

Interview Transcript – John

Interviewer: Christian Ferlaino

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CF: The research has this fairly crazy way of tying up ethnomusicology with community music and contemporary music. It's a postdoc fellowship but the EU places it between job and training so there has to be a training component. So the work I'm doing with Raymond is strengthening my psychology of music.

J: I guess with you especially you've got plenty of time on your back plenty of time on your drive we have at least 12 hours yeah only 12 hours don't worry don't worry I'll try to be concise

CF: What type of music do you like what type of music do you listen to?

J: I think a lot of the time when people say they listen to all sorts of music what they mean is all sorts of quite a narrow field. There's that cliché that goes "Abba to ZZ Top". That's not really a range. I suppose points for me that I would listen to would be: at one end medieval Icelandic music the Edda songs that were taken from that time – I'm very into some of that kind of stuff and medieval music in general the development of that in a very sort of pure sense – through I have a huge huge love of the music of Rafe Vaughan Williams the English composer and a lot that kind of if you will romantic classical orchestral music Sibelius Berlioz all that kind of thing. Vaughan Williams second wife Ursula became a friend and a great guiding light to me when I was, as I put it, 20 and miserable. She was was an important figure in my life, we remained pals for the next 22 years. I've got an association with that music that is above and beyond the music itself. Then go through jazz and blues. I was very fortunate as a young child that in my family there was lots of different music around to be listened to. My siblings liked the Beatles, Hollies, instrumental pop stuff. My mum liked slightly hard-reg things like The Who. She'd been a singer in the dance band of the Royal Air Force amongst other things but she later on loved Kurt Cobain and Nirvana. So she was very open-minded to new things. But my dad was of a critical influence to me as far as music was concerned because he was very fond of jazz and blues. Things like Big Bill Brunsey, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee, Miles, Horace Silver, Thelonious Monk. That kind of thing but also moved towards rock music from the point where the nice Pink Floyd. We had all the Pink Floyd records between my dad and I. I can remember vividly a lot of stuff to do with listening experiences with him as a very young child. I remember running into a room once full of enthusiasm and going: "Dad, dad, dad!". "If you want to talk we'll take the record off." My dad did not agree with background music. Music was something you listened to and you gave your time to it. It wasn't just some sort of oral wallpaper. So listening to things with my dad might involve lying on the floor with our heads propped up in cushions with headphones on a Sunday afternoon hearing all sorts of... it could be Jimi Hendrix, it could be Tchaikovsky, it could be Steely Dan's first album, it could be all sorts of stuff. And that informs my listening going through to the present day. I would say that music from around the world, music from your back your

back garden... The improvising thing really came to me through... through a couple of sources. There was a radio show called The Sequence which had a very wide range of music content that it played which I was very into growing up: Zappa, Captain Beefheart, Led Zeppelin, Bridget St. John. But also things like Terry Riley and folk stuff like Steely Span and Dub Reggie, Lee Scratch Perry. These were all things I continued to love and genres and styles that interested me as well. But what made that program so special was that between the session performances or records they played improvised passages to link it all together. What I didn't realize at the time, and only got to know when I met the people who made the show later on, was that they used Paddy Kingsland of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop with a VCS3 synthesizer... I now have a VCS3 synthesizer but I didn't know that before I discovered the backstory to this. And people who would come in and improvise with him it could be Bob Downs the flute player, Barry Guy, Stan Tracy the pianist, Loll Coxhill, Brian Eno did some of those things as well, Ron Geason. That was another program that really informed my listening as far as improvising is concerned. And then to discover what it was to watch people who were improvising either freely or on a jazz basis together in a room where you can see the performers and the way that they actually play together, Ken Hyder's Talisker was a huge huge influence and importance. So a lot of that stuff out Ken's music took me to listening to Tuvan Shamanic music. Gosh it's just very very hard to pin down a few names. Delia Derbyshire was another one the Radiophonic Workshop. A woman who composed mainly using found sounds and tape. So that was another thing. That's a short answer. There could be a much longer answer to that question. Come round and look at my record shelves.

CF: I imagine that especially with you such a question would be a very broad one. Do you recognize a pattern or a common thread to the music you like? Even in the different styles and genres or do you look for different things in every music?

