

How Musical is my Valley: A Comparative Study of Popular Music Making in Two Semi-Rural Towns

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ABSTRACT

Popular music-making in semi-rural settings has been largely overlooked in popular music scholarship in favour of cities and urban areas. The lack of scholarship generates assumptions that places outside of cities lack opportunities and the resources to make music and this research aimed to find out in what ways popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in semi-rural settings. Reviewing popular music scholarship led to the formulation of three main research questions; What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music-making in semi-rural settings? What kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music-making in semi-rural settings? What are the motivations underpinning musicians' involvement in making popular music in semi-rural settings?

To address these questions this study adopted a qualitative comparative approach drawing on two case studies in the form of the semi-rural towns of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil in the south Wales valleys in the UK. Through empirical observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews this study found differences between close-knit and more loosely knit networks in how they generate different kinds of approaches and attitudes to music-making and the findings in this study show that friendship and family network connections were critical for accessing particular resources and engendering musical activity. Furthermore, musicians' attitudes, values and motivations played a vital role in how they viewed their music-making illustrated through the kinds of resources they draw upon, the approaches taken and the kinds of music they produced. This research argues that semi-rural settings are a rich source of academic interest and provide another perspective of popular music-making compared to accounts of cities and urban areas and illuminates the meaningful connections between resources, networks and motivations that help facilitate and sustain popular music-making in semi-rural locations.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father Allan Cleaton who passed away at the start of my PhD journey. My father's love of music influenced my own passion for music which started a lifelong obsession of all things musical. Love you and miss you Dad.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A Tale of Two Towns

1.0 Introduction

This project is about popular music-making in semi-rural settings. It developed from my personal and professional interest in popular music and an increasing academic curiosity about how popular music-making happens in small towns. My observations of popular music-making in the South Wales valleys initially formed the idea for this thesis and led to an examination of two similar but not identical semi-rural settings in South Wales. This research asks how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in semi-rural settings.

I have spent most of my life listening to popular music, mainly rock, indie, and heavy metal. Music became a significant part of my life after I picked up a guitar and learned how to play the songs of my favourite artists and bands. I took this interest further when I took guitar lessons and then moved to London to study music and classical guitar performance while playing popular music covers and some original music with friends and other students outside of our studies.

Popular music includes a rich combination of cultural, historical, and social dimensions, highlighting the role of popular music as dynamic and creative, influencing and shaping the musical landscapes of societies across the globe (see Jones and Rahn, 1977). Popular music is a complex and fluid term encompassing various styles and forms, typically characterised by its accessibility, widespread appeal, and commercial success.

Characteristics of popular music, as understood for the present study, are instrumentation

typically including all or some of the following: electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, drums (electric or acoustic), vocals and keyboards; distinctive music styles such as Americana, Blues, Country, Electronic, Folk, Funk, Indie, Metal, Pop and Rock; live performance, mainly in pubs, clubs, venues and at charity/fundraiser events and festivals, generally easily accessible to both musicians and audiences.

Many of the popular musicians interviewed in the valley towns of Aberdare and Merthyr are only somewhat concerned with disseminating their music widely or attracting music industry attention. Indeed, many participants in this study primarily viewed popular music-making more in terms of social practice (Middleton, 1990), emphasising the role of popular music-making in encouraging collaboration, creativity and creating meaningful connections with others. Popular music is an activity (Small, 1998) where people are brought together to enable them to play music. It is primarily about groups, although not exclusively and is more about live performance rather than recording, although that is an element of it.

My musical experiences in different places, in and outside of school, as a music student and a professional musician in London and when I moved back to the South Wales valleys, straddled classical and popular music practices. Different ways of making, experiencing, thinking, and talking about music exist. However, these different ways were not just between classical and popular music traditions but, more importantly to this study, between different groups of people involved in popular music-making in different places. This stimulated my personal as well as my academic interest in how popular music-making happens on a local scale, and my central question is why these places differ.

My initial feelings about semi-rural popular music-making and my own experience suggest limited places to rehearse and perform live. Musical activities were generally less formal and focused on having fun rather than viewing popular music-making as work or a potential profession. Along with my observations, I found that during the initial stages of research for

this study, academic scholarship focusing on popular music-making tends to overlook rural and semi-rural areas instead focusing on cities and urban areas.

In addition to the paucity of popular music research on places outside cities and urban areas, extant literature on rural areas mainly focused on popular music education and the commercial music industry (Spring 2013; Carr 2021). Research on musicians in the Welsh valleys tends to look at traditional forms of Welsh music, such as choral and brass band music (see Llewellyn 1998, Williams 1998, Hill 2007, and Barlow 2015), and established famous artists from the area (Price 1999, and O'Connor 2001), such as The Manic Street Preachers and The Stereophonics. This means it often overlooks the majority of musicians who do participate in local popular music-making.

There is a need for research to look at popular music-making in semi-rural places to address the need for more research and to understand the differences and similarities in terms of popular music-making compared to cities and urban environments. Furthermore, a failure to understand semi-rural popular music-making may lead to the assumption that it is of lesser value or quality and could contribute to a lack of scholarship to understand how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in these areas, which requires investigation. This research project establishes new insights into making popular music in semi-rural settings, revealing that semi-rural popular music-making is not just a smaller version of the urban or city popular music-making scene.

The term semi-rural is employed across various research fields and is designated to provide an understanding of the complexities and characteristics of settings that do not correspond to either the 'rural' or the 'urban'. Scholarship in rural studies describes semi-rural spaces as 'urban spaces within rural landscapes' (Wineman et al., 2020). Hall et al. (2011), in their research on tourism in Southwest Scotland, characterise semi-rural settings as 'exhibiting physical, perceptual, and economic characteristics of "in-between-ness"' (Hall et al., 2011,

p.3). This quality of in-between-ness' is ambivalent, and such ambivalence is evident in Government descriptions of different parts of Wales, where the term 'semi-rural' is used to describe a mix of agricultural, residential, and light commercial and industrial land use and has also been used in reference to areas with limited access to some services, yet comprehensive services in other regards (Rural Wales, 2008).

Sociological scholarship has defined semi-rural in spatial and temporal terms. For example, Lefebvre's (2003) axis of urbanisation is a process extending through space and developing over time. The axis 'runs from the complete absence of urbanisation ("pure nature," the earth abandoned to the elements) on the left to the completion of the process on the right' (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 7). Lefebvre designed the axis to show the succession of societies 'in short, the rural, industrial, and urban succeed one another' (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 78). In Lefebvre's axis, semi-rural is in between the rural space and the urban space and includes characteristics of both. For example, compared with rural, 'semi-rural space would have slightly greater population density, greater access to transportation and less reliance on land labour' (Duncan, 2023, p. 40). Compared with urban, semi-rural spaces would have a considerably smaller population density and less access to transportation, for instance.

Lazaro et al., (2017) use the term 'village towns' to describe the process of rural villages transforming into small towns where industry expanded the small villages and then the industry (coal and iron) stopped leaving wastelands in their place which years later, and in the case of the South Wales valleys are being developed into housing and industrial estates in close proximity to woodland, farmland and also transport infrastructure and commercial hubs such as high streets including pubs and small shops and independent businesses including convenience stores, hair salons and takeaway food.

Popular music scholarship on music and place has not really used the term semi-rural or sought to attend to the ambivalences and complexities associated with semi-rurality; instead,

it uses the terms rural and urban much more centrally. Popular music scholarship has defined rural music scenes as 'non-urban, typically due to its geographical distance from a large urban conurbation' (Bennett et al., 2020, p. 368) and emphasises that researching popular music-making in a particular place requires consideration of geographical factors. For instance, Gibson (2002) shows the importance of considering the geographical setting to understand the aesthetics and values involved in popular music-making and explain artistic regional identity.

It is, however, difficult to compare rural and urban settings within different countries. For example, Bennett et al. (2020) highlight this point between Australia and the UK, 'vast and diametrically opposed differences in terms of the population density in relation to landmass make any comparison of regional and rural popular music scenes in these countries inherently difficult to make' (Bennett et al., 2020, p. 369). Furthermore, distances between towns and the idea of isolation are very different between countries where geographically, an isolated town in Australia may be hundreds of miles from the next town, whereas in the UK, what would be classed as a small, remote town may only be twenty or thirty miles from the next town or city.

Reflecting on the term semi-rural, the valley towns of focus, Aberdare and Merthyr, are relatively isolated in the UK, regarding their distance from large towns like Pontypridd and cities such as Cardiff and Swansea. However, both towns demonstrate a sense of 'in-between-ness' (Hall et al., 2011), where rural and urban characteristics blend, including land use, economic activities, and infrastructure.

This chapter continues by describing the South Wales valleys, providing background information on the environment focused on, and then discusses the two towns of focus in this study, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil, providing the context of the areas. I then give a brief outline of the approaches taken to meet the aims of this research. To conclude this chapter, I

then outline the overall thesis's structure and briefly describe each chapter's content in this research study.

1.1The South Wales Valleys

The towns I focus on in this study are both situated in the South Wales valleys (hereafter the valleys). For the purposes of this study, I chose the towns of Aberdare and Merthyr because of my initial observations of popular music-making within both towns and their semi-rural characteristics, and looking at two towns allows this study to offer some comparative discussion between them. Furthermore, apart from the convenience of a researcher living in the environment focused on, the particular nature of the semi-rurality of the valleys made it an ideal choice for this research project.



Figure 1: Map of South Wales. (<https://www.jenniewanders.com/wales-road-trip/>).

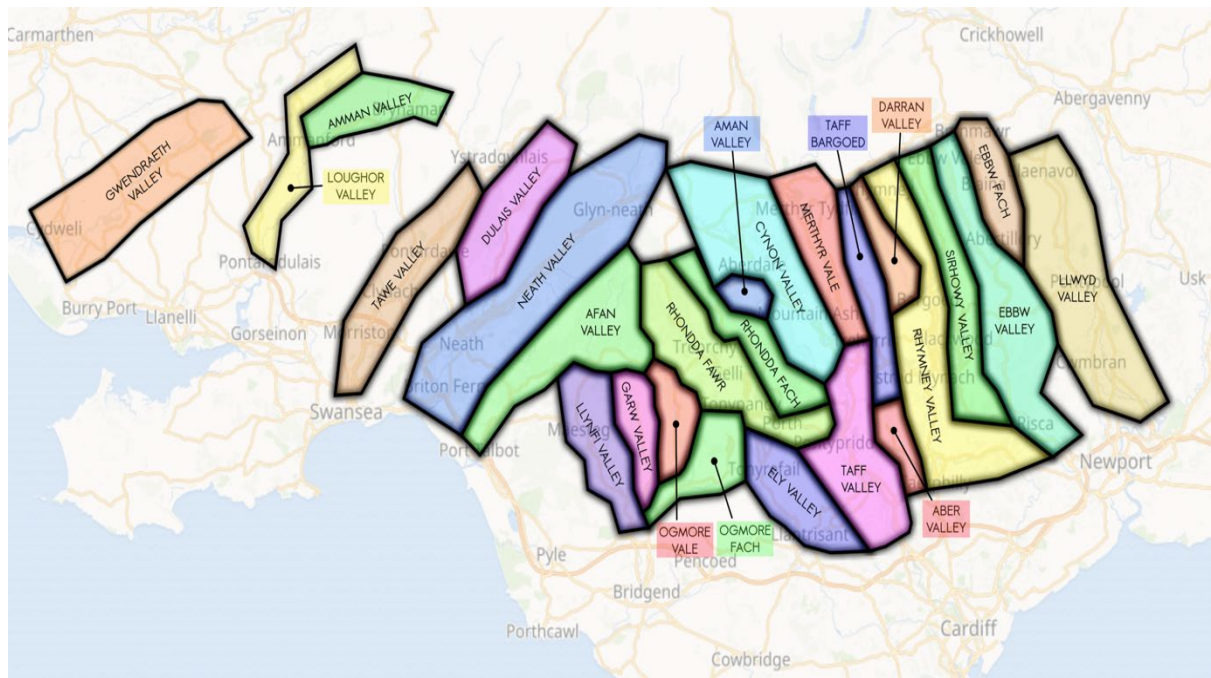


Figure 2: South Wales valleys map. (https://kids.kiddle.co/Image:South_Wales_Valleys_Map.png).

The valleys spread out arterially running approximately twenty miles Northwards from the capital City of Cardiff and includes over twenty different valleys. The landscape changes when travelling north into the valleys away from Cardiff where the built-up suburbs of the city give way to farm and woodland. The hills that form the valleys become increasingly prominent with a mixture of thick forests and farms scattered over the hillsides. Identifying the towns in the valleys are distinct lines of terraced houses, originally built for the coal and iron workers that nestle between the opposing hillsides. The valleys, loosely separated into upper and lower parts, upper being further away from Cardiff (the area commonly referred to as the Heads of the Valleys) and is more rural than lower areas of the valleys closer to Cardiff.

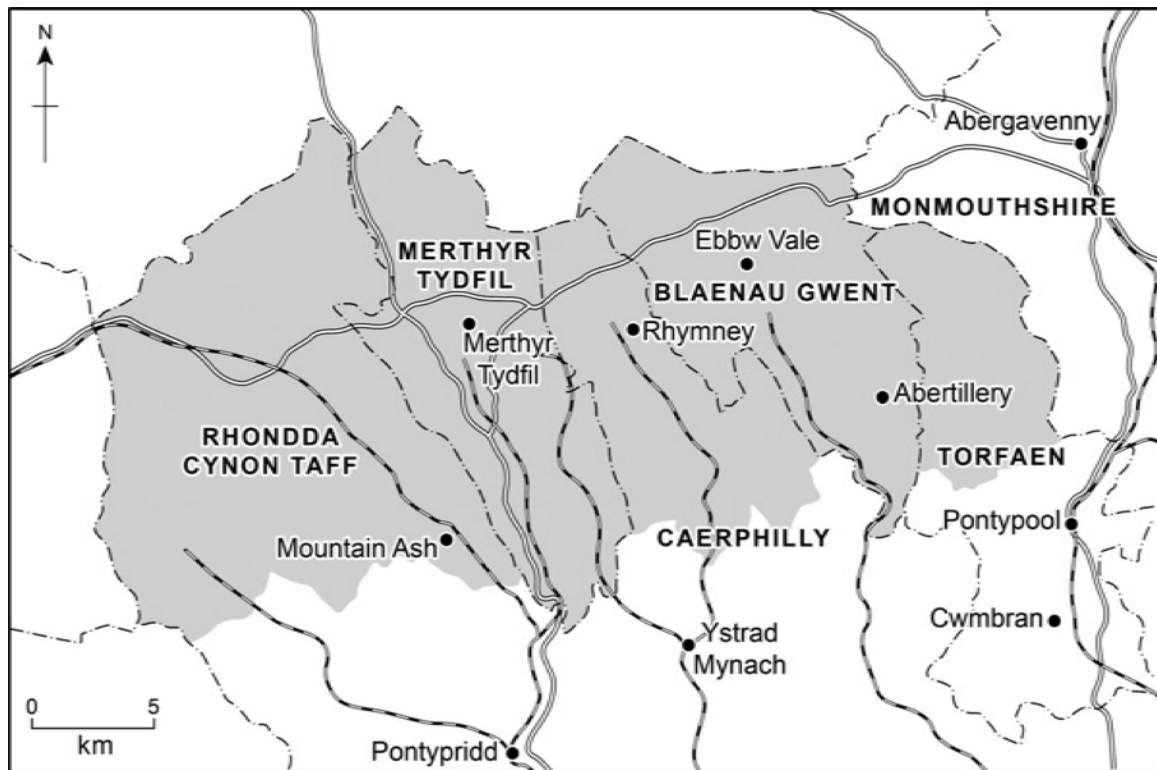


Figure 3: The Heads of The Valleys. (Mastermap Layer@Crown Copyright/database right 2010. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service).

The Heads of the Valleys consists of five local authorities: Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, and Torfaen and is an area where the ‘communities have diverse characteristics and needs’ (Jones et al., 2015, p. 83). The Welsh Office described the valleys as a ‘mountainous country deeply dissected by valleys, many of which are narrow’ (Welsh Office, 1967, p. 101) with distinct geographical differences ranging from rural, isolated valley communities to more built-up areas. This part of the valleys has been particularly problematic for a long time, leading to the long-standing popular and political characterisation of the area, such as ‘economic inactivity and unemployment, high levels of morbidity, under-developed communications, poor housing, and low levels of workforce skills’ (Burgess and Moles, 2015, p. 86).

Most domestic dwellings in the valleys consist of the distinctive streets of terraced housing mentioned above, which housed the coal and iron workers during the industrial boom in the late 19th century. Post-war housing estates built on the outskirts of most towns in the valleys

show the growth of the towns, and a sizeable proportion of them are areas of the worst deprivation and poverty in the valleys and Wales as a whole, often associated with drugs, alcohol, and violence.

The initial growth of towns in the valleys resulted from heavy industrialisation, particularly Merthyr, which was once home to the largest iron works in the world (see Coflein, 2008). Since the decline of its main industries, the area is mainly known for its high levels of unemployment and deprivation (see reports by Easton 2013, Hoban 2013, Dickens and Duffy 2016, and Lynn 2017) and has been described as 'a distressed area unique in Britain for the depth and concentration of its problems' (David et al., 2003). Education in Wales ranked the worst in the UK overall (see Welsh Assembly Government, 2016), and the unemployment rate in Wales is at 3.4% (Labour Market Overview, 2023) at the time of writing.

Property prices in the area reflect the distinction between the upper and lower valleys, where, for example, the average house price in Aberdare is £164,000 and in Merthyr Tydfil, approximately £170,000 compared with Pontypridd, a few miles lower down the valley and closer to Cardiff see prices are averaging around £180,000 (see Rightmove.co.uk). Public transport in the valleys is reasonably extensive, but there are differences in the services offered in the upper parts compared to the lower parts of the valleys. There are early stopping times for some routes and restrictions on others occurring in the bus and train services provided in the upper part of the valleys (see Welsh Assembly Government, 2004, p. 6). The geography of the South Wales valleys has influenced patterns of communication where, for example, the rail links run along the length of each valley running between north and south, linking with Cardiff and Newport, and these transport links follow the geographical shape of the valleys rather than traverse the mountains dividing them.

1.2 Background and Context of the Towns of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil

Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil's towns are in neighbouring valleys located in the northernmost part of the valleys (the Heads of the Valleys) in the Cynon Valley and the Taf Valley. The environment is partly rural and partly urban but not wholly typical of either (Collins Dictionary). Most local authorities in Wales are 'a mix of urban and rural areas to some degree. There are urban areas within rural local authorities and the reverse' (Pateman, 2011), producing a sense of in-between-ness (Hall et al., 2011).

Both towns share many similarities, such as their semi-rural location, and to varying extents, they share some of the problems of living in this environment. For example, both towns have suffered economically because of deindustrialisation, particularly during the coal miner's strike in the 1980s, with exponential increases in unemployment¹ and deprivation. Other effects of deindustrialisation are the steady rise in service occupations, retail, and call centres, suggesting wages are generally low for unskilled positions.

Descriptions of many parts of the valleys often focus on the problems stemming from deindustrialisation, such as crime, drug use and poverty, and Merthyr has received a great deal of negative press. The *Channel 4* documentary *Skint* dubbed the Gurnos estate, a post-war housing estate in the northern part of Merthyr, as a *sick note city* with a reputation as a 'crime, drugs and poverty hotspot' (McCarthy, 2017). The population in the valleys is slowly declining, and economic inactivity, unemployment, and outward migration could contribute to this. Over three-quarters of the population in the valleys were born in Wales, and the majority are white in ethnic origin.

¹ The unemployment rate in Merthyr in 2022 was at 4.4% (Varbes) and slightly lower in Aberdare at 3.7% (iLiveHere) compared to unemployment rates in 1980 in Merthyr 7.4% and in Aberdare 9.4% (Hansard, UK Parliament).



Figure 4: Aberdare aerial view (<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/408258/images>).



Figure 5: Merthyr Tydfil aerial view (<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/33136/images>).

There are differences between the towns, such as their size, population, and accessibility regarding roads and public transport. Merthyr is a much larger town with a geographical footprint of approximately 57.67 km squared compared to Aberdare, which is 29.15 km squared (see Appendix A Google Maps images of the boundaries of both towns). Merthyr

also has a population twice the size of Aberdare². However, Aberdare is situated within the significantly larger county of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), where, in comparison, Merthyr town centre and the surrounding villages within that valley make up the Taf County.

Merthyr has better transport links than Aberdare, and many people in the valleys live in small villages outside of the town centres, and unless they own a car or know someone else who does and is willing to help, they rely on public transport or go to the expense of private taxi fares. Both towns are the northernmost stops on the rail lines within each of the valleys where the train lines terminate. While Merthyr may have better transport links than Aberdare, transport is still a problem for many people living in the valleys.

Merthyr and Aberdare are in similar positions in terms of their geographical proximity to Cardiff in the south and the market town of Brecon in the north. However, Merthyr is more conveniently situated along the main route to Cardiff and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park along the A470 dual carriageway. At the same time, Aberdare is a fifteen-to-twenty-minute detour off this main route on single-carriageway roads. Good road access can provide opportunities for musicians, from getting to gigs to moving equipment around and attracting visiting musicians to the towns. Having access to a car or van is critically important for semi-rural musicians.

Despite the problems in the town, there has been considerable regeneration in Merthyr town centre, with some historic buildings restored, such as the grade II listed building, which was the former town hall now called Redhouse and is an art and cultural centre in the main square in the town (pictured in Figure 1.6 below). Restoration work was also conducted at the Zoar Chapel, Cyfarthfa Castle, and the birth house of the composer and musician Joseph Parry. Merthyr Tydfil is the beneficiary of a great deal of funding for the arts from

² Statistics from 2016 show that Merthyr Tydfil's population is just under sixty thousand (59,810) and Aberdare (30,832) is just over thirty thousand (citypopulation, 2017).

multiple sources, for example, from The National Lottery, the Welsh Government, and The Arts Council of Wales and helped in establishing a cultural hub in the town centre (Redhouse) that includes music recording, rehearsing and performance facilities. Aberdare has no equivalent arts hub, although access to the facilities in Redhouse is restricted to students studying music and arts at Merthyr College.



Figure 6: Penderyn Square in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre (<https://www.visitmerthyr.co.uk/things-to-do/attractions/merthyr-tydfil-town-centre/>).

One pub in Merthyr, The New Crown Inn, hosts live music most nights of the week, including an open mic night. Apart from occasional live music events in a handful of working men's clubs for national and international sports matches and fundraisers, The New Crown Inn is the only place in town to watch regular live music performances. Merthyr also has an annual music festival, Merthyr Rising, held over two days in May in the town's main square (Penderyn Square pictured above in Figure 1.6) and is a mix of music, politics, and culture.

Most of the musicians playing at the festival are from outside the town, but the festival provides an opportunity for a few local artists and bands to perform live. There are no official

figures for the number of bands and artists in Merthyr, which makes it difficult to estimate, especially as some bands are short-lived or have changed their name or lineup. From my observations and knowledge of the town, a conservative estimate would suggest at least fifty to sixty bands and artists making music.

Other forms of musical activity in Merthyr include a strong tradition of choirs, mainly male voice choirs. There are several choirs active in Merthyr, from school choirs to ALOUD³, a charitable organisation that offers opportunities for children, providing three choirs, 'Only Boys Aloud', 'Only Girls Aloud' and 'Only Kids Aloud' that rehearse at Redhouse in Merthyr town centre and the organisation also provide various youth projects in and outside schools based around music and the creative arts. The most well-known choir in Merthyr is the Dowlais Male Voice Choir, established in 1965 and currently has forty-five members. The choir gained international recognition from participating in the Eisteddfod, singing at international rugby matches and performing concerts mainly in churches, chapels, and theatres for fundraising and charity events. Other kinds of popular music-making in Merthyr include school orchestras and wind bands. Theatre Soar and café in the town centre provide Welsh medium music and cultural activities ranging from live music to art exhibitions, poetry, film, and talks focusing on Welsh culture and politics.

Compared to Merthyr, Aberdare has one privately owned dedicated music venue called Jacs and a few pubs and clubs that regularly host live music events, including open mic nights. Some of these pubs were also involved in Cwmfest, the annual music festival in Aberdare, where artists and bands, most of which are from Aberdare, perform live music in several local pubs over three days, usually in late September or early October. As noted above, for Merthyr, there are no official figures to know the numbers of musicians within Aberdare, and

³ The Aloud Charity - <https://www.aloud.cymru/locations/merthyroba/>

my own experiences of popular music-making within the town suggest that there are at least fifty artists and bands musically active within the town.



Figure 7: Aberdare Town. A view from Monk Street approaching the town centre

https://www.stayinwales.co.uk/wales_picture.cfm?p=3613.

Other forms of musical activity in Aberdare involve school orchestras and choirs and the three foremost choirs in the town. Cwmbach Male Voice Choir is the most established. It was founded in 1921, singing operatic chorus, spirituals, hymns, folk music, and ballads, and performing at rugby matches, local charity fundraisers, and church events. Not as well-established as Cwmbach, the Cwmdare Male Voice Choir was set up in 2012 and has forty members. Dare to Sing is a choir for women established in 2015. It has over ninety members who sing ballads, hymns, and Welsh folk songs. They perform at local charity and fundraising events and rehearse weekly at St. Elvan's Church in the centre of Aberdare town.

St. Elvan's Church provides rehearsal space for the choir. It holds events such as WAM (Words, Art, and Music), which includes film screenings and various cultural activities and

events that are free for the public and funded by the local council. There is also a tradition of brass bands in the valleys, and Aberdare is home to the Llwydcoed Brass Band. In addition to playing the brass band repertoire, they also perform Welsh hymns, Christmas songs, and classical repertoire arrangements for charity and seasonal events such as Christmas and Easter.

The local FE College in Merthyr caters for music up to and including A Level (BTEC Level 3), and only students on these courses have access to the performing and recording facilities in Redhouse. Aberdare FE College offers a level 1 Diploma in Creative Arts and Media⁴ and mainly caters to vocational skills and trades such as hairdressing, bricklaying, and plumbing.

1.3 Outline of Approach

The starting point of the approach to this research is broadly sociological. An array of practices feed into popular music-making, including recording, rehearsing, and live performances. This implies that this study should pay attention to the people involved, their thoughts and experiences of making music and the different kinds of resources they might draw upon to do so. My career as a professional musician exposed me to various experiences and approaches concerning popular music-making and informed my observations. I came to this thesis with a particular kind of knowledge and expertise gained from my experiences working in the music industry and as a participant in the musical activities in the towns, mainly as an audience member until July 2020 when a local band from Aberdare asked me to play guitar with them.

This empirical study provides an in-depth approach to thinking about popular musicians' experiences, modus operandi, and their motivations to keep making music to enhance our understanding of how musicians in semi-rural areas go about their popular music-making

⁴ <https://www.cymoedd.ac.uk/?s=music&search+button=Search>

and what it means to them. It is an ethnographically informed comparative exploration, qualitative in design, drawing on participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews for data collection. Thinking about popular music-making as an activity and how that activity comes to take place in Aberdare and Merthyr guided the kinds of questions asked and my approach to data collection and analysis.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review in this thesis is to supply a critical overview of the relevant scholarship on popular music-making and debates concerning music and place. This chapter defines key terms including place, space and local and brings together relevant scholarship on music and place from UK and international research. This chapter evaluates different kinds of approaches to looking at music and place, such as worlds (Becker, 1982), pathways (Finnegan, 1989), scenes (Cohen, 1991 and Shank, 1994) and networks (Crossley, 2015). The scholarship reviewed in Chapter Two helped refine my interest in semi-rural music, elucidating the importance of the resources and networks involved.

Reflecting on questions of why musicians used particular resources and engaged with specific activities and people prompted me to consider the motivations of musicians to help understand why they participate in music and how popular music-making happens in a particular place. The scholars reviewed in Chapter Two commented on the musicians' motivations, attitudes and values concerning their popular music-making and illuminated the usefulness and importance of considering musicians' motivations for this particular research study. Both opportunities and problems can stem from different motivations, such as accessing particular resources, activities, and other musicians.

Reviewing the literature revealed three aspects of popular music-making that were potentially useful in understanding how popular music-making happens on a local scale and helped to formulate the three main research questions this study asks:

- What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music in semi-rural settings?
- What kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr?
- What motivates musicians to make music, adopt the approaches they do, and produce the kinds of music they do in Aberdare and Merthyr?

I discuss extant ethnographic research and scholarship on popular music-making and networks in particular places to understand and engage in the arguments and debates. This chapter helped me form the main research questions for this study, gain a broader understanding of where my research is situated within popular music scholarship, and structure the framework of this study.

Chapter 3 Methods

This chapter supplies justification and the rationale for the approaches taken to examine the phenomenon this study focuses on. Given this study's specific research questions, I adopted a qualitative quasi-ethnographic case study approach drawing on participant observation and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with musicians within each town. I selected interview participants based on my knowledge of those making popular music within each town and through extensive online research.

I identified musicians who performed live and released recordings of their music mainly as bands but including solo artists and did not include musicians, for example, who might only play at home for pleasure. The initial impetus for this study came from observing live music performances in different settings. Secondly, the main focus of this study involves understanding the activities involved in making music, such as rehearsing, recording and live performances. Musicians actively engaged in these kinds of activities were better placed to describe and explain how they went about these practices.

This study takes a comparative approach and thematically analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006) the interview data through NVivo 12 software to produce themes that illuminate and explain how musicians make popular music in these settings and better our understanding of the similarities and differences between Aberdare and Merthyr. I describe the practicalities of my research, including data analysis strategies and my role as the researcher, and discuss the implications involved.

Chapter 4 Pubs, Clubs, Homes, and Sheds

The first of three empirical chapters, Chapter Four, focuses on the interview data collected on the resources musicians relied upon to make music, such as recording studios, rehearsal spaces, and places for live music performances. This chapter aims to detail and compare the kinds of physical infrastructure and material resources used within each town for making music, revealing deficits in provision and differences in the kinds of resources used and how musicians worked around these shortages. This chapter reveals similarities and interesting differences between how the towns operate and the resources used for making popular music.

Chapter 5 Networks of Friendships

The second empirical chapter focuses on the relationships between respondents, using the concepts of network mechanisms and network ties drawn from network theory as metaphors. These help to illustrate and explain the connections and dynamics of the relationships between participants within each town's sample.

This chapter looks at the similarities and differences in the networks within each town and the combinations and connections that help facilitate and sustain popular music-making, addressing the main research questions this study asks. This chapter found that relationships and, in particular, friendships were crucial to accessing resources and, to some extent, the approaches musicians adopted to make music. This part of the overall thesis aims to provide an enhanced understanding of who takes part in making popular music, the dynamics involved and the ways their relationships facilitate and sustain popular music-making in these settings.

Chapter 6 Motivations to Make Music

Chapter six aims to explore Aberdare and Merthyr respondents' attitudes and values to understand better their motivation for making music. Understanding musicians' motivations matters to the present study because it helps to explain why particular resources are used, why musicians adopt the approaches they do to make music and why particular people are involved and provides the sort of in-depth information on semi-rural popular music-making that resources and networks alone could not produce. Drawing on the information concerning the resources and the kinds of relationships musicians rely upon taken from the previous two empirical chapters, this chapter adds a third dimension for an in-depth description of popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr. Furthermore, this chapter elucidates musicians' attitudes and values towards the commercial music industry. It

explains respondents' aims and objectives and the implications for the music they produce within Aberdare and Merthyr.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The closing chapter of this study refers back to the main research questions and begins by restating the aims of the thesis and an outline of the methods adopted to meet the aims.

This chapter synthesises the findings of this study, bringing together the three aspects focused on in the empirical chapters to illustrate the meaningful connections between them and offer a new set of specific insights into an understudied site of popular music-making.

This chapter explains the results of the research findings in answer to the main research questions this study asks, followed by a discussion of the value and contribution of the study and recommendations for future research.

