

HOUND DAWG

MAGAZINE

"I'M A HOUND DAWG!"

NO. 19 NOVEMBER 2013

LOU REED

**THE ALTERNATIVE ROCK
ICON AND VELVET
UNDERGROUND LEGEND
PASSES AWAY**

DRUMBO FRENCH

**BEEFHEART'S DRUM
LEGEND ON DON VAN**

**PLUS! INCREDIBLE
STRING BAND**

GYPSY DAVE MILLS





HOUND DAWG ISSUE 19

SEPTEMBER 2013

WISDOM TWINS BOOKS

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Here we are me old sea dog chummies, Hound Dawg issue 19. It's many a month since I had an apple, shiver me timbers, so I hope I don't turn grey and get the old scurvy.

HD Issue 19 is brought to you by the kind folks at Rent-a-Fork, the UK's most popular and successful fork rental company. They have a fork for your every need, every possible scenario and situation. Hell, they even have one for your Grandma's birthday.

This issue sees some cool content. From the print magazine Hound Dawg Music Issue 1 we have an interview with John Drumbo French of Captain Beefheart, the man who braved the storm of Trout Mask Replica with the eccentric Captain himself Don Van Vliet, taken from my Hound Dawg Music Zappa special issue, available from Wisdom Twins Books and Amazon etc.

We also have samples from two new titles on the WTB website, The Music of The Incredible String Band (a homage to the acid folk pioneers) and Gypsy Dave's (Donovan's road buddy in the 60s) autobiography.

I also have a tribute to one of my favourite artists Lou Reed, who just passed away. RIP Lou x

LOU REED

1942 - 2013

It was a sad day for music, the 27th of October, when news spread, rather quickly, that Lou Reed had died. It was all over the net, but some people just didn't want to believe it. "It's a hoax," they declared. "It's got to be a hoax!" Unfortunately it wasn't, but it would have been nice if it was. The truth is Lou wasn't a well man. He'd only had a liver transplant in May this year and a recent appearance with Mick Rock at the launch of a new book showed Reed looking weak, thin and tired. You could see the concern on Mick Rock's face, as he kissed his old comrade on the head and held his hand, looking as if he didn't want to let go of him. For a man who had always had so much life in him, at times so much venom and bite, so much spirit, it seems strange that he weakened and is now longer among us.

Most people will know, or should know that is, that Reed first emerged on the music scene in the seminal Velvet Underground. If you don't know anything about the Velvets, I suggest you go to issue 7 of Hound Dawg published back in 2010, which has a whole issue dedicated to them, with interviews and album reviews. Their short life span has inspired generations of admirers, copyists and worshippers, sparking what would become punk and alternative rock. Their debut album remains one of the most influential records of all time, the iconic banana cover by their mentor Andy Warhol now an essential part of pop history. The music on the album itself was and is breathtaking, a dark, edgy and sharp set of songs with vivid lyrics and imaginative blending of sounds. Waiting for the Man, Sunday Morning, Black Angel's Death Song



and Venus in Furs are all as varied from one another as they could possibly be. Of course the album sank without a trace and the Velvets/Warhol paring wasn't to last, with Reed reportedly "sacking" Warhol. Although John Cale's input was essential, his viola and bass lines in particular, it was Reed who drove the chariot, his lyrics as great, if not better, than anything Dylan wrote in the 60s. Tales of S and M sex, meeting dealers on corners, and a twisted love song to the dreaded H word, Heroin. It's unimaginable they were making music like this back in 1967, something it is easy to forget. Reed was a true innovator and even more revolutionary was their 1968 follow up, White Light White Heat, a proto punk masterpiece, with the seminal, screeching, train wreck of Sister Ray as its 20 minute grand finale. Although it was definitely a pre-cursor to punk, Reed even thought the song could have been the first heavy metal song.

When Cale left in 1968, Reed brought in young guitarist Doug Yule and with him they made two more excellent albums, a self titled eerie lovelorn record and their final, the almost poppy majestic wonder that is Loaded, featuring some



of Reed's finest numbers, like Rock and Roll, Cool it Down, Oh Sweet Nothin' and Sweet Jane. Sick of the lack of success and feeling the band could go no further, Reed left the Velvets after a gig at Max's Kansas City in 1970. Although they limped on without him, to much controversy, Reed first showed no real interest in music, working at his father's firm as a typist for a short spell. Then of course, his solo career kick started with a self titled record in 1971. Although panned and hated by the man himself, the album does feature some lost Lou gems, like Can't Stand It and an early version of Berlin with dual rock soloing.

It was in 1972 though that things kicked off for Lou. He met admirer David Bowie who showed an interest in producing him. Transformer was the result, Reed's most iconic and memorable album. Songs like Vicious, Perfect Day, Satellite of Love and Walk on the Wild Side have entered the world's psyche now and Bowie's top production was an ideal fit for Lou's dry style.

Reed went on to have a great and varied solo career, from the masterpiece Berlin, the insane hour of feedback Metal Machine Music, oddities like the Bells, the wonderful Street Hassle

album, the brilliant Coney Island Baby and even lesser regarded works such as Growing up in Public. In the 80s, he made the classic Blue Mask album and into the 90s he made fresh and varied works such as Set the Twilight Reeling and in 2003, his masterpiece The Raven, based on the works of Edgar Allen Poe. Reed's music reminds me of my teens and early 20s. I lived alone in a small flat by a canal and would constantly play Lou and the Velvets on my vinyl player. I would download countless bootlegs and make covers for them with cuttings and the use of my scanner. I have a lot of fond memories, all to his music, like millions of others do all over the world. He was every bit as important as The Beatles, the Rolling Stones or any of the classic rock stars. He was an innovator, a crotchety genius who stuck to his guns and never did anything he didn't want to. He was a maverick, existing outside the commercial rock and pop world in his own bubble, but retaining a reputation reserved only for the elder statesmen of music. He did it the way he wanted to do it, taking no prisoners along the way. For this, especially in a time where pop music is at its most machine-like, we will miss and forever admire Lou Reed....



INTERVIEW

JOHN DRUMBO FRENCH ON “TROUT MASK REPLICA”

CONFIDANT AND MUSICAL PARTNER TO THE ECCENTRIC DON VAN VLIET, ALSO KNOWN AS CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, JOHN FRENCH HAS BEEN THERE AND DONE THAT A FEW TIMES OVER. HERE HE TALKS TO *CHRIS WADE* SPECIFICALLY ABOUT HIS ADVENTURES IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVENTIES WHEN ZAPPA SIGNED BEEFHEART TO HIS NEW RECORD LABEL “STRAIGHT” FOR THE RELEASE OF THEIR SEMINAL WORK “TROUT MASK REPLICA”...



With an intense devotion to his craft, Don Van Vliet had finally assembled a perfect band, all of whom were a good generation younger than him, to externalize his art in a most unconventional manner. John French,

nicknamed Drumbo by Beefheart, had become the manipulative singer’s right hand man, forced to tape record any idea Don might come up with, even if it was in the middle of the night.

Increasingly dissatisfied with their record contract, as was Zappa, Don told French that his “old buddy” Frank would sort things out for him, knowing his old chum was forming the Straight label. John French was there when Don called Zappa on the phone, informing him of his

situation, and the displeasure he had experienced when his label had released their latest album, 'Strictly Personal' without the band's consent.