J: I think that the common thread is I: want to feel engaged emotionally by music. Obviously you can't achieve this with every record that you listen to and it would be very difficult in life if every record major want to leap up and dance or burst into tears. But as an ideal something in the music that makes me feel something, that I'm like: "Oh these people mean it." And I think that... I've said this about listening to people are playing noise music. People sometimes say: "Oh noise music. that's just noise." No, no. Noise music has either got soul or it doesn't have soul. And you can't necessarily define what that soul is. But when you listen to it, you know if it's got you and it means something and you feel something from it or if it's just boys noodling. And it would be boys doing it rather than women who tend not to engage with things and that sort of just noodling around with knobs and dials. I think that's that's the difference. I want to have something that I feel engaged by emotionally, that grabs me and holds my attention. That while I'm in that space listening to that thing... whether it's abstract improvising or whether it's a song by the Bobby Fuller Four or whatever... for the time I'm listening to it, I want it to feel like: "That's the best

record that was ever made!" Until upon the next best record that was ever made there might be something completely different.

CF: This emotional engagement acts a regulation of emotions – so you feel a special emotion and look for some music that matches it or that moves you away from it – or is it more like a state of openness that doesn't necessarily have to do with your present emotion. I mean, is it still engaging if you listen to something that is beyond your present state?

J: It can be both of those things. Sometimes it's what hits me when I've never seen or heard it before. An example would be the first time that I saw Corey Mwamba play live. It was in a GIOfest and I was sat next to George Burt and I had no idea what to expect. Here was this guy with a vibraphone and wham! He started to play and the two of us just looked at one another and went: "This is amazing! You could not leave your concentration off that for a split second. It was so engaging and exciting. It was a similar experience when he came to Sharmanka and I said to him: "Well you've got a vibraphone, you're in a fixed space, where do you want to stand?" He said: "No it's got wheels, I can wheel it around." And he played across the gallery, improvising with machines on either side of the space for a solid hour. By the end of it, he was spent force and so was I listening to it. That was one that took me to somewhere that I had no preconception of what that was going to be. On the other hand there are times in life when you feel in a certain way, usually not good, when it's time to get the Jean Clark records out. Sometimes only Jean Clark will do. And that's when you want somebody to, I suppose, empathize with how awful you're feeling but in a beautiful way. That you: "Yeah! Jean Clark! He gets it!" So yeah, it can be either, either of those things. sometimes it can be a mood alterant or sometimes it's just jumping into... "What is this? Oh that's good!"

CF: Did you study music when you were a child or play an instrument? Because you said there was a lot of music going around the house.

JR: Yeah. We had a little... actually little Italian instrument. It was a Farfisa wind organ, which was called... It's one word: it's Pianorgan. It used to get called the piano organ but it's PIANORGAN and it's a bit like an accordion but laid out like a flat keyboard. You've got buttons at one side and it's a little shiny wooden thing with spindly gold legs and it makes a lovely noise. I used to... from I was any age at all and could reach it... I would just sit and play around with that. My mom would encourage me to play familiar tunes on it. Picking out notes of familiar tunes to register where they were in relation to one another. But I just like to make a noise with it and I particularly liked the big chords that were under the black cover, that one had to lift off the left hand side. There was this extra bit. There were these mainstream chords in the middle and then you lift it off the cover and there were these minor chords that made this deep dark sound. And I really liked playing with those and finding how they related to what was on the keys. But I mean... I'm talking about three or four whatever when I was doing that. Later on, inspired by Mr. Hyder's performance in what was then the Third Eye Center – now the CCA – I very much wanted to take up an instrument. And I would like to have taken up a saxophone but they were quite expensive.