Bibliography

Appendices

The Appendices include six sections. Appendix A supplies images of Google maps of Aberdare and Merthyr delineating the boundaries of the towns in the context of this study. Appendix B provides the complete interview guide and consent forms used in the interviews conducted for this research study. Appendix C supplies biographical information on all the participants who took part in the interviews in this research study. Appendix D provides a brief synopsis of the artists and bands on the posters in Chapter Four advertising Aberdare's annual music festival, Cwmfest, and Merthyr's annual music festival, Merthyr Rising. Appendix E includes the complete transcripts of all twenty interviews conducted in Aberdare,

and Appendix F consists of the full transcripts from the twenty interviews conducted in Merthyr Tydfil.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines existing scholarly works related to popular music-making and place and aims to provide a solid foundation for the current study by critically analysing and synthesising key research findings. The literature reviewed helps to understand and address problems and challenges concerning how place and popular music have been linked, how different types of places (rural and urban, for example) have been researched, arguments between different approaches and how different concepts such as scenes, worlds and networks have been used and the different factors involved such as local and global have been brought to bear in popular music and place research.

Research on popular music-making and place has tended to focus on cities and urban environments, to the relative neglect of rural (and semi-rural) areas (see Gibson, 2002). Overlooking musical activity in rural and semi-rural places can lead to a lack of understanding of the music-making that occurs in these settings, and popular music-making in semi-rural settings remains to be theorised.

This literature review consists of three sections: 'Music and Place', 'The Collective Nature of Popular Music Making', and 'Three Key Themes to Exploring Popular Music Making and Place'. I divided them this way to elucidate research related to the present study, the pertinent network scholarship on popular music-making, and the key themes that emerge from the literature.

The first section, 'Music and Place', explains and defines key terms, including place and space, local and global, and evaluates different approaches and concepts for studying the phenomena this study focuses on, including those oriented around notions of 'music worlds', 'pathways', 'scenes' and 'networks' to help address the main research question this study asks, how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in semi-rural settings. The first section then reviews popular music scholarship conducted in different types of settings, including rural and urban, to understand what environments can provide musicians and what aspects facilitate and limit their popular music-making activities. To ensure the relevance of the literature reviewed I drew on three seminal works in popular music and place scholarship supplemented by peer-reviewed journal papers and PhD theses.

The second section of the chapter, 'The Collective Nature of Popular Music Making', discusses the value of network theory concepts and how they can help this study describe and explain how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in semi-rural settings.

The third section, 'Three Key Themes to Exploring Popular Music Making and Place', discusses the themes of resources, networks, and motivations that emerged from this review and in what ways they are useful for exploring and understanding popular music-making in the semi-rural towns of Aberdare and Merthyr.

2.1 Music and Place

Despite a lack of literature on semi-rural popular music-making, there is scholarship on popular music-making and place. This section discusses popular music literature concerning music and place, focusing on the ways key scholars have looked at this relationship to help the present research study begin to think about how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in particular places.

The term 'place' in popular music studies involves spatial, cultural, and social considerations. It highlights the interconnectedness of music and the places in which it happens and can offer insights into the many ways in which place influences the making and dissemination of popular music. Place matters to the present study because it can help understand local dynamics and gain insights into popular music production's cultural, social, and economic dimensions.

Caution should be demonstrated to not simplify or create stereotypes when studying popular music and place. For example, Straw (1991) critiques approaches to understanding the relationship between popular music and place, arguing that they often rely on simplistic stereotypes and overlook the complex interactions between local scenes, global flows, and cultural identities. By emphasising the fluidity and contingency of musical geographies, Straw challenges essentialist narratives that reduce cities like New Orleans to jazz or Detroit to Motown, highlighting instead the multiplicity of voices and influences that shape urban sonic landscapes.

Richard Florida (2002), while not exclusively focused on music Florida's work has influenced research on music scenes and urban development. Florida suggests that the presence of a creative and culturally diverse population, including musicians and artists, is essential for urban economic growth and vitality. However, Florida's framework overlooks issues of inequality and gentrification and essentialises creativity as a commodity that can be harnessed for urban revitalisation without addressing broader structural issues.

Emphasising the importance of place could lead to excluding some practices, artists or genres that do not fit preconceived notions of what is considered representative of a particular place (see Bennett and Shank, 2019) and researching music and place should be careful not to present fixed categories. Essentialism, as in oversimplifying and stereotyping musical expressions associated with specific locations, can lead to a reductionist

understanding of musical activities within a particular place (see Bennett, 2004), overlooking the diversity and complex social dynamics that shape people's lives in particular settings.

The concepts of 'place' and 'space' are distinct but interconnected and often used to analyse social, cultural, and symbolic dimensions of human experiences within a particular environment. While the boundaries between these two concepts are blurred and depending on the context, scholars have explored their differences and similarities. Understanding the distinction between place and space is important to this study to identify the tangible and intangible resources available to musicians in semi-rural settings and how different aspects of the physical and social environment contribute to music-making practices in Aberdare and Merthyr.

Place in this research study refers to a location that has acquired meaning through human experiences, activities, and memories and is socially constructed and infused with cultural, historical, and personal significance (Cresswell, 2004). The term 'space' is used to describe the physical or abstract expanse that lacks specific meaning until socially constructed and interpreted by individuals or communities (Lefebvre, 1991). Tuan's (1977) work emphasises the experiential aspects, arguing that place is space with added meaning, emotion, and attachment. Space becomes place when imbued with human significance. In summary, while space refers to the physical or abstract dimensions, place involves the socially constructed meanings and experiences attributed to a location. Simon Frith (2004) discusses the idea of place as space with added meaning, where a place has acquired value through the experiences that have happened there. These meanings are often tied to social practices and memories associated with the space, such as the rituals of live music performances or the personal connections formed in music venues.

The term 'locality' in this study refers to the specific geographic context of Aberdare and Merthyr. This includes their cultural, economic, and social characteristics, which are often

used to describe different aspects of the social and spatial dimensions of human experiences. This is important for assessing the support structures and opportunities accessible to musicians in both towns. This study focuses on the local musical activities within Aberdare and Merthyr and requires justification and explanation of the definition of the term local in the context of this research.

Popular music scholarship often uses the terms 'local' and 'global' to describe the scope, influences, and dynamics of various cultural practices. Local refers to the specific and immediate context or geographical area where cultural practices, behaviours, and identities are situated and involve the everyday lived experiences of people in a particular place and the role of the local in shaping cultural processes and expressions (Appadurai, 1990). Global pertains to the broader, interconnected, and transcendent aspects of culture that extend beyond specific localities. It involves the flow of ideas, information, and cultural products across national borders (Robertson, 1992).

In popular music scholarship, there are several justifications for focusing on the local rather than the global, reflecting the significance of understanding the specific cultural, social, and contextual nuances within particular places (Leyshon et al., 1998). Focusing on the local allows scholars to investigate the unique cultural expressions and identities embedded in specific places, examine the specific socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts that influence music production and allow for an exploration of the social dynamics within specific places.

2.1.1 Making Popular Music in Cities and Large Towns

According to Sara Cohen (1991), understanding the relationship between music and place requires explaining how music-making happens, considering the setting and music produced and the resources appropriated in the locality for enabling music-making and the activities

and relationships involved. Cohen lived in Liverpool for one year (1985-1986) to conduct ethnographic research into cultural production in a local context, focusing on the activities of two rock bands in the city, the resources they draw upon and their motivations for making the kinds of music they do.

Cohen describes Liverpool as a reasonably small city in economic decline 'littered with boarded up clubs, some supposedly burnt down for insurance claims, existing side by side with empty and decaying buildings and warehouses' (Cohen, 1991, p. 1). Cohen chose Liverpool 'because of its history of involvement and achievement in rock music' (Cohen, 1991, p. 4) and found that Liverpool was a city of contradictions between landscaped parks and the refurbished waterfront to dilapidated buildings and squalor and 'the city is divided by social differences and rivalries yet at the same time projects a strong sense of loyalty and solidarity and a spirit of co-operation' (Cohen, 1991, p. 4). Music has been an essential feature of Liverpool and Merseyside more broadly, hosting a wide range of musical styles and 'Liverpool's role as a seaport has also endowed it with an 'outward-looking' character, a sense of detachment from the rest of Britain and thus a sense of being somehow different' (Cohen, 1991, p. 9).

Cohen's research approach highlights the importance of examining the aspects outlined above to understand how people make music. It elucidates particular resources and musicians' values and attitudes, which help to understand how music-making happens in particular places. Cohen draws on the concepts of scenes, art worlds (Becker, 1982), and liminality and communitas (Turner, 1969, 1977) to describe and explain the circumstances in which rock bands operate in Liverpool.

Cohen's (1991) study found there was a lack of resources in physical infrastructure and material resources for the bands she focused on and pointed out that musicians found other ways to get around the difficulties of a lack of resources. For example, the kinds of

resources musicians depended upon for rehearsing varied from 'private homes, pubs, youth clubs, community centres, and church halls' (Cohen, 1991, p. 47). The two bands focused on in Cohen's work, The Jactars and Crikey It's the Cromptons, tended to use two of the main rehearsal studios in Liverpool (The Ministry and The Vulcan) and is where Cohen conducted a good deal of her research. The two privately owned studios were situated in the city's deserted areas, which meant any noise was less likely to disturb neighbours.

A lack of money was a constant setback for the musicians in Cohen's study and dictated to some extent what resources musicians used and the owners of The Ministry and The Vulcan set up a credit system for musicians to pay for room hire. They put this system in place because many of the bands that used the studios struggled to keep up with payments, and this approach emphasises the informality involved in the exchange of resources. The musicians and the owners of the rehearsal studios discussed seem to have more of a friendship rather than a business arrangement, and this suggests that an element of trust is involved so that musicians will honour their debts. However, this did not always happen where occasionally, some bands, after using the space, disappeared without paying.

The quality of resources available for making popular music can also be an issue for musicians. Both a paucity and poor quality of resources are constraining in the sense that musicians might feel limited in what resources they can reliably draw upon. The rehearsal studios in Cohen's study were described as 'grim and dilapidated in appearance, very cold and badly in need of repair' (Cohen, 1991, p. 47) but, despite their limitations, were places where musicians from several different bands spent a good deal of their time not only for rehearsing but a place where they 'socialised, exchanged tapes, records, equipment, and ideas, information, and advice' (Cohen, 1991, p. 47). Participants in Cohen's study often complained about the quality of the resources and equipment they used but, at the same time, were proud of the 'simplicity and poor condition because it accorded with their general attitudes to music-making' (Cohen, 1991, pp. 49-50).

Most of the musicians in Cohen's (1991) study used second-hand instruments and equipment, often bought on hire purchase with money from family members and paid work, and it was common for musicians to share equipment with other bands they are friendly with to ease their financial burdens. There are also limitations concerning resources and what musicians can do concerning the music they produce, both in live performances and recording their music with the instruments and equipment they have. Many of the bands in Cohen's (1991) study saved up their own money to cover the considerable expense of recording demos in a studio, and most of the musicians wanted to produce a recording of "good quality" in the best studio they could afford' (Cohen, 1991, p. 52).

The two bands Cohen focuses on were good friends and often performed live together. Popular music functioned as a conduit for connectivity and creativity, encouraging collaboration between people and allowing them to express themselves and experiment with music in different ways. This suggests that the relationships involved in popular music-making are significant for musicians for generating live performance opportunities and creating an environment where musicians feel comfortable trying new things out and collaborating with one another.

Cohen (1991) establishes that the popular music-making of each band was 'not only explicitly but implicitly and unintentionally reflected, expressed, and confronted aspects of their surrounding environment and their feelings about it' (Cohen, 1991, p. 194). For example, the popular music-making of one of the bands is described by Cohen as involving an 'aesthetic of 'basic'(ness)' [...employing...] 'certain sounds, chords, notes, sequences of notes that might contradict Western notions of harmony, melody and music; sounds that might, in other words, be perceived as 'non-musical'' (Cohen, 1994, p. 149).

The musicians in Cohen's (1991) study were striving for a record label to sign them. They demonstrated a 'defensive attitude' (Cohen, 1991, p. 74) where they saw difficulties they encountered as part of the process to success, which they felt was only achievable through 'hardship' and struggle' and a lack of money, for instance 'often motivated bands and increased their sense of purpose' (Cohen, 1991, p. 56). The pride musicians took from their difficulties and how these conditions increased their drive to continue making music suggests that a relative lack of resources might become productive in different ways for making popular music.

The quest for success, as in signing to a recording label, was a significant motivation for musicians in Cohen's study. The focus on signing to a label highlights the tensions Cohen found where musicians felt caught between creativity and commerce and how this position affected the kinds of music they produced. Particular values are symbolised through different kinds of music as well as the activities involved. In contrast, the bands Cohen focuses on were more concerned about gaining respect and maintaining their integrity through the music they produced rather than conforming to industry expectations and 'selling out' (Cohen, 1991, p. 133). Different kinds of music can maintain or challenge certain established ideas and hierarchies, emphasising the ways music affects and reflects the networks of people, activities and resources involved (see Cohen, 1995, p. 442). However, it is unclear whether these tensions would be as prevalent in semi-rural settings where the influences of the commercial music industry may not be as immediately prominent compared to cities and urban areas.

Distinctions in the music the bands produced in Cohen's study reflected the 'contradictions and tensions constructed by our culture between art and entertainment, creativity and commerce, culture as a collective, creative expression and culture as a commodity' (Cohen, 1991, pp. 194-5). Cohen found that these compositional processes 'arose not only from musical incompetence and perhaps a conscious decision to adopt a particular style of music

making, but perhaps also from the combinations of personalities within the band' (Cohen, 1991, p. 143). As Cohen got to know the bands, she noticed differences between them, particularly the different characters within the band that largely dictated how the music was to sound. This suggests that the people involved, as well as place, are what matters to what music they make and emphasises the importance of looking at the people and the relationships involved in making music to understand how popular music-making happens in a particular place.

For insights into some of the ways cities like Liverpool differ from other places, we can turn to the work of Ruth Finnegan (1989), who, like Cohen (1991), wanted to understand how music-making happens and how musicians from different music traditions, including rock, classical and brass bands, for instance, operate in a particular place asking questions about the production and performance of music. Ruth Finnegan's (1989) study looked at amateur rather than the 'professional side of music making' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 10) in the large town of Milton Keynes between the years of 1980 and 1984 to understand amateur musicians' practices, rather than musical works, and what these practices can tell us about music-making and urban living.

Finnegan lived in Milton Keynes and was a participant singing in a choir, playing cello and recorder, and an audience member. Finnegan focused on what she terms 'ordinary' musicians often overlooked in academic literature. Finnegan's research helped her understand the many different ways of making music, the support involved, and the rewards that engender and maintain participation in music-making. Finnegan's research significantly influences the present study, with its description of making music in a particular place elucidating the local dynamics involved.

Located in North Buckinghamshire, north of London, Milton Keynes was designated as a new city in 1967. Finnegan explains how defining Milton Keynes is not straightforward

because there are distinctions between the old town and the carefully planned 'designated new city' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 346) area, blurring the boundaries for local music-making. Incorporated within the new area of Milton Keynes were several existing villages, including three established towns (Bletchley, Wolverton, and Stony Stratford) and emphasises that the town was a complex mix of new and already established populations.

The population was growing rapidly, with people mainly from London and the Southeast drawn to the town, including many families with young children. A high proportion of the jobs in the city were for skilled manual work, and people tended to rent rather than buy their homes. Many of these rented homes were council houses which Finnegan points out might be unexpected to people who may think Milton Keynes is primarily middle class.

Finnegan touches on the motivations of musicians to make music and, in contrast to Cohen (1991), found that musicians' motivations lay mainly in non-economic rewards involving a sense of creativity and enjoyment. Some of the rewards that engender and maintain their participation in music-making were 'aesthetic enjoyment, the pleasure of performing, status, the sense of creativity, or even just the *symbol* of having earned 'a fee' irrespective of its actual monetary price' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 293). The kinds of motivations Finnegan discusses emphasise the value musicians place on the live performance of music, and it is apparent from Finnegan's description that the motivations of the musicians in her study to continue to make music did not really focus on economic rewards.

Finnegan found musicians' motivations were more about collaboration and relationships with others involved in music-making, which is emphasised by Finnegan when talking about voluntary support where music-making is dependent on 'the efforts of the musicians themselves and their close associates' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 287). For example, informal support was prevalent in Milton Keynes, providing access to particular resources and opportunities for live performance, rehearsing and recording. This suggests that musicians'

motivations in a large town like Milton Keynes might focus more on maintaining the relationships involved, which in turn helps to sustain their musical activities.

A great deal of music scholarship looking at the motivations of musicians focuses on education and attitudes to learning (Hallam 1998a, McPherson, and O'Neill 2010; Asmus 2021) and the role of gender in musical motivation (Hallam et al., 2018 and Appelgren et al., 2019). A focus on motivations concerning why musicians go about making the music they do and adopting particular approaches could provide valuable insights into how popular music-making happens on a local scale.

Involvement in making music gives musicians access to a 'forum of social interaction and friendship... [music is also a] ...source of confirmation and confidence [...] escaping [and] enhancing everyday life' (Pitts, 2005, p. 44). Everyday musical participation was mainly for the 'sheer pleasure' (Pitts, 2005, p. 119) of music-making and creating a closeness with the music and the other people involved who share the same enthusiasm. Aesthetic enjoyment, according to Pitts (2005), is a critical factor in sustaining participation in music-making despite the demands, expense and frustration sometimes faced by musicians. Pitts (2005) found that people's behaviour and how they felt about making music varied according to the conditions and environment in which music-making occurs and emphasised the importance of context when considering motivations for musical participation.

Finnegan describes friendships as helping to sustain musical life in small-scale settings where 'working together in a group has sometimes been called one of the most profoundly human of experiences [...] How much more this must apply when the joint work constituted an act – that of artistic expression – widely recognised as a deeply valued one and acclaimed by the band's close friends' (Finnegan, 1989, pp. 268-269). On the value of live performance, Finnegan states that '[t]his could not in itself keep players together, but was certainly experienced as one of the deep rewards of participating in a band and building on

the jointly acquired skills of playing together which alone made the experience of public performance possible' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 269).

Cohen's exploration of two closely-knit bands highlights the profound role of popular music in fostering connectivity and collaboration among musicians. Through live performances and shared experiences, music serves as a medium for creativity and expression, enabling individuals to experiment with new ideas and forms of artistic expression. This emphasis on relationships underscores the significance of musical bonds in generating performance opportunities and cultivating an environment conducive to exploration and collaboration.

However, Finnegan (1989) emphasises the importance of friendships in sustaining musical activities, recognising group collaboration as a profoundly human experience. In small-scale settings, joint artistic endeavours are particularly valued, contributing to a sense of camaraderie and shared accomplishment among musicians. Finnegan's insights further highlight the significance of live performance as a rewarding experience that strengthens bonds among musicians, affirming the value of collective skill development and shared artistic expression within bands.

There is an important distinction between the accounts above where Cohen underscores the role of music itself in fostering connectivity and collaboration. Finnegan's perspective places greater emphasis on the interpersonal relationships and social dynamics that underpin musical activity particularly within the context of small-scale settings. Finnegan's emphasis on interpersonal relationships and social dynamics within music-making, especially in small-scale settings like those found in small towns, is important for this research study on popular music-making for several reasons.

In small towns, social networks are often tight-knit, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships can play a significant role in shaping musical practices. Understanding the

intricate web of connections between musicians, promoters, venue owners, and other stakeholders helps understand the contextual factors influencing popular music-making activities in a particular place. Strong interpersonal relationships can contribute to a sense of cohesion within a local music scene, fostering collaboration, support networks, and a shared sense of identity among musicians. Exploring these relationships can potentially provide insights into how popular music as a social glue.

In smaller, close-knit communities, resources for popular music-making, such as rehearsal spaces, recording facilities, and performance venues, may be limited. Strong interpersonal relationships facilitate resource sharing among musicians, enabling them to overcome logistical challenges and sustain their musical activities. Finnegan's focus on relationships sheds light on the transmission of musical knowledge, skills, and traditions within small-town music scenes, potentially enriching our understanding of local music cultures. Finnegan's perspective underscores the intricate interplay between music-making practices and social dynamics within small-town communities. By focusing on relationships, deeper insights into the unique challenges, opportunities, and cultural significance of popular music-making in these settings can potentially be elucidated.

In addition to friendships, Finnegan found that the resources involved in making music emerged as a critical factor, and for music-making to take place, 'there has to be some system for the supply of the necessary equipment and for the material and non-material support that musical performance demands' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 273). What Finnegan (1989) refers to is the instruments, sound and recording equipment, arts and music venues, recording studios, shops, and practice/rehearsal rooms, for example. Local music shops and recording studios provided equipment and advice and were also 'effective communication centres' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 274) where people could meet up and talk about all things musical and also where musicians and bands could put up small advertisements looking for band members and gig bookings. Non-material support refers to the various sources of

financial help available and offered to local music-makers. Finnegan emphasises how critical resources and support are to making music, without which much local music-making would not be possible.

Local shops and firms also sponsored local bands; however, Finnegan found that the main supporters of popular music were the pubs and social clubs in the area and that charities were also an 'extremely pertinent – if unexpected – element in supporting local music' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 288) and emerged as one of the major resources and opportunities for live performance for local popular musicians. The support of parents also played a significant role for musicians starting out in Milton Keynes. They supplied instruments, transport, and somewhere to practice (see Finnegan, 1989, pp. 308-310). However, support given to local music-making was not always about money. Finnegan found that time and effort were just as important, and skills and knowledge were another form of both practical and theoretical support. The ability to play an instrument and the knowledge to use the equipment needed for music-making, such as recording and sound systems.

Finnegan found that for some musicians, grants and subsidies from regional and national arts organisations were important for music-making, particularly for musical societies with a tendency to focus on classical music rather than popular music and musicians not regarded as well-known and professional (not dissimilar to the musicians the present study focuses on) were unlikely to attract funding (Finnegan, 1989, p. 282). Furthermore, the source of funding could create implications for the kinds of music produced. For instance, musicians funding themselves may limit what kinds of instruments and recording facilities they have access to, which can impact the quality of sound and the kinds of music they can produce.

Gordon and Gibson (2017) note how rural places engender do-it-yourself attitudes that provide opportunities to access alternative resources for musical practices, generating a sense of ownership of their music and personal rewards such as resourcefulness.

Nikulinsky,'s (2022) work provides an example of how do-it-yourself approaches are the 'backbone' (Nikulinsky, 2022, p. 217) of popular music scenes in rural Western Australia 'exposing pivotal localised hotspots of creative entrepreneurship, originality and rural music-making practices' (Nikulinsky, 2022, p. 193).

Finnegan points out that in the case of Milton Keynes, support for local music came mainly from informal sources within local networks rather than formal sources such as Council departments and 'state-provided money had a limited role and had to be supplemented by other resources' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 283), from external bodies such as schools, churches, local music societies and patrons, both organisations and individual people. These non-formal sources can be family and friends, and they may be regular or sporadic and rely less on financial benefits. Finnegan suggests that making music predominantly involves social interactions, highlighting the 'element of sociability ...[that]...runs through musical practice' (Finnegan, 1989, pp. 328-9), emphasising the importance of the interactions and collaboration music-making enables.

2.1.2 Music Worlds and Pathways

Finnegan draws on the concept of music worlds adapted from art worlds (Becker, 1982) to help describe and explain the different kinds of music practised in Milton Keynes, including rock and pop music. Anthropologists and others have used the concept of worlds to differentiate between, for example, people's world views or to demarcate between different social worlds, and this concept emphasises the different kinds of ideas, cultures, and practices of people in various kinds of settings. Howard Becker (1982) developed the concept of worlds into art worlds:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of

art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artefacts. The interaction of all the involved parties produces a shared sense of the worth of what they collectively produce. Their mutual appreciation of the conventions they share and the support they mutually afford one another convince them that what they are doing is worth doing. If they act under the definition of "art", their interaction convinces them that what they produce are valid works of art. (Becker 1982, pp. 34 and 39)

Finnegan states that the benefits of the world's concept are that 'it points us to the sustained and systematic notion of what otherwise might look haphazard and individual. Equally important, it gets us away from the idea that there is just one way in which music can and should be enacted' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 180). The concept of worlds also alerts us to the collective activity of people working together, and Becker (1982) views art as an activity rather than an object.

Despite Becker (1982) emphasising that worlds do not have clear boundaries, there are disadvantages to the concept of worlds, where the term does suggest a concrete and systematic reality. While the concept of music worlds has been influential in scholarly research, offering insights into the broader social, cultural, and economic contexts of music production and consumption, it is not without its limitations. Straw (1991) critiques the concept of music worlds that thinking in worlds terms might risk exclusivity and the creation of boundaries, potentially limiting considerations of inclusivity and diversity. In research approaches, the music world concept may provide a macro-level understanding of the industry, but research might overlook micro-level dynamics within specific genres, scenes, or subcultures. Furthermore, defining the boundaries of the music world can be challenging, as industries often overlap, and artists engage in multiple networks simultaneously (Becker, 1982).

There are implications with the world concept for the present study's purposes, where worlds focus on different musical styles and the conventions involved, as well as how people go about making music within specific styles and genres of music. The focus of the present research, however, is not comparing different styles of music and the specific conventions that are involved; instead, it is focusing on popular music-making more broadly within the semi-rural towns of Aberdare and Merthyr. Thinking and writing in terms of the music world concept can result in research treating the music industry as a singular entity implying that the people involved are all the same kinds of people, defining specific genres, scenes, or communities as discrete entities providing a fixed view of music-making that might oversimplify its diversity, potentially neglecting the unique characteristics of different genres, scenes, and places (Peterson and Anand, 2004). Some applications of the music world concept may overly emphasise economic determinism, potentially neglecting cultural and social factors in music production (Hracs et al., 2016).

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of worlds, Finnegan ultimately rejects this concept in favour of the metaphor of pathways (musical journeys). Pathways provide 'established routines of musical practice which people could choose to follow [reflecting the] habitual routes' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 306) of music-making. Pathways highlight 'the personal elements in people's musical activities but also the active and time-consuming work' (Finnegan, 1982, p. 190) involved.

Finnegan's concepts of worlds and pathways are primarily designed to understand the complexities of music-making in urban contexts and may not be directly applicable to researching popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr for several reasons. The dynamics of making popular music, the availability of resources, and the social structures can differ from those in small semi-rural towns. As such, these concepts may not adequately capture the unique characteristics and challenges of music-making in smaller, less densely populated areas. Small semi-rural towns often lack the infrastructure and industry support

found in larger urban centres. This includes fewer music venues, recording studios, and opportunities for exposure and networking.

Consequently, musicians in these areas may navigate distinct social worlds compared to their urban counterparts. Unlike urban environments, where musical activity may be characterised by diversity and fragmentation, small semi-rural towns often have close-knit communities with fewer subcultural divisions. The concepts of worlds and pathways may not fully account for the ways in which social networks and interpersonal relationships shape popular music-making practices within Aberdare and Merthyr. In such contexts, pathways to musical success and recognition may be shaped more by localised networks and grassroots initiatives rather than broader industry connections.

2.1.3 Popular Music Networks

Popular music-making is an activity (Small, 1998) and a social practice (Cohen, 1995) which encourages collaboration and emphasises the interconnectivity between the people involved in making music. Finnegan (1989) acknowledges the usefulness of networks for studying music-making, the importance of the individual pathways of those involved in making music on a local level and the 'shared and purposive collective actions' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 305) of musicians. The collective nature of musical activity is enabled through the interactions between network actors, which are crucial for facilitating the exchange of equipment, ideas, advice, information, skills, and knowledge required to make music (Crossley et al., 2015).

Nick Crossley is one of the most prominent scholars exploring networks in popular music-making. Focusing on social networks, Crossley (2015) analysed the key actors involved in the formation of the punk scenes in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Sheffield between 1975 and 1980 and asked, 'why and how did punk and then post-punk emerge, when, where, in the way and involving the people they did?' (Crossley, 2015, p. 2). Crossley looks

at this phenomenon through a relational sociological lens that claims that 'social interactions, relations and networks are the most basic elements in social life (Crossley, 2015, p. 13).

Crossley conceives networks as relations between people and focuses on the actors involved, the connections between them that facilitate access to and exchange of resources and encourage collaboration.

Crossley drew on secondary and archival resources to do this, including autobiographies of famous punk artists and bands that emerged to eventually form the punk music worlds within each city. Focusing on key punk figures from autobiographies and oral histories provides isolated descriptions of events, although important to include, in doing so excludes other actors not as well known or not considered as significant. Indeed, overlooking non-established musicians who play an active role in popular music-making could potentially limit the scope and effectiveness of a network approach in understanding the interactions involved in popular music-making in a particular place.

Crossley rejects the concept of scenes for the term's ambiguity, and the ambiguities that Crossley refers to are the many different meanings different scholars have given the term scene (for example, Straw 1991; Shank 1994; Peterson and Bennett 2004, and Ajduk, 2018). As Crossley (2015) puts it, 'I have found in my reading of academic accounts which use it [scenes], I have my own 'feel' for it as a term, and this does not always seem to agree with that of the authors I am reading, leading to misunderstandings' (Crossley, 2015, p. 28).

The research approach Crossley (2015) takes combines the concept of worlds (Becker, 1982) and social network analysis, focusing on a particular style of music, punk and post-punk and the conventions involved to understand how these worlds formed. For Crossley, a music world 'involves collective action by a critical mass of individuals with the necessary interests, commitments and resources to make this happen, but this can only happen if members of this mass are connected to one another in a network' (Crossley, 2015, p. 14).

What Crossley is saying is that 'differently structured networks can generate different opportunities and constraints (both individual and collective) for those involved in them, making different courses of action more or less likely' (Crossley, 2015, p. 14).

Crossley states that 'places contribute to the formation of networks because they attract lovers of a type of music, drawing these people together and increasing the likelihood that they will meet and both form and maintain ties' (Crossley, 2015, p. 41). Crossley describes place as 'network "foci"' (Crossley, 2015, p. 41), drawing on the concept of foci (Feld, 1981, 1982) to include clubs and shops, for example, where people with similar tastes and interests regularly bump into one another and place not only plays a role in the formation of networks but is also important in the maintaining of these networks.

Crossley's relational sociological lens further illuminates the importance of networks in shaping opportunities and constraints for individuals and collectives involved in popular music-making. Places serve as network foci, drawing together individuals with similar tastes and interests, thereby facilitating the formation and maintenance of networks. This conceptualisation of place as network foci underscores its role not only in the initial formation of networks but also in their ongoing maintenance and evolution.

The concept of networks in popular music research provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex relationships and interactions involved in popular music-making and within the music industry, fan communities, and broader cultural contexts. The concept of networks offers researchers a means to map and analyse the interconnected relationships between various actors in the popular music landscape (Bennett, 2006). It is essential to recognise the nuanced and context-dependent nature of networks within popular music studies. While networks offer valuable insights into the relational dynamics and socio-cultural processes of music-making, scholars must also remain critical of the ways in which networks intersect with broader social, economic, and political structures. By acknowledging the

potential tensions and contradictions inherent in networked societies, researchers can adopt a more reflexive and nuanced approach to understanding the complexities of popular music-making in particular settings.

Thoroddsen's (2019) research on popular music-making in small communities in Iceland found that networks of close friendships encouraged collaboration, and popular music-making had 'more to do with our need of friendship and human connections' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 76) rather than creating art. 'When it came to band formations, many of the interviewees admitted that the impetus had more often than not to do with finding an activity within a group of friends rather than being a musical one. Most of them stated that the joys were indeed twofold, i.e., that of the friendship *and* the music-making' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 163).

Thoroddsen (2019) found that 'friends can start bands as a vehicle for shared activities' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 134), and musicians talked about how their bands 'came into being as a result of old friendships' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 92). The musicians in Thoroddsen's (2019) study discussed 'an inherent need to be a part of something. The very human and simple need to connect to other human beings steers the endeavour and has more value in this sense than the actual music-making [...] Friendship first, music second' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 134).

