosaurs and that sort of thing.

It's oppressive that you can't buy snacks...

Also, sometimes I'd supervise the glasses.

♦♦♦
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 SUPER-CREATIVE
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 JEREMY CLARKSON."
 ♦♦♦



MARKUS FELIX VIA CREATIVE COMMONS

**Supervise the glasses?**

You know, the 3D glasses you get at IMAX. When you're done with them, they all go on a little conveyor belt through some disinfectant and they're reused.

I've always wondered what happened to those.

One day, there was a convention for orthopaedic surgeons at the Science Museum, and they were showing these incredibly graphic images of surgery on the IMAX screen. Pretty much all the science centre staff were like [makes retching noise]. It was pretty gross.

You didn't fancy becoming a surgeon?

I never knew what I wanted to do really. I got drum lessons when I was 14 and then just sort of knew I wanted to be a drummer. It sounds cliché. Playing drums changed my life, though. It changed how I thought about the world.

It sounds like you had a revelation.

I suppose it was. Learning to play made the world seem smaller and more accessible. All of a sudden, there were these ideas of being a musician that didn't exist before, in my mind at least. I threw all my eggs into one basket quite young, so I've had to make it work really. When I first had drum lessons, it came quite naturally to me. It's probably the only thing in my life that I've been naturally good at.

What was your first paid gig?

I was 16 and playing drums for 50 quid a night. We did covers and played all the workingmen's clubs in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. We'd do two 45-minute sets, and inbetween sets the OAPs would play bingo. I grew to quite like bingo.

How would you describe how your career has progressed since then?

I'm quite conflicted about saying this, but there was an element of luck involved. I've worked hard and been skint for years, and trying to hold down a job and do gigs at the same time isn't that easy. But

I think I was in the right place at the right time with Metronomy. When I first joined in 2009, we were playing really small stages. It all changed in 2011 when The English Riviera came out. Then it went a bit crazy.

Why are you conflicted about saying luck was involved?

I think some people look at me, as a woman, and they're like, "You got this job because you're a woman." Or that my life is somehow easier because being a woman on the drums is a novelty. I've had some shitty comments and stuff from people in the past, and it did kind of scare me in a way.

What would you say to someone who thinks like that?

It's a combination of working hard, doing shit gigs, meeting the right people and being in the right place at the right time. I started at the bottom and, over time, it's felt a bit like I've been getting promotions the same as you would in any job. I see it like I've done a musical apprenticeship. Though I am still a Luddite in some ways.

A Luddite? I thought you played electronic percussion, too?

No. Hitting a plastic pad is soulless for me. It doesn't feel real. There's no acoustic sound. I like being surrounded by the noise of a real drum kit and geeking out about them. I'm a bit of an acoustic drum nerd really. I love all the vintage stuff. Wait... am I being preachy again?