The thought was: "Well, if you start playing another reed instrument, that's cheaper first... if you keep at it, you can get a saxophone later but if we spend 300 quid on a saxophone now," Which is what they cost at the time, "And you don't like it, well that's quite an outlay." So I got this clarinet and my uncle Dan, who was involved in the music shop in Bath Street where it was bought, was an orchestral and jazz band clarinet player. He used to take me for lessons on a Saturday and I really did love it. I was 11 at the time and I used to practice and practice and enjoyed doing that. Then, the following year I contracted whooping cough, which is usually a disease of earlier childhood. If you get it when you're about four or five, six years old, it passes in four or five, six weeks. If you get it in the cusp of adolescence, it can be quite bad. What I also didn't know until much later was that I was slightly asthmatic. So the respiratory disease at that time hit me quite hard. Living in a damp house didn't help much. But you don't know these things at the time. So, for about the next year and a half, if I tried to play the instrument at any point I would get convulsions. I used to keep a bucket at the side of the bed at night. You don't really want to know that for your researches but it was a part of life that wasn't much fun. After that, I got so far away from playing regularly and I just felt that it was kind of lost to me. And I felt, in a way, that because I hadn't kept up with it, I had somehow failed myself, or failed it, or I don't know what I what I felt I had failed. But I felt I'd failed something and of course anytime I looked at a musical instrument somebody would say: "Oh, you can get lessons for that." "I had lessons and I failed to continue them." So that drifted away. I told this story the day were at The Glad Café at first but it may be worth running... and I don't mind it being used because it points up a kind of gaucheness of the extremes of teenage emotion that... now you look back into the thing: "That was utterly ridiculous." But at the time it was terribly serious. When I was 17, my first love of playing around with things in life was tape recorders. I absolutely loved tape recorders. The fact that you could capture sounds with them, playing them back, maybe play them backwards and have different sounds, different speeds and things with tape recorders. I was given a little Casio VL-Tone keyboard. The little keyboard that Depeche Mode used when they started. Funnily enough they had a pocket calculator buried under the keyboard. I've still got it. Given over 16 and I'm pressing around with it. Then I plugged it into the tape machine, started. I sort of cut it up and I made a little loop. Because it was another thing my dad taught me to chop up and splice tapes when I was nine. We both liked tape machines. So I would play around with these things and I had recordings of me messing about with this little keyboard. And then, for some reason, I got this wave of concern that if anyone heard that I was doing this... that somehow I shouldn't be doing it because I hadn't carried on and kept up music lessons. Now it sounds ridiculous but at the time it wasn't ridiculous. It got to a point where I thought that if I died... good thing to think about when you're 17... if I died and somebody found my tapes, they would discover that I'd been doing this. And so I wiped them all. Isn't that stupid? Isn't that just daft? But that was quite what was driving that... I don't know... it's insecurity, I suppose. Cut to much later, my friend Gail and I were running a small record label through her music fanzine. We were going to record a band using

60s valve tape machines. She was very into old technology and dual-meet records and all that kind of thing, as I am too. And she said: "Well, we're gonna have to test this equipment, so it'd be better if we test that with some music than going 'testing testing one two' and then try and record a band. Why don't you go and get a clarinet?" What? I knew that she played a violin in the school orchestra, she knew I'd played something once but we'd never done that in front of one another. But because I had no inhibition about being daft in front of her, it just was like: "Oh yeah! Fine. Okay. Let's do that!" So she played the little wind organ that I messed around with as a child, I played the clarinet and we recorded something of us just playing together. Wearing the tape back and went: "Hey, wasn't that fun? Well, we need a name." We were in my attic and I had old electronics magazines from when I tried to build circuits and solder things and all that. I picked up the first one. It said: "Build your homemade electroscope." "Electroscope. That's a good name, isn't it?" So that gave us a band name and Homemade Electroscope became our first album. First we had a tape which she sold through a fanzine. Someone bought it in the rough trade shop in London. Next thing, he came back and bought a dozen copies, then he bought 25 copies and then 25 more. Then somebody called us up and said: "Hey, I want to do a record with you". The next thing we were getting played on the John Peel show and playing live in London. So I discovered that there was another way of doing music that wasn't about feeling you failed. And, of course, the two of us have continued. Gail, I have to say, does her own thing as Pefkin and she does terrific soundscape stuff. Occasionally we still get together and do electroscope. We played in Sheffield in October 2023 in a place called the Bishops House that was built in 1500. It was a lovely experience to do that again. That's carried right down since the 90s.

CF: Was the first recording improvised?

J: The first recording was improvised, yeah! You know, we were tentative about it but it was of sufficient interest that we stuck it on the tape that we released. The very first thing that we played actually came out, which was really quite a surprise at the end. "Oh! We could do this!" It was a golden moment for me.

CF: Do you have a very early memory of music or a memory that is related in one way or another to music? Or can you remember the time when you became aware of something like music?