Thoroddsen's (2019) study examines professional and amateur popular music-making in Iceland. It discusses the closeness involved in music-making in relatively small settings, understood to be 'subsequently strengthening and suffocating' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 166). What Thoroddsen is saying is that the close-knit networks involved in popular music-making in Iceland are mainly positive, strengthening relationships and encouraging creativity and collaboration. However, there were also some musicians who felt restricted in what they could do musically within a relatively small setting.

The participants in Thoroddsen's research mentioned the smallness of the setting, which created a 'village feel' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 3). Despite some musicians who felt that there was a lack of musical variety with the same people involved, which resulted in a 'lack of fresh ideas' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 104) and the music then becoming stale, most musicians embraced the benefits of a close-knit network to make popular music.

The close-knit networks Thoroddsen's (2019) work discusses are mainly made up of friends, and friendship networks are a source of creativity where the collaboration between musicians encourages experimentation and creativity. Farrell (2001) argues that isolation from other people can delay creative development and that being a part of a 'collaborative circle [...] profoundly shaped the creative work' of those involved (Farrell, 2001, pp. 1-2) where commitment to one another in the group is intensified which deepens interdependence between those involved.

However, friendships can also make it difficult for musicians not part of particular friendship groups. Thoroddsen (2019) found that in small settings, 'if you are outside of the clique, you can't catch a break. It's too tight in that way, and decisions are often made from friendship factors rather than professional ones' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 111). This suggests that the limited pool of musicians in small settings plays a role in how popular music-making operates in these settings and that friendships are critical for making music in smaller, more close-knit communities compared to cities and more extensive urban settings.

2.1.4 Place and Popular Music Aspirations

Another study comparable to Cohen's (1991) and Finnegan's (1989) work that focuses on popular music-making in a particular place is Barry Shank's (1994) research on popular music-making in the city of Austin, Texas. Shank's approach is similar to Cohen and

Finnegan where all three emphasise the social dynamics inherent in popular music culture. They investigate how music serves as a means of social identification, expression, and interaction within specific communities or scenes. They highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships and social networks in shaping musical practices and identities. They explore how friendships, collaborations, and shared experiences contribute to the formation and maintenance of musical communities. Each scholar acknowledges the diversity and complexity of popular music culture, recognising that it encompasses a wide range of genres, styles, and subcultures. They avoid essentialist interpretations and instead emphasise the fluidity and multiplicity of musical identities and practices and recognise that popular music culture is deeply embedded within broader socio-cultural contexts and is influenced by factors such as geography, history, and socio-economic conditions.

There are differences between these three studies where Shank focuses on urban music scenes in the United States in contrast to Finnegan's focus on small-scale music-making in an English town. Each scholar employs a distinct conceptual framework to analyse popular music culture. Shank's analysis focuses on the construction of identity and community within urban music scenes, particularly through the lens of race and ethnicity. Cohen's work explores the relationship between music, identity, and place, emphasising the role of local context in shaping musical practices and meanings. Finnegan's study introduces the concepts of worlds and pathways to examine the interconnected social networks and pathways of musical participation within a small-town setting.

Shank conducted his research while working at the University of Texas, and he also played guitar and took part in Austin's local music scene, which involved a greater extent of participant observation than that of Cohen (1991) and Finnegan (1989). Shank describes Austin by taking the reader through an imaginary tour of the city, outlining the shops and the many pubs and clubs that host live music and emphasising Austin's thriving popular music scene. Shank posits that popular music-making in the city 'maintains itself in constant flux'

(Shank, 1994, p. xiv). What Shank means by this is that clubs close or change ownership and, along with new generations of bands, artists, and fans, create new scenes and, in doing so, maintain cultural production in the city. There are similarities in Shank's research to the kinds of resources found that help sustain music-making for musicians, such as pubs and clubs, as outlined by Cohen (1991) and Finnegan (1989).

Many of the musicians Shank discusses in Austin were motivated by the chance of commercial success and making a living from popular music-making. Embedding these motivations further was that industry professionals would be known to attend particular gigs in the city, and 'making it' was more of a reality for those involved in the thriving environment of Austin's music scene. This suggests that place and what it can provide, from physical infrastructure, material resources and support, can have potential implications on the aspirations of musicians where 'making it' is less of a reality for musicians in places with fewer resources and opportunities to perform live music.

Shank's discussion of musicians in Austin further underscores the influence of place on musicians' aspirations. In a thriving music scene like Austin, the prospect of commercial success is more tangible, with industry professionals actively attending gigs. This contrasts with environments lacking resources and performance opportunities, where achieving commercial success may seem less attainable. The significance of place, encompassing physical infrastructure, resources, and support, underscores its potential implications on musicians' aspirations and opportunities for success.

The distinction between Cohen's view, where motivations appear as an independent variable, and Shank's perspective, where motivations seem to be dependent on place, reflects differing conceptualisations of the relationship between individuals and their socio-cultural environment. Cohen's research in Liverpool emphasises how individuals' motivations, such as the desire for artistic expression or commercial success, drive their

engagement in music-making activities. In this framework, motivations are seen as internal factors that influence musicians' behaviours and decisions, relatively independent of external influences.

Shank's study in Austin suggests that the local context significantly shapes musicians' aspirations and motivations. Shank highlights how the vibrant music scene in Austin, characterised by numerous performance venues and industry professionals, influences musicians' desires for commercial success and recognition. In this perspective, place acts as a crucial determinant of musicians' aspirations, with the availability of resources and opportunities within a particular location shaping their goals and motivations. Reflectively, this difference underscores the dynamic interplay between individual agency and socio-cultural context in shaping human behaviour. While Cohen's research emphasises the autonomy of individual motivations, Shank's work highlights the contextual embeddedness of aspirations within specific geographical and cultural settings.

2.1.5 Music Scenes

How Shank (1994) examines the relationship between music and place is through focusing on the multiple different kinds of musical scenes coexisting in Austin in contrast to Finnegan's (1989) approach of musical worlds and pathways and Shank's work is one prominent example of a scenes approach that informs the present study. Shank drew on the concept of scenes to explore the commodification of popular music-making in Austin and defines scene as an 'identifying signifying community' (Shank, 1994, p. 122) informed by genre and stresses the local embeddedness of scenes as a cultural space where people share sets of symbols and signs. However, they identify with them in different ways. Shank shows that sustaining music scenes involves different identities attached to particular values and motivations and are 'defining characteristic[s] of scenes in general' (Shank, 1994, p. x).

Shank's work shows the sustaining of music scenes in Austin, providing further examples of how different networks overlap, develop, and break down, and this is one way in which the concept of scene is useful. For example, after Raul's closed, 'the majority of those bands who might be called punk were performing at nonclubs' (Shank, 1994, p. 119). What Shank means by 'nonclubs' are spaces repurposed to accommodate live music performances such as people's homes, the basement of a bookstore in Austin where the punk fan who lived there hired the space to local punk bands for gigs.

The Buffalo Gals, an old-school country folk duo, rented warehouse space for rehearsals and let punk bands perform gigs there. These examples draw our attention to the different styles of popular music in Austin, not restricted to particular venues and highlight the crisscrossing of networks between different music styles, where country and folk musicians were facilitating punk music, for instance. More importantly for the present study, these 'crisscrossing' networks suggest the importance of the relationships involved in sustaining popular music-making through the distribution and exchange of resources.

Shank draws on the concept of music scenes to help describe and explain popular music-making in Austin. The concept of scene has been used to study the relationship between music and place, where a local music scene is viewed as the activity that happens amongst musicians and other people involved in music-making within a particular place and over a certain period of time (see Bennett and Peterson 2004). The concept of music scenes has been widely employed in scholarly research, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of local music cultures. The concept of scene implies a particular way of thinking about how music cultures and music-making practices operate and is one kind of 'lens', we might say, through which we might look at the relation between music and place.

Scene is different from the concept of place, where scene refers to a social network of musicians and other stakeholders who share a common interest and scenes are

characterised by their interpersonal relationships, shared values and collective identity. In contrast the concept of place is the physical or geographical locations that hold cultural, social, or symbolic significance within the context of popular music-making. Scene is different to other terms used in this chapter, such as locality, which refers to the spatial dimensions of popular music-making, highlighting the specific physical locations where musical activities occur.

Popular music scholars have found that the concept of music scenes helps illuminate issues such as social identity and feelings of community and belonging and helps researchers understand how localised creativity and innovation occur within specific geographic and cultural contexts (Bennett and Peterson, 2004). The concept of a music scene is instrumental in social network analysis. It allows scholars to study the relationships and interactions between individuals, artists, venues, and other actors within a music scene (Bennett, 2006). These strengths highlight the versatility and applicability of the music scene concept in various scholarly contexts, providing a framework for understanding the multifaceted relationships between music, culture, and geography.

According to Straw (2004), the concept of scene fluctuates in its use in research. It can designate 'particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them' (Straw, 2004, p. 412). It can also be used to distinguish a specific location where particular activities occur. Scenes are not static, and the 'flexibility of the music scene is reflected in its changeability since, no matter how apparent that might be at first glance, the scene is not a constant category' (Ajduk, 2018, p. 6). This flexibility highlights that scenes develop, change, and disappear, and analysis is only an interpretation of the current moment. This also alerts us to how loaded the term scene is, where it has different meanings for different people, resulting in many conflicting definitions of scenes.

2.2 The Collective Nature of Popular Music-Making

The usefulness of the concepts of music worlds, pathways, networks and scenes for the present study was discussed and critically assessed above. This section underscores the importance of the relationships involved in making popular music, particularly friendships, and the roles different kinds of relationships play in sustaining popular music-making in a particular place. Considering network connections for this study can potentially help illuminate the opportunities and constraints experienced by the people involved in popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr. It can help reveal not only the connections between actors but also why they became connected, and the qualities of the relationships involved and help understand how popular music is facilitated and sustained in these towns.

Crossley (2010) identifies particular network mechanisms and ties as crucial in facilitating popular music-making and emphasises the importance of understanding the dynamics of the relationships involved in making music, such as accessing and exchanging different kinds of resources. Network scholarship describes key mechanisms in generating network ties as 'frequently occurring and easily recognisable causal patterns' (Elster, 2015, p. 27-34). When identifying these mechanisms, 'we may also be able to identify the triggering conditions' (Elster, 2015, p. 27-34). Mechanisms allow us 'to explain but not to predict' (Elster, 2007, p. 36), recognising that events could work out differently. Mechanisms are generally used retrospectively to help identify and explain patterns of organisation and facilitation (Crossley, 2008). To understand the dynamics of the relationships involved in networks, Crossley (2010) identified a number of mechanisms from the qualitative data (archives) analysed.

'Propinquity (actors whose geography brings them into contact and who therefore meet with little effort are more likely to connect), transitivity (actors who share a common alter [other actors] are more likely to connect) or preferential attachment

(certain actors become particular targets for connection amongst others).’ (Crossley, 2010, p. 24).

Crossley (2010) identifies the effects of networks on the organisation and sustaining of venues and events through mechanisms such as reputation and preferential attachment, for example, to identify and explain the salient network mechanisms facilitating and sustaining activities and events. People meet up and bump into one another when attending the same events and venues (Crossley, 2008), creating and sustaining connections between actors, providing opportunities to spend time with one another and maintaining and extending existing networks. Theorising networks this way supplies information to help explain the mechanisms at work and the network ties between actors within the popular music network in a particular place.

The content of interactions is ‘rooted in a history of shared experience’ (Crossley 2010, p. 10), emphasising that an understanding of the mechanisms underlying the ties between actors would deepen our knowledge of the motivations of actors connecting with one another. Looking at the mechanisms involved provides insights into the implications of making music in a small town and what that means for the music produced. Mechanisms can help identify networks of ‘entities and activities that are organised such that they regularly bring about a particular type of outcome’ (Hedström, 2005, p. 25) as in popular music-making.

Network ties are the relationships between people, and ties are multifarious in that there are a number of different ties to describe relationships: strong and weak (Granovetter, 1973), positive and negative (see Katz et al., 2004), and direct and indirect ties (Bian, 1997) for example and actors may share more than one tie with others. Katz et al. (2004) provide an example of some of the kinds of ties in which networks vary:

'Communication ties (such as who talks to whom, or who gives information or advice to whom), formal ties (such as who reports to whom), affective ties (such as who likes whom, or who trusts whom), material or workflow ties (such as who gives money or other resources to whom), proximity ties (who is spatially or electronically close to whom), and cognitive ties (such as who knows who knows whom' (Katz et al., 2004, p. 308).

Relationships often consist of multiple ties, such as supplying information, resources, and support. Different kinds of ties all play a role in shaping the relationships between network actors and social life and action, and according to Crossley (2009), 'manifest a structure [which] is not only in virtue of patterns of connection but also because of the effect of [...] resource distributions' (Crossley, 2009, p. 28). Crossley suggests that examining the networks and resources involved allows us to comprehensively explore how popular music-making happens. The effects Crossley (2009) refers to are the opportunities and constraints generated from having access, or not, to resources and the interactions that take place through the distribution and exchange of resources within popular music networks.

This level of illumination into the ways musicians became connected with one another and why they continue to be so could further our understanding of how popular music-making happens in the ways it does in particular places. However, rather than a total social network approach, drawing on some of the concepts from within network theory, such as the mechanisms and ties outlined above and employing them metaphorically (rather than a method), could potentially help understand and explain the kinds of relationships involved in popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr. Attending to relationships and the ways they might form networks could be important for the participants in the present study, and I will look to explore this.

2.3 Three Key Themes to Exploring Popular Music Making and Place

This chapter found that three key themes emerged from the literature reviewed above, 'resources', 'networks' and 'motivations' which can potentially provide valuable insights into exploring the phenomenon this study focuses on. This section discusses each theme in turn and how they are useful for exploring and understanding popular music-making in the semi-rural towns of Aberdare and Merthyr.

2.3.1 Theme 1 – Resources

The literature suggests that a lack of resources is not necessarily a barrier for musicians where they find their own ways around difficulties encountered. 'If certain material resources and physical infrastructure are not available, that does not mean that popular music-making stops and rather people are more likely to use and adapt whatever is easily available to them, and a scarcity of resources can encourage activity where people 'cover what needs to be done' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 162). A consideration of resources helps to understand the many kinds of resources that facilitate and sustain popular music-making in different places and to what extent and in what ways resources would be similar in a semi-rural setting, which is something this study will explore.

In addition to recording studios and rehearsal rooms, pubs, and clubs, musicians might adapt different spaces, such as basements, shops, and warehouses (Shank, 1994), not necessarily meant for making music to circumvent the problem of a paucity of resources. Spaces such as garages, people's homes, and other places lend themselves well to music-making and adapting them from their intended use to accommodate music-making requires consideration. These are all places where popular musicians 'may meet, collaborate, and exchange creative experiences' (Watson et al., 2009, p. 873).

Some music scholarship assumes that there is a lack of resources for music-making in semi-rural settings, and as a result, these places also lack musical activity. However, Cohen (1991) found that a paucity of resources can be both limiting but at the same time, musicians were proud of the (Cohen, 1991) suggesting that limitations in resources can be productive in important ways.

The present study aims to understand the potential implications concerning the kinds of resources semi-rural popular musicians draw upon and how a relative lack of resources might be productive in this setting. Semi-rural settings are unlikely to have an abundance of clubs, bars and rehearsing and recording studios such as those discussed in Shank's (1994) work. However, musicians find alternative ways around any lack of resources, repurposing particular resources such as homes and shop basements (Shank, 1994) and relying mainly on informal support (Finnegan, 1989) involving people they know and trust.

2.3.2 Theme 2 – Networks

Finnegan's (1989) research on music-making in a large town details the different kinds of support amateur musicians draw upon and highlights the importance of informal support from friends and family members, helping procure equipment and providing skills and knowledge. The network of support Finnegan reveals emphasises the significance of the relationships involved and how crucial they are for music-making to happen. Finnegan found that support came from a 'complex network of institutions, many of them essentially realised by local participants at the local level' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 293), and informal support was critical for rock and pop musicians described as 'self-help' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 285) where musicians are dependent on themselves and the people they are close to, to organise and finance their musical activities. Finnegan's (1989) examination of support for local music in Milton Keynes highlights the predominance of informal sources within local networks, supplemented by external bodies such as schools, churches, and individual patrons. As

Finnegan emphasises, the significance of social interactions in music-making underscores the importance of relationships in facilitating collaborative musical endeavours.

Shank refers to overlapping networks concerning the collaboration between the people involved in making popular music. Shank's notion of networks involves musicians and producers, managers, publishers, and businesses such as recording studios, radio stations, and record and musical instrument stores. Both Cohen (1991) and Finnegan (1989) also emphasise the importance of collaboration and the relationships involved as crucial in sustaining music-making. Cohen (1995) notes the intersection of music with established ideas and hierarchies, which underscores the dynamic relationship between popular music and the networks of individuals, activities, and resources involved.

Cohen and Finnegan both explore the role of music in fostering collaboration and connectivity among musicians, but they emphasise different aspects of this phenomenon. Cohen highlights music's profound impact in creating bonds and opportunities for collaboration, particularly through live performances and shared creative experiences. In contrast, Finnegan focuses more on interpersonal relationships and social dynamics within musical groups, emphasising the importance of friendships in sustaining musical activities, especially in smaller-scale settings. While both perspectives recognise the significance of musical bonds, they offer distinct insights into the ways in which music facilitates collaboration and fosters a sense of camaraderie among musicians.

The use of the term networks in both Finnegan's (1989) and Shank's (1994) research suggests that there is potential in looking at the network of relationships involved in popular making music and in what ways they might meaningfully connect with resources and musicians' motivations and could provide important insights into the phenomenon the present study focuses on. Shank's study of music scenes in Austin further illustrates how different networks overlap, evolve, and dissolve, showcasing the fluidity of music scenes and

the crisscrossing of networks between diverse music styles. The distribution and exchange of resources within these networks are essential for sustaining popular music-making activities. Finnegan's revelation of a complex network of institutions at the local level, supplemented by informal support, underscores the critical role of relationships in organising and financing musical activities, particularly in the rock and pop genres.

The scholarship reviewed above showed that the role relationships and, in particular, friendships play in making music are critically important sources of support for musicians. Support includes sharing equipment, skills, and information, supplying access to and exchanging particular resources (Cohen 1991; Crossley 2015, Prior 2015,) and where musicians attend live performances of their peers as a show of support (Finnegan, 1989). The activities involved in making popular music, for instance, rehearsing, recording and live performances and including events such as festivals and open mic nights, open up possibilities for social interaction through collective action, which can both affect and reflect the kinds of musical networks in a particular place. Different kinds of networks bring about different kinds of opportunities and constraints for musicians, and the present study aims to understand the benefits and implications of different kinds of relationships in popular music-making in semi-rural settings.

Crossley's (2015) work on networks brings into focus the mechanisms and ties between network actors, which can help to understand not only the connection between them but also the nature of the connections involved. The importance emphasised in the literature above on the relationships involved in popular music-making suggests that consideration of the networks involved might be a fruitful approach for the present study. To understand in what ways popular music-making happens in the towns of Aberdare and Merthyr might benefit from drawing on network concepts to help elucidate and explain in what ways and the circumstances (mechanisms) in which network actors became connected through, for example, friends, family and work and the network ties that maintain their relationships to

one another and generate popular music-making. This approach has the potential to provide insights into popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr, focusing on the dynamics of the relationships involved and how they enable the distribution and exchange of resources and provide support.

2.3.3 Theme 3 – Motivations

The scholarship reviewed above suggests that musicians' motivations are important to understand when examining popular music-making in a particular setting. Shank (1994) found that the motivation for many of the musicians in Austin was for a recording label to sign them, which accords with the motivations of the musicians focused on in Cohen's (1991) work. Shank (1994) highlighted the significance of people's aims and motivations, described as desires that underpin their involvement in making popular music, where commercial success and making a living from music were the primary motivations for musicians to continue to make music.

In contrast, the relationships between musicians in Finnegan's study of Milton Keynes were the main focus of their motivations to make music, where they focused on spending time with friends and other like-minded people and was critical in sustaining their musical activities in the town. Finnegan's (1989), Cohen's (1991) and Shank's (1994) work demonstrates the value of investigating popular music in a particular place and the real-life musical activities of local musicians, showing that music-making and 'engaging socially are mutually dependent' (Behr, 2010, p.5) and they inform the present study's thinking.

Musicians' motivations can help describe and explain how different attitudes and values can spur musicians to participate in popular music-making, how they make music in particular ways, and for what reasons. The literature above suggests that the motivations of popular musicians are generally based on the aesthetic enjoyment of creating music and live

performances. Cohen's (1991) and Shank's (1994) work suggests that musicians in cities and larger settings place a great deal of value on 'making it' as in commercial success and securing a recording deal. Finnegan (1989) found that most of the musicians in her study of a large town placed a great deal of value on the relationships involved rather than the aspirations of commercial success found prevalent in Cohen's (1991) and Shank's (1994) research. There are implications to understanding what the motivations of musicians are where resources and opportunities might not be as abundant as they are in cities, there is less chance that industry professionals might see them perform and 'making it' may not be a reality for popular musicians in semi-rural settings in the same way as Cohen and Shank describe.

Shank's discussion of musicians in Austin emphasises the influence of location on musicians' aspirations, particularly in a thriving music scene like Austin where opportunities for commercial success are more readily available. This contrasts with environments lacking resources and performance opportunities, where achieving success may seem less attainable. The significance of place, including physical infrastructure, resources, and support, underscores its potential implications on musicians' aspirations and opportunities for success.

This distinction between Cohen's and Shank's perspectives reflects differing views on the relationship between individuals and their socio-cultural environment. Cohen's research in Liverpool focuses on internal motivations, such as artistic expression or commercial success, driving musicians' engagement in music-making activities, and viewing motivations as relatively independent of external influences. In contrast, Shank's study in Austin suggests that the local context significantly shapes musicians' aspirations and motivations. The vibrant music scene in Austin, characterised by numerous performance venues and industry professionals, influences musicians' desires for success and recognition, highlighting the contextual embeddedness of aspirations within specific geographical and

cultural settings. This difference underscores the dynamic interplay between individual agency and socio-cultural context in shaping human behaviour.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that the kinds of attitudes towards the commercial music industry might affect the kinds of music musicians produce where they are either creating music within industry conventions or are pushing against music industry norms and signalling that questions of motivation are potentially important to the present study. The anti-commercial attitudes could feed into the motivations of musicians making popular music outside of cities and places where the commercial music industry is not as prevalent and might have an effect on the attitudes and approaches musicians adopt and the kinds of music they produce.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has emphasised how critical resources are for making popular music and highlights the different kinds of resources popular musicians draw upon and what different kinds of settings can provide. Networks emerged as crucial for popular music-making to happen, and different kinds of relationships and the network mechanisms and network ties therein can potentially help to understand the different ways network connections facilitate and sustain popular music-making in semi-rural settings. In addition to the resources and networks involved, an understanding of musicians' motivations can help to understand their aims and aspirations. This chapter found that the three themes that emerged from the scholarship above are potentially helpful in understanding the facilitating and sustaining of popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr and informed the development of three main research questions:

- What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music in semi-rural settings?

- What kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr?
- What motivates musicians to make music, adopt the approaches they do, and produce the kinds of music they do in Aberdare and Merthyr?

The present study aims to show that exploring the contexts, qualities, and relationships between the resources and networks involved in popular music-making and understanding musicians' attitudes and motivations towards their own musical activities can reveal rich, detailed, and valuable information about how popular music-making is facilitated and sustained in a particular place. To do this, I aim to conduct qualitative comparative research by examining a sample of people involved in making popular music within Aberdare and Merthyr.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Methods

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the research design for this study and the methods employed to meet its objectives. The ontological position of this study views reality created by individuals and groups, and the theoretical perspective is interpretivism, where epistemologically, understanding the meaning underpinning people's activities and motivations requires interpretation. This study considered how resources, networks, and musicians' motivations concerning popular music-making within the social, economic, and geographical contexts of two semi-rural towns play a role in sustaining popular music-making in these locations.

I explain how the adopted methods accord and deviate from previous scholarly approaches and why they were appropriate and helpful for this investigation. I then explain the data collection and analysis methods, including an overview of key considerations such as interview recordings, biases in the treatment of data and my position as a researcher, which steered my approach and the study overall. This research used a quasi-ethnographic case study approach employing qualitative methods to collect data, including observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to describe in detail the resources, relationships and motivations concerning their musical activities. I expand upon the information this chapter provides throughout the other chapters in this research project.

I divided this chapter into five sections: 'Research Questions', 'Approaches to Researching Popular Music-Making', 'Proposed Research Approach', 'Research Design', and 'Analysis' to explain why and how I gathered information to answer this study's main research questions.

3.1 Research Questions

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two led to the development of three main research questions:

- What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music in semi-rural settings?
- What kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr?
- What motivates musicians to make popular music and, adopt the approaches they do and produce the kinds of music they do in Aberdare and Merthyr?

Addressing the main research questions this study asks requires an approach that can elicit in-depth details about the ways popular music is made in semi-rural settings. Qualitative approaches generate greater depth and detail of data than quantitative approaches allow, and it is unlikely that systematic sampling and questioning would identify some of the idiosyncrasies looked at in this thesis. Surveys and questionnaires, for example, would not allow for such scope and flexibility and are less effective in capturing the levels of detail required by the research questions this study asks. There is no extant scholarship on popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr to draw on. The kind of research questions this study asks suggests that data gleaned from the people involved in making popular music would be most effective in understanding how popular music-making happens within these settings.

3.2 Approaches to Researching Popular Music Making

This section discusses other comparable research studies' approaches to exploring popular music-making in particular settings. I examine some of the ways scholarship has approached questions to research popular music-making to help understand the most fruitful ways I can go about answering the main research questions the present study asks. Chapter Two reviewed literature from multiple disciplines, such as anthropological and ethnographic work (Becker 1982, Finnegan 1989, Cohen 1991, and Shank 1994, for example) and network research (Barnes 1954, Bott 1957, Feld 1981, Katz et al., 2004 and Crossley 2008, 2009, 2015). I also reviewed psychological and sociological research literature to understand how scholarship has looked at musicians' motivations for participating in music-making (Pitts, 2005; Kokatsaki and Hallam, 2007; Appelgren et al., 2019).

The scholarship reviewed in Chapter Two adopted various methods and approaches to investigate popular music-making in particular places. Ruth Finnegan's (1989) study of music-making in Milton Keynes wanted to understand the production and performance of music-making within the town. It focused on amateur musicians from multiple music traditions, such as brass band music, country and western, and rock music, for example. Finnegan defends her relatively narrow focus, looking at just one town, stating that she is 'following one well-established tradition in social and historical research, that of using specific case studies to lead to the kind of illumination in depth not provided by more thinly spread and generalized accounts' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 4). The specific case studies refer to the different music traditions within Milton Keynes rather than between different places.

Finnegan's particular study required in-depth knowledge from participants to compare their activities in these different music traditions within one town. It engaged with a mix of different methods to understand the work involved in making music on a local scale. In addition to documentary sources such as local newspapers and advertisements and unpublished

material from local music clubs and groups, and Finnegan engaged in extensive participant observation.

Participant observation was central to Finnegan's research, where she states that without this method, 'I do not feel I could have begun to understand what was involved in the meaningful practice of local music' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 344). Finnegan is saying here that participant observation enabled a deep and direct appreciation of the different music worlds focused on in Milton Keynes. Finnegan was not actively involved in all the musical activities in Milton Keynes and was more involved in some than others. For example, looking at rock and pop bands, Finnegan relied more on non-observational methods than in the classical world, which Finnegan was more familiar with and actively participated in.

To supplement participant observation, Finnegan disseminated questionnaires and conducted a series of face-to-face and telephone interviews with an associate on Finnegan's behalf between 1982 and 1983. Finnegan also used extended personal interviews described as 'friendly conversations' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 344) 'conducted on a very free basis, mainly just encouraging people to talk about their experiences and views' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 344). Finnegan interviewed fifty-two popular music bands, and contacts were 'gathered from various sources: partly through 'snowballing' (one contact leading to another), partly from mentions in local newspapers and background knowledge' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 345).

Sara Cohen (1991) conducted the research for her study over a period of one year and, immersed herself in the Liverpool music scene and spent long periods of time observing the lives of those involved and conducted in-depth interviews with the musicians focused on. Cohen (1991) also adopted a case study approach, however, for different reasons to Finnegan, where Cohen's study aimed to understand in-depth the musical, social and cultural struggles of local rock musicians in Liverpool and examined the processes involved

in the musical composition and rehearsal of two rock bands and how the band members 'conversed about and conceptualized those processes' (Cohen, 1991, p. 136).

Another comparable study reviewed in the literature review is Barry Shank's (1994) study of multiple music scenes in Austin, Texas, to help understand changes in the music scenes in the city and in what ways music can shape and construct musicians' identities. Shank shared some of his music-making experiences in the city, where he engaged in extensive participant observation and gathered data from historical documents and interviews with musicians, music fans, and supporting personnel. Supporting personnel include those who may not necessarily play an instrument, sing, or compose music but are involved in a professional or voluntary capacity, such as providing equipment, rehearsal, and performance space. They can also include those who organise and promote events and those who own, run and work at venues that host live music performances or rehearsal and recording spaces.

The work of Nick Crossley (2015) is also pertinent to the present study, where Crossley investigated the emergence of punk scenes in different cities in the UK, London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Sheffield, to understand how music-making happens through a social network lens. Crossley drew on secondary and archival sources, such as the autobiographies of famous punk bands and artists, to understand how punk music emerged in these particular locations between the years 1975 and 1980. Crossley (2015) used network mechanisms and ties drawn from social network analysis to help explain the kinds of networks and the dynamics therein that enabled punk music to emerge in these cities.

Social network analysis thinks about networks in very different ways compared to, for example, social anthropology where 'the former, [...] marks a critical engagement with mainstream social science's individualistic assumptions and championed a kind of structuralism, but in the latter, it marked a critical engagement with structural functionalism

and signalled a recognition of fragmentation and complexity' (see Knox et al., 2006, p. 133). This highlights the tension between different disciplines concerning their focus on structure and agency. It also warns against assuming that network thinking is an easy solution for resolving tensions between different disciplines.

There is a tendency in social network analysis to emphasise the structural elements of society, and these structuralist assumptions create basic problems for the significance of networks in this tradition. However, social network analysis is not a single theory or a particular collection of theories. It is rather "a series of mathematical concepts and technical methods', drawing specifically on graph theory, leading to a distinct cluster of methodological expertise which connects nodes through ties, and institutionalized in specialized software packages' (Knox et al., 2006, p. 116).

Social network analysis uses networks to replace 'one kind of structural explanation with another' (see Knox et al., 2006, p. 125) replacing structure with the structure of the network itself. Social science research has long been asking questions concerning social connections between people, such as friendship, kinship, and exchange (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Kapferer, 1973; Carsten, 2004). Furthermore, ethnographic approaches have been significant in network thinking (Barnes 1954, Bott 1957, Riles 2001), providing depth and richness to the data produced.

Social network analysis has a long history of deploying networks as 'methodological tools, as metaphors for understanding forms of relations and as descriptors of social forms' (Knox et al., 2006, p. 114). The position of networks in a methodological sense changed when 'attention moved from culturally defined groups in delimited locations, to social settings where culture and stability were less important than conflict and change' (Knox et al., 2006, p. 125). In short, ethnographic accounts of networks shifted from method to metaphor, and the questions researchers were asking changed where they became more concerned with

'issues of representation, reflexivity, meaning, personhood, and identity' (Knox et al., 2006, p. 125).

3.3 Proposed Research Approach

This section of the chapter outlines the broad design of this study and discusses the value of proposed approaches for answering the main research questions. The methods outlined above suggest a quasi-ethnographic approach provides valuable methods for examining the phenomena this study focuses on. Ethnography typically involves the researcher asking questions, listening to what people say, and observing what happens in an attempt to answer questions about what is going on in a particular situation (see Silverman, 2006). The 'ethnographic approach can be effective in small social groups where face-to-face encounters are typical of the contexts in which people know each other and know about the world' (Latour, cited in Knox et al., 2006, p.127). Porter (1996) asserts that ethnography aims to explore the relationship between social action and social structure. An ethnographically informed approach is potentially helpful to this investigation because the tools used can help build a rich picture of the phenomena under investigation.