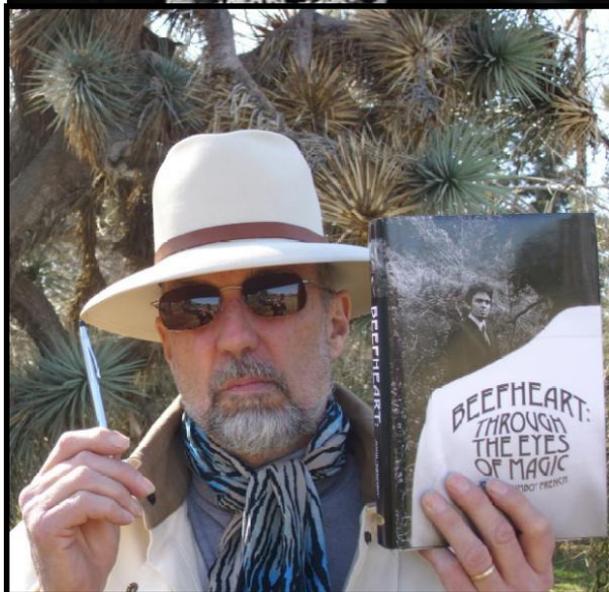
From the moment he was thrust into the centre of this disjointed friendship, French could see the way things were quite clearly.

When did you first become aware of Zappa?

In high school, I painted a Playboy Bunny on the girl's gym with spray paint. Of course, being a typical High School Moron, I bragged about it to a couple of friends. Ernie Tosi (vice principal) called me into his office and said, "I understand that you're quite talented artistically." I thought they were going to assign me some school art project and said, "Why, yes, I guess." He said "especially good with Playboy Bunnies I hear..." Busted! He went on to tell me in a very positive way how I reminded him of a former student he'd dealt with named Frank Zappa. He said that Frank was very talented and had actually hand-painted movie frames of movies he'd made. There was a lot more said about him. Later, when I joined Beefheart, Don's girlfriend, Laurie Stone, showed me a photo of a guy playing guitar. She said, "This is Frank Zappa, a friend of Don's."

How can you best describe the relationship between Don and Frank?

Pretty one-sided. Frank gave Don the stage name "Captain Beefheart" when he cast him in his never-finished "Captain Beefheart vs. the Grunt People" film, which he had written after meeting Don and seeing his strange relationship with his parents. He would boss them around and verbally abuse them, which Frank saw was Don's problem: everyone in Don's world was actually his "grunt." Frank was sort of an amateur anthropologist in a way, and had a scientific side. He was fascinated with this symbiosis as he was with the behavior of many other people, several of whom he wrote songs about.



Can you tell me about your first meeting with Frank over at the infamous log cabin, when he agreed to sign Don to his new record label?

I was with Don, and there were several other people I didn't know in the big room at the log cabin. When I spoke to Frank, he said, "so, who are you? Don's brother?" I was taken aback, as I didn't really understand the question at first, which was rather sarcastic. I knew that he knew Don was an only child, and so the only thing I could really figure was that I had picked up some of Don's mannerisms. I'd been told that I did that with people I was around. However, I thought that it was a little rude of Frank to say this. Later, I realized it helped me.

There's a well known story of you advising Frank to change a guitar part for a track. What happened there?

That was in 1975 when Don had hooked up with Frank again. I went to the Recordplant with Don to observe a session Frank was doing. He had George Duke come in and overdub a bunch of lines on a synth. George was in the control room, and I couldn't believe how fast he picked up on the lines and stacked harmonies. He was done in an hour. Incredible player. The piece was in an odd time signature, but since I don't listen to Frank's music much, I am not familiar with it and cannot name it. I just recall that there was a guitar solo of Franks over this one section, and it seemed to just glide in 4/4 over the odd time signature is such a way that it kind of blurred and took away from the piece. I mentioned this to him later at his house, where he had invited us for breakfast, which was cooked by the maid/housekeeper lady. Even though I was hesitant to do so, I was really surprised and relieved to see him actually take what I was saying seriously as an objective viewpoint that may be valuable. He thanked me and later I asked Don about it and he told me that Frank had changed the solo. It was a good illustration of how approachable Frank could be. It's funny, he never called me John. Always "Drumbo."

Can you tell me what it was like rehearsing the Trout Mask album, living the way you did under Don's control? How do you look back on that period?

I do not wish to speak about this any more as I've gone over and over it so many times. All I can say is that it was quite unpleasant.

Did Frank come up to the house where you were rehearsing?

Only once during rehearsals, and then again when we actually were first doing the album as a "field recording." We were rehearsing "Moonlight on Vermont" with Gary "Magic" Marker playing bass. Don had worked with me in detail on the drum parts (something he hardly ever did) and I was a bit puzzled until Frank flipped out at my drumming. I realized later that Don had purposely written drum parts he knew former drummer Zappa would appreciate, having been around him a lot at Studio Z. He took Don and I out for fried chicken afterward.

How can you describe the recording of Trout Mask with Zappa at the controls?

He was very complimentary and unobtrusive. Basically, he said little or nothing. This may be because he had been in the studio all day doing Mother's sessions, and was probably extremely tired, though he didn't show it.

How did you feel when he gave you six hours for the sessions for Trout Mask and saw him alternatively spending weeks on the Wild Man Fischer album?

It was both confusing and maddening. Fischer's album was done in a great studio (Sunset Sound) while we were in Whitney Sound in Glendale – a much cheaper studio.

So were you happy with the production and release of Trout Mask?

I really thought Frank put it together quite well, but it's hard to hear something objectively after you've been drowning in it for 9 months.

Things turned sourer between Don and Frank. Was this because Don was not too quick to trust anyone, even a close friend like Frank?

Partially. Don didn't trust anyone at all, and no one was outside his wrath. We had all been victims of it several times. It was the "Grunt People" mentality that Don seemed to maintain, in which all other humans were really just his subjects. I do think that Frank's handling of the album art work, the rushed studio time (we did it in 4 ½ hours, but then Don was in the studio for about a week doing vocals and overdubs), his obvious feelings of inferiority with Frank (whose technical abilities far exceeded Don's knowledge and made him look like an amateur at times) and his almost insane jealousy of Frank.

How do you view Zappa musically and what period do you see as his best?

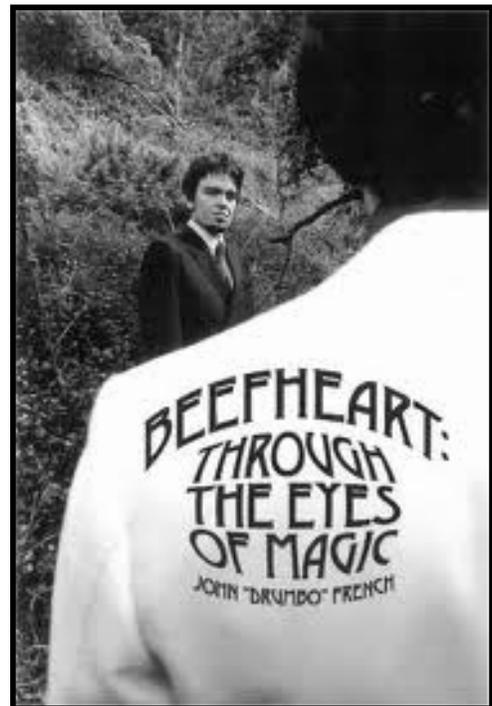
I see him as a hard-working over-achiever who was basically a genius and really understood music technically though he didn't have the basic "soul" that Don possessed. I think Frank was a bit jealous of Don's voice, but at the same time, I do feel that he truly was a friend to Don and helped him on more than one occasion, only to then be criticized afterward. Gail Zappa said that for the most part Frank never had anything bad to say about Don. Though he had a perfect opportunity to sue Don over breach of contract for the re-recording of several pieces on Bat Chain Puller (1976) he didn't follow through with this though I'm sure it made him extremely angry. It is also been revealed that the recording session was funded with his royalty money by Herb Cohen (his

manager and Beefheart's at the time) without permission from Frank. He was unaware of this until his return, and was extremely upset by this.

