

BURNT FROWNER

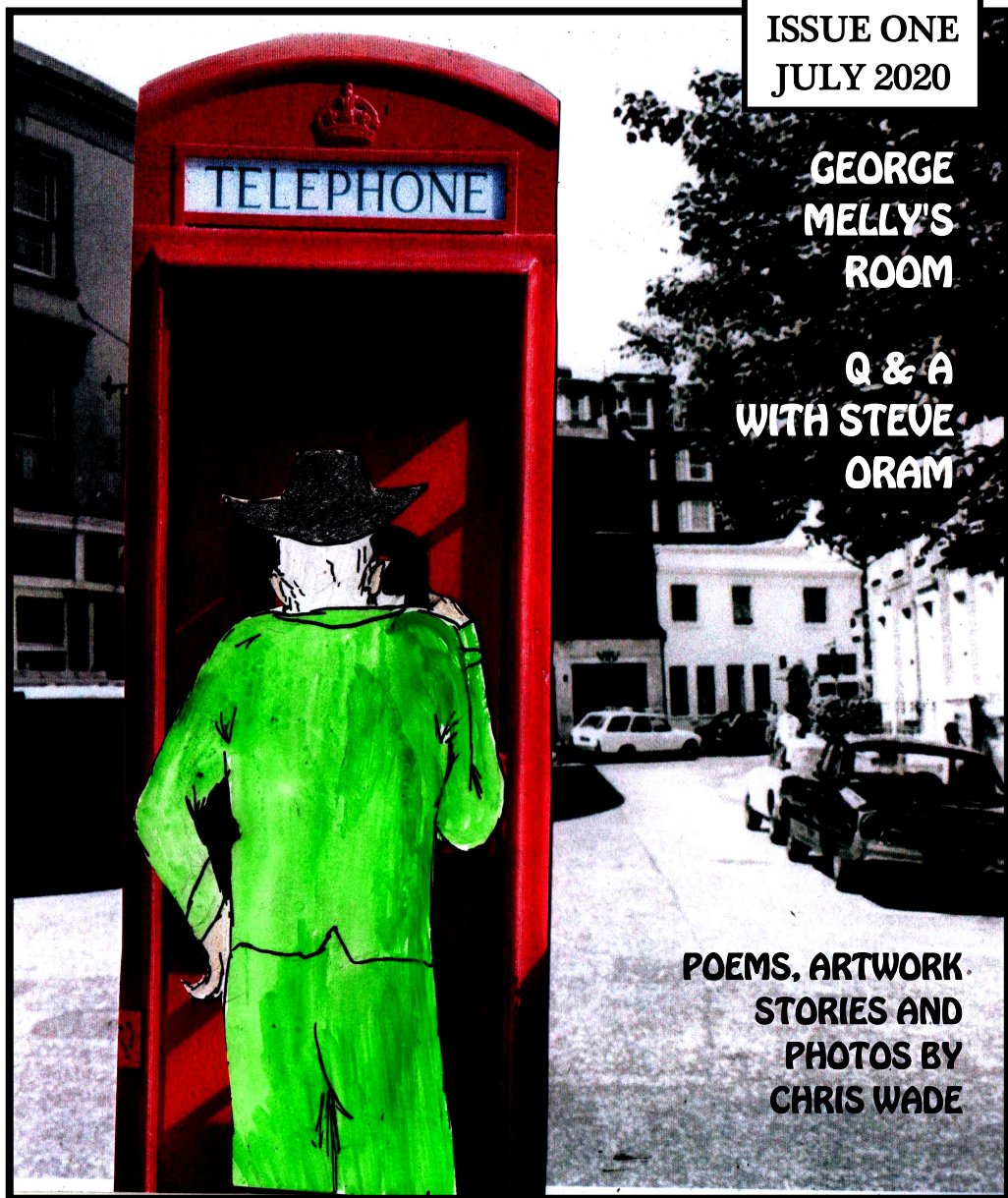
THE CHRIS WADE AND DODSON & FOGG MAGAZINE