This study employs a qualitative research approach to unpick the complex phenomenon, and the amount of data collected in qualitative research is usually smaller than that of quantitative collection methods. Qualitative results often do not always lend themselves well to generalisations but allow for much more in-depth analysis to produce detailed data. However, qualitative research must have some wider resonance, with findings being generalisable in some way (Mason, 2002). Payne and Williams (2005) suggest that generalisation is a limited type in qualitative research and is more of a pragmatic approach rather than a total rejection of any generalisability for qualitative studies. While qualitative data helps us understand popular music-making on a micro level, it also helps us develop a sense of the resources and relationships involved in popular music-making, the drive for

musicians to continue making music, and the kinds of music they produce, contributing to popular music scholarship.

3.3.1 Interviews and Participant Observation

The research above suggests there is a great deal of value in using interviews to understand how popular music-making happens in particular settings where speaking to the people involved in popular music-making provides rich, detailed data. Interviews aim 'to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences' (Patton, 2002, p. 350). The interview approach has some weaknesses and has received criticism, particularly notions that the interview process is an opportunity for participants to present themselves as competent and to say what they think the researcher expects, a form of 'impression management' (see Goffman, 1959).

However, the detailed accounts of participants' experiences an interview approach allow emphasises the value of in-depth interviews for the purposes of the present study. Detailed descriptions from the musicians themselves are a potentially useful way to understand what resources they use, who else is involved, the motivations behind their musical participation and why musicians adopt the approaches they do and produce the kinds of music they do. This approach potentially provides the researcher with rich, detailed accounts that allow for a deep data analysis to help reveal how musicians make popular music.

All three ethnographic studies discussed above demonstrated a high level of participant observation (Finnegan 1989, Cohen 1991, and Shank 1994), where the researcher was involved to various extents in local music-making. Participant observation can take a number of different forms, from informal conversations and observations as an audience member to actively participating in particular musical activities.

There are some considerations to this approach, such as which musical activities the researcher should and can observe and in what capacity the researcher can take part. However, it is not realistic or practical to try to be a part of all the musical activities and events that occur in a particular place and a balance between a deep understanding of some of the people and activities involved as well as an understanding of music-making more broadly would allow for in-depth insights and also help reveal comparisons of the way popular music-making happens within Aberdare and Merthyr. Although observation does not always help us to understand what someone thinks about a particular topic, it is through interviewing and prompting that people will talk about what they do, allowing the researcher to understand the participant's perspective. Supplementing the interviews with observational data can help support the interview data and deepen understanding of what is involved in popular music-making in these locations.

3.3.2 Case Studies and Comparisons

Scholarship has used case studies to 'dig out the characteristics of a particular entity, and its key distinguishable attributes include a focus on a single unit, in-depth description of a phenomenon, anchored on real live scenarios and uses multiple data collection methods' (Njie and Asimiran, 2014, p. 36). Yin (2003) specifies that a case study approach is suitable for 'how' and 'why' questions, and with the depth of detail, this approach allows for explanations of particular phenomena. In tandem with other data collection methods, case studies are useful for comparative research in illuminating the differences between each case, the complex issues involved, and how aspects from each case can knit together for broader insights.

A case study approach aims to generate as much detail as possible about an event and the people and processes involved. One could criticise Finnegan's (1989) research for looking at

only one town, but the case study approach Finnegan adopted provided in-depth knowledge from participants about their activities in different music traditions and suggests that case studies could potentially yield detailed and valuable information and be an effective approach for comparing popular music-making between Aberdare and Merthyr.

Whether intended or not, research involves some comparison, helping researchers identify differences and similarities (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Ethnographically informed fieldwork constantly compares empirical research, the activities, and the contexts in which they take place. Comparative analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomena focused on and the peculiarities of each case (see Tilly, 1984). There is 'no single method or theory of qualitative comparison but rather a plurality of approaches' (Palmerberger and Grinrich, 2013, p. 95), which depends on the research questions and the study's design.

While comparing is implicit in undertaking research, comparison used specifically as a research tool can provide a deeper level of analysis, and the value of a comparative approach is in 'understanding rather than measuring difference' (Richie and Lewis, 2003, p. 50). The ethnographic scholarship discussed above all includes a comparative element, whether that is between different music traditions (Finnegan, 1989), rock bands (Cohen, 1991) or music scenes (Shank, 1994) and emphasises the depth of understanding and value a comparative approach brings to research.

Comparison is an effective approach for the researcher to analyse in detail the kinds of responses given by participants through interviews. In doing so a comparative approach can potentially illuminate musicians' motivations and the ways relationships and resources involved in popular music-making may accord or differ between Aberdare and Merthyr. Furthermore, comparing two similar settings to understand the facilitation and sustaining of popular music-making in semi-rural areas can strengthen the verifiability of this study (see Yin, 2003), revealing differences and similarities concerning the musical activity and the

kinds of music produced in each town. Comparative approaches have been criticised for 'losing the complexity and uniqueness of the cases under investigation (see Palmberger and Grinrich, 2013). However, treating comparisons carefully, as in not allowing the differences found to overshadow the similarities, which can generate stereotypes, mitigates these risks. Furthermore, keeping the number of cases low can also reduce the risks involved, which is particularly important when conducting research as an individual researcher and not as part of a team.

3.4 Research Design

This section evaluates the data collection methods the present study will take forward, looking at what data these approaches should yield and how they will enable me to answer my main research questions. I first discuss the methods and approaches this study will adopt and research ethics, then outline the research population and place and how I went about sampling for participant interviews, followed by my role as a researcher and a musician and the implications involved. I then finish this chapter by describing the approach to analysis this study will adopt.

This exploration requires a research design that can acknowledge the social structures (place and resources) but focus on individual actors, their relationships with one another and their attitudes, motivations, and values towards popular music-making. The present study intends to compare each town as a mini ethnographic case study, and the comparisons made in this research are between the resources, networks, and motivations of musicians within each town rather than, for example, between the practices of different music traditions (Finnegan, 1989), rock bands (Cohen, 1991) or music scenes within the same location (Shank, 1994).

3.4.1 Data Collection – Participant Observation and Semi-Structured Interviews

The extent of my own participant observation was attending gigs and having occasional social chats with local musicians and supporting personnel. Participant observation is not the main method employed in this study; rather, it is a supporting method that is partly useful for recruiting interview participants. For the data collection phase of this research, participant observation provides the opportunity to engage in ‘friendly conversation’ (Finnegan, 1989, p. 344) and provides information on musicians, their activities, and resources within each town.

Another staple methodological tool in ethnographic research is the interview, which ‘provide[s] a useful way for researchers to learn about the world of others’ (Qu and Dumay, 2011, p. 239). I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews in Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare with twenty participants from each town in person and over the telephone between May 2019 and March 2020. I approached sixty-five people in total, and forty agreed to an interview, twenty people from each town. I recorded all interviews using a discrete audio recorder, which were all fully transcribed.

I conducted the face-to-face interviews for this study in various settings of the participants’ choice within each town so they were as comfortable as possible. I recorded all interviews, which varied in duration from forty minutes to one hundred and twenty minutes. The interviews I conducted were not only one-to-one but also with pairs of participants, and some interviews were with full band line-ups. I did not interview all the supporting personnel I identified in the towns; rather, I gathered factual information from those not interviewed. The number of interviews I conducted was not determined prior to data collection; rather, during this phase of research, I was looking for repeated information to emerge, indicating that the data collected was sufficient for analysis.

The interviews are in-depth and semi-structured in design, employing a mixture of descriptive, probing, and open-ended questions to avoid leading the participant's answers and elicit sufficient detail while encouraging a relaxed, conversational tone in the interviews.

In-depth interviewing,

'Is not designed to test hypotheses, gather answers to questions, or corroborate opinions. Rather, it is designed to ask participants to reconstruct their experience and to explain their meaning. The questions most used in an in-depth interview follow from what the participant has said' (Seidman, 2006, p. 92).

The flexibility and generative nature of semi-structured interviews allow participants to deviate from and elaborate on their responses to provide more detail in their answers. Compared to unstructured interviews, this approach can help achieve a great depth of detail and enables the researcher to stay on track despite any deviations from the interview guide while maintaining consideration of the research's focus.

Face-to-face and telephone interviews allowed for double-checking information, such as names, places, and dates, and asking more probing questions to develop a line of discussion further. Telephone interviews made it challenging to build rapport with the participants, as they were unable to make eye contact and interrupted one another at times. However, this did not negatively impact the amount or quality of the information participants provided.

The recordings of telephone interviews were generally good in quality, but there were occasional disruptions in the connection. I plugged my mobile phone into a speaker to enable the recording device to pick up the participant's voice. There was also a significant difference in background noise where most face-to-face interviews conducted in public spaces like pubs and cafes involved variable levels of noise, other people talking,

background music and the clattering of crockery and cutlery. I managed to slightly mitigate the background noise by using the noise reduction function in Audacity software, but this did not significantly affect the difficulties experienced when transcribing. The minimal background noise present in the telephone interviews made it much easier to hear and transcribe than many of the face-to-face interviews conducted in public spaces.

Through a process of 'funneling' (Berry, 1999), the interview questions moved from broad to more specific, including descriptive and probing questions, wording them as simply as possible so as not to influence the response of the participants. The interview questions aimed to illuminate the role of resources and networks in the activities and interactions involved and what attitudes and values motivated participants to continue making popular music. The same semi-structured interview guide was employed for each interview. However, the interviews varied in length depending on how forthcoming the participants were and how effective I was as a researcher in encouraging them to talk.

3.4.2 General Interview Guide (see Appendix B for full Interview Guide)

Prior to the interviews, a general interview guide (Patton, 2002) was prepared, which lists the main questions I wanted to cover in the interviews. This approach is flexible and allows for further development of lines of discussion, and it also lends itself well to a more conversational tone during the interview process. An additional advantage of having an interview guide is that it helps with the time management of interviews in terms of keeping within a reasonable timeframe and covering the questions in enough detail within that time. Deciding beforehand what topics to cover 'helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored' (Patton, 2002, p. 344). In addition to the flexibility the guide enabled me to ensure that I did ask the same key questions to every interview participant and helped to keep a particular level of consistency across all interviews.

3.4.3 Research Ethics

The participant information form (see Appendix B) was given in person or sent digitally to participants before the interview to provide an overview of the study and to ensure informed consent when participants came to sign the consent form (see Appendix B). Informed consent means that all participants understand the research study's nature and purpose and the questions I would ask (Latusek, 2018). The consent form (see Appendix B), given at the start of all face-to-face interviews and sent in advance of telephone interviews, explains who I am as the researcher, the purpose of this study and that all interviews will be recorded. Although this research is not controversial at the level of research ethics, I reassured participants that I aimed to keep their identities hidden by using pseudonyms instead of their names, band names, and any other people's names they mentioned.

The consent form also assures participants that they can stop and/or withdraw from the interview and the study at any time and that all data is stored securely on an external hard drive rather than a desktop, paper notes or a USB stick that could be easily misplaced or lost and data will only be used for the purposes of this research project. Furthermore, the consent form states that I will destroy all participant details and recordings at the end of the research study period. Participants were aware of the limitations to anonymity in research conducted in small semi-rural towns, where particular features included may challenge that anonymity. I spoke to the respondents about this, and they often expressed that they would be more than happy to be identified. Still, nonetheless, I anonymised them as a matter of course to adhere to research ethics regulations.

I was also conscious of what respondents said in the interviews about third parties and was careful not to include anything that could be offensive or hurtful and could affect their relationships in the town. Where I felt there was no likelihood of that I was able to work with

people that might be identified but not compromised. Informed consent, pseudonyms and secure data storage help to mitigate the limitations of anonymity along with careful consideration of including particular details without revealing specific characteristics that could identify individuals. The process of anonymising data is a balancing act (Saunders et al., 2015), maximising anonymity without compromising the integrity of the data.

3.4.4 Research Population and Place

This study compares the towns of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare in terms of popular music-making in semi-rural environments. Both towns share many similarities. They are semi-rural in location and suffered from deindustrialisation, particularly during the 1980s coal miner's strike, which created high unemployment and deprivation in these towns. Deindustrialisation has affected the type of employment available in each town, and there has been a steady rise in service occupations, healthcare, retail, and call centres, suggesting wages are generally low for many unskilled positions.

The differences between the towns are equally significant, with Merthyr having a larger geographical footprint and twice the population of Aberdare. While both Merthyr and Aberdare are similarly positioned in relation to Cardiff in the south and Brecon in the north, Merthyr is also positioned along the main route to both Cardiff and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park along the A470 dual carriageway road, allowing easy access in and out. In contrast, Aberdare is a detour off the main route.

Transport links are important in semi-rural settings for people to get to different places, and there were limitations to public transport in both towns. However, Merthyr has better transport links than Aberdare. Many people in the valleys live in small villages outside of the town centres, and unless they have their own means of transport or know someone who does and is willing to help, they rely on the limited public transport or go to the expense of

taxi fares. Some of the rehearsal spaces identified in this study are outside the towns, suggesting that transport is vital for musicians to move their gear and get to different venues when rehearsing, recording, and performing live.

3.4.5 Sampling

Through my knowledge of both towns, participant observation and extensive online research, I identified individuals involved in popular music-making in each town. I had a sense of the kinds of musical activities I wanted to cover and the number of people I thought could give me good coverage of the types of questions I was asking. My sampling aimed to speak to those musicians actually making popular music at the time of writing this thesis to gather their thoughts, opinions and experiences of making popular music in this setting to help answer my main research questions. I contacted and recruited most of the participants in this study via social media and messaging apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp and a few respondents were recruited in person when speaking to them at live performances for example. What I found from the people I initially identified to be interviewed fed into how I made decisions about how I topped up my sample, for example, speaking to solo artists and bands. The decision not to include all local musicians from within each town in the sampling approach was based on several considerations aligned with the objectives of the research study.

The study focuses on understanding the activities, networks, and motivations involved in popular music-making within two towns. While criteria such as income earned or musical training are commonly used in music scholarship to define musicians, they are not directly relevant to addressing the research questions. Therefore, the selection criteria were tailored to include individuals actively engaged in activities such as writing, rehearsing, recording, and live performance, as these aspects are central to the study's objectives. Including all musicians, regardless of their level of involvement in popular music-making activities, would

broaden the study's scope beyond its intended focus. By narrowing the participant pool to those actively engaged in relevant musical activities, the study can maintain a clear and focused inquiry into the specific dynamics of popular music-making within Aberdare and Merthyr.

The kinds of questions this study looks to address concern the resources where people take part in the activities involved in popular music-making, the kinds of networks that connect them and their motivations for making popular music. With the main research questions in mind, this study defines musicians as the people actively involved in the kinds of musical activities outlined above, drawing on the resources and other people involved to accommodate these musical activities. However, I not only searched for musicians (although the majority of the sample were musicians as defined above) but also supporting personnel who I identified as important to popular music-making (see Becker, 1982 and Finnegan, 1989).

The value of including both musicians and supporting personnel is that it provides a broad source of information, from the activities involved in making music to the logistics behind those activities, such as finances and maintenance of venues, booking musicians and licence controls, for example, which can all have an effect on how popular music-making is practised. Also considered was accessibility to venues, attracting an audience and what they can play and where, such as acoustic sets and different combinations of ensembles where volume or space is an issue.

Selecting participants this way is known as purposive sampling, and this approach allows the researcher to reveal insights into the participants' activities and processes in terms of the subject under investigation. Criteria guided participant selection, such as initially looking for people who have been involved for many years in local popular music-making because they will likely have a great deal of knowledge and information to give me about the local popular

music scene. Levels of collaboration and engagement were also considered, the kinds of music they played, and those people heavily involved in local popular music activities could potentially provide in-depth and detailed accounts of their musical experiences. My knowledge of popular music making within each town, combined with speaking to people informally and socially at gigs and extensive online research, informed my decisions concerning people's levels of collaboration and engagement.

In addition to purposive sampling, a snowballing strategy was also employed. I built this approach via referrals from participants initially identified through purposive sampling and those I had already interviewed, and some participants offered recommendations during informal chats at gigs and events. A combination of purposive sampling and snowballing allowed me to develop a list of artists, bands and supporting personnel to approach. There were some people I could have interviewed but did not because I felt they would not add anything new as I had already had people talking about particular aspects, including recording and live performance.

The participant biographies (Appendix C) provide an overview of the interview participants who took part in this study, and their characteristics are equivalent in most regards except for the towns they live in. The interview participants within both towns vary in their professional status as musicians, ranging from full-time professionals to hobbyists, balancing music with other commitments such as family and full-time jobs. The kinds of genres and styles of music included rock, metal, pop and indie to country, Americana and folk music. The roles adopted are diverse, with participants serving as performers, organisers, promoters, and session musicians. Each individual contributes to popular music-making in their towns in unique ways based on their skills, interests, and experiences. Participants are engaged in a variety of artistic projects, from solo albums and concept albums to tribute bands and collaborative initiatives. This diversity of projects reflects the richness and creativity present within the local music scenes. Overall, while each individual's popular

music-making journey is distinct, their collective experiences contribute to the popular music scenes of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare.

3.4.6 The Role of the Researcher

There are implications for my study design where analysis must consider that my role as the researcher involves interpreting and framing the data collected. I am a professional musician investigating professional and amateur musicians and supporting personnel living in the same area. When I started this project, I seldom performed (playing live concerts/gigs or recording music to promote); my musical activities were more involved in attending live music events, delivering music education, and making music only for fun. This did change during my fifth year (2020) of research when I was asked to join one of the bands I had interviewed in Aberdare the year before. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that there were not many opportunities to perform⁵. However, I was privy to the processes involved in how the band recorded and promoted themselves (which had been done remotely during the lockdowns), and I was also involved in the interactions and banter between bandmates.

My position as a musician and a researcher creates a dilemma called the *insider/outsider* problem. There are some dangers involved where too much of an inside position risk 'ceasing to be a detached observer' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 343) and too detached risks misunderstanding the participant's words and actions. However, being an insider to some extent meant I was familiar with the participants' language and colloquialisms (Asselin, 2003). My position as a musician living in the valleys could have created a more comfortable and relaxed feel for most interview participants. Furthermore, I might be more readily accepted by the interview participants than perhaps an outsider because I am a musician and live in the research area, which might provide a certain amount of legitimacy with the

⁵ One opportunity did arise, Covaid, an all-day event organised around the music venue Jacs in Aberdare streaming local band performances live via social media to raise money for the NHS.

participants than an outsider researcher (Adler and Adler, 1987). Participants might feel more confident in being open with me in the interviews (Talbot, 1998-99) and my representation of them in contrast to a non-musician or someone who does not live in the same area, for instance.

Exploring the musical activities in my own 'backyard' might suggest I am an insider; however, Bruno Nettl (2015) explains that the insider/outsider distinction is complex, and it is not simply the case that researchers exploring their own location are necessarily insiders. For example, being Welsh does not necessarily make me an insider on all Welsh music; likewise, being a woman does not mean I am an insider on all music by women. However, resolving the dualism between an insider and an outsider is complex, and Acker (2000) asserts that finding a way to be both is helpful. Spradley (1979) suggests that a balance is necessary, and the risks an insider/outsider position can bring about are partly balanced by being an insider in some aspects of the music-making taking place and with some of the people involved in both of these towns and an outsider in other aspects (see Finnegan, 1989). Spradley's suggestion of balance above was evident in my experience, where I was more of an insider regarding the activities and processes of making music but less so concerning the relationships between participants.

3.5 Analysis

In the present study, I analyse each town's data separately, comparing findings from each location and the themes that emerge. There are different kinds of frameworks for analysing qualitative data and the kinds of research questions this study asks influenced what kind of analysis I carried out. The present research aims to understand popular music-making in a particular place by looking for in-depth details about the resources, networks, and motivations involved. Discourse analysis and content analysis, studying the use of language rather than its meaning and analysing artefacts (text, audio and visual) would not elicit the

kinds of information this study requires. Analysing how often a particular word is used and historic artefacts does not really help understand how musicians make popular music; rather, this study employed thematic analysis to code data from the transcribed interviews.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying themes in data (Terry and Hayfield et al., 2013), and data can be quantitative or qualitative. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis involves two broad categories, experiential and critical, and it is useful to provide this study's orientation to understand how thematic analysis is useful. The research questions this study asked focussed on what participants think and do rather than on the theoretical patterns of meaning to find out about the participants' lived experiences and interpret them within the context of the situation and setting. Thematic analysis is appropriate to use with most frameworks. The value of thematic analysis is its flexible approach, which can help to address a broad range of research questions, unlike other data analysis approaches such as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and discourse analysis (Wetherell, 1998), which are situated within particular theoretical frameworks (see Clarke et al., 2015a).

'Coding is treated as an organic and flexible process, where good coding requires a detailed engagement with the data. The assumption is that coding 'gets better' (i.e., develops depth and moves beyond the obvious surface level) through immersion in, or repeated engagement with, the data' (Terry and Hayfield et al., 2013, p. 20).

However, this approach's flexibility should not be confused with having no theoretical underpinnings at all. The frameworks and findings from secondary sources uncovered in earlier stages of this investigation influenced the initial coding of the interview texts, and even though inductively driven, it is impossible not to have any ideas of themes beforehand

(Rowan, 1981). Analysis and coding of the data took place after the interviews were fully transcribed, and the transcriptions included some interruptions and laughter, which I separated from the interview text by square brackets. However, I did not include every single utterance, for example, sounds and stuttering. I initially conducted an analysis of the interviews in Word, reading through each transcript, identifying expected themes to emerge, such as a lack of physical infrastructure, and then boldening and colour-coding the text. After completing this for all forty interviews, I uploaded all the transcriptions into the analysis software NVivo 12.

The NVivo software allowed me to organise and file the pertinent quotes from the interviews, creating nodes for each, such as collaboration, motivation, and support. For example, I split the analysis into two projects, one for each town. The software not only helps with organising data but also has effective search tools to find keywords, enabling easy retracing of my steps to locate the transcription and the individual quotes in the context of the interview. Informed by Braun and Clarke (2006), my approach to analysing data employed a mainly inductive six-phase strategy:

1. Familiarisation – This phase requires transcribing interviews and reading through transcripts while editing. A further read through the transcripts allows me to highlight pertinent aspects that have already emerged, such as a lack of rehearsal space.
2. Coding – This phase generates nodes using NVivo 12 software, collating words, sentences, and phrases. Noting the key issues within each node will help generate themes in the next phase.
3. Themes - The third phase reviews the nodes and issues to identify patterns and what is more significant than others in relation to my research questions. Several nodes could make up a theme.
4. Sifting - This phase reviews the themes, looking back over the interview transcripts to confirm and double-check certain aspects. Questions asked here are: Do the themes

represent the data? And do I need to change anything, for example, theme titles, to better represent the data?

5. Defining - Defining requires the researcher to review the specifics of each theme, examining what it means, how it helps to understand the data, and how well it addresses the research questions. Themes need to be clear, and one aim is to be able to describe each theme in a sentence.
6. Writing - The final phase addresses each theme in turn, explaining how they emerged and what they mean, including examples of the interview texts as evidence. It explains how each theme helps answer my main research questions.

Moving between phases two and three required developing nodes into themes, and supplementing this phase, I considered the recurrent issues within the nodes generated, for example, discussions concerning friendships and professionalism in music, and this helped develop themes from the text. Attride-Stirling (2001) discusses developing codes into themes where noting the issues that emerge from the nodes helps to understand which themes are more relevant to the research questions I am asking.

The process involves continuous evaluation, asking myself questions, for example, am I reading this excerpt deeply enough? Am I missing something? What nodes are more important than others? Phases four and five were time intensive, and theme descriptions changed and developed over a series of months after re-reading the interviews and considering the main research questions asked. During the analysis phase, I also kept in mind the different kinds of network mechanisms and ties involved in connecting participants to one another, and they functioned as metaphors to help describe the kinds of relationships that I found were involved in popular music-making within Aberdare and Merthyr. Phase six produced multiple drafts of overviews of the empirical chapters addressing the different themes that emerged from the data and finding out how to best present my findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pubs, Clubs, Homes, and Sheds

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to address the research question, which is asking what kinds of resources musicians draw upon to make popular music in semi-rural settings. Scholarship on music-making and place has posited that there is a lack of resources in places outside of cities and urban areas (Gibson, 2002, Bell and Jayne 2010, Spring 2013) and there are implications that a lack of resources leads to a lack of music-making. However, the paucity of research looking at popular music-making in these settings (Straw and Janotti, 2012) leaves a gap in knowledge, and the present research contributes towards addressing this gap by comparing the resources in the two semi-rural towns of Aberdare and Merthyr. Additionally, the study explores how music-making resources function differently in semi-rural versus urban settings. In Aberdare and Merthyr, resources often serve multiple functions and are adapted for various uses, and particularly in Aberdare, foster a close-knit, DIY culture. In contrast, urban settings typically offer more dedicated and specialised resources, influenced by commercial interests and professionalisation within the music industry.

This chapter is divided into three sections: 'Rehearsing and Recording Spaces and Material Resources', 'Live Performance and Festivals' and 'Skills and Knowledge'. They are divided this way to illustrate the different kinds of resources important to musicians and the functions they provide. They also reflect the most important aspects of their music-making and the sequence they most commonly happen from rehearsing, recording, and performing music

live to looking at the acquisition of the skills and knowledge they need to enable their music-making.

The first section focuses on places for rehearsing and recording, including material resources such as PAs, backline⁶, musical instruments, hardware, and software. It emerged that Aberdare, the smaller of the towns, has a greater extent of resources for musical activities. These resources are, for example, spaces and equipment and are typically more multifunctional in Aberdare than in Merthyr. For instance, places are used not only for musical activity but also as pubs, garages and storage sheds. This is important to the present study because it suggests that the town's size does not necessarily indicate more provision for popular music-making. Furthermore, we are also alerted to the importance of the different combinations of resources and the different functions they provide popular musicians within each town.

The implications of different combinations and functions of resources revealed that local musicians interviewed in Merthyr seldom play live in the town and conduct most of their musical activities in dedicated spaces outside of the town. Aberdare, in contrast, revealed more places to perform live combined with reappropriated spaces and a 'do it yourself' approach fostering a greater extent of local musical activity and thereby inflecting the character of the music produced by local musicians.

The second section looks at live performance and music festivals, discussing live performance spaces, how they function as resources, and why they are important to local musicians. Comparing the two local annual music festivals within each town reveals differences in resource exchanges and the extent of free non-musical labour provided by local musicians.

⁶ Backline refers to speakers, amps, and drum kits for example.

The third section focuses on musicians' key skills and knowledge and how they facilitate their music-making. It emerged that there is a greater number of musicians in Aberdare involved in additional roles such as recording and promotion, and there is a tendency for musicians in Aberdare to be more involved in the organisation of musical events and activities than in Merthyr.

4.1 Rehearsal and Recording Spaces and Material Resources

This section discusses the resources important to musicians for rehearsing and recording. Participants from both towns remarked upon a lack of rehearsal and recording space, yet the ways musicians in both towns responded to this paucity contrasted. Aberdare is a much smaller town than Merthyr, and many of the resources relied upon in Aberdare were convenient to access because they were close by.

4.1.1 Rehearsal Spaces

For musicians to rehearse their music, there has to be some provision of physical infrastructure to accommodate this activity. One of the key resources providing local musicians with space to rehearse in and around Aberdare are pubs⁷:

The pubs in Cwmaman⁸ are quite integral in letting me practice there [...] the Globe and the Shepherds primarily. (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

⁷ Corresponding with Ruth Finnegan's (1989) findings in Milton Keynes.

⁸ Cwmaman is approximately two miles south of Aberdare town centre.

The Shepherds Arms in Cwmaman have let us practice [...] we don't have a PA so we're borrowing a PA [...] so band practice tomorrow up the Shepherds. (Warren Baker, 46, guitarist and producer from Aberdare).

Musicians have to source their own PA because there is no in-house equipment at either pub, but their proximity (both pubs are 'the local' for some musicians) and the space they provide is a valuable resource emphasised by Dave's comment that they are integral for him and his musical activities. Jacs, a dedicated music venue in Aberdare town centre, also offers space for local bands to rehearse in exchange for performing live for free or a reduced fee. Many of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare complained about the costs of rehearsal space suggesting they would struggle with the payments involved and is not a dissimilar situation to the credit system Cohen (1991) discusses regarding rehearsal space in Liverpool.

Aberdare also has The Shed, a disused lorry trailer situated in Rhigos (just north of Aberdare town centre) used as a rehearsal space and mentioned by most respondents from the town. The Shed is in a secluded spot on approximately one and a half acres of land where the owner Stephen lives in his bungalow and runs his auto repair garage. The Shed is important to many of the respondents in Aberdare for rehearsal space and also occasionally recording. Many spoke fondly of their experiences there:

We're lucky I guess the Shed, we don't have to pay for a practice room well we do pay Stephen, but we've got a practice room that we can go to. (Harry Dewey, 32, vocalist from Aberdare).

I love the Shed [...] we've rehearsed up there a few times [...] We managed to get a good little sound in there, even though it's as wide as I can hold my arms [laughter] and Stephen and a few of his mates are always sitting there listening, I like it up

there, it's enjoyable [...] multiple bands have been through there over the years [...] it's that hub thing isn't it, I think that's the good thing about when you have [...] music scenes and things like that, there's always a hub [...] there'll always be somewhere where people kind of gravitate towards to either rehearse or gig or hang out (Jim Brenner, 48, guitarist, singer/songwriter and guitar teacher from Aberdare).

Stephen (owner of The Shed) occasionally takes small payments to cover electricity and gas, but there is no fee, highlighting altruistic ties at work. Stephen told me The Shed was intended to be used as a storage shed and that his nephew Nathan's interest in music and desire to form a band encouraged him to let them use the space to rehearse. Over time, more local band friends of both Nathan's and Stephen's also began using the space to rehearse, highlighting the connections involved where friendships are a conduit to access particular resources.



Figure 8: The Shed Aberdare. (Authors' own photograph).

Many participants in Aberdare used homes and garages specifically adapted to function as rehearsal spaces and mentioned the convenience of rehearsing in these spaces:

The bass players got a garage that's all set-up in Hirwaun [...] you can just walk in and just plug the mic's in and it's ready to go. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

The money to practice these days, these places are fifteen pound an hour! Y'know [...] forty-five quid is expensive for me! Who has a full-time job and works fuck if I've gotta pay forty-five quid to practice every other week it's ninety quid a month! I mean I'd find it hard to spend that amount of money (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

Dave's comment highlights that the costs involved were a factor for some participants in Aberdare.

In contrast, most participants from Merthyr used dedicated rehearsal spaces outside of town because there was a lack of suitable rehearsal spaces locally. However, limitations of local public transport did impact how easily some participants in Merthyr could access these dedicated spaces:

The closest rehearsal studios are Cardiff based and obviously I can't really get over there as much as I would like to and it's obviously lugging all your equipment over as well (Bethan Shearer, 22, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

The transport connections are absolutely ludicrous and to think our bus services in Merthyr stop at like six o'clock at night! [...] the public transport system is absolutely crap (Justin Brown, 48, owner of Caffi Soar from Merthyr).

The comments above underscore the importance of private transport for getting to particular places and transporting equipment.

A couple of participants from Merthyr did have their own private practice space at home, one using his garden shed and another using his attic space. These spaces are private and only used by the participants themselves; however, one practice space that other musicians do use is the side room of Lloyd Davies's parents' house, adapted into a rehearsal space for the four bands he plays in:

I've got a rehearsal room on the side of my mother's house which was there when I started [playing drums] at 12 or 13, so that's still active today. We got a PA [...] we got a drum-kit set up in there, there's a bass amp in there as well, guitar cabs. You just turn up, plug in, and go for it. (Lloyd Davies, 46, drummer from Merthyr).

Participants who have used this space in the past explain how long it has been available and why they like using it:

It's his parent's side room, so imagine this is his parent's house it would be that room there [pointing to a second front room the other side of the house] So, his mother, they've always put up with it haven't they [...] since we were twelve, we were in there. (Sean Williams, 45, bassist from Merthyr).