I don't know what I would consider Frank's best period as I haven't really listened to his music that much. However, I did think that "Overnite Sensation" and "Apostrophe" were my personal favorites.

Do you see Don and Frank as true rivals to each other?

Frank was a friend to Don. He called him "Donny" because they were childhood friends. I thought he was being condescending at first, but then I realized that it was a term of endearment. Don was a rival to Frank. I'm sure they both had certain feelings of competition with each other, but Don's were apparently over-the-top to anyone who was around.



Well worth a read are John's memoirs of his time with the Captain, Through the Eyes of Magic. Copies are floating around on Amazon... For more Zappa and Beefheart goodies read Hound Dawg Music Issue 1

RECORDING

“TROUT MASK REPLICA”



An obsessive amount of detail went into sharpening the work and the desperately long rehearsals for the album began in the house on Ensenada Drive in Woodland Hills. The band, also featuring Zoot Horn Rollo and Jeff Cotton on guitars, Victor Hayden on bass clarinet and Mark Boston on bass, soon became little more than zombie-like figures, brainless drones in an almost cult-like situation. It was like a musical version of the Manson Family... kind of.

Convinced they were on to something new and fresh, something that people would be talking about fifty years on (and he was right there), Beefheart worked on his band psychologically, mentally and physically until they cared or thought about nothing else but the arrangements of the tracks on their upcoming album. And considering the frazzled, fractured, often insane hour and a half of material, this would surely have driven a man close to madness. Don would bully them, belittle them, and turn them against each other in a scheming manipulative manner. John French called him “tyrannical and controlling,” as he purposely starved the band, and forced them to rehearse from the moment they woke up until the end of the day. They slept in their clothes on the floor by their instruments, and ate only a bowl of soya beans in a whole day.

Don made the band slaves to the music, with no pay, literally on the brink of starvation and almost certain mental breakdown. They resorted to stealing food, on Don’s orders that is, and once were even arrested and locked up for doing so. Don had Zappa bail them out, once again relying on his friend to get him out of a mess. As the rehearsals went on, Frank stayed clear and let the band, led by Don throughout of course, do things exactly the way Don wanted.

However, “Trout Mask Replica” was not a major commercial hit, but it did get generally good reviews and helped to spread Don’s name around as a maverick visionary, an eccentric on the fringes of popular music. Beefheart and his band would release a second album with Zappa’s Straight label, ‘Lick My Decals Off Baby’, which suffered due to poor distribution, and quite soon Beefheart was on his way. He resented being just another “freak” on Zappa’s label, categorised alongside the likes of The GTOs and Wild Man Fischer, seeing himself as a genius in his own right, far and away above the others.

Zappa: “I naively thought that if there was some venue for nonstandard material, the material would find a market. But it failed because it was independent and had independent distribution.”

GYPSY DAVE MILLS: KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD

GYPSY DAVE MILLS WAS THE ROAD BUDDY OF 60s POP STAR DONOVAN. HE WAS NOW WRITTEN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, PUBLISHED WITH WISDOM TWINS BOOKS. HERE IS AN EXCLUSIVE SAMPLE FROM THE BOOK ITSELF....

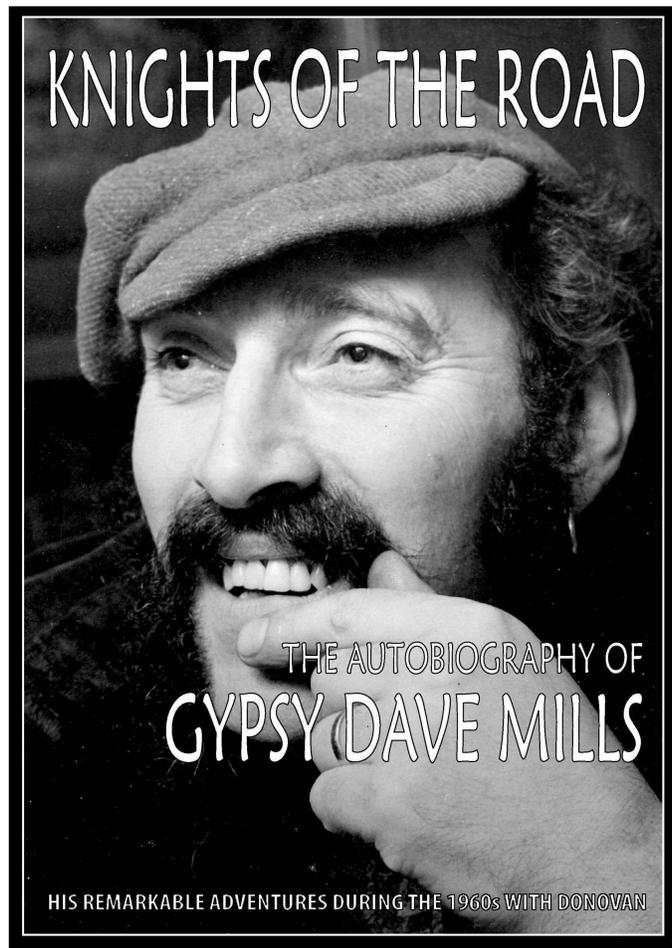
Dave had some other news too. The television company Granada, one of the biggest in Britain, were interested in making an autobiographical documentary about the Bohemian lifestyle of Donovan and by implication myself too.

It was to be called *A Boy Called Donovan*.

As I was talking away excitedly to Dave, Idriss was giving me long sad looks. She knew our relationship would not be sailing off into the still waters of a red and rosy glowing sunset. I had never promised her more than I could give and now she could hear from my voice that I was off. Donovan and I were Blood Brothers of the Open Road and it pumped through our Ramblers' hearts with the promise of travel, adventure and freedom. Idriss bit back her unhappiness and made smiles replace her tragic feelings as Dave and I continued our heated discourse.

She wore this mask for me, so as not to spoil for the merest second the pleasure I was feeling in my new found freedom. That was love indeed.

Dave Tilling and I left the next morning. He had been given the money to get the train back, but I wanted to hitch - for some reason I wanted to go back the way I had



arrived.

During the filming of the documentary, Dono and I moved flats again. This time to Maida Vale and the building of his new manager Ashley Kozak and his beautiful wife Anita. Our flat was several floors above them..

We had just moved in the night before when the director wanted to shoot a short sequence there. Apart from a few things that were our own the furniture in the flat had been left by the previous tenants.

We were filmed in the area that was to be my bedroom, but as yet I still hadn't bought a double bed for the room. The single beds you see Donovan and I in on the documentary, were not ours and were picked up the day after filming by the owners. Dono had bought a beautiful French half-tester bed made of brass but not being very practical he was waiting for me to assemble it so that first night we kipped in the single beds hoping the owners wouldn't mind. Dono had no blanket, so he draped a Union Jack flag on his bed. I had completely forgotten that the TV Company wanted to film us.