ISSUE ONE
JULY 2020

GEORGE
MELLY'S
ROOM

Q & A
WITH STEVE
ORAM

POEMS, ARTWORK,
STORIES AND
PHOTOS BY
CHRIS WADE



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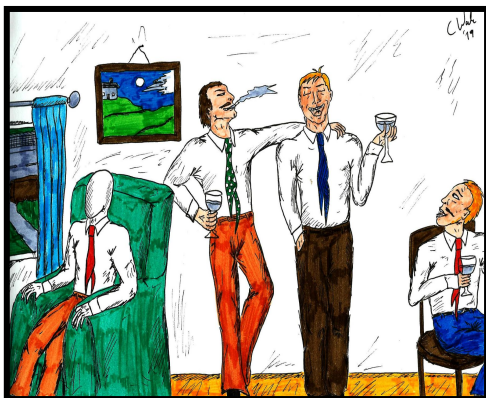
DODSON AND FOGG

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WELCOME

So what is this thing? Well, if you are familiar with my music project Dodson and Fogg, or my books, documentaries, audiobooks or whatever else I've done you might have discovered or tripped over, then this weird little publication will make at least some sense. If you have stumbled upon it on a late night internet journey, you will either react by moving immediately on to the next website, calling me names I will not be able to hear (whispering such things as "Pretentious tosser") or throwing your PC, laptop or phone into the fireplace, and if there's a fire it will thereupon burn into nothing.

Either way I hope you enjoy this new publication, which is an outlet for my poems, photography, artwork, writings thoughts on recent obsessions and interests and other varied ideas. In between making albums and writing books, there is often a gap for other things which end up sliding down the back of the sofa. Burnt Frowner hopes to fill this void and in it I hope to cram all kinds of things. This issue features some new poems, some recent photographs, artworks, and thoughts on the era we live in. The issue also features a Q and A with filmmaker and actor Steve Oram, someone whose work I am into at the minute. Hope you enjoy the eclectic self indulgence ahead of you....





CORONA-DIARY

SATURDAY 13 JUNE

Pleasant Saturday morning as I write. Was woken at 5 by the cats (well, Violet, tapping things on the side, this time Lily's watering can money box), got up, napped on sofa until 8, started watching a documentary on Garry Shandling... will finish it later. I released a new Dodson EP this week. People seem to like it. All good.

Lily is making a cushion house for violet now, Linzi is looking at pictures of gangrenous body parts on the lap top... that sounds weird, but she read about gangrene in an article and now I can hear her upstairs making sounds of disgust, obviously going through a gangrenous gallery. This is not a normal household I don't think. Spoke to dad this morning, had a good laugh. Also Nigel Planer sent me some more stuff for one of his songs, which is called Winter, and is very nice too... just need to do some mixing and sorting it out.

Corona deaths were 200 yesterday. Government have said we can meet and hug parents/grandparents, but just because they said I can doesn't mean I will risk it. The BLM riots continue, banning episodes of Fawlty Towers and knocking down statues. Eventful times. Been watching some French films for a book I am doing on Gerard Depardeu's film career. Really fun, or l'amusement.