It had pictures of The Beatles on the walls [...] and 'cause there's a drumkit there already and a PA system and microphones, a bass amp and a guitar amp, we can just walk straight in there and get stuck into it [...] Quite often rehearsal rooms can be quite sterile and not very nice places, that was kinda a nice environment [...] always a bit of a laugh, messing around and his parents were always keen to come in and meet everyone, it was very nice. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Lloyd's parent's side room is a valuable resource to some of the Merthyr respondents, particularly because it is all set up and ready to go and is a relaxed environment without the limitations of booking by the hour compared to dedicated rehearsal spaces. This space is not accessible to everyone; only Lloyd's friends and bandmates⁹ illustrating the connections involved in accessing specific resources.

Some respondents in Merthyr had used NuStudioz, the only dedicated rehearsal space in the town, which provided a backline, PA, and microphones. However, many of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr preferred to use other places out of town because of poor quality equipment, inflexible booking times and unreliable staff:

The gear's not that good really it can be hit and miss [...] In the past we've gone up there they've left the key for us to let ourselves in and they haven't been there they've forgotten do you know what I mean, a waste of a trip [...] we don't tend to go there. (Anthony Jenkins, 22, pianist and guitarist from Merthyr).

The problem with [NuStudioz] is you'd call them up and they might not have a space on the time of day that you want and when you're on a tight schedule trying to work between four people's lives if there's one day a week [...] you need that day to be free. And also, to do with times how long we can be there for, coz you're paying by the hour in those places. (Carl 25, drummer from Merthyr).

There are more places in Aberdare than in Merthyr for rehearsing and cost emerged as a factor reflected in the extent of adapted spaces used in Aberdare which were mostly free such as pubs and storage sheds and accords with Cohen's (1991) findings where a lack of money motivated musicians and their sense of purpose and they found ways around a lack

⁹ Approximately seven musicians including Lloyd use this space.

of finances. Landlords were friends with some of the musicians in the town and supported their local musical activities, letting them practice at the pub and, in doing so, bringing custom into the establishment. Friendships were also a key factor for rehearsing at The Shed, and seldom was money exchanged for using the place, highlighting the altruistic nature of Stephen, the owner. However, there is also a sense of reciprocity where Stephen enjoys listening to the bands rehearsing and often sits in on rehearsals with a couple of his friends having a drink and emphasises the value placed on the social aspects of music making. Furthermore, convenience is a factor not only in terms of setting up equipment but also proximity where Aberdare is much smaller than Merthyr, and some resources are easy to access because they are in close proximity.

4.1.2 Recording Spaces and Material Resources

There were no dedicated recording studios in either town, and most respondents in Merthyr as with rehearsal space, travelled outside of the town to recording studios in Cardiff and Monmouth for example, often attracted by the producer and the kudos of the studio itself:

We recorded in Monnow Valley studios in Monmouth [...] we went three separate times over about two weeks at a time for about six weeks (Ed Jones, 22, a drummer from Merthyr).

We got a guy down in Cardiff who's a terrific guy really good producer [...] especially keeping on top of all the ideas that are popping up and remembering where things are going [...] he's great [...] originally, we went with a mate of mine. We just did a couple of quick tracks [...] they didn't come out terribly but it [...] wasn't a professional recording (Richie, 23, vocalist and rhythm guitarist from Merthyr).

[We] fund ourselves, we got a bank account, we put everything into the account and save up [for] a recording in October we'd save money in the fund for that [...] We went to Leamington Spa to record with a guy called John Rivers who did The Specials stuff [...] we've used Sonic 1 in Carmarthen [...] we recorded there with Tim (Anthony Jenkins, 22, pianist and guitarist from Merthyr).

The comments above highlight the costs involved. The impression was that some of the respondents felt the recording quality would be compromised if not conducted in a dedicated studio with professional producers. Musicians in Cohen's (1991) study also wanted to produce good-quality recordings but, at the same time, were proud of the poor condition of their instruments and resources and the simplicity of their music, which reflected their attitudes to popular music-making. Most of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr produced music of a more commercial style overall and contrasted with the kinds of music made by participants in Aberdare and one of the most important aims of some of the respondents in Merthyr was to get their music played on particular radio stations and streaming playlists. Furthermore, there was a sense from respondents in Merthyr that following similar approaches of established musicians by recording in reputable studios, for example, increased their chances of industry institutions taking them seriously as credible artists.

In contrast to many of the Merthyr participants, most of the interview respondents in Aberdare preferred to record themselves:

We do all our recordings ourself, so it doesn't really cost us any money [...] it's so much easier, instead of going in a room with your band for three days and bit by bit we can slot in anytime [...], I'm always listening to the demo's [...] in the car on the way to work [...] thinking of ideas to add in and I can go off up Warren's house where the recording studio is, he has a spare room decked out for recording, with microphones, and soundproofing and you can add bits in whenever you like [...] I

prefer that than spending a lot of money, there's more freedom as a musician then. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

I've been offered studio time, but... I can spend as much time as I want... it can take six hours to record or it can be done over the course of a month [...] you've been listening to it for two weeks and you hear another little thing on top, oh right I want to chuck that on. You don't get that option when you're paying for studio time, you're condensed to twelve hours, and you're paying twenty-five quid an hour sometimes and you're thinking, right if I'm gonna arse about with this song anymore it's gonna cost me another fifty quid. Whereas everything costs me nothing. (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

The comments above illustrate how respondents in Aberdare felt that reappropriated resources for recording saved money and created a sense of greater control and freedom. However, Dave mentions expenses a number of times, suggesting that perhaps the cost involved is more of a determining factor for doing it himself.

Some participants in Aberdare described the hardware and software they used for recording and producing music ranging from Apple Mac computers to Tascam devices and Garage Band and Audacity to Logic Pro X:

Warren uses Logic [...] he uses Apple Mac and he's got two screens [...] I'm a little bit lo-fi myself, I either record on Audacity, which is a very simplistic version of, it's like an 8-track from the 80s (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter and promoter from Aberdare).

Yeah [it's] conscious because digital recordings strip the background noise off everything. So, you digitally record a guitar, or through an interface or your vocals and it's just compressed to an inch of its life. Whereas I always found that a Tascam which is DP004 slightly digital in you can bounce files out but the microphone on there, I've always found it to be absolutely stunning to record through. I always just use a Tascam with no external microphones just the inbuilt ones, that's how I record everything (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

There seems to be an attraction for respondents in Aberdare to create less commercially produced sounds, whereas Dave consciously avoids the clean sound of a digital recording. Cohen (1991) posits that in her study of musicians in Liverpool, they produced music that contrasted with commercial mainstream music, and it was their desire to produce something that they felt was natural and honest. However, musicians producing music that contrasts with commercial and mainstream music could have more to do with a desire to sound different from others. Furthermore, cost, convenience and proximity were factors as to why there is more activity in Aberdare reflected in the extent free labour and a do-it-yourself attitude is employed in Aberdare compared to Merthyr (the attitudes, values and motivations of participants from each town are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six).

Many participants in Merthyr travelled outside of the town to use dedicated spaces because of a lack of provision in Merthyr, while participants in Aberdare tended to adapt spaces within the town. Adapted spaces are what Watson, Hoyler and Mager (2009) describe as 'informal spaces' such as people's homes, for instance, that are adapted from their intended use to accommodate music-making. These adapted resources provide multiple functions for local musicians, for example, somewhere to hang out and a space for recording and rehearsing. Furthermore, these spaces often allow musicians the freedom to take their time and have more control over their schedule, with costs significantly lower compared to dedicated rehearsal rooms and studios. The reappropriated resources Aberdare respondents tend to

rely upon reflect a do-it-yourself approach to making music. The approaches and attitudes discussed above accord with Gordon and Gibson (2017), who, as I noted in Chapter Two, wrote of how small-scale settings engender do-it-yourself attitudes towards making music, where musicians feel a sense of ownership and control over their music. Furthermore, we can see how the resources and approaches taken can lead to producing complexly layered sounds that might lack the quality of a professional studio recording.

In summary, this section illustrates the differences between the resources and also the approaches concerning rehearsing and recording within each town. Cost, convenience, and proximity were factors that influenced Aberdare musicians towards using certain spaces like pubs, sheds and garages, and the combination and kinds of resources used facilitated do-it-yourself approaches. Musicians adopting do-it-yourself approaches are characterised as not drawing on industry-owned and controlled resources either because they do not have access or they choose not to because of their attitudes towards the mainstream music industry (Crossley, 2023).

Some of the findings discussed above accord with previous research. For example, Shank (1994) discusses how musicians in Austin adapted resources despite there being an abundance in the city and suggests there is more to this approach than simply addressing a lack of resources. Adapting, for example, The Shed in Aberdare and Lloyd's side room in Merthyr from their original uses are examples of spaces that have become meaningful places through human experiences and their activities. This suggests that these resources are important for respondents not only as musical resources but also as places to create memories. Furthermore, and importantly for my research, this also highlights the cultural, historical, and personal significance of these resources in small-scale settings for the people involved and popular music-making (Cresswell, 2004).

In contrast, musicians interviewed in Merthyr tend to go out of town attracted by particular studios and producers for the quality of the equipment and the reputation of the producers. The creative cultures of each town differed, whereas in Aberdare, there was a grassroots, do-it-yourself approach to rehearsing and recording music and a sense of pride in making music without industry intervention. In contrast, the Merthyr participants were more focused on professional approaches to making music, where they rehearsed and recorded, and with whom was almost a measure of quality and their own credibility as an artist.

4.2 Live Performance and Festivals

Pubs are crucial for local musicians (Finnegan, 1989), not just for rehearsal space as laid out above but also for providing a place to perform live, watch others perform, have a drink, socialise, and connect with others. This section discusses key live performance venues within each town, why they are important to local musicians, and how they function as resources.

One pub was identified as significant to live music performance in Merthyr, contrasting with the multiple pubs facilitating live music in Aberdare. Many venues tended to book covers and tribute acts, and with just the one pub in Merthyr providing live music, local musicians playing original music rarely played live in their own town. The second part of this section discusses the role of festivals as a resource, illuminating differences in the resource flows involved and how they function, highlighting distinctions between their size, their aims, and the roles of local musicians in their implementation, illustrating the differing extent of musicians providing free non-musical labour.

4.2.1 Pubs in Merthyr

There are over thirty pubs in Merthyr, and a few sporadically host live music. The only pub regularly providing music is The New Crown Inn (hereafter simply The Crown), a venue mentioned as an important resource by all participants from Merthyr, with most remarking on the frequency of live music provided by the pub.

The Crown was built in 1785 and is located at the southern end of Merthyr High Street. Initially, a small pub with an extension added to the rear of the property and a capacity of approximately eighty people. The Crown was taken over by Jacob Dent in 2011, who developed it from a traditional pub to a pub and restaurant providing live music six nights a week. A wide range of music is offered, and events are advertised and promoted on their website¹⁰ and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Jacob was mainly motivated to create a successful pub/restaurant, and the extension provides extra space for dining tables, increasing covers and takings. The renovations made to The Crown and the different things the pub provides (pub/restaurant and live music venue) seem to be more about getting as many people in the pub as possible and is reflected in the majority of the bands and artists that play The Crown (established artists, tribute acts and cover bands) and although Jacob is a big music fan his motivations appear more commercial than providing a space for live music.

The Crown functions in different ways for local musicians, providing somewhere to watch live music and occasionally play live, as well as socialising and networking with other musicians. The Crown provides a regular opportunity for musicians to perform live by hosting the only open mic night in Merthyr, Stone Cold Sober Jam Night, held on the first Tuesday of the month. It is popular with and attended mostly by local musicians. Stone Cold Sober provides important functions, for example, an opportunity for beginners and experienced musicians to play live, solo or in groups and hone performance skills:

¹⁰ <https://www.thenewcrownmerthyr.com>

It (Stone Cold) gives people a chance who perhaps can't afford a PA or amp [...] just come along and get up and do it. [...] people starting off I mean they're not always young kids. There's people in their 40s and 50s who've never played before (Aled Davey, 46, singer and guitarist from Merthyr).

I'll always go down there [...] do a couple of my own songs which is great and jam with some of the musicians as well (Logan Jones, 35, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

The comments given above illustrate how Stone Cold Sober provides multiple functions for musicians, from a space to play and access equipment to a platform for trying out new material. As mentioned, The Crown also provides a space for musicians to socialise and meet up with, '[m]usicians from different bands [...] all drinking in the same place, all sharing ideas, talking' (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist, Merthyr).

However, respondents in Merthyr also voiced some criticisms of The Crown's status as a pub/restaurant and the ways it affects the live performance conditions and experience for local musicians. Large chunks of the audience leave mid-set to go on to other places for a night out, and also other patrons are there to have a meal rather than watch live music:

The Crown [...] seems to be the biggest venue in town but to me it's an eating house, we played there and thirty or forty people who had a thoroughly good first half, they get up from the tables jump into a minibus and the place is empty because they were going on a hen do [...] So, to me I think he [Jacob Dent] needs to make his mind up is it a music venue or is it a eating house [...] seen Buck and Evans there a few months ago, they were superb but you couldn't see the band, I watched them on a

television screen because they're in a little corner, there's no elevated stage, it's not a venue (Geraint Morgan, 68, guitarist from Merthyr).

Some respondents in Merthyr also commented on The Crown's tendency to promote established artists, bands from out of the town and covers and tribute bands:

I would say 95% is covers. They're [The Crown] doing a lot of tribute acts bringing back a lot of bands from back in the day that are [...] still touring but not able to command that big theatre venue. (Rachel Clements, 60, singer from Merthyr).

The success of The Crown it's become a sort of South Wales hop on the tour for bands on tours. You do get some big names down there, but I don't think it does very much for local music, so that's not really a viable venue for local people. [...] there are a few pubs local that are dotted here and there but those sorts of gigs and those sorts of venues are sporadic there's no real sort of [...] night [...]: The Crown, stopped booking local artists, they just book artists from outside, bigger artists. (Grant Miller, 46, drummer, organiser of Merthyr Rising festival from Merthyr).

These comments illustrate a preference for The Crown to book acts that are more likely to attract larger audiences before local artists, especially those playing original material.

There was the impression that as much as local musicians loved The Crown for raising the profile of live music in the town, some felt frustrated that it provided few opportunities for local musicians. The implications are that many local musicians seldom perform live at The Crown, particularly artists and bands playing original music. The fact that The Crown is the only place in Merthyr that provides regular live music further suggests how rarely local musicians get to perform in Merthyr.



Figure 9: The New Crown Inn Merthyr Tydfil. (Authors' own photograph).



Figure 10: The Crown (Used with permission from Jacob Dent, owner of The Crown).

4.2.2 Pubs in Aberdare

There are over twenty-five pubs across Aberdare, with many providing jukeboxes for background music, serving food to attract customers, and some occasionally putting on live music. The typical bill at such venues comprises cover bands and solo artists (singer/guitarist or singer with backing tracks). There are three pubs in Aberdare that are most important to local musicians because they serve multiple functions encompassing live performance opportunities, socialising and networking, and providing rehearsal space.

Two of these pubs, The Shepherds Arms (The Sheps hereafter) and The Globe Inn, are located approximately five minutes walking distance from each other situated in Cwmaman, one of the small villages within Aberdare approximately two miles south of Aberdare town centre. Interviews revealed these to be important resources for local musicians to socialise (these pubs are some participants' locals) and to network with other musicians, and hence to forge friendships and form bands. John explains how chatting with a band member at a music quiz in The Sheps led to him being asked to join a local band:

I was doing name that tune up in the club¹¹ with my instruments [...] and Charlie used to come up there with his family [...] and he asked me one day by the bar do you fancy joining up with me, Neil and Steve (John Phillips, 52, multi-instrumentalist from Aberdare).

In addition to somewhere to meet up with other musicians both pubs also provide a space for live performance opportunities, such as hosting the annual music festival Cwmfest and fundraiser gigs, open mic nights and ad hoc gigs:

¹¹ John is referring to The Sheps.

Sort out a little gig up the mountain¹² or go to the Globe [...] occasionally sort little things out, have a jam (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

There's one [open mic night] in The Globe that's been running years [...] The Last Friday Club (Neil Galsworthy, 52, guitarist from Aberdare).

The Last Friday Club at The Globe has been running for at least thirteen years, and regulars of the night formed a committee in 2008 for Aberdare's first annual music festival, Cwmfest, which continues to be organised by musicians who are regular patrons of The Globe. The landlords themselves are avid music fans who are well-acquainted with musicians in the town. Furthermore, some musicians are long-standing patrons of these pubs and friends with the landlords, and the relationships involved are advantageous for both musicians and the pubs themselves connecting with one another, creating a good atmosphere, attracting customers, and live music performances usually combined with socialising and drinking. The importance the landlords at The Globe and The Sheps place on supporting popular music-making is illustrated both through the length of time they have been involved in facilitating musical activities, and in the steps taken to improve how they accommodate live music:

The Sheps is [a small space] but they've taken away one of the pillars now. I like it downstairs it's my local place as well and there's The Globe, Martin's [the landlord] tried everything round the pub where people can play and we've settled in a certain place now which is interesting 'cause that's an awkward shape for a pub (John Phillips, 52, multi-instrumentalist from Aberdare).

¹² The participant is referring to the mountainside in Cwmaman (a small village just outside Aberdare town centre) where he and his friends sometimes go to hang out in the warmer months which involves informal ad hoc jamming usually on acoustic guitars and having a drink.

The layout of some pubs can make it difficult to host live music events because pillars (The Sheps) and furniture (The Globe) restrict space. Rearranging the layout opens up the space, improving live performance conditions.

Dedicated music venues are important resources for musicians, much in the same sense as pubs, which provide a space to socialise, try out new music, and develop performance skills. Venues are more likely than pubs to have in-house equipment such as a sound desk, PA, backline, monitors, and a raised stage area. There was one dedicated music venue in Aberdare called Jacs. All participants from the town mentioned Jacs and how important it is to them and the local music scene.

Jacs is situated just off the main High Street in Aberdare town centre¹³ in what was a Working Men's Club for many years known locally as The Shot and Shell. The venue's capacity is two hundred and eighty people in the main performance room, there is a function room with a bar on the first floor and a small separate bar on the ground floor next to the main performance room. Jacs is Aberdare's only dedicated music venue, which provides live music performances (original music, tribute acts, and covers bands), family afternoons (usually local bands performing), album launches, fundraisers, and open mic nights. Not only do local bands have opportunities to support higher profile acts that play at the venue, but Jacs also provides employment (as bar staff, sound technicians and promoters) for some local musicians.

The owner, Phil Taylor, grew up and lives in Aberdare and is a huge music fan and friends with many local musicians. His strong connection to Aberdare and its local music scene are important reasons why Phil established Jacs there. Phil runs a successful local business and set up Jacs as a private limited company with himself and his wife as equal shareholders.

¹³ It is approximately eight miles between Aberdare and Merthyr town centres, taking about twenty minutes by car.

When setting up Jacs, Phil took the step of asking local musicians for advice and guidance about the layout of the venue and the equipment he should acquire:

The owner came up to us, a guy called Phil [...], he'd only owned the place two weeks if that. What would you want here as a rock band? [...] and we were like right then c'mon we want a ten-thousand-watt PA system, ah full thirty-two/twenty-four channel mixing desk, proper stage, riser for the drums etcetera one month later it was all here. [...] we had to rehearse two weeks later they were building the stage. (Andy Roberts, 30, bassist and singer from Aberdare).

We're very lucky at the moment to have Jac's music venue in Aberdare, I help out a lot with them for promotion [...] helping them running the nights, so in return I get to use the place for a practice area for the band [...] The good thing about Jac's is they help out a lot of local acts, [...] 'cause they want to support the local music scene [...] When I first went to Jac's, I met with Phil Taylor, he said 'look, I've taken on this venue [...] I want to see some great bands here, any of these you got send them my way, don't worry about costs. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

Such investment indicates that Jacs is not just a business but also something of a labour of love for its owners. There is also a strong sense from musicians of being a part of a project in which their opinions matter and suggests this encouraged cooperation with and bolstered support for the venue and is an example of the kinds of informal support helping to sustain local popular music-making (Finnegan, 1989). Local musicians were involved in decision-making, and their advice was acted on promptly, acquiring sound equipment and building a stage, for example, reinforcing feelings of control, responsibility, and investment in the venue's success.

Many participants in Aberdare mentioned the attraction of the equipment in Jacs particularly having an in-house PA and the ease of setting up and playing at the venue suggest these factors play a part in Jacs popularity within the local music scene:

Back in the day there used to be a lot of pubs doing bands [...] in the '90s it was quite a healthy scene around here [...] bring your own PA and set up and it was a good vibe for a while but Jacs has topped that in the fact that it's a dedicated music venue it's got its own PA, its own sound guy, never had that and I think it's great. (Neil Galsworthy, 52, guitarist from Aberdare).

Sometimes I'm kinda biased towards Jac's now because it's the only venue in Aberdare that has its own in-house PA system. They've got a sound guy as well. The problem when you play other venues in Aberdare you have to bring your own equipment like, PA system, guitar amps, drums but it's all at Jac's because that's dedicated towards music, they've got the tools needed then for people who can just turn up and play. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

It was also interesting to find that numerous musicians (mainly those playing original music) preferred to perform in dedicated venues rather than pubs. The main reasons were two-fold: first, dedicated venues typically offer in-house equipment such as a PA system and a sound technician and are important to musicians especially those who cannot afford or acquire a PA themselves and for musicians who do not have the knowledge or experience in using a PA and sound desks. Secondly, musicians felt that audiences at dedicated venues were more open to hearing original material:

Different places to play are hard to come by now. Like years ago, you could just go to a pub and say can I play for you for half an hour they'd give you fifty quid no problem.

But nowadays you find covers bands in pubs and we're looking for venues, so we'd rather be playing places like, Jacs is great in town, Sin City or Bunkhouse in Swansea, Full Moon, Clwb Ifor in Cardiff so more venue. (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitarist, bassist, and drummer from Aberdare).

There's the odd venue but it's not like it was where multiple pubs would always have bands on y'know just in this valley alone you had your pick, right from Hirwaun down to Abercynon¹⁴, there were loads of pubs you could play all of them. These days there's very few and the music scene has changed an awful lot. Depends on what music you play as well, if you're a covers band then you stand more of a chance of getting into a pub. If you're an originals band then you gotta be looking for the original gigs in certain places, more venue type places I suppose. (Jim Brenner, 48, guitarist, singer/songwriter, and guitar teacher from Aberdare).

The mention of the valley above is perhaps significant since none of the participants from Aberdare mentioned playing The Crown in Merthyr, and likewise, all but one Merthyr participant made no mention of playing Jacs. This may have something to do with the geography of the valleys, since a mountain separates Merthyr and Aberdare with no direct train links between the towns¹⁵, limited bus services (not to mention time-consuming), and taxis are expensive. The comments above also alert us to ruptures in local music-making where there has been a shift from many pubs and clubs accommodating live music performance to just a few.

A few participants from Aberdare were mildly critical of the amount of covers and tribute acts Jacs tended to promote:

¹⁴ This covers a distance of approximately 11 miles with Aberdare town centre roughly in the middle about 5 miles away from both Hirwaun to the north and Abercynon to the south.

¹⁵ Train lines from all valley's towns run from north to south connecting the valleys to Cardiff.

As good as Jacs is for bands and they are still pushing original nights it does seem to be predominantly the tribute act nights that are selling out, rather than the original band nights. (Gerry Dufraim, 49, drummer from Aberdare).

If you're a band I don't think it's any problem to get a gig but if you're an original band it might be a little more difficult [...] even Jacs on the doorstep they do original bands, but their money has to be coming in and obviously tribute bands are the ones that will bring in the money. (Alyn Perkins, 48, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Aberdare).

I think covers bands are an essential thing in these venues because for them to put on original acts they have to have the financial safety net of bands that can guarantee income so they have a big covers band like ourselves [...] these bands help to get the cash in then they can take a risk on something that's original. (Aaron Lewis, 51, keyboard player from Aberdare).

The comments show that while Aberdare participants had criticisms, they understood the importance of covers and tribute acts in sustaining the venue. They are popular with audiences and enable the venue to put on local bands and artists.



Figure 11: Jacs Aberdare. (Authors' own photograph).



Figure 12: Jacs Aberdare. (Used with permission from Clint Elwyn Thomas).

There was less discussion about the Aman Tavern in Aberdare, and local musicians tended not to drink and socialise there as much as The Sheps and The Globe. Nonetheless, it facilitated local music by providing live performance opportunities for local musicians. The

Aman Tavern is located roughly halfway between Cwmaman and Aberdare town centre¹⁶ and as well as being one of the venues hosting Cwmfest (and fundraisers for the festival) it also hosts an open mic night on the third Sunday of the month. The landlord of the pub is the stepson of a local musician, Neil Galsworthy, and Neil was asked to organise the open mic nights for the pub:

My stepson runs the pub and he's been asking for a while to do it I've never been a fan of open mic nights really [...] I always like sitting and playing with other people [...] So, the last couple we've introduced a bit of a jam night as well [...] getting a few people just jamming songs together [...] it's nice (Neil Galsworthy, 52, guitarist from Aberdare).

Neil's comments show his discomfort as a player with the open mic format, and he developed the event to include a jam element. Expanding the scope of the event this way provided a space for himself and other musicians who might not want to perform solo to play along with one another, developing performance and improvisational skills through jamming. This example illustrates how musicians can influence the function of certain resources to provide others and themselves opportunities for live group performances that otherwise might not be available to them. Furthermore, the comments in the above sections alert us towards a wider point that illustrates the extent of collaboration between musicians and venue owners throughout Aberdare and demonstrates the long-standing relationships between musicians and venue owners where the majority have known each other most of their lives.

This section found that pubs are a significant resource in providing live performance opportunities but to a much greater extent in Aberdare than in Merthyr. Furthermore, pubs

¹⁶ Approximately a mile outside Aberdare town centre.

provide multiple functions for local musicians, not only for live performance opportunities but also a space to socialise with other musicians not dissimilar to the rehearsal studios musicians in Cohen's (1991) study used for both rehearsing and socialising. A few pubs in Aberdare were musicians' locals, where they regularly socialised and shared ideas, underscoring the close-knit and longstanding connections involved.

Similar to section 4.1 above, 'Rehearsal and Recording Spaces and Material Resources', the proximity of these venues being a short walk for many musicians plays a role in the extent musicians spend time together in these pubs. The Crown's location on Merthyr's high street contrasted with the pubs in Aberdare, which were found in residential areas and within walking distance for many musicians. There was little discussion of the role of clubs¹⁷ and live performances opportunities at clubs in both towns was intermittent, limited to the occasional bank holiday, festivals, and sometimes after international rugby matches.

4.2.3 Cwmfest

This section, together with the next, describes and compares two annual music festivals held within each town in order to explore what resources and opportunities they provide local musicians.

Cwmfest¹⁸ is a free annual festival held over three days in September in the small village of Cwmaman, approximately two miles outside Aberdare town centre. Performances held in the most recent festival in 2019 were across four pubs and one club¹⁹, places that musicians rely upon throughout the year for open mic nights, rehearsal space and occasional gigs, including fundraisers for the festival.

¹⁷ Clubs here refer to Working Men's Clubs, Constitutional, Conservative and Labour Clubs for example.

¹⁸ <https://cwmamanmusicfestival.co.uk>

¹⁹ The Aman Tavern, The Globe Public House, The Shepherds Arms, Cwmaman Workmen's, and Social Club (Glynhafod Club) and The Falcon Inn.

One of the festival's main aims is to sustain both the pubs and local musicians by providing performance and promotion opportunities (during the festival and fundraisers throughout the year) and raising the profile of local musicians and the local music scene more broadly. Slogans for the festival, 'Keep the Village Alive' and 'Music in the Village', suggest a strong focus on local musicians and the local resources they rely on, something also reflected through the lineup each year. With the exception of a small handful of established artists (nationally and internationally known), for example, Alabama 3 in 2008, Mike Peters, and Mabon in 2010, all performances are by local bands and artists, with some from neighbouring valleys. Cwmfest is a good example of a non-profit organisation maintained by a committee made up of local musicians, which highlights the free non-musical labour involved and is best described as a 'grass-roots-driven' event (Fisker et al., 2021, p.252) meaning that these kinds of events,

'(a) represent a collective action at the local level, (b) use ordinary people from the community as the basis for their functioning, (c) are associated with bottom-up, rather than top-down decision making, and (d) are considered to belong more organically to the locality than larger scale professional events and festivals' (Fisker et al., 2021, p.252).



Figure 13: Cwmaman Music Festival Poster 2019²⁰

John Phillips is a local musician and a former member of the festival committee made up of local musicians Dave Holt, Rob Jenkins, Huw Chidgey, and a few other regulars of The Globe and talks about the financial responsibilities and administration involved:

To get funding from places you have to [...] be more legalised and there were more things pushing us like we needed insurances as well and things like that, so it grew that way. [...] all voluntary, no one gets a penny from it [...] one person said which I thought was a good idea, don't create a monster, don't create a huge thing. (John Phillips, 52, multi-instrumentalist from Aberdare).

John's comments also emphasise the committee's intentions not to expand the festival and explains that one of the main motivations behind the festival is to support local pubs:

The whole thing was set up to benefit the pubs in the first place [...] It was to have a festival for the village which would also benefit the pubs because we thought about

²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/CwmamanMusicFestival/photos/1160643357456199> Appendix C provides a breakdown of the artists and bands from the poster above.

having marquee's around the place but that involves a hell of a lot more organisation and money, you're taking money away from the pubs as well then. (John Phillips, 52, multi-instrumentalist from Aberdare).

John's comments above highlight the importance of the local pubs involved in the festival, and throughout the year, they provide rehearsal space and live performance opportunities for local musicians. The Cwmfest committee receives some sponsorship from local businesses such as Solar Windows Limited, Grey Trees Brewery and Globe Coaches and some funding from Pen Y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund. The funding goes towards paying the artists and bands playing the festival, the pubs do not get paid but make a significant profit from bar takings and all committee members are volunteers illustrating the importance of the free labour of those involved as a resource:

They [members of the committee] all got full time jobs and they do it for the love of it, they just want the festival to continue [the pubs] make their money on the booze and the bands are paid out of this central fund [...] They [the committee] book all the acts they get grants, money [...] from the company that put the wind farms up they gave them money as well so they can book bands and pay them. (Andy Davies, 74, singer/songwriter, guitarist from Aberdare).

We can see a circular support system embedded in Cwmfest where the festival provides an economic boost benefitting the pubs that many local musicians rely on throughout the year. There is also a sense of ownership for the musicians involved (similar to the discussion on Jacs in 4.2.2 above), where they feel a responsibility to make the festival a success and the organisation and decision-making is down to the musicians themselves and further highlights the informal support behind musical activities in small-scale settings (Finnegan,

1989). Andy explains how he got together with members from another band while enjoying their performance at the festival:

I got up and jammed with them [the band] on percussion²¹, ended up liking it, they came around [Andy's house] and did a little bit of recording, ended up fleshing it out then a bit more (Andy Roberts, 30, bassist and singer from Aberdare).

They were playing in Cwmfest one year and I said to the committee I wanna link with them, I wanna go on before them, get to know them more [...] have a chat with them [...] they were impressed with what I played so we swapped phone numbers and a year later they asked would I join in with them (John Phillips, 52, multi-instrumentalist from Aberdare).

The comments illustrate Cwmfest's flexibility with impromptu jamming and how the festival is a place for musicians to connect.

The key points to emerge are that Cwmfest provides local musicians with live performance and promotion opportunities and also a space to socialise with other musicians forming connections. The aim of the festival is to sustain both local popular music-making and the pubs local musicians rely upon throughout the year, revealing a circular exchange of resource flows. Furthermore, a sense of ownership emerged similar to accounts given about Jacs revealing not only the musical labour but also the free non-musical labour and support of local musicians helping to facilitate the festival and accords with Finnegan's (1989) findings where informal support was crucial, in particular for rock and pop musicians where they are dependent on themselves and their friends for organising and financing their

²¹ During their live performance at Cwmfest

popular music-making activities and suggests that the size of the setting makes little difference to the need for support.