Early next morning there was a noise at our door. I was sleeping after a tiring day the previous day and wasn't sure what the noise in the hall was. Still half asleep, as it was

only eight in the morning I went to answer the door wearing nothing but my Scants, short modern underpants for men which were fast becoming all the rage. I opened the door to find the whole crew standing in the hall - cameras, sound and lighting technicians and Charlie Squire the director.

"You forgot Gypsy, didn't you?" he said. "I thought you might. Never mind old boy, we'll just film you as you are."

I suddenly realized I was standing at the door virtually in my birthday suit. "Shit! No way man! Let me get some clothes on first Charlie," I said laughing.

"Just put a shirt on Gypsy - it would be great to get you doing the normal things you do in the morning .Go back to bed then and we'll film you waking up, get out of bed, go to the kitchen and make some breakfast old man - anything like that," Charlie advised me - and that's exactly what you see in the documentary - Scants and all.

Charlie Squires was a fantastic man and the perfect fella to direct this film on Donovan. Sadly he died a short while after making this film, his family and the world lost the kind of man it can ill afford to lose.

He was a real gentleman and he left his mark on everyone he had contact with in the finest of ways. God bless you Charlie, Dono and I still hold you warm in our hearts.

There's a party scene at the end of the documentary. It's about as genuine a scene as you could wish to get for all participating were friends of long standing.

It was filmed in Artists studios in Bushy, Hertfordshire and was where our good mate Dave Tilling lived. He rented the studios from British Rail who no longer had any use for these huge storage facilities.

You entered the buildings through a parting in the trees. They were made of corrugated tin, painted black, over a wood and steel construction and must have being built in the 1940's. The really fantastic thing for my friends and I was, they were the most haunted space we had ever come across. The ghosts of a mid eighteenth century Estonian Prince and his beautiful mistress, Lulu, both haunted the grounds. He, as legend had it, sent his castle over to England and rebuilt it stone by stone in of all places Bushy.

Of course jealous rage and murder were all part of the tale. There were many psychic occurrences there One I remember well was when Dave brought me a mug of tea. We had eight mugs - each a different colour. I was sitting reading when Dave set a mug down on the arm of my chair - it was the blue mug with two white chips in the rim. I said 'Thanks' without looking up and continued reading. A couple of minutes later as I was about to turn the next

page Dave came and gave me another mug of tea - the same blue mug with two chips in the rim. That's when it hit me.

"Dave, you just brought me this tea a couple of minutes ago - same mug and same resting place."

"Not me mate," said Dave, "must be Lulu up to her old tricks again."

Three of the other studios were occupied. In one lived a painter who had made a name for himself in America in the style that's now called 'Splash & Dribble' he was a cocaine junkie. Next door to his studio was a 40 year old lady painter who was by far the craziest person I had ever met outside of a Mental Hospital. In the last of the studios there lived at times a little old lady as thin as the lace she wore. Her clothes were at least 60 years out of date, but immaculate and as if bought from the tailor's that very day. We never knew when she would be there. She owned a house in the village and her unhelpful neighbours complained about her piano playing so she moved the piano to the studio and at the strangest times through the night she played the most exquisite classical music that can be imagined.



Dave Tilling swore he saw the piano playing itself on one still and pregnant night. I had my own personal experiences to do with distortion of time and space. One time when staying at the studio I went into the corridor late at night after hearing what I believed to be the boots of the long deceased Prince walking there on the bare boards. The corridor was dark as there was no electricity installed there, but the moon was shining through the first window nicely. These windows were spaced at intervals on the right hand side of the corridor. Walking to this window and looking out I leaned up against the wall adjacent to the aperture I was looking through. The view was of a tree, a silvery blue light appeared to transfix everything in place like a photograph.

I enjoyed this scene for a few minutes whilst smoking a cigarette until I noticed what appeared to be a small animal

rustling up the leaves under a tree. Fearing it might be a rat I leaned forward against the windows surround to get a better view. As my hands reached out for the window sill and frame my fingers hit solid wood. Before my eyes were a blank wall - there was no window there!

Stretching my whole body to the left with my hand and arm out as far as it would go I had to take a few shuffled steps before my fingers touched the edge of the windows frame I had supposedly been peering through .. Bloody hell, did it send shivers up and down my spine as I realized that for five minutes I had been looking through a wall of solid wood and corrugated metal. Make what you will of these recollections, that is your right.

We were to lose Dave Tilling about ten years after these events. He was an artist and photographer. He took the cover photo for Barry Gibb's first solo album. Dave couldn't swim but he was out on a windswept sea on a friend's yacht taking pictures of rigging and masts. As the storm got worse his friends came up on deck to warn him to come in for shelter - but there was no one there. He had disappeared, fallen overboard they presumed. He was only 29. The good die young they say - it could be true for Dave Tilling was one of the best there ever was. We can still see him smiling as he always did, with his lover - a model called Roey on camera when they took part in the party scene *A Boy Called Donovan*. Dave is the curly haired chap who escorts the two policemen out of his studio door.

There was some debate as to whether or not these two policemen were real or actors. I can tell you now they were real local bobbies who had come to investigate a theft. A car had been taken and driven at high speed and with such reckless abandon as to be found wrapped around a lamp post in the middle of a roundabout not five minutes walk away from the Studios. The driver, who was described as being male, tall, scruffy and long haired, was seen walking - or rather lurching - away from the wreck, obviously very drunk. He was seen walking into the Studios - did we know anything about it? Well there were about 40 tall, drunk, scruffy, long-haired people at the party to choose from. Charlie Squire had arranged for 30 demijohns evenly distributed of white and red wine to be at the party, to get the scene off the ground so to speak. - after all it was a beatnik party. It kicked off at 7 p.m. but Donovan and I were a little late and it was 9 p.m. by the time we arrived. By then the demijohns were all lying empty and the joints were being rolled. Peter, our dear genius of A-levels and ICI fame, the only junkie amongst us, wanted to score. Whilst walking to his rendezvous he decided on the spur of the moment to take a car he saw by the curbside with the keys in the ignition.

In his drunken state he reckoned he'd be back before anyone noticed the car was gone. Unfortunately he didn't

take into consideration the fact that he was drunk, hence the silly business of wrapping the car around the lamp post. Luckily he was only dazed and made his way back to the party - as did the local fuzzi a few minutes later - but to no avail. Peter too has passed on now - suicide by an overdose



of cocaine. He had tried very hard to kick the habit near to his death and had been off the stuff for over a month when a junkie friend paid him a visit Peter's resolve failed him. He thought one fix would not a junky make; nothing would make him take it up again. Why not have one more hit for old time's sake? Having been off it for so long Peter almost died simply by taking his normal dose. He told it to me like this;

"Your heart pumps in anticipation of the enjoyment - then you find the vein that's had a chance to heal a little in the needle's absence. You push on the plunger slowly and wait for the first effects to take place feeling like a million dollars worth of back pay. Then the Express Train hits you. You fall to the floor believing your heart has jumped from your mouth.

Your body has been taken over by a maniac intent on torture of the most cruel and dire kind.

The mind spins, falls, flies, dives, spilling your poor perforated brain on the floor of thought like a road accident in the making. You're not aware of who you are or what's taken hold of your soul - you just know it has to stop.