IMAGES



THE PM SPOTTED IN GARFORTH, LEEDS

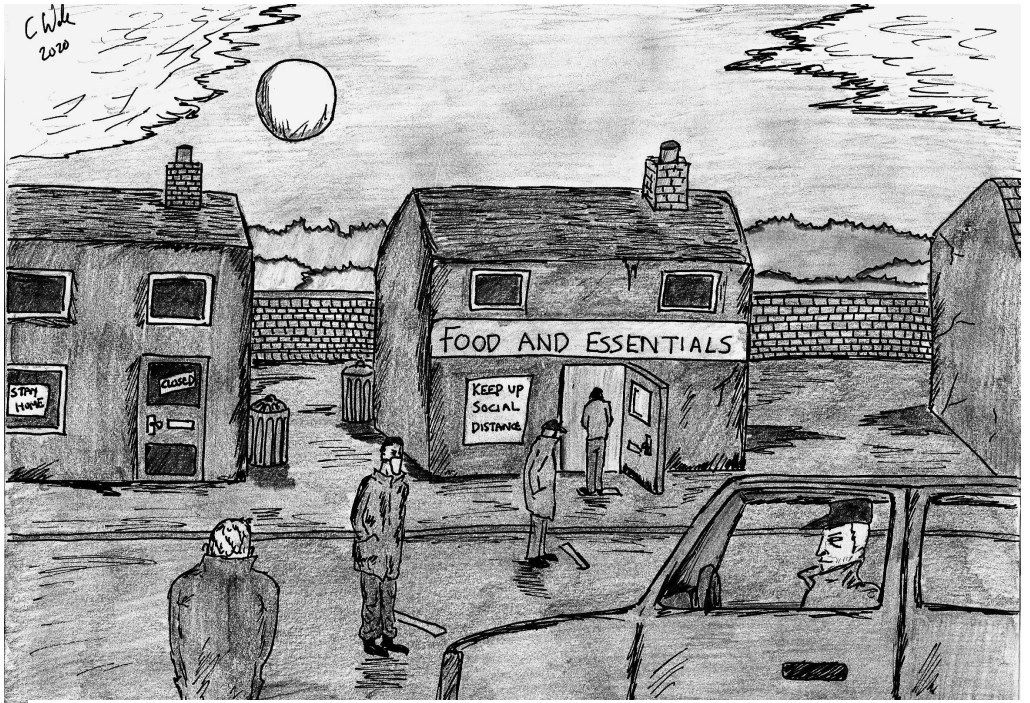
If you are wondering what the Prime Minister, Mr Boris Johnson, has been up to lately, you may be surprised to discover that he was hanging about Garforth, a suburb of Leeds in West Yorkshire. I spotted him getting some dosh out of a Halifax ATM. Observing him from a parked vehicle, though I was not spying on him, I saw Johnson count the tenners in a Scrooge-esque manner. After pocketing his cash he crossed over to the offy and purchased a scratch card, which seemed to be a success, as I saw him punch the air. He then nipped into the Co-Op and came out three minutes later with a packet of malt loaf, which he ate unbuttered and without slicing, straight from the pack. I subsequently lost the PM who I presume went back to his busy day job.





Top: Seaside Cafe, New Brighton, Feb 2020
Below: "The Clown Ahead" (2020)





"Outside", a drawing I did in March 2020, just as lockdown tightened and we found ourselves queuing like zombies outside shops...



"House in the Mist"
(2020)



INTERVIEW WITH STEVE ORAM

Steve Oram is an actor, screenwriter and filmmaker, best known perhaps for his script and starring role, alongside Alice Lowe, in the wonderful Sightseers. He is also the writer/director of the remarkable Aaaaaaaah! Here, I take this opportunity to fire a few questions his way, especially for Burnt Frowner.

I thought Aaaaaaaah! was brilliant. How did you come up with the idea for it?

I have always been obsessed with how similar we are to monkeys. And also how we humans tend to feel we have progressed light years beyond them. And so I wanted to make a satire about that somehow. The idea of a world without language came about when experimenting with a short film idea, in which some girls don't want to pay their gas bill and so go to the headquarters of the gas company, kill a random employee and eat him in the park. The stripping away of language allowed a way of looking more starkly at our actions, and made me laugh a lot. When people can't define themselves with language, their behaviour tends to seem quite monkey like.

I watch a lot of your short films; do you find working on that length of film liberating and free?

Yes, short films are great fun. I have a rule that you should never spend more than £100 on a short. They are just sketches and a way of trying out your ideas. You can do whatever you want (as long as you can film it in a park!). The shorts themselves are fairly tightly structured when we film them, with some looseness around how the scenes develop, so the actors can play around. Sound is also very important in the process, and that's where most of the work ends up being for me. With longer pieces of work such as Aaaaaaaah! there is more planning and money involved, but I've tried to keep that same ethos.

With Aaaaaaaah!, you had quite a cast. How was it directing the range of people from Julian Barrett to Toyah Willcox?