J: Yeah, yeah. I can remember climbing up on a stool to play 45s on a little auto change record player that was between my sister's beds. When I was too small to reach it by any other means. I mean, I was literally still in a nappy, climbing up to put records on this thing. Other music that was around that I remember distinctly from that time, would be a thing called Fujiyama on Dave Brubeck's Jazz Impressions of Japan album which this beautiful smoky Paul Desmond saxophone. That's something that is in my musical DNA as were folk song recordings that were on an album by Robin Hall and Jimmy McGregor. Some of them were kind of comic songs or amusing little folk songs, which my mum would encourage me to sing. Things like the Crockhill the Pussy-O. Strange little, sometimes macabre, tales actually. Obviously stick in a child's mind with the imagery. I was so interested in records and things early on that my sister used to get

paid each month as a teacher and she went to the States and brought back my first tape recorder when I was two and a half. There's a picture of me sitting on my granny's knee with a face that's just absolute glee with my little eyewear tape recorder. Then she started to get records for me and I became an active consumer of records. The first one can be dated to when I was two years eight months old and it was... I still like it actually... it's called Don't Go Out into the Rain You're Gonna Melt Sugar by David Garrick. It's still a great pop record that thing and my copies of these things are still playable as well. Because my dad was very into: "Even if you've got small hands you can handle records properly, so you don't ruin them." I got that early on too. That was around the first time I saw somebody play music in front of me. It sort of stitched into my mind as well. The neighbours from across the the back gardens family called the O'Donnells had a daughter called Francis. Francis had a guitar and sung folk songs. Folk songs... Just, you know, the kind of things that people strummed at that time. There were things like the Jeely Piece Song which is Scottish colloquialism right. So people were moved en masse from the old tenement flats in Glasgow. There was a lot of slum clearance, it was called, when old flats that should have been renovated actually got knocked down. And people got herded into high-rise flats. The idea was that in the back courts of the tenements children would shout up to their mother for a sandwich, which was a Jeely Piece. And the mother would throw the sandwich over and they'd catch it and eat it in the back court in the high-rise flats. "You cannae throw a Jeely Piece oot a 20-story flat." Didn't work if you were in a high-rise flat. So the first thing I saw anyone play live was Francis O'Donnell with a guitar: "Oh you cannae throw a Jeely Piece oot..." I think I was instantly smitten. I just thought: "Love!" I was completely smitten by the idea that somebody could... not on the TV and not, you know, star, classical or rock musicians or whatever... but somebody could just sit down in a room and play and sing. I thought this was fascinating. Yeah, that's another very very distinct early memory. Yeah there was a lot of music around and it was consumed from the TV and the radio as well. I was very much hooked to listening to it.

CF: When you were tinkering with the recording, splicing in your teenage, were you aware that was a form of composition or it was...

J: Oh yeah! Yeah, yeah. I became aware later of... I'm trying to think when I first became aware of Delia Derbyshire because she was obviously really doying of that style. She became a friend towards the end of her life. But I was certainly aware of... TV documentaries would focus on interesting stuff. I remember when I was nine seeing David Bowie on a documentary on the TV. My mum was a huge Bowie fan. We had a poster of David in Aladdin Sane era on one wall of the kitchen. On the opposite wall we had Alice Cooper with his python. So that was my kitchen experience. Bowie was talking about cut-ups. Talking specifically about Brian Geist and William Burroughs and how they cut up text and then how you could do that with tape as well. So he was talking about how he used this in songs. So I was aware of it from that point of view and... As I say my dad taught me how to splice tape when I was nine. So the fact that you could do it as a function to edit something: you put a lead of tape on something and make it start exactly where

you wanted. But you could also do other things with tape and if you turned the loop around it would play backwards and things that was something I liked as a child as well. The fact that a half-track tape machine, if playing a quarter-track tape, will play two quarter-track channels per half-track head width. It will therefore play something forwards and backwards at the same time from the quarter-track tape. So if you have a quarter-track tape machine and a half-track machine to play it, you can mess around and record things on the one and then play it on the other. And you'll come up with something completely random on that, that involves things in both directions. I was really interested in the noises those things could make. I wish I'd applied myself to not being silly when I was a teenager... probably I'd done a lot more with that. Anyway, it was what it was and I was who I was.