Please God let it stop before you explode with fear and

disintegrate into a feeling of nothingness bereft of all happiness and joy, suffused with sorrow so deep you shake and writhe in anguish - your mind eventually clearing with the thought I want to live! I want to live! I want to live!

He told me that he lost something very important to him at that point in time - he told me he had lost his mind, literally lost his mind. It had disappeared. It had died leaving him with a body that could only perform its daily duties. He was in anguish grieving for his lost intelligence.

That was the last conversation I had with poor Peter.

A couple of days after my last talk with Peter, Sammy saw him; it was two days before Peter's sad demise in a broom cupboard under a stairwell. I kid you not - Peter had fallen so low as to be living under a large stairwell in expensive flats in an affluent quarter of London. He lived there free of charge if he kept the marble stairways clean. It was the only job he could hold down as his habit got out of hand once again. Sammy met Peter in a café and they went for a walk down Portobello Road. He could see Peter was extremely agitated.

"What's the matter Pete?" he asked

"Nothing Sammy, it's just Death catching up on me, that's all," Peter said with resignation.

"What do you mean by that Pete?" Sammy asked in surprise,

"Well, for instance Sammy I'll be looking in a shop window when suddenly in the reflection in the glass I see a death's head staring over my shoulder, it's bloodshot eyes in graying sockets staring at me intently."

"For God's sake Peter, you can't mean that!" Sammy said laughing nervously.

"I mean every single syllable of every single word Sammy.

Another time I'll be walking along the street minding my own business when I hear my name called and on looking up I see Old Father Time with his hour glass beckoning me to walk with him; or I see a skeleton lying in my path that claws at me with its crooked fingers of whitened bone. It's happening more and more just lately. Don't look like that Sammy, because I'm pleased it's happening. You see, I know that I'm dead already. I'm just waiting for this madness to stop. This shame that is my life, now that I have lost my soul, I am just waiting for it to be over."

"Peter, listen to me," Sammy said. "You've got to stop this mate before it takes over your mind." He was appalled at what he was hearing from Peter. "What you're saying is madness - a dangerous fantasy made up by a mind that sees Death everywhere."

Sammy was trying to get some sense into poor Peter's head when he heard a car speeding up behind them. It was a shining black Hearse, complete with floral tributes which passed them by erratically and screeched to a halt halfway around the corner. Here the back doors burst open with a crash spilling out an ornate coffin. It slid down the road and stopped at Peter's feet. Sammy couldn't believe his eyes. Somebody would surely come to retrieve this macabre relic, but....nothing - nobody came. Stranger still people around them on the streets seemed to think nothing of the coffin lying abandoned by the curbside.

On looking up from the coffin Peter asked Sammy with the slightest tremor in his voice, if he believed him now.

"Look," he said triumphantly. "There you are - the Grim Reaper himself."

Sammy looked to where Peter was pointing and there indeed stood a hooded figure in a bedraggled garment with a huge scythe and skeletal hands holding an antique book of gigantic proportions.

"Jesus Christ help us!" cried Sammy grabbing Peter's arm and running with him in the opposite direction.

"It's no good Sammy, you can't outrun your Destiny anymore than you can outrun Time. My time is up and it's a travesty of nature that I'm still alive - soon I will be gone Sammy. All that you see before you is a shadow cast by another shadow."

Two days later Peter was found dead under the stairs having taken a massive overdose of cocaine. He was 27 years young.

Make of this story what you will. It's the truth as told to me by Sammy - the same Sammy who grabbed my legs before I fell to my own death. The world would be richer if we could teach people like Peter to be able to find their own creativity and not their own destruction, what artist these souls would make.

There are too many artists in this modern world with small unremarkable minds and unremarkable talent.

Hype has become the art while art has become insignificant.

It was during the filming for *A Boy Called Donovan* that I bought a beautiful Chinese screen, with its black lacquer and gold leaf work. It rivaled the Mona Lisa's smile for me. The lovely old lady in the antique shop didn't want to sell it when I enquired about it until by chance I mentioned my name in connection with the film we were making.

"Gypsy?" she said. "Gypsy do you remember a Sonya Cottonwood?"

"For sure I do - we were going out with each other for a while about three years ago."

"Well I'm her Grandmother."

"Well I will be blown", I said amazed

"She used to come and talk to me about you for hours and hours." said the old lady. I was ill for a while after coming back from China and I was convalescing. Sonya cheered me up no end with her tales, so I feel I know you Gypsy, and I will tell you something else, I know Sonya would want me to sell you this beautiful piece. Let's say £200, shall we?"

"How did you know, that's exactly what the TV company are paying me for my part in this documentary" I said. "I will take it, thanks - and please send my love to Sonya. Is she still living in Cornwall?"

"I'm afraid not Gypsy - Sonya has passed on. A very sad hit and run accident on a deserted road - never did catch the blighter."

"My God - how terrible!" I said in shock and disbelief. I can hardly believe it. Sonya was always so full of life."

"Yes, she was Gypsy and I can tell you one thing, if it'll make it any easier for you. You made her very happy for the short time you two were together. And Gypsy - she understood when you left."

"Yes, I know - she was a bright spark Sonya was," I said.

"A spark that's been extinguished Gypsy."

"Well Sonya's Nan, I'll tell you something - I'll remember Sonya now every time I look at the beauty of this wonderful screen."

"Then I'll have made Sonya happy I'm sure, wherever she may be," said her Grandmother emotionally

. "It was very nice to meet you Gypsy, you've brought my Sonya back to me - even if for a short time."

"Sonya was always talking about you too you know - she loved you very much," I said, my voice full of feeling.

The old lady's eyes brimmed full of tears. "Thank you Gypsy, thank you."

I treasured that screen for many, many years before I was forced to sell it when I was broke and the Self Employed Stamp government people were hounding me for some unpaid stamps and threatening to take my house, chattels and all.

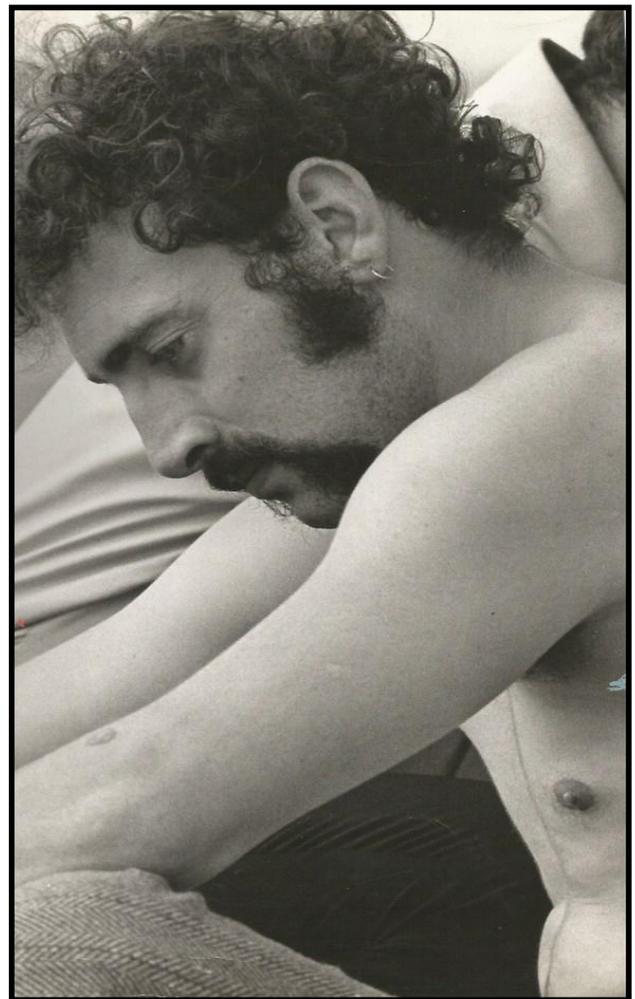
The documentary *A Boy Called Donovan* was an unbridled

success. It was released, after some delay, in January 1966. There was a little disagreement between the producer and the director as to whether they should leave the party scene in, but eventually it was decided to use it. The headlines in the newspapers next day were all about ,