Everyone in the cast of Aaaaaaaah! totally committed themselves to it. I guess you wouldn't agree to be in such a film unless you were going to would you!? So I love them all for going with me on it. Most of the cast are friends who I'd worked with before (such as Julian, Noel, Tom, JRT etc). I didn't know Toyah or Lucy, but they just fit in so well. So I found directing everyone very easy. Most of the parts were written for the people that actually played them. And the preparation was good enough that everyone knew what was being asked of them. Most of all they seemed to enjoy being apes.

Sightseers is one of my favourite British films. How long did it take for you and Alice Lowe to write it?

I think about 4 years writing, with a couple of years of playing with the idea before that. We had the initial idea in about 2005, from a live comedy sketch we'd written. We filmed a taster in 2006, then started writing the film script in about 2007, finishing in 2011

Also, what was the filming like on it? Was it a fun or gruelling film to make?

It was great fun. Alice and I had done our writing work and could now just enjoy acting. Which is a lot easier than writing I can tell you. We were encouraged by Ben (Wheatley, the director) to improvise, and so we gave them hours and hours of stuff. Alice and I can waffle on indefinitely if you let us. The most gruelling thing was the extreme weather that hit us at certain points in the Lake District.

Poster for
"Aaaaaaaah!"



I love your short film Connections, what are your memories of making that one and seeing it get so much attention?

I had already written the Connections song which I did as part of a live act I was doing at the time. So I recorded it and plotted out the film with an editor I knew called Nick Lear who worked out the timings of every shot to the tenth of a second I think. It was brilliant to work with Alex Kirk, one of my best pals and longest collaborators from the comedy scene. I'm not obsessed with him as I am in the film, honest...

POEMS by Chris Wade

Of That Contradictory Age

Sitting here by dim lamp light
I turn the latest book page
And I realise when I look at my hands
I'm of that contradictory age

While it's clear my hair is thinning
I still get teenage spots
I'll do a difficult crossword
But prefer doing dot to dots

I'll walk a street like a proper grown up
Because that's how it's supposed to be
But when I know no adult's looking
I'll happily climb a tree

I know how my money's earned now
I know it's down to me
Yet even after a long day's work
I still think things are free

I'll happily make that morning coffee
But moan when asked to sweep the floor
I know such things have got to be done
Yet find them all a bore

Oh when I hear the letter box flap
And the packages hit the floor

I see the postman through the glass
And childishly crouch by the door

In the garden I am right at home
Snipping the bushes and flowers
But when I'm back inside the house
I'll play hide and seek for hours

I'm of that rather difficult type
When I don't do what's expected
But now I am ever more aware
That my youth can't be resurrected

So I must get on with being an adult
And talk of things quite boring
I'll do the things that grown ups do
Like passing wind while snoring

The Train in the Distance

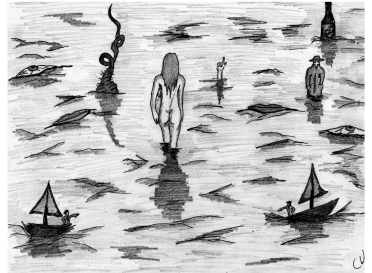
The smell of cut grass in the air
A studious bird which makes no sound
Stands out of reach of the feline brood
That horn I often hear echoes afar
A train just passing through
Carrying workers and day trippers alike
Two metres apart of course
Rules must be followed
Even by the trolley man
Offering butties and teas

Pulling the cart down the aisle
Careful not to bump into feet and dint shoes
I can hear it screech upon the hot metal tracks
Sweating faces peering through glass
Whizzing past the endless fields
And a weird shack in the overgrowth
As I sit beside the expanding tree
Miles away, unseen by them
And neighbours around me speak but say nothing
Wasted words instantly forgotten
Like a thought I might have myself
Vital now, but worthless within the hour
Up by the expanding tree
With the train in the distance
Which is merely passing through

The Echo

Inside the cave, I found
My echo is not the only echo
Nor the one sole voice
That's been heard there
Bouncing off the stone
Other faces, other sounds
Those distant echoes, unfamiliar
And no longer there
They're probably yelling elsewhere
Down some other cave
Where we'll never hear
Their echoes again

Chris Wade



The Sea of Night:
A Collection of Poems

OUT NOW

Chris's first poetry collection

Available here:

<http://wisdomtwinsbooks.weebly.com/poetry.htm>

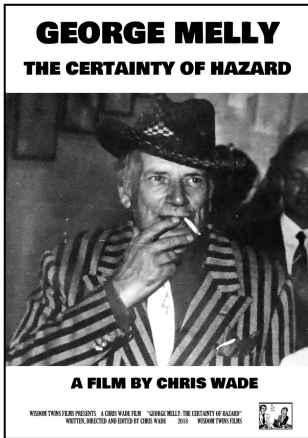


WALKING INTO GEORGE MELLY'S ROOM

THE MAKING OF A DOCUMENTARY BY CHRIS WADE

The idea to make a documentary film on George Melly came one Saturday morning out of the blue. I had always been aware of and liked Mr Melly, the colourfully dressed Surrealist and jazz singer, but save for a few book titles, the odd chat show viewing and his duet with The Stranglers, the charmingly titled Old Codger, I did not know that much about him. In the middle of 2018 I was going through one of my obsessive phases, something I have always had, when I fix myself on a certain subject, whether it be an actor, director, musician or artist, and have to collect, consume, learn and digest all I can about them. In this case it was Surrealism itself, or more precisely the Surrealist art movement.

This Saturday morning, between book and music projects, I was browsing art documentaries on You Tube, reclining on the sofa with a coffee, when I came across the Arena special of Melly and Surrealism, in which the great man got up, shaved, ate a boiled egg and made his way across town to the current Surrealism exhibition. On the way there he meets other interesting characters, though

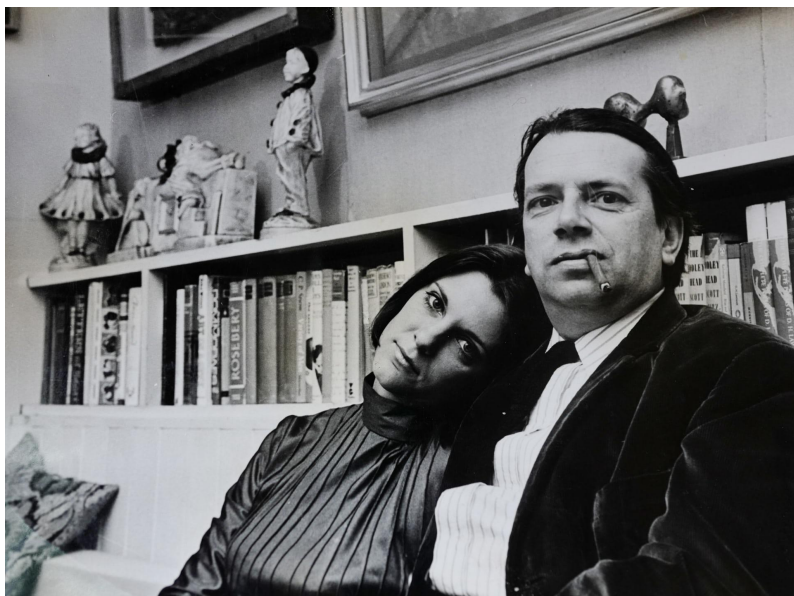


none as interesting as him, and gives the viewer his view on Magritte, Max Ernst, Andre Breton, the founder of Surrealism, and the shameful Dali. I was transfixed, feeling like I had come across someone who would have "got" me so to speak, but someone who unfortunately had already been dead for eleven years. I am not sure why, but from then on I became obsessed with

George Melly. I began collecting his books, quite speedily in fact, his records and CDs, reading and learning everything I could about this remarkable man.

For those unaware of him... He had begun as a jazz singer during the trad boom in Britain in the fifties and sixties, given up music to begin writing criticism for the Observer (I still have some cuttings of his film reviews), begun writing books on art and music (Revolt Into Style is the seminal book on pop culture to this day) before getting back on the jazz scene with John Chilton and his Footwarmers, touring and recording albums until the new millennium. In his final years, plagued by cancer and suffering from dementia, he continued to tour with Digby Fairweather before

joining the choir invisible in 2007. The mighty had fallen and in his wake was a void of boredom.