CF: So you were aware of doing something creative with sound.

J: I suppose so. Although to me it was just... I was playing around with it because it was interesting. I would like to say that I was aware of all the great European music studios but in point of fact I was more aware of Pierre Henry because of the album he made with Spooky Tooth, which is actually not very good. I wish I'd known more about Pierre Henry but he made this album with Spooky Tooth. It had somebody drawing a nail down the neck and drawing blood. What was that? And then I had the record, I thought: "Why did they bother?" It's not as good as the other Spooky Tooth records. But yeah, so some of the stuff I learned about later on... so I'm trying to devolve myself away what did I actually know at the time. I knew at the time certainly that when I listened to my beloved radio program the Sequence, there were things that happened and that: "What's that? That's amazing!" And all these strange, strange little sounds that made the show unique.

CF: I was thinking about the societies for tape recording where people were just recording sounds.

J: Oh yeah! In the UK, there was even a magazine, I think more than one magazine certainly. There's one called Tape Recorder which had annual competitions for tape recording. That could be field recording or that could be creative sound or whatever and... Another thing that I think is it's probably quite important to mention so far is: children who were born in the... especially the 60s and the 70s here... was that we were spoon-fed a diet of abstract sound. Because when the BBC formed its radiophonic workshop, it didn't form it to be like Stockhausen's music studio or whatever. It wasn't doing that. It was doing it because they could make cheap music at a below the line cost in the BBC. However what they proceeded to do... of course the apogee would be Delius' realization of the Doctor Who theme... But they made this very creative tape music which got used all over the place for signature tunes and television and radio background music, special effects in strange spooky children's TV shows and all that kind of thing. Of course, then other channels caught on to this too. So if you're watching programs on TV you might well be listening to FC Judd, Fred Judd who was another really creative tape-music musician who's only been rediscovered in the last say 10 or 15 years. Because before that: "What does that say? Who's this guy?" You know, there was a lot of creative stuff that came through that time. If you

talk to people who then became creative musicians, I think from the point where electronic music became cheaper to access. So there'd be the point where say the Wasp synthesizer came in and people who didn't have hundreds of pounds to spend on the fancy synths could buy a cheap synth and start creating pop on it. Then you go through the phase where there's people like Adrian Utley and Portishead for example or Anne Shenton with Add M to X... these people had all grown up listening to radiophonics and abstract sound. But we didn't know it was abstract sound, it was just what was on the TV. I think that actually begat quite a lot of unusual creativity in music in the UK in a broader sense.

CF: Do you have non-musical sounds that you like particularly?

J: It depends where you split the line between what's music and what's not music. Because I find, for example, magpie chatter very musical. Yet people would go: "Eh eh!" [IMITATING THE MAGPIE'S RASPY SOUND] You know, I've got a silver birch tree in the back garden. I've been fortunate enough to have magpies nest up there and to listen to just the range of different sounds that they produce. So yeah! I like a good noise. I had some fun with that along the way. There was one point a few years ago when I got asked to take part in a series of works that were commissioned by an artist called Minty Donald. She was dealing with the tidal flows of the river Clyde. People think: "Oh the tides, that's the sea." But they don't think the tides and urban waterways and rivers and so on... So she asked me if I would do one of five pieces for this, and I did. I ended up performing it with Gail, whom I've mentioned before, and also Ceylan, whom you know. But first of all, I wanted to gather the sounds. We were going to sing different parts to do with the the evolution of the the waterway but I wanted to gather all sounds to make the backing track that came from the river and associated stuff to do with just the noise that made. So I found that if you go up to Clyde bank, for example at low tide, if you sink a hydrophone into the river, there's a whole bubbling thing that happens in the mud of the river bed. Which obviously up above you don't hear. There's this great gloopy bass bubbling sound that comes up from the mud when, I suppose, the mass of the water is less. So whatever oxygen is trapped in the river bed goes [IMITATES THE SOUND]. You can do a lot with that. There's all the sound that travels through the water that doesn't travel well in air, so you can hear stuff from maybe two, three miles down the river bank. That's maybe industrial sound. That's interesting. And then the one that... I said: "Well, I wonder what it sounds like on a nuclear sub." And somebody at the meeting was: "How will you ever find that? You'll never get aboard a nuclear sub." Of course, that's the driver I need to... "Won't I? I'll show you!" You know right. That's me set now. I'm going to get aboard a nuclear sub just so I can go back: "I've been on a nuclear sub" So I went off and contacted the Ministry of Defence and I said: "I'd like to come aboard a nuclear submarine to do some field recording." And they said: "But they're silent." And I said: "Well, they may be technically silent in operation but I can guarantee you that if I come aboard one, I'll find sounds on them. Because they can't be silent." "What?" I said: "There's nothing political about this. I'm not discussing the pros and cons of the trident program. All I want to do is record sounds that the submarine makes. There is no