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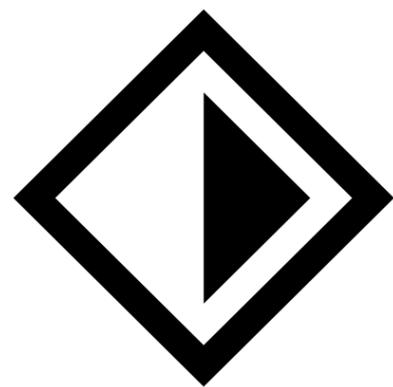
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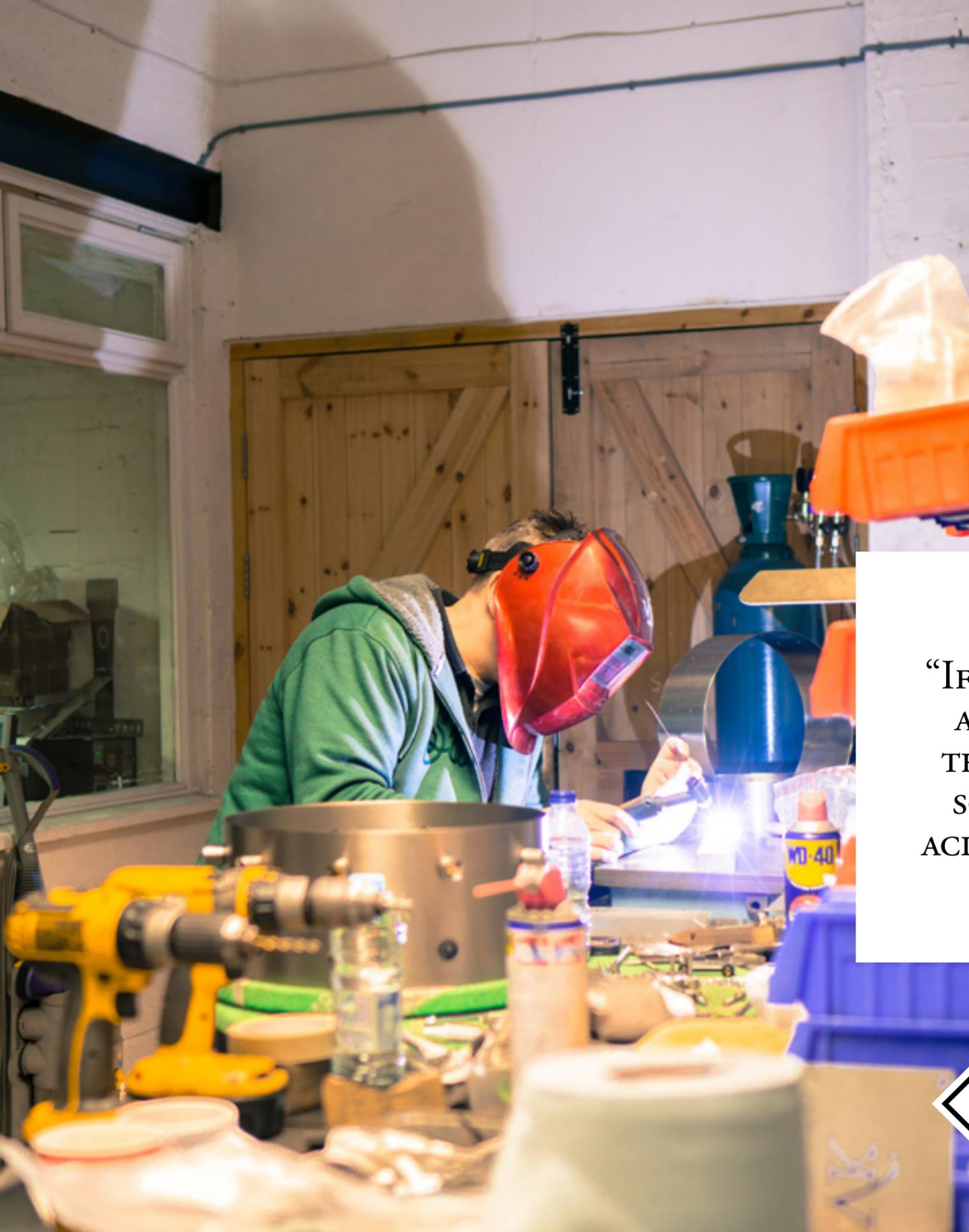


SHEFFIELD STEEL

VK DRUMS' ALAN VAN KLEEF

Words & photography by Tom Hoare





RIGHT: DON'T
LOOK DIRECTLY AT
THE FLAME

♦ ♦ ♦
“IF SOMEONE WANTS
A PATINA FINISH,
THE SHELL HAS TO
SOAK IN A VAT OF
ACID FOR A MONTH.”
♦ ♦ ♦



The train, which had been happily winding through the Yorkshire countryside, comes to a halt on the outskirts of town. The conductor, over a tannoy which cuts in and out intermittently, relays an indecipherable message, presumably intended to explain why the train had stopped.

The man sitting opposite me narrows his eyes as if deliberately dulling his vision to improve the sensory reception of his ears. He ponders the conductor's announcement with a look of confusion. “Did he just say asses? Asses on the line? Like, donkeys?”

Someone offers clarification: “No, trespassers I think.”

“Oh.”

There's a silence.

“They are donkeys, these kids,” an elderly man sat to my right announces. He readjusts his flat cap. “They'll get themselves killed one day. They don't go to school. They just come and throw stones at trains.”