4.2.4 Merthyr Rising

Merthyr Rising²² originally started as a small one-day event of music, politics, and film, which developed into a three-day festival, and in 2016 became a non-profit limited community interest company (CIC)²³. However, the company is in partnership with Merthyr Council making it also a public association. This partnership involves the acquisition and allocation of funding.

The festival's mission statement reads, 'Our mission is to celebrate working-class culture and encourage resistance to inequality through music, arts, culture, talks and debates whilst promoting Merthyr's heritage and history both on a local and international level' (merthyrising.uk). Merthyr is a staunch Labour Party constituency with a history of radicalism where the working class protested against low wages and working conditions in 1816 and then again in 1831 concerning ironworkers and more recently in 1984 with the coal miners. Merthyr Rising festival has been running since 2013, maintaining a political theme commemorating the 1831 uprising and using the town's history of working-class struggles as a unifying symbol:

We want to link up with [...] partners and international, we want to get speakers, attendees from around the world to share this story of the red flag which is, [...] one of the most powerful symbols on the face of the Earth. (Lee Williams, 48, Director of Merthyr Rising festival and bar owner from Merthyr).

²² <http://www.merthyrising.uk/about.html>

²³ A Community interest Company is a limited company where profits are intended to benefit the community rather than private shareholders. See Gov.UK/setting up a social enterprise.

Lee Williams, the director of the festival, explained that their aims are to gain international recognition as a festival and reflects this in the number of nationally and internationally known musicians, bands, actors, politicians, and comedians included in each year's line-up. Merthyr Rising is on a much larger scale than Cwmfest and is not strictly just music; there are also political debates and talks, although foregrounding the live music aspect of the festival. The festival's location is in Penderyn Square, the main square in the town named after Dic Penderyn, one of the main protestors during the 1831 uprising.²⁴ Lee Williams director of the festival explains how his marketing background got him involved in the festival:

[A] gentleman called Ian Jenkins set up a small one day event [...] called Merthyr Rising [...] which was a [...] mixed sort of event of music, politics and film at the time. [...] I did see posters around at the time but [...] I was deep into doing the marketing for the initiative²⁵ in town. After that event [the initiative] I was asked to [...] come and have a look [...] based on my experiences. (Lee Williams, 48, Director of Merthyr Rising festival and bar owner from Merthyr).

²⁴ This refers to the Iron workers uprising in 1831 against the Government in Westminster and the Court of Requests (debt collectors), where workers demonstrated across the valleys demanding reform the cuts in wages and jobs, and the inequality between the rights of the working class and the privileged classes (see Jenkins, 1991).

²⁵ Lee is talking about an initiative he was working on prior to his involvement in the festival called 'We Love Merthyr' creating a brand for the town and helping local businesses through marketing strategies and promotional events.



Figure 14: Merthyr Rising Festival Poster 2019²⁶

Respondents tended not to mention the political aspects of the festival and rather looked forward to performing and promoting their music, suggesting their motivations to play at the festival are more to do with the opportunity of playing live, particularly for a larger crowd, compared to the more common gigs in pubs and small venues. The comments below suggest the festival is one of the rare occasions they get to perform live in the town:

I haven't played in Merthyr since, oh God, Merthyr Rising (Anthony Jenkins, 22, pianist and guitarist from Merthyr).

²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/merthyrising/photos/2168935416523508> Appendix C provides a breakdown of the artists and bands from the poster above.

Merthyr Rising [...] 'cause it's local it is quite special, I do enjoy it, obviously it's rare to play a gig in Merthyr [...] I mostly find that I'm gigging out of Merthyr, in Cardiff, Newport and places like that (Bethan Shearer, 22, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

The implications are that local musicians rarely play live in Merthyr, playing places further down the valleys and in the capital Cardiff. Merthyr Rising is one of the main opportunities for performing live in the town. However, there are fears of downscaling the festival or stopping it altogether, reducing live performance opportunities in the town even further. Interviewees explained the tensions between the local council and Merthyr Rising CIC concerning the allocation of funding, where they felt the council insisted on paying for items that were more focused on advertising, overshadowing the cultural and historical aesthetic for marketing purposes. Further tensions were felt with the council's proposal to downscale the festival by moving it out of the town to a nearby field, taking it away from its intended site and its historical significance of the 1831 uprising. Lee suggested that changes to personnel in the council have increased tensions because some of the people making the decisions are not local and do not understand the importance of the historical and cultural significance of the festival for the town.

Aside from the obvious differences between the festivals, such as the size and scale of operations²⁷, their aims, how they function and in what ways they are resources for local musicians contrast. The aims differed from Cwmfest's keeping it small, celebrating local music and benefitting the local pubs to Merthyr Rising illuminating the town's cultural, political and historical aspects and a desire to gain international recognition.

²⁷ Both festivals provide around fifty to sixty music performances overall, however, the scale of Merthyr Rising is bigger also including debate panels, talks, poetry, film, and art exhibitions. Audience numbers for Cwmfest are difficult to measure because there are no ticket sales and on average 2,500 tickets are sold for Merthyr Rising.

Musicians in Aberdare organise all aspects of Cwmfest in coordination with the venues involved, considering both the musicians' and the pubs' interests and concerns in the organisation and implementation of the festival. Alternatively, while a few musicians volunteer to help in Merthyr, the festival's decision-making is up to the Council along with Merthyr Rising CIC. How the Council and Merthyr Rising spent the funds for the festival created tensions, and the latter felt that the council was overlooking the cultural and historical significance of the event. There is an emphasis on politics in Merthyr Rising, illustrated by the location and artwork for the festival, sponsorship from trade unions such as Unison, and a focus on socialist and working-class struggles alongside music, film, art, and poetry. Cwmfest, on the other hand, is all about local music and boosting business for the pubs musicians rely on throughout the year, and the focus is very much on local music rather than country-wide politics in the case of Merthyr.

To summarise, while both festivals provide performance and promotion opportunities for bands and artists and raise the profile of local popular musicians and the local scene more broadly (although Merthyr Rising's future is in doubt) there were differences between what they provided local musicians. Merthyr Rising was more outward-looking than Cwmfest and provided a bigger stage for those local musicians who were involved. Cwmfest provided opportunities for new bands to form and bolstered connections between local musicians themselves and local landlords. Furthermore, the emphasis on do-it-yourself approaches in Aberdare showed a significant difference in the extent of the use of free non-musical labour of musicians compared to Merthyr. Festivals can also generate connections between musicians illustrated in Aberdare, where musicians formed bands and took charge of organising, promoting, and fundraising for the festival. The festivals' size, scale and aims contrasted and the resource flows differed where Aberdare showed a circular exchange of resources between local musicians and the pubs involved in the festival.

Overall, the first part of this chapter shows that despite many similarities, the towns have clear differences. How musicians go about recording and rehearsing showed differences in the approaches taken where there seems to be more of a concern in Aberdare about the cost and convenience of resources and is reflected in the extent local music-making relies on adapted resources, informal support and free non-musical labour compared to Merthyr respondents drawing on dedicated studios and industry professionals. Adapting resources was more than just a response to a lack of resources; it produced meaning for musicians and a place to create memories.

Pubs provided multiple functions for musicians in both towns, from socialising and somewhere to play live with The Crown in Merthyr and a number of pubs and Jacs music venue in Aberdare. However, the resources in Aberdare helped to sustain local music-making to much more of an extent than in Merthyr, such as rehearsal space and live performance opportunities, including Cwmfest. Musicians in Merthyr and Merthyr Rising were more outward-looking, and their motivations aimed more towards commercial success. Participants in Aberdare spoke about 'doing it themselves' and how that attitude influences the kind of music produced and the processes involved in creating music and organising events and festivals, providing a sense of ownership over their music. Aberdare musicians have a history of employing do-it-yourself approaches influenced by punk and hip hop, and how music has emerged out of deprived areas resonated with many local musicians in the town (see Cleaton, 2019).

4.3 Skills and Knowledge

This section looks at the skills and knowledge participants discussed as important to their music-making and the various ways of acquisition. Divided into two parts, 'Playing and Performance' and 'Organising Events and Activities', reflect the importance musicians placed on different skills and knowledge.

Key points to emerge from the data show that musicians interviewed from both towns tended to learn new skills and knowledge rooted in relationships, contrasting with Lucy Green's (2001) findings that popular musicians tend to learn in 'haphazard and random' ways (Green, 2001, p.207). Many participants in both towns learned from friends, family, and peers, and live performances for some musicians were training grounds of sorts.

4.3.1 Playing and Performance

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most participants foregrounded playing and performance skills when discussing their music-making. In Merthyr, the majority of participants were self-taught and shown different skills informally by friends and family:

I've always loved music and it didn't become a thing until I was about twelve and when my aunty bought me a guitar [...] she offered to give me guitar lessons, that was the highlight of my week. [...] I developed a sound [...] she taught me the basics.
(Bethan Shearer, 22, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Bethan's comment above emphasises the importance of connections with family members with the skills and knowledge to help her develop.

Aled's comment below explains how also acquaintances such as the local guy who drove the video library rental van in his village helped him how to work out songs by ear:

There was this fella who used to come round mobile video vans in those days sort of mid-eighties and he saw me with a guitar [...] he said how do you work out new songs? So, he showed me a way of putting the record on and [...] with the bottom string till it sounded the same [...] the band was playing Iron Maiden and as soon as

he showed me that I was able to teach myself. (Aled Davey, 46, singer and guitarist from Merthyr).

Aberdare participants gave similar accounts to those in Merthyr concerning learning themselves, from friends and also learning through doing:

I learnt TAB and I learnt how to play this is a chord and where you put your fingers and my mate showed me then. (Alyn Perkins, 48, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Aberdare).

Stage craft [...] it's not something you can learn, y'know you gotta go out there and experience it. [...] every song we're kinda learning is teaching us something else and picking up a different skill. [...] it's experience you can't buy, you can't learn that you go out and do it. (James Morgan, 52, guitarist and singer from Aberdare).

In addition to the knowledge and skills to record ideas, arranging skills are also required to produce a song from the different ideas recorded. Furthermore, there is a sense of trust in being able to express themselves, strengthened through improvising and creating music in a space amongst friends. Live performances can also be seen as serving as training grounds (see Behr, 2012), learning through doing by providing opportunities to practice playing, manage performance anxiety and hone other skills such as memorising, listening to others and interpreting the music they are playing.

One of the main ways popular musicians acquired and developed performance and compositional skills was through listening and copying recordings, also shown in Green (2001) and supported by Bennett (1980), Finnegan (1989), and Cohen (1991). Jim Brenner from Aberdare mentioned the importance of copying recordings:

I always try and learn new tunes by people like Richard Thompson, Steve Howe and all of these things you'll find ideas in everything you learn won't you, so I find that an important part of song writing is learning new tunes, so you get inspired by the new things that are under your fingers. (Jim Brenner, 48, guitarist, singer/songwriter, and guitar teacher from Aberdare).

Most participants in both towns did not mention copying recordings when responding to questions about their learning approaches, and it could be, as highlighted by Green (2001), that many of the musicians interviewed did not consider this practice as part of their learning process and not worth discussing. However, Green (2001) posits that a less conscious approach to learning 'has more to do with enculturation into and enjoyment of music than with any disciplined or systematic learning practice' (Green, 2001, p.67). Furthermore, schools and colleges did not emerge as important to the interview participants' music-making, and little was said about these kinds of resources for gaining skills and knowledge.

Recording and producing skills were demonstrated in Aberdare and knowledge was gained from multiple sources through observing friends, watching YouTube videos and learning through experience:

I learnt a lot from him [Ceri]²⁸ but no-one actually taught me as such just a lot of YouTube and stuff that [...] I'd just picked up anyway [...] I've been doing a lot of it now and listened to a lot of music and I can see and hear things a little bit different to what I used to and I think sometimes you can do something to make that a little more interesting. (Warren Baker, 46, guitarist and producer from Aberdare).

²⁸ His friend is Ceri Chandler who is a musician and a producer who moved to Brighton around 2010.

Warren's comment highlights how producing music has developed his listening skills and influenced his creativity when writing and recording music.

4.3.2 Organising Events and Activities

Typically, popular musicians have to organise rehearsals, gigs, and recording sessions, and active musicians regularly demonstrate a number of skills and areas of knowledge. Open mic nights are often organised by musicians demonstrating multiple skills, from sourcing a venue, acquiring and using equipment (PA, for example) to playing themselves and promoting the event. Some respondents in Aberdare took on additional roles as local promoters organising live gigs and promotion on social media sites, and the owner of Jacs asked two local musicians Mike Thomas and Christian Lewis to put on events for the venue:

We used to put a lot of shows on locally around Aberdare but when we went to Jac's then we managed to get more interest [...] 'cause it was a really good venue on our doorstep [...] I've been helping put on original shows in Jac's every Friday and Sunday, so I get personally involved then by booking bands that I think will be suitable for the night and any tickets they sell keep all the money for them, help them promote their own shows (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter and promoter from Aberdare).

Pub landlords and owners require a degree of trust when tapping into the knowledge of local musicians so that they have a good understanding of bands and artists, both local and more established, when booking and scheduling acts. For instance, you would not want a heavy rock band supporting a Celine Dion tribute act. Impartiality is a skill Mike refers to when talking about booking friends' bands:

Promoters have their favourites [...] it's their friends they book I'm guilty myself booking my friends bands but I try to give everyone an honest go, because I think that it's important to nurture everybody [...] no matter skill or the sound of music try and find somewhere for them (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, bassist, songwriter and promoter from Aberdare).

There is some extent of exclusivity concerning promoters booking friends, and a sense of loyalty plays a role in why this is the case. However, promoters get to know who is dependable, who they can trust, and who will attract audiences. Most of Mike's friends are local musicians, but the gigs he promotes do not exclusively involve local musicians.

This section shows the ways respondents acquired skills and knowledge in both towns, mainly from friends and family. The approaches adopted towards learning, such as copying recordings, were almost subconscious and suggested acquiring skills and knowledge had more to do with the enculturation of local values and norms to do with making music. Compared to Merthyr, Aberdare has a greater combination of musicians organising events and activities and taking on additional roles²⁹ where friendship and trust were crucial factors.

4.4 Adapted Resources and Dedicated Spaces

This chapter discussed the different kinds of resources musicians used in each town to sustain their music-making and answers the first of the main research questions this study asks: What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music in semi-rural settings? While there were some similarities in the kinds of resources used, there was much more of a range of resources and extent facilitating music making in Aberdare than in

²⁹ Additional roles were found to be a trait of small-town music-making (see Thoroddson, 2019) because there are less people to cover the jobs that need doing.

Merthyr, which is surprising given that Aberdare is half the size in population and geographical footprint compared to Merthyr.

A lack of resources identified for music making in both towns revealed that responses to this paucity contrasted between the respondents in Aberdare and Merthyr, and there are a number of reasons why this is the case. Friendships, convenience, close proximity and trust played important roles in accessing and using different kinds of resources in Aberdare, from people's homes, sheds, garages and pubs, and cost was an issue for musicians in the town encouraging do-it-yourself approaches to making music. There was also a sense that respondents in Aberdare felt they had more creative freedom by doing things themselves. Aberdare had more musicians adopting additional roles such as producers and promoters, which is common in independent music scenes and accords with the do-it-yourself attitudes of musicians in the town.

Many of the resources in Aberdare provided multiple functions for local musicians from somewhere to rehearse, record, perform live and socialise. This suggests that in some semi-rural settings where there is a paucity of resources, musicians make as much as they can out of what is available to them to make up for any lack of resources. Jacs provided employment for some musicians, and the owner of Jacs consulted with local musicians for advice and guidance when setting up the venue, all of which gave respondents a sense of belonging and responsibility in the venue's success, spurring activity and involvement. The collaboration between local musicians and venue/pub owners from live performances, open mic nights and Cwmfest, for example, emphasises the circular exchange of resources and support, much of which involves the free non-musical labour of local musicians, which helps to sustain musical activities in the town across the year. The interviews suggest close relationships between musicians, landlords, and venue owners in Aberdare, and maybe these relationships are not the same or to the same extent in Merthyr. This could partly explain why there are fewer places where musical activity takes place compared to

Aberdare, and an important implication is that musicians from Merthyr rarely play live in the town.

Despite there being a dedicated rehearsal space in Merthyr, NuStudioz, the studio was criticised by respondents in Merthyr for poor equipment and unreliable staff. Most of the participants in the town did not use the studio and rather tended to use rehearsal and recording spaces outside of the town attracted by the reputations of producers, for instance, and the costs involved did not seem to be an issue for them as it was for those interviewed in Aberdare. There was a strong sense from respondents in Merthyr that status and a sense of professionalism were significant and were a measure of who to work with, which could explain why musicians tend to use the kinds of resources they do. Most of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr emphasised a desire for industry recognition and commercial success with their music, which could be a factor in why they choose the approaches they do in contrast to the do-it-yourself approaches adopted in Aberdare.

The annual music festivals in both towns illuminate the different outlooks that play a role in how local music-making is facilitated and sustained. Cwmfest focuses on local musicians and music-making and the resources they rely upon throughout the year. Merthyr Rising, in contrast, is more outward-looking, seeking international recognition, booking national and international artists and speakers and providing performance opportunities for some local musicians. Unlike Cwmfest, Merthyr Rising shares its focus between music, politics and local history and culture, and the point of the festival is not necessarily to sustain local music-making and is rather a celebration of working-class culture and Merthyr's heritage. The relationships involved in organising Cwmfest are significant, encouraging a greater extent of free non-musical labour than was evident in the organisation and implementation of Merthyr Rising. Respondents tended to gain skills and knowledge through their relationships with friends and family, and this was consistent in both towns.

This chapter extends popular music scholarship by highlighting how musicians in semi-rural settings like Aberdare adopt a do-it-yourself ethos, making extensive use of multifunctional spaces such as homes, sheds, garages, and pubs. This aligns with but also expands on the work of Finnegan (1989) and Cohen (1991), who documented similar resourcefulness in urban settings. The detailed analysis of how these spaces are used for multiple functions provide new insights into the adaptability of musicians in semi-rural areas. This chapter also extends Bell and Jayne's (2010) and Spring's (2013) discussions on the significance of social networks in rural creative economies. It provides empirical evidence showing that close-knit relationships, proximity, and trust play critical roles in accessing resources in semi-rural settings, thus offering a nuanced understanding of how social capital operates in these areas compared to urban settings. The emphasis on economic constraints fostering creative freedom and do-it-yourself approaches among Aberdare respondents adds depth to existing literature. It illustrates how financial limitations can lead to innovative practices, supporting and extending the arguments made by scholars like Gibson (2002) regarding the impact of economic conditions on rural music-making.

The finding that Aberdare, despite its smaller size, has a greater range of resources and facilitates more popular music-making than Merthyr diverges from the common assumption that larger towns or cities necessarily have more resources for creative activities. This challenges existing literature that often equates urban settings with better infrastructure and resource availability for music-making (Straw and Janotti, 2012). The contrasting roles of Cwmfest and Merthyr Rising highlight different approaches to local festivals in semi-rural versus urban settings. This divergence from more traditional views of festivals in urban studies (Fisker et al., 2021) demonstrates how semi-rural festivals can emphasise local community and resources, whereas urban festivals often seek broader recognition and incorporate more diverse elements such as politics and history.

This chapter agrees with Finnegan's (1989) findings on the importance of informal support systems in sustaining local music scenes. The collaboration between musicians and venue/pub owners in Aberdare, and the reliance on informal networks, reinforces the idea that such support is crucial in small-scale settings. The study's observations on do-it-yourself approaches in Aberdare resonate with the work of Crossley (2023), who discusses the social dynamics of DIY music scenes. It confirms that such approaches are not confined to urban environments but are also prevalent and perhaps even more necessary in semi-rural settings. The consistency in how musicians in both towns gain skills and knowledge through relationships with friends and family aligns with Green's (2001) findings on informal learning practices among popular musicians. This agreement underscores the universal nature of these learning processes across different geographical contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Networks

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to address the main research questions of this study, looking at how music-making is facilitated and sustained in semi-rural settings. This chapter focuses on the second main research question asking what kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music making in semi-rural settings, looking at who participates in making popular music in Aberdare and Merthyr and why they adopt the approaches they do looking at the extent to which networks facilitate popular music-making. This includes looking at how the relationships between actors influence musical activity and the implications of different combinations of network connections on popular music-making within each town. Scholarship looking at popular music-making tends to derive from studies of city music-making and often focuses on venues, policies, funding, education, and the marketplace, overlooking the human actors involved. This chapter focuses on the people involved in popular music, comparing the popular music networks between Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil. By contrasting these findings with scholarship on urban popular music-making, the intent is to highlight the unique dynamics in semi-rural settings, offering a deeper understanding of how different contexts shape popular music-making practices.

Relationships and interactions are important to popular music-making (Crossley et al., 2015), and a network perspective is helpful for understanding the extent of participation by actors and in what ways the relationships between them create opportunities and shape

their musical activity. Focusing on resources alone is not sufficient to understand how music-making happens. By looking at how actors and resources connect to one another, it is possible to better understand how networks help make music-making possible, and this research contributes to scholarship looking at popular music-making and the network dynamics in semi-rural settings.

This chapter is divided into three sections, 'Small Town Popular Music Networks' 'Network Ties' and 'Network Mechanisms' and are divided this way to provide an account of the connections involved, explain the qualities and combinations of the links between actors and what can be revealed more broadly about popular music networks in small town settings.

The first section gives an overview of the networks within each town, looking at their general characteristics in terms of the relationships involved, the extent to which respondents knew each other and the impact that connections made on their popular music-making.

The second section focuses on the qualities of the relationships made between respondents and describes the kinds of connections involved in employing the concept of network ties (see Katz et al., 2004), such as family, friendship, formal and work ties for example. Drilling down into the nature of the relationships involved not only shows there is a connection between actors but also illuminates the dynamics of relationships and the extent they facilitate popular music making.

The third section examines the shared history between actors and how connections are formed. It is important to understand the contexts of the relationships involved to understand how actors became connected, not only through music, such as live music events and band membership, but also through school, work, family, and socialising.

The design of semi-structured interviews helps ask descriptive, probing, and open-ended questions to understand the network connections involved. I asked interview respondents to

describe how they met other actors, how they got into making popular music, and to describe the relationships that are important to their music-making. Network concepts (see chapter two) help explain the connections made between network actors, and in this chapter, I draw on the concept of network mechanisms and ties to help identify and elucidate patterns of organisation and facilitation within each town's popular music network. Illustrated by interview examples, this chapter shows how network mechanisms generate network ties. Thematic analysis revealed the most salient network mechanisms and ties within each town, showing how actors became involved with one another, in what ways actors formed connections with others, the extent to which relationships were long-standing and the incentives that brought actors together.

Analysing network ties helps to characterise each town's popular music network and understand the connections involved. Network ties help explain the different ways and to what extent connections between network actors facilitate and sustain popular music-making, illuminating the interdependencies between actors through friendship, trust, support, and shared responsibilities. I will also look at actors organising events and how they use networks to gain access to particular resources and support (crucial to musicians and without which music-making would not be possible) through their connections with others.

5.1 Small Town Popular Music Networks

This section describes the main characteristics of the networks and relationships involved in popular music making in Aberdare and Merthyr, and I divided it into two parts to compare each town. The aim is to provide an overview of the general patterns of connections involved within each town's popular music network to understand in what ways networks sustain popular music-making for respondents within each town, which addresses the main research questions this study asks.

5.1.1 A Synopsis of Aberdare's Popular Music Network

The popular music network in Aberdare is crucial for most of the music-making in the town. Chapter Four illustrated how network actors relied heavily on friends and family for resources, support, and inspiration. Aberdare's popular music network can be characterised as established and cohesive, with long-standing and close-knit relationships. It facilitates a do-it-yourself approach to making music, drawing on friends and family and resources within the town.

Prior (2015) described close-knit musical networks as having "village-like" properties where everybody knows each other, borrows equipment from one another and supports each other' (Prior, 2015, p.90) and most of the respondents interviewed from Aberdare knew each other suggesting the interconnectedness between them. Respondents were aware of their environment in terms of living outside cities and large towns where there are more resources and actors that can enable music making. As a way around this, some respondents took on multiple roles, such as producing and promoting music to make up for the small pool of actors involved in popular music-making in the town.

There was also a sense of other musicians and younger generations feeling inspired and influenced by musicians in the town. The appreciation actors have for one another and the importance of maintaining local popular music-making points towards a sense of a local creative community in Aberdare. There was also a keen sense of a do-it-yourself attitude in Aberdare, and Chapter Four showed there was an element of pride in being able to do it themselves, a perception of greater freedom to do what they want with the music, and cost was a factor and actors in Aberdare often commented in Chapter Four about the importance of keeping costs low. Furthermore, musicians' punk roots³⁰ could also be an influencing

³⁰ Aberdare had a vibrant punk scene in the 1970s and 1980s and the town is an important location in punk history where the punk band Crass played their last gig in 1984 at the Aberdare Coliseum (see Kill Your Pet Puppy, 2012).

factor to do things themselves, and Aberdare has a long history with punk music and the ideology of hip hop, where music-making emerged out of deprived areas also influenced musicians (see Cleaton, 2019).

5.1.2 A Synopsis of Merthyr Tydfil's Popular Music Network

The partial sample of the popular music network looked at in Merthyr is not easy to explain. A small group of musicians were close friends, but the network also included acquaintances not closely tied with others, suggesting a more loosely knit network than in Aberdare. Some of the network connections in Merthyr did facilitate local popular music-making to some degree, where, for example, rehearsal space was available to a small, close-knit group of actors. Approximately seven actors made up the small group who are all long-standing friends and play together in a handful of bands. Some of these respondents were in school together and have known one another for many years, and having fun and trusting each other were important factors in maintaining their close-knit connections.

Alongside the small group discussed above, the interview data revealed a fairly loosely knit network in Merthyr overall. The town is situated in a larger valley than Aberdare, where people are more spread out. Some respondents in Merthyr were friends to varying extents, ranging from close friendships to acquaintances and more formal connections with managers and producers, for instance, which did not feature in the Aberdare sample because most of the connections made were between friends and family.

Merthyr contrasts with the 'village-like' character of Aberdare and describing Merthyr as more 'town-like' seems appropriate for this study where many of the connections between actors were not close and there was not so much of a sense of 'everyone seems to know

each other' in Merthyr as there was in Aberdare. There was, however, a sense of formality amongst many Merthyr respondents who tended to seek professional support to record and promote themselves, revealing transactional kinds of network connections involved and a more commercially orientated approach to making music compared to Aberdare.

5.2 Network Ties

This section discusses the qualities of the connections between actors within each town's popular music network. I draw on the concept of network ties (see Katz et al., 2004) to help describe the components that make up the connections and explain the kinds of relationships involved and the qualities therein. For example, ties of friendship and family, and affective ties where actors like and trust one another and want to spend time together. Formal ties include who reports to whom concerning managers, producers, and other professionals, and material and workflow ties include who gives money, resources, skills, and knowledge to whom. Examining the nature of the network ties involved helps us understand not only that there is a connection between actors but also how and to what extent the connections function in facilitating popular music-making.

This section is divided into two parts, focusing on each town separately. It is presented in this way to reflect the differences in terms of the network ties involved within each town's popular music network and compare them. Network ties contribute to our understanding of popular music networks by drilling down into the relationships involved to provide a sense of what the connections mean to respondents and the benefits for them and their music-making.

5.2.1 Network Ties in Aberdare

Theorising network ties this way reveals the dynamics of the relationships involved and in what ways the connections between actors sustain their popular music-making and allows comparison of the similarities and differences of ties within each town's popular music network. Respondents in Aberdare tended to draw on their friends for access to rehearsal space and a means to record and produce their music. Some respondents from Aberdare talked of their friendship with landlords (The Sheps and The Globe) providing access to rehearsal space and a place to play live where some musicians are long-time regular patrons of these pubs engendering friendships with both landlords and other regulars.

Affective³¹, material and workflow³² and family ties

Many of the respondents in Aberdare mentioned The Shed and to gain access to rehearse there musicians were either friends with the owner Stephen, his nephew Nathan (who is in a local band) or were in a band with someone who is friends with them. Quite often, Stephen and occasionally some of his friends sat in on rehearsals and hung out with the bands during breaks. There is no set fee to use the space, and Stephen seldom asks for money to cover his gas and electric costs, suggesting ties of kindness and support along with affective, material, and workflow ties. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, local musicians think fondly of Stephen:

There is a fella called Stephen Shed as he's affectionately known he's a lovely fella. [...] He got a converted trailer it's a [...] shipping container [...] so we only use that, he's very good he doesn't charge [...] and I text him directly. (Dave Threadwell, 49, guitarist from Aberdare).

In addition to rehearsal space affective and material ties also functioned in ways that provided musicians in Aberdare with access to recording facilities:

³¹ Affective ties are where actors like and trust one another and want to spend time together.

³² Material ties supply money, resources, skills, and knowledge.

With recording we've never phoned some random fella up and said how much do you charge to record us; it's always been someone we know, and we've been close to. (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitar, bass, and drums from Aberdare).

One of my best friends [...] he produced my last album [...] it's been me and him [...] we'll play all the parts between us [...] ultimately when we get in a room together to make music, he knows exactly what I want and I know exactly how he'll do it. (Connor Powell, 42, singer/songwriter from Aberdare).

The comments above suggest a high degree of trust and support involved, illustrated by the emphasis actors put on being close to one another and knowing what the other wants out of the recording. Connor's and Dylan's comments highlight the familiarity between actors and the close-knit, long-standing connections that help facilitate their music-making.

Family ties were also important to respondents in Aberdare helping with promotional material such as videos and album artwork:

My brother-in-law, he's done the videos and I've got a friend who's got involved with the artwork [...] fair play to him it's amazing we got a sort of network of people. (Harry Dewey, 32, vocalist from Aberdare).

We get his [fellow band member Mike Thomas'] Dad to do the artwork, he's done the artwork for pretty much all the stuff. (Warren Baker, 46, guitarist and producer from Aberdare).

Together with the family, affective, material, and workflow ties involved, we can also see again ties of kindness and support, where friends supplied resources and did not expect

payments in return. This suggests strong network ties between actors and a desire to contribute to the local popular music network and local life and culture more broadly.

Friendship ties

Most of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare were friends before they made music together foregrounding the significance of the affective ties involved:

It's all pretty much every band that I've ever been involved with has been with [...] people that I've known for years [...] why don't we do something together or they got a band, somebody leaves do you want to step in? (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitar, bass, and drums from Aberdare).

Friendships generated musical activity and enabled opportunities for live performances, from organising events such as open mic nights to the annual music festival Cwmfest, which emphasised the cooperation, coordination, and shared responsibilities between actors in Aberdare. These connections functioned in the way they did because the long-standing friendships mentioned above and actors seeing one another frequently involved social and musical interactions. These interactions strengthened the affective ties and trust between actors, stimulating activity and hanging out together was an opportunity to make plans (see Crossley, 2008).

Musicians interviewed in Aberdare tended not to advertise for band members and rather asked their friends to collaborate underscoring the strong ties between actors and the closeness of the network:

I've never had to put out adverts for band members 'cause you know people. Whereas [...] in the cities there's people who'll put adverts out and they're not friends and that's a different working relationship. [...] With somebody you know you

understand their facial expressions, you understand what they look like when they're playing. As strange as that sounds you can look at somebody when you're playing in a band with them for x amount of time and you can talk without words. (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

We all know each other, there's a big bank of people around here who have been playing around here for years, we've all been in bands together all collaborated somehow. (Jim Brenner, 48, guitarist, singer/songwriter, and guitar teacher from Aberdare).

The comment above says something about how respondents from Aberdare perceived relationships as significantly important for their popular music-making activities and friendships are positive and strengthen the relationships involved (Thoroddsen, 2019) crucial in facilitating their music-making. Furthermore, the better actors know one another, to the extent they do not necessarily need to speak while playing music highlights the closeness and familiarity between actors where non-verbal communication suggests established and close relationships (see Green, 2001, p. 35).