other side to this.” Eventually the guy who was doing the press for the Fazlain said to me: “We only ever get contacted by people who want to do things that are political.” He said: “You’re the only person for a long time who’s got in touch who’s interested in it purely as a sound source. I just don’t get asked that.” So they cleared me to go to Fazlain. I had to go through all these different locks with a different pass. If you go there... I mean... this is not germane to your course, but it’s an odd little story. If you go there you get the first pass. It’s all different coloured keys that you have to take. Plastic keys. You go through the blue gate and the green gate and the red gate and eventually you get to the last one before you can go on the ship, or the submarine rather, which is a black pass. It takes you through another turnstile and suddenly you’re standing on this curved surface with these big round shapes on the curvature of the submarine. And I said to someone: “What’s the big round shape for?” “Ah well that’s where, if it’s actually being used, they open up... that’s where the warhead comes out. I’m standing tough like: “Jee! What?” That was amazing in a very scary way. Then when I went on the thing, of course there were fantastic drones. There was all this sound that I was able to record and then have them actually as harmonies with one another. I made layers of them so they built up in nice little waves of harmony that we sang against. Yeah the John Cage “music is sound thing” appeals to me a lot. “Sound is music” I should say. Sorry Mr Cage, I flipped you around the wrong way there.

CF: Is there a quality in the sounds you like that you seek for specifically?

J: I suspect that I am quite drawn to things that are droney, actually. Yeah, I think that may well be true. Andrew Loog Oldham put it well, the Rolling Stones original manager, put it well when he said: “Scottish people know how to drone.” I think there’s probably stuff that relates the droniness of bagpipes and Scottish folk forms that relates to your Calabrian pipes. And probably relates to any of those sort of Celtic or sister and brother cultures that go right across through parts of Asia and all sorts that involve drones. I think that’s probably something that appeals to me quite a lot.

CF: Do you know why?

J: I don’t know why especially and I’m not sure that... I don’t know if I want to know why. Maybe it would be interesting, maybe there’s some analysis that would be... the reason I say that is because... Right. What I do in my day-to-day life is I do voiceover work. That can be all sorts of things. That can be stories to help people go to sleep or meditations or it can be selling pet food. “Bella and Duke. Not just a life well lived a life well loved.” I do that. And on the other hand I’ve done the whole series of promotional trailers for the BBC’s Scottish women’s professional league football coverage. “Live football lives here!” That kind of that kind of thing. But what I was very interested in as a child was mannerisms and tones of the way people spoke and mimicry. I liked different sounds and different voices and I would try and pick up bits of things that I liked. If I listen to somebody like Vincent Price, great horror movie actor. If you listen to Vincent Price: “Darkness falls across the land, the midnight hour is close at hand, creatures crawl in search of

blood, to terrify your neighbourhood.” That kind of thing. One day I was talking to a friend of mine who is actually our voice coach. She’s somebody who understands which parts of the mouth you place it all in and how you produce different sounds. And I said... Well, I’ve always had that interest and ability to do that kind of thing but... I said: “I have no idea how I... how it’s done. I cannot tell you what I’m doing.” And she said: “I could tell you but if I tell you you’ll start thinking about it.” And she said: “If you start thinking about it, maybe it’s best if I don’t tell you”. So there’s some things that... It’s not, certainly not a reluctance to learn where things come from or understand why they are. But there are some things that I think: “Maybe just leave that.” I’m not sure is the short answer from a very long exposition on that question.