He wasn't wrong. After three minutes of the train tentatively creeping forward, almost like it knew what was coming, a small group of hooded youths emerge from behind a dilapidated signal shed to pepper the side of the train with small pebbles. The stones rattle off the windows and the side of the carriage. The man in the flat cap leans over me to shake his fist at the stone throwers, much to their delight, before they quickly disappear from view.

“Every effing time,” he seethes.

A few minutes later, the train pulls into Sheffield station,



and everyone alights. I look at the side of the train from the platform. It looks completely fine. In my peripheral vision, I see the old man in the flat cap has stopped to look at it too.

“British Rail, Class 185,” he says, tapping the side of the carriage as if he’s proud of it. “Aluminium. It’ll take a lot worse than that.”

♦ ♦ ♦

In the station car park, a silver BMW is waiting. Inside is Alan van Kleef. He specialises in making bespoke metal drums, mostly from steel and aluminium. He’s on the phone talking to someone about finalising an order of custom snares he’s shipping to China.

Alan spent a long time living in East London, and his leather jacket and cropped, combed hair make him look like a bit of a geezer. His voice has a slight cockney lilt.

We drive to his workshop and it quickly becomes apparent that Alan is not one to hang around. “This is an ex-police pursuit car,” he states. We move off at a green light as if we’re vying for pole position at Monza.

His workshop is inside an industrial metal fabrication factory, tucked away in the corner. You have to walk through the factory to get to it. We navigate around enormous towers of sheet metal and hulking, hissing machinery. A lot of the guys in the factory look like they could have worked there their whole lives.

We go into a room in the back – the kitchen – so called because

it has a microwave, fridge and kettle. He offers me a cup of tea, but not before leaving the room to check which mug I’m allowed to use. “People here are very protective of their mugs,” he smiles. “So don’t break it.”

In comparison to the factory floor, Alan’s workshop is almost cosy. In some senses, it’s more like a lab. “I do a lot of experimentation in here,” he says, gesturing to several large tubs of industrial acids stacked in the corner.

We begin chatting about how he came to start building drums. “My original plan was to make myself some 24mm thick triple-flanged stainless hoops,” he says. “I got a quote for them, just enough for one kit, and it came to four and a half grand.”

The Drummer’s Journal: Four and a half thousand pounds, just for hoops?

Alan van Kleef: Yeah. So instead, I made my own 12mm ones. They worked out a lot cheaper, but they were still expensive to make. They were about £300 a pair.

Did you move to Sheffield specifically to do metalwork?

No. Being in Sheffield did start this off, but mostly it came off the back of another business I had. When I lived in London, I worked as a sound engineer. When we decided to move to Sheffield, I did one of these courses where you pay £4.5k to train as an electrician. At the time, the government was making a big thing about solar panels, so there was a lot of work fitting those. As soon as I qualified, they slashed the solar panel incentives and it pretty much killed the business.

That sounds unfortunate...

Yeah. I just felt, “This is absolutely typical. It’s exactly the sort of thing that would happen to me.” Two years of training, getting up at 6 am, and commuting across London, all for £50 a day. Prior to that, I lived in Ibiza.

♦ ♦ ♦

“I TRIED TO PUT MY
BED ON STILTS ONCE. IT
COLLAPSED IN THE NIGHT
WHEN I WAS ASLEEP.”

♦ ♦ ♦



♦♦♦

“I USED TO DRUM AT RAVES, A LOT OF DRUM AND BASS STUFF. ONCE A MONTH, I WAS THE RESIDENT DRUMMER AT THE MINISTRY OF SOUND.”

♦♦♦



Ibiza sounds interesting. Were you a raver?

Yup. I was drumming, DJing and clubbing. This was back in the 90s. I used to drum at raves, a lot of drum and bass stuff. Once a month, I was the resident drummer at the Ministry of Sound.

That must have been one of the biggest clubs in the world back then?

It was really in its prime. I played a few raves at Wembley too. I went to some good parties, that's for sure.

How did you end up making drums, then?