The Thursday Night Music Club provides insights into the ways affective ties and close friendships can provide opportunities for live performance. The club is organised by two friends and is open to their wider friendship groups, including both musicians and non-musicians but is not a club open to the public:

The Thursday Night Music Club is properly experimental, it's like a collective. It's anyone [within the wider friendship groups] who wants to be involved that's the idea behind it, you turn up on the night, no-one has written any songs, but someone might have an idea, then we record that idea. As they're recording that idea everyone in the room is listening to what's going on and then going hang on, I'd want to put that on

there, and there's no argument, it's a case of you're in the room you want to do that you do that and then that sculpts that song in a way that is only lead by the people in the room. The whole idea of the Thursday Night Music Club is that everyone makes this different, whoever's in this room should be making or adding to this song and they're enjoying it. Don't just look at it as something you can rate you can't rate it, take it for what it is, we are enjoying ourselves. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

The enthusiasm and enjoyment of hanging out with friends are clear from the club's description given above. Charlie talks about the collective creative process, where respondents are open-minded about ideas suggested, and there is a sense of shared ownership of the music produced. Farrell (2001) argues that friendship networks are a source of creativity and collaboration and encourage experimentation, shaping the music produced.

There is a sense of diversity in the music produced, and despite the club being made up of mostly close friends, it also includes members of their wider friendship groups. There is also a sense of inclusivity where friends can get involved whether they sing or play a musical instrument or not. The experience of playing music with other people is 'one of the deep rewards of participating in a band [or club] and building on the jointly acquired skills of playing together' (Finnegan, 1989, pp. 268-269), emphasising music-making as an activity (Small, 1998). The collective model of the Thursday Night Music Club is well suited to the relatively fluid and small group of actors involved in developing socialisation and cooperation between them, deepening the interdependence between actors (Farrell, 2001). The Thursday Night Music Club also provides them with an opportunity to express their musicality in ways that might not be possible on a larger scale.

Friendship ties also functioned in providing promotion, for example, booking acts to play Jacs, illustrating a key point where actors were aware of the effectiveness of collaboration and cooperation and drew on the local network to facilitate teamwork:

Jac's re-opened with a new manager and owner [and] I wanted to get more involved with the venue. [...] I put a team together called Blowout, we used to put a lot of shows on locally around Aberdare. [...] So, the people, including myself got together [...] that was Christian Lewis [...] and we had a couple of people helping on the side like Jordan Brill and Warren Baker [...] we were collaborating together. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

The comment above highlights a variety of ties, emphasising the multiplexity of the connections involved. It is a characteristic example of how respondents in Aberdare pooled their skills and knowledge to enable musical activity. The actors Mike mentions were all good friends with one another and in bands together, underscoring the affective and friendship ties between them and also the coordination and shared responsibilities involved. There were cognitive ties involved, such as knowing other actors with particular skills and/or knowledge that can assist with popular music-making. Communication ties were also involved, such as who talks to whom and gives information or advice to whom, and Phil (the owner of Jacs) approached Mike to ask for his help and expertise to promote bands and artists to play at the venue. In return, the musicians got to be more involved with Jacs and got free practice space at the venue, further revealing reciprocal and transactional ties at work where the connections provided access to particular resources for musicians while providing Jacs with promotional assistance.

To some extent, generational ties (relating to older generations) influenced younger musicians and functioned as support for musicians, not only by providing resources but also by alerting musicians to the importance of the role of others for support when making music:

I remember old people my parent's age being in bands and doing these kind of things and without seeing that other people can do it, you never get the idea that you can do it. When we started at thirteen there was a lot of the older generation who was lending us stuff, PA, drums. [...] It's the community of musicians, without these people around you're not going to move on, you could stay in your bedroom all you like and have all the equipment and be able to record and have all these songs but you need people around you to make good music. [...] I really don't believe in any one person ever being able, I know people do go out there and do it but I'm sorry that's not just you. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

Charlie's comments emphasise the importance actors place on collaboration and support in facilitating popular music-making in Aberdare and alert us to the importance of the local network to music-making activity in the town. The close-knit friendship ties highlight the trust between actors that increases the likelihood of musical collaboration. Also, affective ties, along with material and workflow ties, provided support, supplying equipment, somewhere to rehearse, and a means to record and produce music.

5.2.2. Close-knit Friendship and Family Ties

In summary, the most significant ties identified from the interviews in Aberdare were friendship, affective, family, and material and workflow ties, which functioned in multiple ways in facilitating local popular music-making. Friendships were mainly close-knit, and material and workflow ties were significant in providing support and underscoring the trust, kindness, and familiarity among respondents. Furthermore, friendships were a conduit to access particular resources such as rehearsal space and recording facilities for respondents in Aberdare. Family and friendship ties provided support through helping with merchandise and artwork, as well as cognitive and communication ties involved in promoting events.

There was a keen sense that many musicians interviewed in Aberdare were incentivised to create opportunities to play music with their friends and to hang out with one another. Friends started bands and organised events together to create shared activities where they get to spend time together. In Aberdare, the relationships themselves were the most important aspect of their music-making and accords with Thoroddsen's (2019) findings where the relationships come first and music-making itself takes second place.

There are implications where the combination of ties and the closeness between actors could make it difficult to be critical of each other's music (see Prior, 2015) and only one participant interviewed in Aberdare was critical of the music of other actors in the town: I don't like them but I think what they're doing is a little bit different (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer, from Aberdare). However, the comment does suggest that despite not liking the music, respect is given for being different, which seems to be an important aspect of the kinds of music made by actors within Aberdare's popular music network.

The close-knit friendship ties are positive and strengthen the relationships involved, engender collaboration and cooperation amongst actors, and stimulate them in terms of activity (see Thoroddsen, 2019). The Thursday Night Music Club highlighted a desire to collaborate with one another and the importance of friendships as a source of creativity and socialising with friends when making music, particularly the relative inclusivity underpinning the idea of the Thursday Night Music Club, where musical competence and experience were not prerequisites for participation.

5.2.3 Network Ties in Merthyr Tydfil

The tendency to pursue industry professionals is linked to the most significant ties identified in Merthyr, which were formal, material, and workflow ties. Formal ties emerged as

significant in the Merthyr interviews, where the connections made between actors were based on promotion, recording and live performance through managers and promoters. Some actors in Merthyr relied on their managers for support, especially for promotion and booking gigs:

I have got a manager [...] working with him now more London opportunities have come forward. [...] I met him in Cardiff and since then he's acted as a booker and a manager. (Bethan Shearer, 22, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

I employed a plugger which is very expensive to plug the records to radio stations so to generate revenue from PRS. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Despite acknowledging the expense of employing a plugger, the costs involved in hiring professional managers, producers, and promoters do not seem to be a barrier for many respondents in the town, and there was a sense that connecting with industry professionals over doing it themselves was the natural route to take.

Material and workflow ties were significant concerning recording music and rehearsing and many of the respondents from Merthyr used dedicated rehearsal spaces and studios and also professional producers who were either recommended by others or met by chance at gigs:

The promoter Francis Brown based in Cardiff [...] met up with us, he came to see us and funded our first set of recordings, it was by chance really [...] we happened through a gig. (Anthony Jenkins, 22, pianist and guitarist from Merthyr).

Anthony's comment provides an example of how a combination of ties is involved in connecting musicians where we see the gig itself was the main focus in bringing actors together in the same space, and performance spaces can function as a source of ties. Furthermore, in addition to material and workflow ties, communication and cognitive ties were also involved stemming from professional status mechanisms where the promoter knew and recommended a recording producer as well as supplying funding to record at the studio.

There was a formal business-like attitude concerning auditioning for band members:

We needed to get a new drummer [AC: What was the problem with the other guy?]
Ah, y'know, musicians have disputes, you stick it out or you don't and he didn't so we had to audition a few drummers. Lewis who's on drums now was already in a band I don't think they had the commitment that he wanted so he joined us. (Sam Gregory, 35, singer and guitarist from Merthyr).

Sam's comment highlights the kinds of connections involved within the band, mainly made up of material and workflow ties, where they were providing one another with resources such as equipment and their skills and knowledge to play and write music. Furthermore, the participant alludes to the importance of commitment, suggesting that the band aspires to a particular level of professionalism.

There is also a sense of aspiring to a level of professionalism amongst band members in Richie's comment below where they felt they needed to have some sort of a contract between them:

We've got a verbal agreement that would continue into a contract y'know if we were to have one, that would say, all recordings, royalties and song-writing royalties are 25,25,25,25. (Richie, 23, vocalist and rhythm guitarist from Merthyr).

Material and workflow ties emerged out of the interview material where, despite not having a formal contract, the respondents still created verbal contracts concerning royalties and other money paid to band members to ensure equal distribution between them. The discussion of royalty payments shows a mindfulness of avoiding likely future disputes over band finances. There is also the presence of affective ties where they like each other and do not want to put the future of the band in jeopardy, and a contract helps to avoid any tensions that might arise. Furthermore, Richie's comment suggests there is a serious drive within the band to make a career out of their music-making.

A small group of close-knit friends in Merthyr played in bands together and regularly socialised with one another. In addition to the friendship ties between them, a combination of affective, material and workflow ties provided performance opportunities and gave them privileged access to a friend's house (Lloyd's side room), which they used as a rehearsal space. Access to Lloyd's side room through a close friendship group accords with Thoroddsen's (2019) research where friendships are critical for popular music-making. Those people who are not part of the friendship group or 'outside of the clique' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 111) miss out on being able to use this valuable resource, which underscores the importance of friendships in popular music-making in small-scale settings. Steve comments on some of the benefits of being able to use Lloyd's side room for rehearsing:

Going to a nice place where you've been before [...] you can stay there as long as possible really [...] you're not looking at the clock for other bands to come in. In between sessions you can relax [...] always feels like friends hanging around with

each other particularly the people I've worked with (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

The comment above emphasises Steve's fondness for Lloyd and his side room and the importance placed on socialising when making music, but Steve also alludes to his music-making as work. Despite the importance of socialising, there is a sense again of aspiring to a particular level of professionalism. Steve goes on to discuss how he goes about recording and organising live performances of his music illuminating the supply of support and how material and workflow ties blended in with friendship ties:

I'd write a song and then I would tell them what I had in mind, and they would then do their parts on top. [...] I'd record it just on my phone [...] then they'd get a chance to listen to the song and when we get to rehearsal then they would [put] what they want to put on there. [...] They're friends of mine and [...] because I'm not with them all the time it's a different dynamic to what it would be if people in a band are together a lot there's a lot of friction it's like being in a marriage with four people sometimes [...] it can be tough. [...] It's not like the band needs to be together I mean it's kinda doing my own thing and they just help me out and play on the record. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Steve's comment above illustrates how friendship ties combined with affective, material and workflow ties facilitated recording and live performances for some actors. However, rather than a 'full-time' band, musicians helped out more on an occasional basis when Steve needed them. Steve's comment alludes to earlier experiences in bands and how meeting regularly as a band can cause friction between members and could explain why he prefers drafting in friends as and when he needs them.

Friendship ties enabled live performance opportunities for example, Jacob, the owner of The Crown, and Lloyd, a local musician, set up the Stone-Cold Sober Jam Night, the only open mic/jam night in Merthyr. Jacob's and Lloyd's friendship involved a combination of ties where material and workflow ties facilitated a space for live popular music performances, and affective ties were active where Jacob and Lloyd liked and trusted one another. Cognitive ties were also involved where actors knew others with the skills and/or resources to facilitate and support activities such as open mic and jam nights. Jacob was aware that Lloyd knew many musicians when he jokingly mentioned that 'Lloyd's involved in like fifty bands' (Jacob Dent, 44, owner of The Crown, Merthyr Tydfil). It was in both actors' interests to be friends, where Jacob owned a space for live music, and Lloyd is a local musician and is well-connected to many other musicians:

A jam night on a Tuesday night [...] is very popular called Stone Cold Sober that usually 99% of the people in the room are musicians [...] that's with Lloyd [...] Lloyd's a good friend. (Jacob Dent, 44, owner of The Crown from Merthyr).

Many of Lloyd's friends and band mates attended the jam night, which was one of very few opportunities for musicians to play live music and socialise in the town.

5.2.4 Formal Ties, Friendships and Workflow Connections

To summarise, the most significant ties for respondents in Merthyr were formal, material, workflow, and friendship ties. Many of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr talked about their relationships with managers, promoters and producers and ties between them were formal in the sense that there was a financial agreement to supply services, and they did not spend time together socially. Material and workflow ties reflect the resources, skills, and knowledge industry personnel supplied to actors, and the costs involved did not seem to be a barrier for actors in Merthyr as it was in Aberdare.

The ties within bands were a combination of affective, material and workflow and the extent of each tie varied between different bands. Some relationships focused on commitment and aspiring to a particular level of professionalism, auditioning band members, and creating contracts. Discussing contracts suggests that actors aspire to make money from their music-making and be successful enough to earn royalties. The contract could be an attempt to mitigate any likely future tensions concerning money matters, suggesting affective ties where they like each other and do not want to have arguments. There is also the presence of workflow ties where they do not want to jeopardise opportunities and the future of the band.

Friendships developed within bands and between musicians, such as recording producers and managers. In comparison to the kinds of friendships found in Aberdare, many of the friendships made through music-making in Merthyr foregrounded the music first over the relationships involved, not that the relationships are necessarily cold and business-like, but the focus is on getting the job at hand done, rather than popular music-making as a vehicle for social interaction. There was, however, a small group of close friends among the respondents in Merthyr, and their friendship ties blended with affective, material and workflow ties, and affective ties were most significant where they enjoyed spending time together socially as well as musically. Material and workflow ties were present where rehearsal space, skills and knowledge were important components of the relationships involved and friendship ties generated activities such as Stone-Cold Sober Jam Night.

5.3 Network Mechanisms

Theorising network mechanisms this way shows how relationships involved in popular music-making come about and supplies the context to the network ties between actors. Relationships are rooted in a 'history of shared experience' (Crossley 2010, p. 10) and

mechanisms help to differentiate between long-standing and new connections, which is critical to understand the extent to which network actors share a history.

Network mechanisms help to explain patterns of organisation, which are also important to help understand the processes in how actors connected with one another and the dynamics of the relationships involved. I argue that understanding the mechanisms at work within each town's popular music network contributes to popular music scholarship by identifying the effects of networks on the facilitation and sustaining of popular music-making in a particular place.

Formal social network research introduced by Simmel (1908) assumes that relationships emerge from 'structural tendencies rather than from individual motivation, normative orientation, and the distribution of resources' (Fuhse and Gondal, 2022, np). The present study aims to show that while there are similarities between the town's networks, exploring the structure, contexts, and qualities of the networks within reveals there is more of an extent of variation between the networks than a formalist view of networks might suggest.

Reflecting upon the kind of network ties and friendships that operate in the urban settings from which punk emerged compared to those in semi-rural settings reveals both similarities and differences. In urban settings, the punk movement was characterised by dense and sometimes transient networks formed in response to a shared sense of marginalisation and opposition to mainstream culture (Hebdige, 1979, Crossley, 2015). These urban networks were typically centred around specific venues, record shops, and social hubs where like-minded individuals could easily congregate. The high density of interactions fostered a vibrant but sometimes impersonal scene, where connections could be short-lived but intense, driven by a collective ethos of do-it-yourself and rebellion (Crossley, 2015). In contrast, the musicians interviewed in Aberdare exhibit network ties that are stable and long-standing, deeply rooted in the local community.

This study found that a scarcity of formal infrastructure in semi-rural areas compels musicians to rely on enduring personal relationships and multifaceted roles within their networks, findings that accord with Bell and Jayne (2010). Furthermore, this study found the smaller, more close-knit nature of these communities means that the same individuals often interact in various capacities, strengthening their bonds and fostering a resilient network that can adapt to limited resources and accords with the findings of Gibson (2002). This reflection aligns with Crossley's (2009) emphasis on the impact of resource distributions within network structures and extends Finnegan's (1989) and Crossley's (2015) discussions on the importance of social networks in popular music-making by highlighting the distinct dynamics in semi-rural settings.

This section looks at how actors initially connected to one another to acknowledge and understand the network ties and the context of the connections involved within each town's popular music network. To explain how actors became connected to one another, I draw on network mechanisms to help explain the emergence of network connections and differentiate between the ways actors became connected.

Four mechanisms emerged as significant from the interviews, 'sociality', 'propinquity', 'reciprocity' and 'professional status'. Sociality works as a mechanism connecting actors with one another, as in the tendency for people to want to connect with other people. Some choice dictionary definitions explain sociality as 'the action on the part of individuals of associating together in communities', and 'the relative tendency or disposition to be sociable or associate with one's fellows' (The Free Dictionary, 2023).

The term sociality has become more prominent in sociological and anthropological research in recent years. There are, however, implications with the term 'sociality' because it has been conceptualised and used in different ways across different disciplines and suggests that the

term 'is capable of standing for anything and nothing' (Long and Moore, 2013, p. 2). The lack of clarity around the term and what Long and Moore (2013) describe as 'definitional haziness' (Long and Moore, 2013, p. 2) views sociality in a different way where the 'haziness' around the term supports the idea of sociality as a process rather than a product. Human social behaviour can take many forms, and the term acknowledges the plasticity of human sociality understood as a 'dynamic and interactive relational matrix through which human beings come to know the world they live in and to find their purpose and meaning within it' (Long and Moore, 2013, p. 2).

The importance of sociality as a generative force and the emphasis on process rather than product means sociality as a mechanism has the potential to help explain some of the ways actors make connections, sustain those connections, and avoid the drawbacks of more static, structural terms such as 'society'. Sociality, in this sense, draws our attention to the dynamic social processes involved in human interaction and can be broadly understood as the 'process of relating to others through action' (Sillander, 2021, p. 2).

Propinquity refers to the generation of network ties due to actors' geographic proximity to one another, including where actors live and how easy or difficult it is for actors to meet up or bump into one another. Reciprocity is a mechanism where actors help each other out and at the same time benefit themselves, whether that is from meeting their own goals, such as developing skills and knowledge or making a recording, to opportunities to perform live or get to spend time with and listen to local bands rehearse and play.

Professional status is a mechanism that generates ties by attracting musicians to work with particular others and, in the case of this study, industry professionals such as recording producers, managers, and promoters. Professional status refers to the number and kinds of awards industry professionals have won and with whom they have worked. Other less prominent but important mechanisms to participants and their popular musical activities link

with sociality, propinquity, and professional status, such as reciprocity, where there are mutual benefits in helping others out. The mechanism of transitivity was also at work and helps to elucidate how dyads (two connected actors) extend to triads and so on, where friends of friends also become friends with one another, extending their friendship network.

Aberdare and Merthyr are compared in terms of the network mechanisms involved within each town's popular music network. Network mechanisms can help to understand and aid comparison of how actors formed connections, the extent to which relationships are new or long-standing and the incentives that brought actors together. Elucidating the mechanisms involved goes towards explaining the effects of relationships on popular music-making and in what ways the network connections made facilitate and sustain popular music-making within each town.

5.3.1 Network Mechanisms in Aberdare

The cohesive close-knit network, the close proximity between respondents in Aberdare, and the importance of affective, friendship and family ties, for instance, relate to the fact that many of the respondents were long-standing friends, and these friendships were a significant part of the popular music-making network within the town.

Sociality

Sociality draws our attention to the dynamic social processes involved in human interaction and can be broadly understood as the process of relating to others through action. This section discusses examples of sociality generating and sustaining connections between actors in Aberdare. When asked about their musical activities, many of the Aberdare participants foregrounded the social aspects involved and saw popular music-making and socialising as mutually exclusive:

I'm spoilt in my social circle in terms of all the boys [...] it's generally a fact y'know see the lads whatever and we hang out [...] so the social aspect for me goes hand in hand. (Dave Threadwell, 49, guitarist from Aberdare).

Intertwined within sociality, the mechanism of transitivity also helped in the generation of ties between actors:

I met Dave through Ceri Chandler [...] Ceri I met many years before that he was a bartender in the Market Tavern, and I walked in and put some Radiohead on the jukebox [...] we struck up a conversation and we ended up forming [a band]. (Warren Baker, 46, guitarist and producer from Aberdare).

Warren's comment shows sociality of a distinctly musical kind, connecting actors who met in a pub and how shared musical tastes provided common ground, sparking conversation and ultimately forming a band.

Some musicians interviewed functioned as a connecting node for others introducing them to other musicians in the town (transitivity), stimulating activity and cooperation:

Meeting Warren opened me up to these musicians that became my friends as well [...] so that net has become bigger [...] bringing in those different people. (Alyn Perkins, 48, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Aberdare).

Alyn's comment also shows a musical kind of sociality. The processes of connecting actors together through the project he and Warren are working on formed new material and workflow ties, strengthened existing ties, and expanded the local popular music network in the process.

Social media platforms provided contexts for the functioning of sociality and transitivity in sustaining existing connections:

You might be talking every week and that's text, WhatsApp, and Facebook, social media, it might be the devil but it's brilliant for things like this. (Dave Roberts Holt, 32, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

Despite Dave's reservations about social media, saying, 'It might be the devil,' his comment expresses his satisfaction with how effective social media is for communication, especially with fellow band members.

In one case, for example, a band's formation and subsequent performance opportunities arose out of friends sharing a joke on their Facebook news feed³³:

[It] was a joke that happened [...] one of the boys posted where he's going y'know set up an imaginary funk band, who's in and you had quite a few people saying I'll play this, and I'll play that [...] just one gig and as it was there was a charity gig coming up which was important to a few people on the page, and I said why don't we do it for a laugh. [...] A couple of them fell by the wayside 'cause they didn't really want to commit to anything, the first gig we did there was ten of us? And it was a case of ooh look this has gone well shall we keep doing it? (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

The enjoyment the participant above conveys from the experience, which has since become a regular occurrence, reveals processes of musical sociality working as a mechanism for

³³ Sharing on their news feed makes their messages visible to anyone connected to them who are their 'friends' on the site and depending on the privacy setting could be visible to anyone on the whole platform whether connected to that actor or not.

connecting actors. The comment above shows how pre-existing social media connections, combined with affective ties where actors liked and trusted one another and wanted to spend time together, might fuel a willingness to play together and thereby generate local popular music-making activity. Although this started online, all those involved were local to Aberdare, and social media maintained and strengthened existing local connections. While respondents lived close to one another, social media supplied the means for respondents to communicate with each other at any time and to talk to a number of people at the same time to organise activities.

The processes involved in sociality facilitated and sustained popular music-making in Aberdare, providing people to play music with access to resources (see Chapter Four). At the same time, making music together helped to sustain the friendships between actors, revealing a reciprocal pattern of benefits whereby, through the practice of making popular music, new friendships formed and existing friendships strengthened.

Reciprocity

The mechanism of reciprocity was also important to popular music-making in Aberdare and, like transitivity, blended in with sociality, generating connections between some respondents in the town. Respondents in Aberdare tended to help each other out and, at the same time, get to socialise with one another and meet their own goals, whether that is an opportunity to perform live, make an album or develop production skills. Reciprocity is especially important in independent music scenes where formal contracts are uncommon (Crossley, 2009, p. 41). Reciprocity was particularly important in Aberdare because of the close-knit network and do-it-yourself approaches to making popular music in the town. For example, the Shed discussed in Chapter Four provided an example of kindness by Stephen (the owner) and reciprocity where he got to spend time with local bands and hear them play live.

Alyn's comment below talks about the reciprocal nature of his relationship with Warren producing his material and helping each other out viewed as mutually beneficial:

This was an experiment producing for him [Warren] 'cause he wanted to get some production skills [...] he wanted to develop as a producer and because I had all these different ideas for songs [...] there's a lot of material for him to get his teeth into.
(Alyn Perkins, 48, singer-songwriter from Aberdare).

Alyn's comment discusses how both actors benefit from their connection to one another. He gets his music recorded and mixed, while Warren uses the opportunity to hone his production skills in the process. There is a sense of mutual appreciation and respect between Alyn and Warren.

Furthermore, Mike explains how reciprocity generates material and workflow ties between the local music venue Jacs and local musicians and suggests patterns of connections where being a part of the Aberdare music scene is a form of collective identity.

Ah, the good thing about Jac's is they help out a lot of local acts I think from Jac's perspective it's like, you practice with us you play for us sometimes which I think is fair, 'cause if you're getting free practice time then they can y'know reap their rewards by playing a show at Jac's and it's nice to see a venue go from strength to strength 'cause they want to support the local music scene. There was a recent tribute band to Rage Against the Machine who practiced in Jac's for about six months and they played their first gig there for a reduced fee on the basis they had free practice and it worked out great for everybody then, the venue had a really great night, the band they took a small amount of money home they were happy because they had the free practice and had a really good show then. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

The instances above could be loosely organised bartering systems, and given the town's lack of resources discussed in Chapter Four, these systems could be ways of fulfilling musicians' needs. Reciprocal mechanisms based on mutual appreciation, respect, and a form of collective identity facilitated activity within the local popular music network.

Propinquity

Propinquity along with sociality and reciprocity emerged from analysis of the data as one of the most important mechanisms generating ties between respondents in Aberdare:

When I think back to my first band, we were best friends living two streets away, if we wanted to play or whatever, I'd plug the guitar in and play in the garage and he'd more than likely hear it and come down y'know. (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitar, bass, and drums from Aberdare).

Dylan's comment emphasises how close some respondents lived to one another. The geographical closeness between musicians was important to many of them, and the significance of propinquity also revealed convenience and familiarity as key factors in the facilitation and sustaining of local popular music-making:

I've known him since he was about seven, we lived next door to each other [...] he was almost my younger brother really, y'know we grew up so close. [...] It weren't just about the music, the music probably helped it the fact we were linked probably brought us even closer together, I don't know that's just the way it is he's always been one of my best friends [...] we just know each other's work. [...] [recording] is a very quick process because we know exactly what we want out of it. (Connor Powell, 42, singer/songwriter from Aberdare).

Respondents in Aberdare often foregrounded close and long-standing relationships, referring to one another in family terms, such as brothers. Furthermore, Connor's comment suggests that long-standing close relationships, along with close proximity and the familiarity and trust built up over the years between actors, are significant factors in the ways musical processes became streamlined and efficient.

Members of some bands have lived together in house shares, and Dylan's comment below emphasises the importance of the social connection between actors and the intense feelings of closeness with one another where Dylan had difficulty not seeing his bandmates and spending time with them as regularly as he used to:

All of a sudden you find a girlfriend and you move out, it's like I'm not seeing everybody every day anymore. I struggled with that, so having that excuse now to be like once a week [rehearsing] we see each other so it's like old times again. (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitar, bass, and drums from Aberdare).

Dylan's comment above highlights the closeness between actors where he experienced feelings of loss in not seeing his bandmates as regularly as he once did. The words Dylan uses, such as 'having an excuse' to meet up, foregrounds the importance of the friendship ties involved and suggests popular music-making is a means of maintaining the relationships between actors.

5.3.2 Long-Standing Relationships and Bartering Systems

The long-standing connections that make up the cohesive network in Aberdare mainly consist of affective, family and friendship ties generated by mechanisms of sociality, reciprocity and propinquity and underscore the close-knit relationships involved and the support and trust amongst actors in the town's network. These mechanisms helped to

elucidate the patterns of connections and organisation within the local popular music network. Sociality played a role in generating ties between actors in Aberdare, where respondents drew on their close friends to form bands and wanted to get involved in musical projects to spend time with one another, and there was a sense that respondents felt that popular music-making and friendships were almost mutually exclusive. Other mechanisms, such as transitivity, intertwine with sociality stimulating musical activity and cooperation where shared interests and musical tastes provided common ground, expanding the local popular music network.

Reciprocity was particularly important, especially in independent popular music scenes where contracts of any sort are uncommon (see Crossley, 2009, p. 41). Helping each other out was mutually beneficial, providing opportunities to perform live and develop skills such as recording. Patterns of connections were based on mutual appreciation, respect, and a form of collective identity (being part of the Aberdare music scene) facilitating activity within the local popular music network. The do-it-yourself approaches to making music in Aberdare meant that reciprocity was especially important to respondents to be able to procure resources and draw on the skills and knowledge of their peers to help achieve their own aims. Through mechanisms of reciprocity, musicians can fulfil their needs through a kind of bartering system of sorts, and this system is important, especially in places where particular resources might be scarce.

Propinquity played a role in the patterns of connections and organisation in Aberdare's popular music network, generating affective and friendship ties between musicians. Musicians are more likely to bump into each other if they are geographically close, and analysis found that convenience was a key factor, making it relatively easy for many musicians to meet up with one another. Despite the close proximity of many musicians in Aberdare, social media emerged as an effective means of communication between musicians and provided the context for the functioning of network mechanisms of sociality,

transitivity, and reciprocity. Friends of friends can see and comment on social media posts and join groups drawn by their shared interests. The social and musical processes involved formed new friendships and sustained existing connections along with the geographies of proximity linked musicians in Aberdare.

5.3.3 Network Mechanisms in Merthyr Tydfil

The popular music network in Merthyr was described earlier in this chapter as loosely knit, where some respondents were friends to varying extents from close-knit to acquaintances, and a few respondents did not know other musicians in the town. This section looks at the mechanisms involved in Merthyr's popular music network that generated and sustained network ties between actors and facilitated and sustained their music-making. The mechanisms most prominent to emerge in the Merthyr interviews were professional status and sociality, although other mechanisms, such as transitivity, intertwined within these main mechanisms. Furthermore, as in Aberdare, the mechanism of sociality through social media played a key role in communication between actors.

Many of the connections made by respondents from Merthyr were with actors from outside the town such as managers:

My manager [...] James Lee he's from Norbu Media, they work in Cornwall. [AC:³⁴ How did you meet him?] He sort of found another guy's music, Dan Bettridge his name is, and he liked the sound of his music and he come across my music then and he liked the sound of my music so he's like we'll arrange a meeting. So, I met him in Cardiff. (Bethan Shearer, 22, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

³⁴ AC are the researcher's initials.

In contrast to the musicians interviewed in Aberdare, respondents in Merthyr tended to seek out professional managers and producers, and professional status was a key factor alluded to in the comments below. Respondents mentioned who producers have worked with and accolades won, and the professionalism involved seemed to be an attraction for local musicians to want to connect with these actors:

The reason you tend to go to a studio is not because of the equipment it's because of the person [...] Martin Levine, in Llandoverly, Red Kite Studios and Martin has won an Emmy he did all the sound engineering for Joseph's Technicolour Dreamcoat and Les Misérables. [...] Tim Hamill in Sonic 1 in Llanelli, I was going down there with him for about five years constantly recording different records, and that would be a case of going down there when you got enough money together 'cause £300 a day it costs. [...] So, I made an EP after that, and then I wanted to make an album, so I recorded the entire album down there with him. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

We went to Leamington Spa to record with a guy called John Rivers who did The Specials' stuff. (Anthony Jenkins, 22, pianist and guitarist from Merthyr).

Furthermore, the level of professionalism was a measure of who to work with, in contrast to Aberdare respondents, where friendship and trust were significant factors determining who they made music with. Formal ties with industry professionals might also benefit the musicians' own reputation by association and possibly increase opportunities for exposure and paid work.

Sociality was also a mechanism that emerged in the Merthyr interviews, where the processes involved in interaction maintained and generated connections between actors,

resulting in music-making activities. Friendships made in school were important for generating connections between a few of the respondents from Merthyr:

I started talking to Sean Williams in school [...] him and Robert Beecher [...] we got chatting and said they're starting a band and were looking for a drummer and a singer. So, I went home in front of the mirror wasn't very good at singing [laughter] so I said to the old man can I have a drum kit for my birthday? I made loads of sawdust after that³⁵ [...] we were writing songs and y'know playing in the back room of the youth centre. (Lloyd Davies, 46, drummer from Merthyr).

All my mates were all musicians around me, and I just didn't have anything to do so I was 'oh yeah d'you know what I'll play drums' why not let's give it a go. I just started playing in school. (Carl, 25, drummer from Merthyr).