'Near Orgy Scene in Documentary A Boy Called Donovan'

The 'near orgy' was simply a silly episode in the life of our friend Pauli. Unbeknown to him we had arranged for his estranged wife Diane to be at the party, hoping we could act Cupid and bring them together again. Pauli, God bless him, on setting his peepers on Diane sitting on the couch, rushed across the studio and threw himself on her at the same time thrusting his hand up her skirt as her legs had gone leaping into the air with his amorous attack. It was just boisterous fun - fun that had been captured on film.

The documentary made Donovan's second album, *Fairytale* , a must- buy for anyone who was a fan and viewed the film. A lot of the new album tracks were featured in the documentary.



Gyp's book is available from Wisdom Twins Books

BOOK PREVIEW

The Music of The Incredible String Band

by Chris Wade

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK.

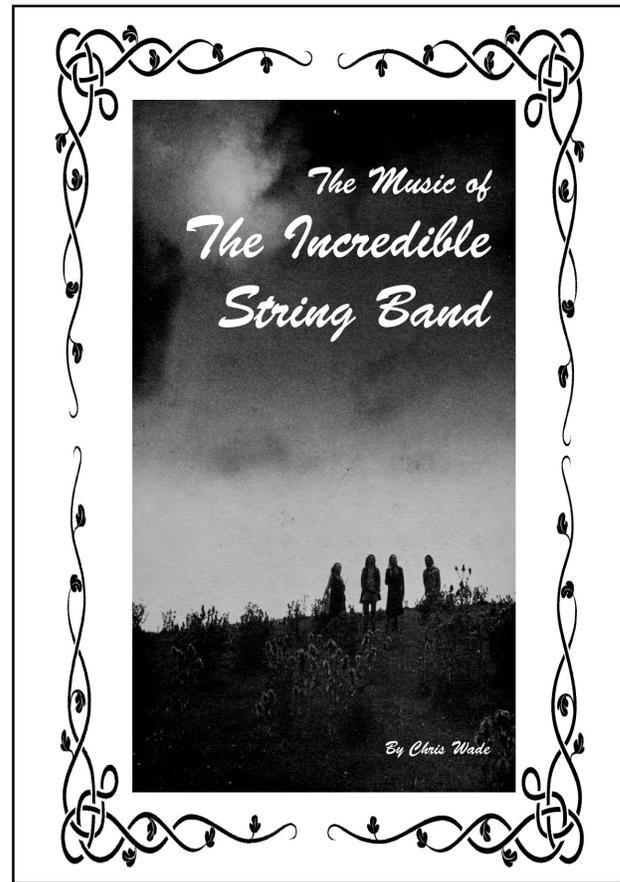
The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion

*"We'll have a go with this, make a noise on this,
clang on this, thump on that, squeak on the other."*

– Robin Williamson, Folk Britannia, BBC

It's fair to say there was a dramatic shift in sound when Robin and Mike recorded their second album, *The 5000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion*. The new music was much freer, it was wonderfully experimental and definitely representative of the typical sound one might associate with the late 60s drug culture scene. Boyd called them "drug culture pioneers." But how much influence and effect did drugs have on the lads and their new sound, and what does Mike think of the theory that tied together experimental music and experimental drugs?

Mike Heron: "The point to be made is that I don't really think it was the drugs that brought it about, it was just a common factor, people sat around listening to music, it wasn't a pro-drug thing, it just happened that that was



the invisible catalyst that stirred it all together. One of the main things too is that pop bands hadn't really quite broken through at that time, it was clubs like UFO and places like that, and more the psychedelic thing, which was a bit after that, that made it possible for rock bands to sing songs that people would listen to. Even the Beatles when they started, it was that kind of music you went to a dance and you either danced to it or you didn't. You didn't sit down on the floor and kind of go "Ah, Crikey ... Great words!" and actually listen to the songs! So what we did was listenable too, the lyrics and the mixture of music and all that kind of stuff, and that was what really attracted us to do it. That's why we came up through folk rather than rock, because I basically came from rock, my roots are rock, but I was playing that kind of music and nobody cared much about the lyrics, and I discovered that if you played folk people actually listened to what you were saying (and Dylan came around about that time too) and your songs could be rated as songs rather than just music you could dance to or not."

A good point is the fact that Boyd wanted to take the ISB out of the folk scene, with its strict rules and cultural and sonic limitations, which no doubt changed the perspective on the band's music from the outside at least. As a result, the ISB were embraced and received by the alternative scene, and the album was even better rated than the first. But this was not merely due to a cultural shift in the band's audience, it was also musical. This album is rich, totally characteristic of their ability to blend the beauty of Celtic, Indian and traditional folk styles, a combination which effortlessly creates a new genre of its own. World Music perhaps? It resulted in the band becoming key figures in the advancement of popular music and even getting to number 25 on the UK charts, which considering the type of material on this album is remarkable. The reviewers were ecstatic to say the least ("Better than The Beatles!" etc.) and the band continued playing clubs and venues to promote the record, including the UFO Club, which Boyd also ran.



Recorded in very early 1967 at London's Sound Techniques with Boyd again, the lads were joined by Pentangle's Danny Thompson on double bass and Licorice herself providing vocals and percussion. John "Hoppy" Hopkins, the man who famously co founded the International Times, and was in fact one of the key figures of the 1960s underground music scene, was rumoured to have played piano on the album.

"Yes it was me," John told me by email. "All 16 bars of it." Demonstrating a strong element of eccentricity to this day, he added "unfortunately I have just broken my leg and will be out of the loop for a while. Sorry to disappoint." Still, it was very much Mike and Robin's

own little world and Boyd enjoyed being a part of it, loving the recording process immensely. He was also charmed by the new material, the strange lyrics, rich melodies, and the "off the wall" ideas they kept coming up with.

Chinese White opens the album, a now classic favourite among the fans. A Mike Heron oddity for sure, it shows him at his quirkiest, lyrically and vocally. Robin's screeching violin could have been played by The Velvet Underground's John Cale, under laying the lyric but somehow never threatening to take over it. A line like "will your magic Christmas tree be shining all around," could only work in an ISB song for sure, but its charm and innocence only warms the heart. The second number is Robin's wild Americana style slide fest No Sleep Blues, where a restless Williamson rants in a Dylan-esque manner, rather like one of the beat writers he so idolised, while Heron puts his unique stamp on the song with some brilliant backing vocals. The sitar, played here by Nazir Jairazbhoy (an instrument later mastered by Heron himself of course) and the flute also fuse together to add some nice touches. Clearly, the more conventional blues rhythm is something we may have heard before, but the added flute and sitar lines are what make such a potentially conventional song innovative in its inspired collage of cultural sounds. Then there's the words of course. "The dawn keeps on sneaking up when it think I'm not looking" must surely be one of Robin's most tortured and paranoid lines. With lyrics so usually associated with dreams, surreal fables and child like fairytales, it's odd and also refreshing to hear such a twitchy, restless neurotic monologue.