I had a basic pillar drill I bought from Machine Mart for about 50 quid. I bought an old tumble dryer, put it on its back and welded in a pipe and tabletop and that was my sanding table. That's about it. I was working out of my garage initially.

Do you ever miss that?

The garage? Not really. It was tiny. You'd walk in, and there would be the tumble dryer on the left, the little pillar drill next to that, then a kitchen worktop with a few bits on it. The rest of the space was taken up by a homemade tent where I'd do all the polishing. There was a wasp's nest too. That was less useful.

Didn't you have a background in metal fabrication before you started VK?

No. I've always liked trying to make things, though. I remember at school I wanted to make my own hi-hat stand, so I got an old, hollow music stand, put a piece of metal rod through it, and that rod rested on my foot. I only had one cymbal, so I used a beer tray as the bottom hi-hat, and then two pieces of Meccano bolted to hold the cymbal in place. Worked ok, surprisingly.

You were an inventor, then?

[Laughs] Maybe. I tried to put my bed on stilts once. It

collapsed in the night when I was asleep. I also tried to make a bass drum pedal from an old mushroom box and a coat hanger. Wasn't so great.

Did any inventions take off?

Most of them broke, probably for the best. But now, I take it a bit more seriously.

How much of an initial investment did you have to make to get things up and running?

I probably invested about £30k in machinery and other bits. I bought a CNC lathe, a mill, and a laser.

A laser? Does that cut things?

It's for marking. Putting logos on drum shells and things.

That sounds expensive.

It was about £20k.

Did you feel a bit like a kid at Christmas when it got delivered?

Not so much, because it took about two weeks to get it all set up and calibrated correctly. It took me a while to get my head around how it works. It's incredibly sensitive.

What metal do you work with most frequently?

Stainless steel. Aluminium I started doing a couple of years ago, as well as brass, copper, titanium and magnesium.

Magnesium? Isn't that incredibly flammable? I think I remember doing an experiment in school with magnesium.

Yeah. You can't laser cut it because it's flammable. It's used in flares because it's really bright. It's also really light. The only place you can get it in the UK is from aerospace or racing companies. It's not cheap.

What about carbon fibre?

Carbon I'm going to stay away from. It's not nice to work with. At least, for me it's not. There are already companies doing that, it's pointless me trying to do it.

Do you ever get customer requests that sound hideous?

I've had a couple where I've said, "Are you sure you want to go in that direction?" But they're minor things. People generally seem to have good taste.

How many hours do you spend on an average snare?

It's hard to say. If someone wants a patina finish, the shell has to soak in a vat of acid for a month. The patina for stainless steel I've started doing is a mixture of copper sulphate and sulphuric acid. I do a green and blue copper patina using ammonia with Himalayan pink salt sprinkled on it. You have to repeat that process every few days. I've got some hydrochloric acid too but I have to be careful as it'll corrode mild steel, even if it's sealed in a plastic bottle. But I like it when customers ask, "Can you do this?" and I've never done it before. It pushes me to try it. I always find a way to figure it out. And young Tom, my apprentice, loves watching me almost blow myself up. I started brazing brass and that's quite dangerous. But yeah, I enjoy coming to work. [Pause] Do you want to see the laser in action?

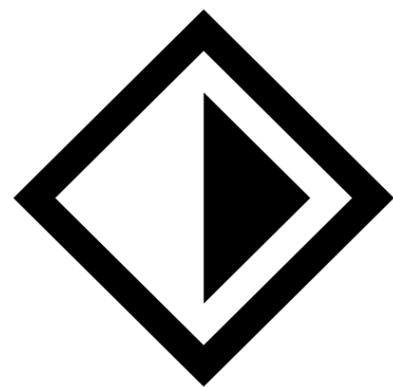
Absolutely I do.

♦ ♦ ♦

♦ ♦ ♦
 "I JUST FELT, "THIS IS
 ABSOLUTELY TYPICAL.
 IT'S EXACTLY THE SORT
 OF THING THAT WOULD
 HAPPEN TO ME."
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DRUMMER'S
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AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

tdj



THE DRUM THING

DEIRDRE O'CALLAGHAN

Introduction by Tom Hoare

♦ ♦ ♦

The Drum Thing is a book by renowned music photographer Deirdre O'Callaghan.