My first idea was to write a book on Melly's albums and books. One day I emailed the book publisher of his wife, Diana Melly, and received an email saying it was OK to call her and interview her for my book. Talking about George on the phone was wonderful, and Diana was warm in her recollections, though she did say Melly was easier to live with once he had dementia, much more so than when he was full of himself. Slyly I asked her if she would be OK with me making a documentary on her late husband, and she said yes. I don't know why, but I was expecting a firm Sod Off. Alas, I did not know Diana was so friendly and open. Within a couple of weeks I was on the coach to London, Shepherd's Bush in fact, the house where George had lived for the final stage of his life.

It was a boiling hot day in July when I boarded the coach, listening to a variety of music on my mp3 player, from Madonna to Melly himself. I was also due to meet an ex girlfriend of Melly's the same day, the art critic Louisa Buck, who George had seen during the 80s when he and Diana's marriage opened up. I got to Shepherd's Bush, a familiar area to me from my days recording with Rik Mayall and then of course Nigel Planer, a little bit earlier than arranged, so took a stroll round the street and the local park. I had seen this street on the BBC documentary George Mell'y's Last Stand, which I had watched when it aired in 2007, and here I was, waiting for my meeting with Diana. I go to tthe door and saw the sign on the buzzer, the handwritten "Melly", which reminded me of the personal importance this meeting had for me. She wasn't in. I feared the worst, figuring she had changed her mind and decided not to see me. Boiling hot and sweating like a pervert, I headed off towards the town centre of Shepherd's Bush where I thought I'd have a nose around while waiting. But down the road I passed Diana herself, carrying a large shopping bag and wearing a sun hat. I stopped her and said who I was.

"Great", she said, and I took the bag from her as we went back towards her house. She went ahead, opened the door and we went inside the dimly lit house, feeling like the location of a Leonora Carrington painting. We went into the dining room area beside the kitchen and sat at the large table there. Almost immediately, Diana went off and came back with a stack of photographs and memories. I looked through them almost fiendishly, taking pictures of them on my camera; snaps of George and Diana overloaded with goods

from the stalls at Portobello Road, of the family together, kids and all, and some of George singing, looking as eccentric as ever.

After looking through them I coyly got out my video camera. This was the first time I had filmed a video interview so I was nervous, but tried not to let it show, even though I was sweating profusely. Diana though, obviously used to people asking her about George, though probably not 30 odd year old sweaty Northerners, was calm and answered my questions with openness. I asked her about when they met (the early 60s on a march), when they got married (just as he gave up the jazz) and when their life together started to turn more unconventional. It was a wonderful chat and I loved hearing her memories of George, his frustrating side included. The highlight for me at least was when she discussed his ill health, his strange hallucinations (pre-Raphaelite women roaming through his bedroom being one that stood out) and the fact he was convinced he was playing Jesus in an upcoming big screen biopic on the Son of God.

I knew George had a separate bedroom at the Shepherd's Bush house, for I had seen him sitting in it, surrounded by Victorian furniture and Surrealist masterpieces, on pictures and in the odd documentary or interview. I coyly asked about his room and she asked if I wanted to see it. On the way up the three flights of stairs I peered at the paintings that were left on the walls, one a huge African piece he had brought back from a holiday one time, and in the bathroom a family portrait, I believe done by the same man who painted the cover to his Makin' Whoopee album (I know I am in obscure Melly land here, but please stay with me), which Diana really didn't like. I couldn't help but laugh at the distaste she had for

it, and how right she was in her criticism that the picture did not capture the likeness of any of the Melly clan.



Then we came towards his old room, the place where he had written, relaxed, drank, slept, thought, and, morbidly I might add, laid in bed until he died. For me, stepping in to the room, dimly lit and comforting in the way some Surrealist paintings are, was an extraordinary experience. I know some people will roll their eyes, but it felt spiritual to be in there. Melly himself was a famous humanist and atheist, so I know this concept would have irritated him, but this was how I felt and I cannot describe it any other way. It was eerie but, again, comforting at the same time. It was as if he was there in corner, handwriting an art review or penning his final memoir, *Slowing Down*. It was almost emotional to be in his place of study, rest and work. It reminded me of a story Melly himself told about visiting the hospital room where his hero, the doomed

Bessie Smith, had actually died and he was overcome with emotion. I was having a similar experience.