As soon as it begins, Painting Box sounds special. Later covered by Julie Felix (who also did a duet of it with the ISB lads on her TV show), the original album version, written and sung by Mike, is a lovely, soothing, soft number, made all the sweeter in the wake of Williamson's beat poet riffing on the previous track. There is a charm about this type of Heron song, a lovely naivety, and with Licorice's perfect backing vocals behind Mike's voice, the song enters an almost child-like

euphoric area rarely conjured up in music. The play off between the flute and sitar after the chorus takes the song into an even wilder and more wonderful area too, while lyrics like “baby raindrops playing on the window” could have been written by Lewis Carroll or one of the classic children’s writers. “Lately when I look into my painting box, I seem to pick the colours of you,” hints at the slowly approaching feeling of love entering the body, as ones self becomes besotted with the object of affection. It’s like the mind giving itself into the heart. Heron also shines on The Hedgehog Song, another cult favourite which he still plays to this day, while his bright cheeriness clashes brilliantly with Williamson at his barmiest on tracks like The Mad Hatter’s Song. One Robin stand out is Way Back in the 1960s, where our narrator curiously looks back on that most decadent decade as an older man, lamenting a time when people “made their own entertainment” and even “went to the pictures.” These kind of lyrics can only work in an ISB song, where the music floats from one style to another, changing speeds, tempos and rhythms as quick as possible. Somehow, even if some of the lyrics are almost too obvious, and the melodies seem too wild, it all works brilliantly. Why can’t more bands have such a fearless love for the free form and the experimental, the welding of ideas and styles?

Williamson brings us a Gothic creepy Celtic mystery again with the brilliant The Eyes of Fate, which once again refuses to stick to one melody. But Mad Hatter’s Song is quite possibly the album’s strongest track. The interplay between guitar and sitar is once again inspired. While from 1966 onwards The Beatles played with Indian sounds, the ISB dove right in and mixed it with their own melting pot of magic. Donovan had also done this with class on his Sunshine Superman album, but although the results were nice on his 1966 classic, they were often not as listenable or inspired as the ISB’s take on the idea. You would think that the boogie woogie section, which suddenly invades the song at 2 or so minutes in, would jar awkwardly, just as you had been getting used to the dreamy “do what you like” melody. But of course it doesn’t. With ISB you get used to these

unconventional shifts in tone and sound, and accept them. In fact, the more imagery and ideas they fit into one song the better. It becomes wildly addictive, a sea of tones you could swim in forever.

The haunting My Name is Death is another chilling Williamson ballad, his vocals one again perfect, his strums deep and full, lyrics that conjure images of a stark, dark, Dystopian valley, as the cold reaper himself comes to collect the dead. But there are still very conventional moments on this album, most notably on First Girl I Loved, a very touching ballad where Robin wonders what happened to the girl he adored as a child and suggests with sadness that she has become little more than “a grown up female stranger.” There was no sex with this fair maiden, but they “must have made love a thousand times”. Has young innocent love ever been put sweeter than that?



With moments like this, swimming deeply in idyllic British poetry, why is it that the band are remembered, and cemented in fact, as a typical product of the drug culture? Sure, they get far out from time to time, but tying all these various ideas together is a grounded sense of human understanding, a sensibility of true love and a purity rarely seen in popular music. It’s positive, not dark, not drugged and scary, not frightened and edgy. The ISB’s world is full of colour and sunshine.

So what of the cosmic album title?

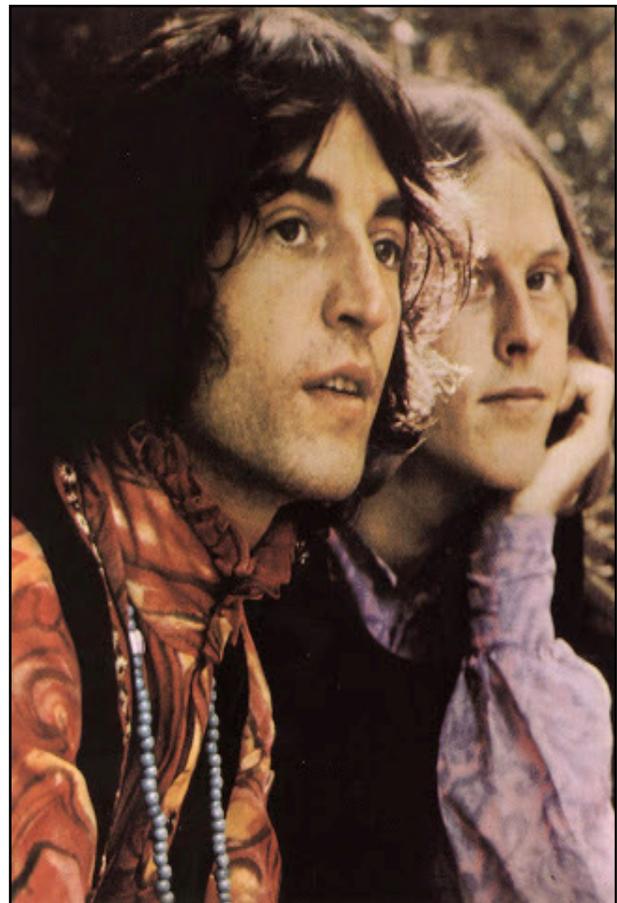
“I thought up most of the String Band titles,” Robin later told *Swing Time Magazine*. “... and they were just things that seemed like good little phrases. It was about as much as that. If you want to get really deep about it, it seemed to be a symbol of consciousness. You know, you either think of it of layers and layers and layers of onion or thousands of voices. So it seemed like a good title at the time. A lot of the String Band lyrics at that time were almost deliberately ambiguous; they were not intended to be direct communications particularly. They were things that you could get your own interpretations out of and that was something that we felt very strongly about. It was almost like word-jazz. It was more like things you could get ideas from, get your own images. One of the things that I felt perhaps I contributed at that time was the idea of using a variety of different kinds of instruments to colour the sound, because at that time there were just the two of us in the band and I had acquired a number of exotic instruments and Mike was getting into sitar and so forth. We were just using a whole lot of instruments and I began writing songs that would allow a variety of changes within one song. See, it would start in one kind of style and use the appropriate musical style for this piece of the song, then it might require some other kind of piece, you know. So, it was, like, things that were strung together with different moods and different flavours thrown in there and I think in a way this was the first sort of attempts at what might be now called ‘fusion music’. I think we were the only band who was doing anything like that.”

Having the freedom to interpret songs how you choose to is a most refreshing thing when dealing with a songwriter. So many modern songs are too clearly defined, it’s either a love song, a song of lost love, or a song that’s only message is that dancing is an enjoyable activity. Lyrics are too obvious, too clear, so much so in fact that they tend to become clichéd parodies of themselves. You’ve heard them a thousand times it seems. But with free form “jazz poetry”, the listener is freed of any pre-conceived concepts. Listen to the words, divulge in them, delight in them, and enjoy them. We are given language and we don’t use it as we should. It seems

hat the ISB, and Robin in particular here, is asking us to appreciate the words we have been given.