CF: It seems like that in the way you talk about music and friendships and family, music plays a big role in establishing or maintaining relationships with people around you. It feels like that many of the important things related to music that you cited involved some sort of relationship. Somebody who was there with you in the music. It was either your father or your grandmother holding you while you were playing with the tape recorder or your mother or friends who sort of incited you or introduced you to making music. That’s a beautiful thing.

J: Actually that’s very astute observation because when I think of it a lot of my social contact with people involves going to see live music. If it’s not going to see live music, it’s listening to it or... of course, the radio thing as well. I’ve long been involved in programming and presenting music on the radio so that’s another huge, huge part of my my life and something that I love very dearly. So yeah, that is a massive part of my social thing in the way I relate to other people, in the way that, I suppose, gravitate towards one another. It works in purely personal ways of how I find friends or how they find me or whatever. It also worked in the way of actually accessing some people whom I had admired and then I did something with them. Recording or... for example... Strangely enough Loll Coxhill and Bridget, St John, who were both part of that radio show The Sequence. Raymond knew Loll obviously. Loll used to come up and play with the Burt-MacDonald band. I’d seen Loll play live when I was about 12. Back then I said: “I think we’ll just go and have a chat.” Again, I should have done because I had done it with Ken Hyder. But I just admired Loll Coxhill from a distance and I admired the fun side of it as well as the extraordinary music. But then I had these ideas for some pieces, and I said to Raymond at one point. I gave him a copy of the first album I had made under the name Phosphene. I had no side on this as in “I want you to play this to Loll Coxhill.” In fact, I was slightly... when Raymond came back to me, he said: “Oh, I played that to Loll.” I was like: “Whoa! What? You played my record to Loll Coxhill? Oh god, what’s gonna...” You know, and he said: “He really liked it!” He said Loll Coxhill liked my record? Wow! He said: “He especially liked tracks three, six and seven. It wasn’t just “oh yeah that’s nice.” It was a constructive engagement of what he liked and why he liked it. And then I said: “I’ve got some other things. Do you think that when he comes back up, maybe he would play on something?” Raymond said: “Pass them on to me, I’ll ask him. So, I sent them off. Next thing, Loll goes: “Yes, I want to play in that.” Raymond brought him around one day and I said:

"Which one would you like to play on?" And Loll goes: "We have time. Just set them up, see how far we go." He played on six then we rounded it up and made an album. So all of a sudden I'm doing this album with somebody who was a real musical hero. Then through another related story, I ended up in touch with Bridget St John. Bridget was an important voice in my musical interest but she also became important for another reason which was: when my dad had Alzheimer's disease and he lost so much of who I knew him to be, he still knew music. I could put on something he'd not listened to for years... you know, a Miles Davis album he'd not heard in years and years: "My favourite bit's the next one because he does this." Sure enough he still knew what these records what this music was. One day, after we'd reached the stage of the Alzheimer's where he would say: "Who are you and why are you in my house?" And I'd say: "I'm your son and this isn't your house." That's a very hard place to be if you've got anyone with dementia in your family you'll know that place has to be. It's horrible but you're dealing with the disease, not the person and you just have to get used to that. I had been sent some stuff I was listening through for the purposes of noting down where sessions were recorded for the BBC. I put this one on, it was it was Bridget with Kevin Ayers. There was a knock at the door and I thought: "What's my dad gonna say now?" He wanders in: "That's Bridget, isn't it?" I must have misheard. I said: "Sorry dad, what was that?" "Bridget St John, lovely singer." And he wandered out. He knows who that voice is. Apart from odd times when I've played on the radio, he's not heard regularly since the 70s. And he doesn't know me. And rather than think: "Oh dear, how terrible. I'm insulted." I thought: "How absolutely wonderful that music can cut right through that thing and you can still find those connections in there. I told that story to a friend of mine in New York, a woman called Gail O'Hara. And unbeknown to me, Bridget St John was one of her pals. She said: "You've got to write this down, I'm gonna send that to Bridget." I wrote it down. I sent it to Bridget and she got it. And we started to correspond and then we ended up doing a song together in New York. Unfortunately by the time we did that, my dad had just gone. But it was still something... we dedicated the record to him and it was still an important thing that happened and that circle was was made. So yeah, there is a huge amount, as far as I'm concerned, of personal connections that involve music stuff. Definitely.