Later the same day, I went over to his one time girlfriend's house, Louisa Buck, whose house was adorned with gifts from Grayson Perry. She'd gone out with Melly in the 80s when she was in her twenties and he almost sixty. As soon as I arrived we started making hot drinks. She asked me to get the milk out and as I opened the fridge a massive pot of yoghurt fell out and went all over my foot. We sat down in her room and I filmed an interview with her, all her recollections of George. She was surprised by my enthusiasm for this long dead jazz singer, but the truth is I was very excited to hear of her old tales.

I headed back to Leeds that evening on the coach and over the next two weeks I did some phone interviews for the documentary, some of which I also used for my book on Melly. I spoke at length with artist Elda Arbamson, who had been one of Melly's girlfriends in the 80s, Wally Fawkes, the ageing clarinettist and former Daily Mail cartoonist (he drew comic strips as Flook) and Tom Melly, George's son. Once I had the film edited and released (excited, as this was my first documentary), I started selling DVDs of it and arranging screenings. The first screening was at the Chelsea Arts Club, the exclusive establishment for London's creatives. I went down as a guest and watched the film with about 100 people, many of whom knew Melly well. Afterwards I even took part in a Q and A with Diana and Tom Melly. Most surreal. To think around four months earlier I was just dipping my toes into Mellyland, here I was, presenting a documentary on him and answering questions about it

with his wife and son at either side of me. The certainty of hazard indeed.

Weirdly, I felt there was some help from beyond when I made this film. I felt Melly's presence, and Elda even said something to that effect too. It's ridiculous I know, but that is how I felt. I remember going into a collectable shop one day and randomly flicking through a large book that was lying on the table. I didn't even look



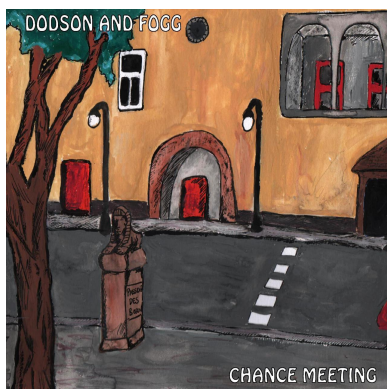
at the cover. In truth I was in there with my dad who was browsing stamps (an avid collector) and while standing to one side I casually opened it up. The first thing I saw were huge black letters reading GEORGE MELLY. The book was a series of recollections on a deceased newspaper figure, and I just happened to open it on Melly's entry. The chances? Slim. It sounds like nothing, but I felt there was something

unexplainable going on. Many people said it was as if I had known him or he had helped me make the film. I arranged other screenings, one at a jazz festival, a couple down south and one about 3 miles from myself, but I didn't go to any. Feedback was great from them all. I got the documentary bug after that. I loved the experience so much I dove straight into another film project. But I am not sure any will be as fun and special to me than the Melly experience.

You can get the documentary on DVD here:

<http://wisdomtwinsbooks.weebly.com/documentaries.html>

NEW DODSON AND FOGG RELEASE - CHANCE MEETING



In April and May I recorded a new Dodson and Fogg EP, called Chance Meeting. It features six tracks, Gone Away, Come Outside and See It All, No Difference, Do You Know What's Happening Here?, Caught in the Middle, and On This Sweet Night So Clear. Some of them were inspired by lockdown life, though it has to be said I am pretty used to being on my own

with my work and any time I spend with others is usually with my partner and daughter. This was very enjoyable to record. I thought an EP was just right. Once I had the six songs I felt satisfied enough to get on with something else. But more ideas are brewing already and I expect to start recording in August...

You can get the CD here:

<http://wisdomtwinsbooks.weebly.com/dodson-and-fogg-cds.html>

You can download it on Bandcamp here for a couple of quid:

<https://wisdomtwinsbooks.bandcamp.com/album/chance-meeting>