The amazingly psychedelic cover art also deserves more than a passing mention. Boyd wanted a strong cover so he hired the artistic team “The Fool” consisting of Maijke and Simon Posthuma (the team had also painted the side wall on The Beatles’ famous Apple boutique). Now it’s almost the clichéd epitome of psychedelic swinging 60s cover art, but ignoring the social and cultural snobbery, it’s a powerful cover.

5000 Spirits... is a brilliant album, of its time but also timeless. Just because an album is most definitely from a specific era, does not mean it doesn’t retain its full power, its ability to entertain and baffle in equal measure. This album is not a “safe” place; it’s totally unpredictable, but purely beautiful at the same time.



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DIRECTOR FRANK MERLE ON

THE EMPLOYER

THE EMPLOYER IS A NEW THRILLER DIRECTED BY FRANK MERLE AND STARRING CLOCKWORK ORANGE MOVIE LEGEND MALCOLM MCDOWELL. THE FILM FOLLOWS 5 CANDIDATES WHO ARE BEING INTERVIEWED FOR A JOB WITH A MAJOR YET MYSTERIOUS CORPORATION. THE NIGHT OF THE LAST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS, THEY ARE DRUGGED, KIDNAPPED AND LOCKED TOGETHER IN A ROOM, WHERE THEY RECEIVE CALLS FROM THE MAN WHO INTERVIEWED THEM, THE CEO OF THE COMPANY PLAYED BY MCDOWELL. HE TELLS THEM THEY ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE THEIR FINAL INTERVIEW AND THE ACTION BEGINS. DIRECTOR FRANK MERLE ANSWERED SOME QUESTIONS FOR CHRIS WADE ABOUT HIS MOVIE

When did you first become interested in film?

My first career was as a theatrical producer and director. I studied in Chicago, a great theater town, at DePaul University's fabled former Goodman School of Drama. While I was still a student, I started a theatre company with a few other students. It survived for seven years, which is a decent lifespan for a small theater troupe. I was the Artistic Director, and I oversaw productions of new plays as well as classics, even several interpretations of Shakespeare. But after awhile, I wanted to challenge myself creatively in another way. The stage is very much the actor's medium, whereas film is much more of a director's medium, and that intrigued me. So, with the help of some friends who knew cameras and



editing, I made my first short film. I had such a great time doing it, that I never looked back. I bought myself a camera, taught myself lighting and composition, and started making more shorts. My time as a theatre producer really came in handy, because I had the leadership experience to run a smooth set and because I knew how to work well with actors.

Can you sum up some of the projects you've done in the past, film-wise?

"The Employer" is my first full-length film, but I had written and directed about a dozen shorts before I felt ready to tackle a feature. The first few were very simple 5-minute comedies, but as I became a more sophisticated filmmaker, I began creating longer projects and experimenting with different genres. I made a 20-minute fantasy romance called "Morgan's Last Call," which did well on the film festival circuit and won a few awards. After that, I made a trilogy of 13-minute horror films, "Gnaw," "Art Room," and "Graves Farm." All three were very well received, and I discovered I enjoyed working within the suspense



genre, using sounds, shadows and other tricks of the trade to manipulate the audience's reaction.

How did you come up with the idea for *The Employer*?

I was interested in making a contained movie. "People trapped in a room" has become a sub-genre of its own, but for good reason. I think something very raw and true about human nature comes out when people are trapped and forced to

deal with each other, when walking away is not an option. So I dreamed up my cast of characters, people whose personalities would grate on each other, of course. I imaged them locked together in a room, and only then began to wonder how they had gotten there. Eventually, I landed on the idea of a job interview. I was interested in the idea of how far people would be willing to go for the sake of a high paying job, and how much power that gave employers over others. And then, because it's a movie, I pushed that concept to a deadly degree.

What is it like to work with Malcolm McDowell? Did you have him in mind for the role at first?

I dreamed of having someone like Malcolm to play the title character, although I honestly didn't think I'd be able to get him. But I figured it couldn't hurt to try, so sent the script to Malcolm McDowell's manager with a cover letter explaining who I was and why I felt Malcolm would be perfect for that role. Fortunately, his manager responded well to the material, and so did Malcolm. Once he was on board, I was able to write a new draft with Malcolm's voice in mind, and the final version of the screenplay took shape. Working with Malcolm was absolutely delightful because he really enjoyed the role and had a lot of fun on set. He liked the fact that I come from a theatre background, like his mentor and favorite director, Lindsay Anderson (who he worked with on three films). I'm a very collaborative director because of my training, so I welcome input from everyone I work with. For example, an idea that Malcolm had for his character's back story ended up influencing his wardrobe in the film. Malcolm decided that his character was an avid hunter, drawing a connection between a hunter's

relationship to the natural world with the Employer's connection to his potential employees. My costume crew really loved this idea and ran with it. So for the film's climactic confrontation with the Employer, Malcolm is wearing a safari jacket as an ode to the character's favorite sport.

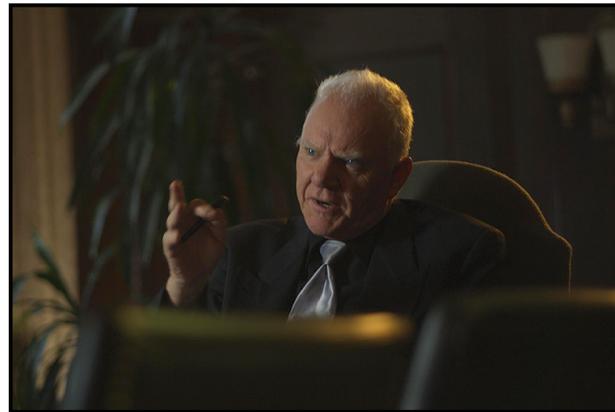
It's had great reviews and seems to be doing well. Are you pleased with the reaction to your film?

It's extremely gratifying for me when someone contacts me to let me know how much they've enjoyed the film. It's an unusual movie, with a lot of character development and heavy themes that are not typical for this type of film, so it's nice to see that risk paying off. As an artist, I would much rather create a film that everyone has a strong reaction to, whether it be positive or negative, than a movie that is just so-so, one that you forget about the moment it's over. Several people have told me they've watch the film twice, and liked it even more upon a second viewing, once they know all the plot twists, and that is also very rewarding for me to hear.

What is next for you?

I'm attached to direct a really exciting thriller called "Vicious," although I'm not allowed to say much about that yet, it's very hush-hush. I will say that its one of the best scripts I've ever read, so I'm really psyched about it. The producer is locking down cast now, so hopefully I'll be able to make a big announcement about it soon. I also have a new script I've written that I'm shopping around. It's a coming-of-age crime drama called "Criminality," set in Los Angeles. So one way or another, with a little luck I'll be back in the

director's chair soon, and perhaps I'll even get to work with Malcolm McDowell again.



What film directors do you most admire?

The directors I admire most are the ones who have managed to have box office success while maintaining their artistic integrity. With all of the high-stakes pressure and negative influences in Hollywood, that's no easy task. As far as my personal favorites, here's a partial list, in no particular order: Oliver Stone, Robert Zemeckis, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino and Steven Spielberg. They are all able to get incredible performances out of actors, and never let the spectacle of their huge-scale productions overshadow the stories they tell.

Check the Employer's website out now:

<http://www.theemployermovie.com/>

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