It's the culmination of four years of photographing and interviewing some of the world's most iconic drummers. Over the last few years, Deirdre's work has appeared in this magazine on more than a few occasions.

Now the project is complete, we're proud to display a snippet of what the book itself contains. We hope you enjoy it.





BRIAN CHIPPENDALE

Lightning Bolt / Black Pus

It feels like all the shows I've ever played are so crazy. Even if they're not, even if nothing's happening, in my mind they're so crazy because I'm trying to play to the edge of my ability all the time. So they're all just like blinking your eyes really fast for an hour. They all seem really intense. Some have been more intense, like playing during the summer in July in New Orleans in a storefront with no air conditioning. Or another one in Louisiana – I remember the outlet caught on fire. I think it was because it was so hot, as we were running all this gear, this fire started in the corner. I thought it would be funny to tape my mask to my head. I was like, "It's so goddamn hot in here, I'm not going to take it off," – and then ended up almost passing out.





JULIE EDWARDS

Deap Vally

I like playing that's ridiculously heavy. Someone who stays behind and makes everything so pimp – like John Bonham.

Next page:

ZACH HILL

Death Grips / Hella

I have a hard time talking about music because I play music. It's my whole language and I play to express things that I can't verbalize. I'm slightly a masochist by nature in a lot of ways. Playing, I want it to be biting me, grating on me while I'm doing it. It's like I'm concentrating so hard that I'm not concentrating at all. I want to be overtaken when I'm playing and then that's the time in my day not to think about other things and let something else in, let my body host a different type of energy through playing the drums.

JIM BLACKS...
A...
PHAM...
R...
H...

ZACH HILL

Death Camp / Hello, Photographed in California



PAULI THE PSM

Gorillaz / Damon Albarn

The drum machine's got a spirit in the same way that a human drummer has. The traditional thing to say would be like, you know, a human drummer has energy and it's alive and will bring its personality and its touch and its flavour. No, the drum machine is exactly the same: it's an instrument, and you're programming the drum machine in the same way that you programme your body to play the drum kit. When I play a drum machine, I really go to town on the fact that it's an instrument that needs to be pushed to its limits in the same way a clarinet or a drum kit or whatever should be played. I think drum machines are amazing. Look at Jam and Lewis – those guys made patterns that drummers cannot play. Look at what Skrillex is doing now with dance music. You can't keep up with that stuff. Questlove, he replicates drum machines. Look at what J Dilla did with the drum machine. That is more than what any drummer can do. Except Quest or Chris Dave.



QUESTLOVE

The Roots / D'Angelo / Elvis Costello / Al Green / Jay Z / The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon

I got introduced to jazz as a punishment. I had deceived my older cousin into buying me a 45 of a song that my parents wouldn't allow me to have. I asked them for it, and they said, 'No, we don't like that song, that song is dirty, you're not getting it.' And after about three weeks of plotting and scheming, always missing the song when it was on the radio, trying to record it ... It was a song called Juicy Fruit by James Mtume, who was the percussionist for Miles Davis. It seems harmless by today's standards ... All of Miles Davis's musicians were heavy jazz cats but in the mid-'80s they all wanted to get paid, so they all did regular pop music. This was one of his breakthrough singles and Notorious B.I.G. sampled it for his first single, Juicy. But I was twelve at the time and I didn't understand double entendres. I really thought, maybe it's about a stick of gum, Juicy Fruit. Stupid me! I thought it was about candy. I didn't know it was a metaphor for sex.

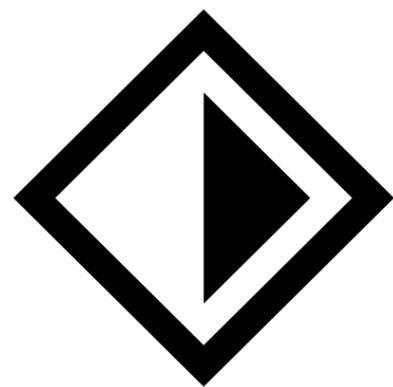


DEIRDRE O'CALLAGHAN

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