Sociality functioned as a mechanism that generated material and workflow ties forming bands where not wanting to miss out incentivised some actors to take action to get involved in making music corresponding with Bennett (1980). Bennett found that friends tended to make up people's first bands and that some friends only took up music because their friends were forming bands.

Processes of sociality involved in music-making also functioned through social media platforms:

I think like the actual like social network side of things obviously it's all internet based but you are friends with people from Merthyr so that in terms of keeping in contact

³⁵ Making sawdust refers to playing the drums.

with people [...] that's a key force for me. (Logan Jones, 35, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Logan's comment highlights how socialising on social media strengthens and maintains existing connections between actors in the town, which is consistent with Aberdare's accounts discussed above.

The comment below illustrates how connections made through social media between some actors brought them closer together and subsequently helped in organising the Merthyr Rising festival:

I've known Grant since I was a kid, 'cause we were in school together [...] but I was never that close to him. What happened was social media [...] with social media everyone airs their views, you start to find out people got similar views to you [...] there's a lot of online groups and stuff. Stephen a member of Welsh Labour Grass Roots which I was a member of [...] I didn't know Stephen in the past. (Lee Williams, 48, Director of Merthyr Rising festival and bar owner from Merthyr).

The comment above also alerts us to the shared interests of actors in both music and politics and how, for instance, dedicated groups on social media platforms, particularly Facebook, help like-minded people connect with one another, subsequently creating live music performance opportunities.

Relating to others through social media platforms provided a context to connect with new actors previously unknown to each other:

The drummer we got, Nathan ah, when he joined, I didn't know him previously, ah, he put like an advert up on Facebook, said that he was looking for a band and then a

friend of mine ah, tagged me in it. (Danny Howell, 18, singer and guitarist from Merthyr).

There is an aspect of transitivity here. A friend tagged Danny to a post about a drummer (Nathan) looking to join a band, connecting the two actors. The result of sociality through social media was that Nathan found a band to join, and Danny found a drummer for his band.

5.3.4 Professional Status and Sociality

The combination of mechanisms in Merthyr revealed a mixed picture; while some actors had close, long-standing relationships meeting through school and socially, most of the actors were little more than acquaintances or did not know each other at all. Professional status generated formal, material, and workflow ties between musicians from Merthyr and professional producers and promoters from outside the town. Musicians interviewed sought professionals who have worked with established artists and are well known for their production and promotion skills, suggesting that respondents in Merthyr measure who to work with in terms of professionalism rather than friendship, which was the case in Aberdare.

Popular music-making in Merthyr focuses more on mass media, the recording industry, and supporting music through the marketplace, contrasting to the do-it-yourself friendship networks that support popular music-making in Aberdare. The lesser extent of connections generated through school (compared to Aberdare) is partly attributable to the loosely knit network identified above, where many actors relied on professionals outside the town to facilitate their music-making.

For the small group of actors identified in Merthyr, sociality was especially important in accessing rehearsal space and providing respondents with a small pool of musicians/friends

that can help with live performances and recordings. Actors made connections through processes of sociality, and social media provided the context for many of these connections to happen. Social media created multiple kinds of connections, from maintaining existing connections to bringing acquaintances closer and shared interests played a role in connecting actors together. Furthermore, sociality through social media created new connections between actors and subsequently formed a band. Social media platforms also encourage transitivity, where actors can tag particular others into posts, and send information and messages directly to one another whether there is a previous connection or not.

The actors within each town's popular music network are different kinds of people in terms of their aspirations and how they view their own music-making, revealing a focus on professionalism in Merthyr and friendship in Aberdare. The overall implications were that musicians in Merthyr collaborated less with one another in particularly for recording and promotion.

5.4 Close-Knit and Loose Knit Networks

This chapter aimed to understand the kinds of networks that facilitated and sustained popular music-making in two semi-rural towns and the implications of different combinations of networks on the ways actors go about making popular music. Overall, this chapter shows that Aberdare has an established and cohesive popular music network compared to Merthyr's more loosely knit network, and the combinations of connections within each town alert us to how the networks are comparable and contrast.

This study's findings accord with Finnegan (1989) who found that cohesive networks in smaller towns are often built on long-standing personal relationships and frequent interactions in multifunctional spaces such as homes, local pubs, and community centres.

Aberdare's network reflects these characteristics, where close-knit connections foster a strong sense of community and mutual support. The significance of local networks in smaller settings is highlighted by Thoroddsen (2019) and like found in Aberdare, these networks rely on close personal ties and multifunctional use of limited resources to sustain musical activities. The loosely knit nature of urban music networks is highlighted by Cohen (1991) and similarly, in Merthyr, the network is less cohesive, with musicians often relying on professional studios and venues outside their local area. Furthermore, Crossley (2015) describes urban punk networks as highly dynamic and fluid, with frequent changes in band membership and venue usage. Merthyr's loosely knit network mirrors this fluidity to some extent, where connections are less rooted in long-standing personal relationships.

The respondents in Aberdare were part of a long-standing close-knit network with a high degree of kindness, trust, and support between one another combined with the close proximity between network actors encouraged collaboration and a do-it-yourself ethic which spurred on activity. The mechanism of sociality was significant for popular music-making in Aberdare, generating ties between many respondents that resulted in musical activities. One of the most significant stimuli for actors to pursue music-making was the social aspect of wanting to spend time with one another, encouraging actors to start bands and create projects, activities, and events. The way Aberdare participants talked about their relationships with friends and peers revealed shared interests and shared musical tastes, and actors foregrounding the friendships involved suggest that the connections made are primarily to connect with others, putting relationships first over music-making. Existing friendships generated musical activity in Aberdare, illustrated through the Thursday Night Music Club and the band formed by several musicians when chatting on a social network site.

The intricate dynamics of collaboration and connectivity within popular music are explored by Finnegan (1989) and Cohen (1991) each shedding light on different facets of this

phenomenon. Cohen's examination of closely-knit bands illuminates the transformative power of music in fostering bonds and opportunities for collaboration. Through live performances and shared creative endeavours, music becomes a conduit for expression, allowing musicians to explore novel ideas and artistic forms. This emphasis on musical bonds underscores the profound role of music in generating performance opportunities and cultivating an environment conducive to exploration and collaboration. This study found that particularly in Aberdare there was more collaboration and experimentation than in Merthyr.

However, rather than music-making creating friendships, this study found that, particularly in Aberdare, friendships spurred on musical activity and might be because the musicians interviewed were not all as professionally ambitious as the musicians in Cohen's research. Finnegan's perspective accentuates the importance of interpersonal relationships and social dynamics within musical groups, and this study's findings accord with Finnegan's perspective where the findings of the present study illustrate how friendships are pivotal in facilitating and sustaining musical activities in smaller-scale settings. Finnegan underscores the significance of joint artistic endeavours in fostering camaraderie and shared accomplishment among musicians which was particularly prevalent amongst the musicians interviewed in Aberdare and emphasises the rewards of live performances in strengthening bonds and affirming collective skill development underscoring the social fabric inherent in musical collaboration.

Concerning the question of close friendships playing a pivotal role in fostering collaboration, Thoroddsen's (2019) investigation into popular music-making within small Icelandic communities reveals that the driving force behind band formations often stems from the desire to engage in shared activities among friends rather than purely musical aspirations. In a similar vein, many of the participants in the present study acknowledged that the joy derived from music-making is intertwined with the camaraderie fostered by friendship. My findings therefore accord with both Thoroddsen's (2019) and Finnegan's (1989) assertions

concerning the ways that friendships, rather than relationships developed through the course of music-making, can be the primary catalyst for musical activities in small-scale settings.

Moreover, Prior's (2015) study illustrates how bands often emerge as a result of longstanding friendships where musicians are motivated by the desire 'to have a good time and hang out' (Prior, 2015, p.89), a further phenomenon uncovered in my findings, especially in Aberdare. The present research therefore underscores Thoroddsen's (2019) and Prior's (2015) findings concerning the ways popular music-making in more isolated settings often primarily serves as vehicles for shared activities among friends, rather than music-making activity functioning as a key mechanism in the formation of new friendships.

The ways musicians interviewed in Aberdare tended to go about popular music making also reflects the constraints regarding the costs involved in making music, and they relied heavily on friendship ties, which functioned as a conduit to access resources such as rehearsal space and recording facilities, contrasting with Merthyr. The most significant incentives for Aberdare respondents to connect with one another were social, and reciprocity and propinquity highlighted not only the kindness, trust and support between actors but also factors of convenience and familiarity that were important in establishing and maintaining connections between actors. The kinds of support in Aberdare emphasises Finnegan's (1989) findings where support was 'essentially realised by local participants at the local level' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 293), with informal assistance proving pivotal for rock and pop musicians, often characterised as 'self-help' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 285). Furthermore, the reciprocal ties identified in Aberdare revealed a bartering system of sorts, which is an important function that facilitates and sustains popular music-making within the town.

The popular music network in Merthyr was a mix of formal ties combined with friendship, affective, and material and workflow ties, creating a more loosely knit network overall compared to the close-knit network found in Aberdare. Most respondents in Merthyr sought

out professional assistance and support from outside of the town. Professional status was a significant mechanism in attracting musicians in Merthyr to industry professionals and generated formal ties between them and could be an effect of the lack of resources identified in Chapter Four. Frequenting dedicated rehearsal and recording spaces outside of the town increases the likelihood of musicians bumping into professional producers and promoters and possibly increases the chances of paid work and/or exposure. Furthermore, professionalism seemed to be a measure for musicians in Merthyr as to who to work with, particularly for recording and producing, and Merthyr respondents did not comment on the costs involved in the same way as those interviewed in Aberdare.

Sociality was important to some of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr, where the friendships involved facilitated some aspects of their music-making. However, sociality also played a role in connecting musicians in Merthyr with industry professionals through live performance settings and also through social media, both maintaining existing connections, bringing acquaintances closer and connecting actors who did not previously know each other. The kind of sociality in the latter example (with industry professionals) differed from the sociality amongst the small group (and to sociality in Aberdare) where rather than the relationships themselves being the most significant aspect of the connection, the music itself was most important over any friendships involved. Contrary to Aberdare the extent of formal and material and workflow ties involved illustrates the tendency for respondents in Merthyr to seek out music industry professionals to fulfil particular roles rather than adopting do-it-yourself approaches and drawing on friends and family as did the respondents in Aberdare.

The topography of each valley, to some extent, reflected the networks within each town where Aberdare's valley is narrow, and people are geographically much closer to one another than actors in Merthyr. Furthermore, the mechanism of propinquity in Aberdare helped maintain ties where actors often bump into each other. Conversely, Merthyr is a

larger, more spread-out valley, and perhaps it is not as convenient to meet up or bump into other musicians as it is in Aberdare.

Different network issues arise between the professionalism and amateur approaches of each town where the closeness and reliance on friends and family in Aberdare's popular music network meant that actors might be less likely to criticise one another and their music because they knew each other well or were even related. A lack of criticism could engender experimentation where actors are not worried about their peers ridiculing them for trying something different, and the music produced in the town was much more of an eclectic mix than the music produced in Merthyr.³⁶

The relative absence of a do-it-yourself ethic in Merthyr could be a contributing factor to why there is a focus on professionalism and a lack of concern regarding costs, suggesting different kinds of popular musicians in Merthyr compared to Aberdare. Respondents view their music-making in different ways, and in Merthyr, there was more of an emphasis on professionalism and professional status. The implications of respondents' aspirations of professionalism in Merthyr's popular music network were that local actors collaborated less with one another where dedicated professionals from outside of the town met their needs, resulting in much less popular musical activity within the town compared to Aberdare.

The value of networks in researching music-making and the collective efforts of musicians in shared and purposeful actions is recognised by Finnegan (1989). This acknowledgement underscores the pivotal role of interactions among network actors in facilitating the exchange of essential resources, ideas, advice, information, skills, and knowledge necessary for music production.

³⁶ Chapter six discusses in more detail the kinds of music produced within each town.

Crossley (2009) posits that social interactions, relations, and networks 'manifest a structure [which] is not only in virtue of patterns of connection but also because of the effect of [...] resource distributions' (Crossley, 2009, p. 28). Viewing networks as dynamic connections between individuals helps foreground the actors involved, the connections forged between them, the ways in which relationships facilitate resource access and exchange, and the collaborative musical activities fostered within these networks. Networks are crucially linked to resources, as they determine the distribution and accessibility of these resources within the popular music-making community. The use of the term networks in both Finnegan's (1989) and Crossley's (2015) research emphasises the value of investigating the interconnected relationships inherent in popular music-making.

In semi-rural settings, these networks take on distinct characteristics, where close-knit communities and limited resources create unique dynamics. The scarcity of formal infrastructure compels musicians to rely more heavily on personal connections and informal support systems to access necessary resources. For the present study showing how these networks intersect with resources and musicians' motivations provides valuable insights into popular music-making in semi-rural settings.

This chapter demonstrated that semi-rural settings like Aberdare and Merthyr exhibit distinct network characteristics that significantly impact their popular music-making activities. Aberdare's cohesive and community-oriented network contrasts with Merthyr's more fluid and professionally driven network, highlighting the unique dynamics of semi-rural music networks. These findings extend and complement existing scholarly work by emphasising the importance of close-knit, supportive networks in fostering musical activities in semi-rural settings, as well as the impact of economic constraints and geographic proximity on these networks. Understanding these dynamics provides valuable insights into the facilitation and sustainability of popular music-making in semi-rural settings.

CHAPTER SIX

Attitudes, Values and Motivations to Make Music

6.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the attitudes, values, and motivations of the musicians within each town to understand why they became musicians and how and why they adopt the approaches they do to make popular music. Drawing on musicians' comments from the interviews conducted, this chapter explains how musicians became musicians and how their attitudes, values and motivations impact the approaches they adopt and the kind of music they produce.

This chapter also contrasts these findings in semi-rural settings with popular music scholarship on urban music-making, highlighting unique or divergent trends observed in these towns. Musicians in urban settings often benefit from a vibrant, diverse cultural milieu, access to a wide range of venues, and exposure to various musical influences. They also typically have better access to professional networks, recording studios, and promotional opportunities, which can shape their attitudes towards music as a career and their approach to production and performance. In contrast, semi-rural musicians might exhibit different attitudes and motivations, such as those in Aberdare and Merthyr. Limited access to professional resources and fewer performance venues can foster a more do-it-yourself ethos, emphasising self-reliance and community support. The close-knit nature of semi-rural popular music-making results in strong local support networks, and their motivations often stem more from personal expression than commercial success.

Focusing on musicians' motivations explores their behaviour and opinions and helps answer the third main research question this study asks: What motivates musicians to make music and adopt the approaches they do and produce the kinds of music they do in Aberdare and Merthyr?

Along with consideration of the key resources and networks discussed in the previous two empirical chapters, the current chapter proposes that appreciation of the attitudes, values and motivations of the people involved in making popular music is a third key factor important to understanding how people go about their musical activities and provides a multi-layered and comprehensive account of popular music-making within each town's sample. Looking at attitudes and values helps illustrate musicians' motivations behind why they use the resources they do and draw on the networks they do to make music. It also supplies in-depth descriptions of popular music-making in the semi-rural settings of Aberdare and Merthyr.

Motivations are a person's desires that stimulate them towards a certain action or behaviour and underpin what they do, how they do it, and with whom. This further validates findings from Chapters Four and Five, where musicians drew on family and friends and also industry personnel to help them make music. Making music was mainly for enjoyment, but some musicians in Merthyr also strived for recognition in the music industry. Chapter Five found that, particularly in Aberdare, the musicians interviewed placed significant value on the social aspects of popular music-making, and there was a focus mainly in the Merthyr sample on industry recognition and commercial success.

This study defines values as how people think and feel about something, how they respond to their situation to make music and what is important to them when engaging in musical activities. People's values are their guiding principles and morals and directly influence their

attitudes. For example, principles such as kindness, support, creative freedom, and success make up people's characters and inform their opinions. Particular social and non-commercial values may influence musicians' attitudes towards different kinds of relationships (drawing on friends or industry professionals) and how they make music in the sense of using dedicated resources and professional personnel or doing it themselves.

Musicians' attitudes and the values they hold towards making popular music, whether that is a desire to be famous, spend time with friends, for fun or work, along with their perceptions of the commercial music industry, feed into their motivations and could motivate a person to adopt certain approaches for going about their music-making. This research contributes to scholarship on popular music through consideration of the attitudes, values and motivations of the people involved in popular music-making in a particular place, often overshadowed by economic concerns (see Behr et al., 2016) such as the income earned by musicians (Behr et al., 2020), funding opportunities, policies and cultural regeneration (Brown et al., 2000) in a particular place.

This chapter has two main sections: 'Aberdare: Attitudes, Values and Motivations to Make Popular Music' and 'Merthyr: Attitudes, Values and Motivations to Make Popular Music'. Each section explores the most prominent attitudes, values, and motivations that emerged from the interview data, illustrated through musicians' comments. Each section discusses their priorities and perceptions towards enjoyment, friendship, the mass music market, popularity, and income in relation to popular music-making to understand the main motivational drivers for their involvement in musical activities.

This chapter shows how musicians' attitudes and values feed into their motivations to go about their music-making in the ways they do and compares with popular music scholarship in urban settings. This chapter also explores how their motivations connect to the resources and networks they draw on, discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

6.1 Aberdare Attitudes, Values and Motivations to Make Popular Music

This section focuses on the Aberdare musicians and is organised under the following headings: 'Friendship', 'Commerce and Creativity', and 'Attitudes to Place'. These themes emerged as prominent throughout the interviews in Aberdare, where many of the musicians interviewed mentioned them and, in doing so, foregrounded their motivations to spend time with friends and experiment with their music. In both previous empirical chapters, many musicians in Aberdare talked about how much enjoyment and fun they experienced when making music with their friends.

Musicians' attitudes, values, and perceptions of the music industry explain why they use and adopt particular resources and approaches. Furthermore, some musicians emphasise the importance of distancing themselves from what they perceive as 'mainstream/commercial music'. The 'Attitudes to Place' section shows how place finds its way into the aesthetics of the music produced.

6.1.1 Friendship

Most of the musicians from Aberdare expressed their motivations for enjoyment and satisfaction (Pitts, 2005) in making music with their friends, and the comment that follows suggests that music-making with close friends provides intense feelings of pleasure and intimacy:

I just don't think I could stop. Like now January, it's quiet and [...I get...] a bit twitchy. I miss it when it's not happening. I get an immense amount of pleasure, immense, I know it [laughs] sounds a bit weird and it's not perverse but it's almost sexual [laughter] [...] because I don't play on my own, I don't practice in the house I struggle

with it I get bored [...] It's when you're with the right people it's nice, you're all on the same page, you're all almost breathing together. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

Here, Charlie emphasises the importance of making music with the 'right people', meaning close friends who know each other well and have been friends for many years, and the closeness and long-term connections referred to here link back to the longstanding relationships and affective ties shown in Chapter Five. Furthermore, Charlie states that he struggles to play on his own, and his comments emphasise the importance of collaboration for musicians in Aberdare, tying in with the interdependencies and close-knit ties between them in the town detailed in Chapters Four and Five. In small communities, friendship encourages collaboration, whereas musicians' motivations have more to do with finding an activity to participate in with their friends rather than purely musical (Thoroddsen, 2019).

Some musicians, when asked about their motivations to make music, said outright that being able to spend time with their friends was the primary motivator for them to make music:

When you boil it down, it's seeing the boys and seeing everybody and just being together [...] I'm still grateful to be able to do it with boys I love and respect so much (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitar, bass, and drums from Aberdare).

Dylan's comment stresses the importance of the social values involved in making music, where the relationships between musicians are the primary focus, and music-making is not only a musical act but also a social act (Kokatsaki and Hallam, 2007). The importance of friendship and the enjoyment and meaning experienced through making music with one another motivated many musicians to continue making music:

We do it as friends, which I think is vital when you're in a band, 'cause the people you're playing with shouldn't be acquaintances you meet to make money at the end of it or do a project or what do they call it? Session musicians. I think real music of passion and heart and meaning comes from friends who do it together 'cause they enjoy it and that's honest. I mean that it's the truth [...] I just like to get involved as much as I can with the people around me because it's endearing really to be part of your own little group. You're making genuine friends and meeting nice people, it's a nice sociable time. I like to be close with other people. (Mike Thomas, 28, singer, keytar, drum machine, songwriter, and promoter from Aberdare).

Mike suggests that feelings of trust and support are important, using words such as 'honest' and describing how significant it is to be part of a group and be close to them. Mike's comments highlight drivers of affiliation (McClelland, 1988) and the category of collective values (Mok, 2011), where the focus is on enjoyment, good relationships and bonding with the other people involved. Mike's comment above also focuses on the approaches taken rather than the music produced, suggesting that the processes involved in making music rather than the outcome are most important. Other musicians did mention the enjoyment and satisfaction of the processes involved in making music together rather than focusing on the outcome, suggesting they value friendship over commercial success:

The actual process of it y'know, that enjoyment. I mean, for us if we weren't gigging [...], we'd still be jamming and still be creating music even if nobody ever listens to it. (Gerry Dufrain, 47, Drummer from Aberdare).

Such comments suggest the significance musicians placed on the social values involved in their music-making. The motivation is to get together and create music; for some, whether that music ever gets recorded or performed publicly is not a primary concern. Similarly, Finnegan (1989) found that comradeship and close cooperation between band members

was highly valued amongst musicians in Milton Keynes and was 'both a mark and cause of a band's mutual interdependence' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 269).

6.1.2 Commerce and Creativity

Some musicians discussed the approaches employed to record music and how important it was for them to do it themselves, not only for skill development (Kokatsaki and Hallam, 2007) but also to maintain what they felt was independence and control over the way they went about making music and the sound produced:

I use a jack lead for recording bass, vocals are sound directed at the Tascam, drums are played in the Tascam in the corner of the room facing the other wall. It's just something I've always [done], and people always think I'm crazy using it, but then when you show people the end results, they think, bloody hell, wow, where did you record this? [...] It is incredibly time consuming, but I wouldn't do it any other way. [...] It's the sound; it's all this melting pot of white noise in the background and the various noises of things, it's not supposed to be perfect, is it [...] It was all about doing it yourself. There's something there which is, like, y'know it's fuck you. I'm gonna do it myself [laughs]. That's how it always has been. (Dave Roberts Holt, 34, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

Dave's comment illustrates how keen musicians are about making music and, despite the time-consuming approaches taken and the amount of effort required, chose these particular approaches because of the sound produced and to facilitate a sense of control and self-sufficiency. Musicians embrace these do-it-yourself ideals for a number of reasons: feeling they have control to some extent and maintaining their creative freedom. Furthermore, there are influences left over from the punk scene in Aberdare from the 1970s and 1980s which promote do-it-yourself approaches, and some musicians stated in the interviews that these

approaches are how musicians have always gone about their music-making in Aberdare and alert us to the continuities of local popular music-making in the town.

One respondent felt that he, along with some of the other older musicians in the town, played a role in sustaining local popular music-making:

I think, and I hope it doesn't sound a little bit too presumptuous, but it's bands and musicians like myself, Neil, and a lot of people I've played with are partly responsible for keeping that thread going, allowing people to see this is just fun regardless of money, regardless of anything else. From the age of 13 the first band, I've continuously played in bands since then non-stop, and it goes right back 'cause I remember when we started at 13, there was a lot of the older generation who was lending us stuff, PA, drums, all that and without that, so they obviously y'know it's the community of musicians. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

There is a focus for some musicians in Aberdare to show how much fun they are having when making music, and the quote above also reveals non-commercial values concerning popular music-making held by Charlie and other older musicians, which they pass down to younger generations. Charlie goes on to mention that the older generations helped him and his peers when he was younger, and the sense of community concerning making music could partly explain why older musicians in the town feel some responsibility to 'keep the thread' of popular music-making going in Aberdare.

Many of the Aberdare musicians interviewed expressed great enthusiasm for trying out different sounds and styles when writing and arranging music. The keenness to experiment with their music suggests they place significant value on what they viewed as notable levels of creative freedom facilitated through their music-making:

Everybody knows what a 4-piece band acoustic guitar strumming and singing sounds like [...] when we do covers, we don't do them straight [...] there's like little, not gimmicks, in each song but there's little things that we do like proper swing like jazz medley with the Grand Old Duke of York, St. James' Infirmary a few other like really old classics. The name of our EP is Did You Just Assume My Genre? Cause every song on there is basically completely different, there's no unifying theme apart from the people who play the instruments [...] Like a modern Vaudeville, like a modern rootsy anti-folk, anti-country, anti-pop. (Andy Roberts, 30, bassist and singer from Aberdare).

The enthusiasm and attitudes of many of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare towards experimentation could be an influence of the non-commercial values highlighted above responding to what they perceive as industry expectations describing mainstream music as 'formulaic':

It's almost like everyone's part of it for the end goal to be famous. They're responding to a scene that is very formulaic, it's quite a popular scene, but [...] people [audiences in general] only want to hear that, so break out of that, you're gonna have to do something that might piss some people off [...] This isn't going to be somebody getting up and singing Stereophonics songs this is going to be challenging. C'mon, let's have a bit of fun with this. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

Charlie's comment alludes to mainstream music and industry expectations as unchallenging and not much fun and is an example of how many of the respondents in Aberdare perceive the mass music market. Crossley (2023) suggests that some musicians feel they have to distance themselves from industry conventions to avoid compromising their own music.

Furthermore, the quote above mentions that experimenting with music might 'piss some people off' and 'people' means audiences want to hear music they know. Charlie's comment emphasises the musical values musicians hold and how important experimenting with music is, where they are willing to risk a less than warm reception from an audience rather than compromise what they are doing with their music.

There was a great deal of importance placed on what musicians perceived as creative freedom, and questions about desires for commercial success elicited quite negative responses from musicians:

It's not what I want at all. What I'm doing now is what I want. I feel incredibly blessed to be around the people that I'm around and lucky enough to be in a good couple of bands who I really, really like every one of them, love playing with them. Being in the music business and trying follow that sort of route it was really horrible. I hated it, there wasn't any freedom you had to always be, you can't do that because of this. [...] It becomes stale, and everything sounds the same because that one person [...] he's the be all and end all, so none of these will have an input, they just play your song. (Charlie Denning, 49, keyboard player and singer from Aberdare).

Charlie's comments recall Toynbee's (2000) discussion of 'proto-markets' in the sense that the conditions of popular music-making in Aberdare are at a local level endorsed and approved through peers rather than through the mechanisms of the market. The approval and endorsement by peers rather than industry personnel emphasise the close-knit networks in Aberdare and how vital these relationships are for musicians. Positioned on the fringes of commercial music-making, proto-markets afford musicians a degree of creative freedom from industry expectations and control. Furthermore, proto markets can encourage anti-commercial attitudes, which were prevalent amongst many of the Aberdare musicians interviewed, distinguishing themselves from what they perceived as the commercial mass

music market. Toynbee also points out that anti-commercial narratives might be especially prevalent in proto markets because they help protect musicians against self-perceptions of failure, and a lack of success can be explained as a result of sticking to anti-commercial values.

Some of the respondents talked about distancing themselves from what they perceived to be the commercial music market, and there were suggestions that mainstream music lacks some musical credibility:

It's not entertainment, and I mean entertainment in neon lights and bulbs all around it, right. That's not where I am, I'm more in a band, y'know, that old kind of rock n roll kind [laughs] y'know old school kind of head, I suppose where it's not about that for me. I can see how it creates opportunities for people to do things on a different level, and I'm not knocking them for doing it; it's just not ever something that I've wanted to be associated with. [...] I think it's a kind of conveyor belt. (Jim Brenner, 48, guitarist, singer/songwriter, and guitar teacher from Aberdare).

There is also the suggestion that Jim feels mainstream commercial music is transient to some extent, and musicians are on 'a kind of conveyor belt'. The 'old school' attitudes and values Jim is referring to seem to focus more on the long term. This ties in with the long-standing relationships discussed in Chapter Five, where musicians focused on and placed meaning on the processes involved in popular music-making rather than the outcome.

Despite negative perceptions of the mainstream commercial music market, there was no sense of friction between commerce and creativity for musicians interviewed in Aberdare, as found in Cohen's (1991) study. This could be because Aberdare and Merthyr are outside cities and, like Crossley et al. (2015) note, are less affected by industry influences and pressures. Furthermore, unlike many of the musicians in Cohen's (1991) study, the

respondents in Aberdare did not give a sense that they necessarily wanted to get signed to a record label or become famous, and their apparent lack of interest could also go towards explaining the lack of friction between commerce and creativity for them.

6.1.3 Attitudes to Place

Some of the respondents felt that place influenced the themes and sounds created and suggests that despite Aberdare being small and possibly lacking the excitement and busyness of cities and urban settings, the town has a positive and formative influence on local popular music-making:

I think we are all quite rural in general in Aberdare. Y'know, we're sort of thirty miles away from the two major cities, give or take, and I think being out in the sticks, you couldn't be further out [...] I think it does have a certain effect, but you've got much more of a mixing pot in Aberdare. I think some people are into everything. Like I said, y'know I'm into all types of music. I think you get that a lot more in the smaller towns because when there's only five drummers in the town [laughs], those five drummers are gonna be expected to play punk, metal, sort of like Irish jig, and everything (Dave Roberts Holt, 34, singer/songwriter, bassist from Aberdare).

Dave's comment reflects the belief of some musicians that being a musician 'out in the sticks' influences the kinds of music they listen to and play. Given the small pool of musicians in the town and the extent of collaboration (see Chapter Five), it is not surprising that many of the musicians interviewed played several different styles of music, especially those in higher demand, such as drummers. Furthermore, Dave's comment above suggests that many musicians in Aberdare value being 'into everything', and there were motivations to be versatile and able to play many different styles, possibly to increase opportunities to participate in local popular music-making.

Most of the musicians interviewed felt grateful to be making music in Aberdare, and Dylan's comment below links back to the point made earlier where the older generation of musicians in the town influence and inspire others to make music:

I feel lucky to have grown up in Aberdare around so many good musicians, great songwriters. I mean, listen to albums by y'know, Cripplecreek, Headshot, Pilot Fish, y'know all these bands you just think they are life-changing experiences going to watch bands like that at a young age, locally, changes your life y'know so I feel lucky to have grown up around so many talented and nice people, none of them are arseholes like I mean how often can you say that y'know you go and watch this band and they've blown you away and also lovely. (Dylan Andrews, 35, guitarist, bassist, and drummer from Aberdare).

The choice of words, for example, 'life-changing', expresses how meaningful these experiences were and how they have had a lasting effect on Dylan. The comment also alerts us to the importance of the local popular music scene and the closeness and fondness musicians have for each other, which links back to the close-knit network and affective ties discussed in Chapter Five.

6.1.4 Friendship over Fame

In summary, this first section shows that most of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare viewed friendship as critically important for their music-making, and attitudes and values towards creative freedom and following do-it-yourself approaches emerged as important. The enjoyment and pleasure of making music with friends was the primary motivation for most of the respondents in Aberdare, where their musical activities generated feelings of pleasure and intimacy with the 'right people', meaning close, long-standing friends.

'Friendship first, music second' (Thoroddsen, 2019, p. 134). The comments in the section above show the importance of social values where musicians felt that making music with close or longstanding friends was more meaningful than if with acquaintances or session musicians, for instance, and links with the affective ties and longstanding relationships found between Aberdare musicians in Chapter Five.

Finnegan discovered that musicians' motivations were largely driven by collaboration and their relationships with others involved in music-making. This is highlighted by Finnegan's discussion of voluntary support, where music-making relies on 'the efforts of the musicians themselves and their close associates' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 287). For instance, in Milton Keynes, informal support networks were common, offering access to resources and opportunities for performances, rehearsals, and recordings. However, the primary motivation for the musicians in Milton Keynes was the desire to spend time with friends and other like-minded individuals, which was essential for continuing their musical endeavours in the town. This aligns with the musicians' motivations in Aberdare, where music-making was a vehicle to hang out and spend time together. Similarly, enjoyment and pleasure were also significant motivations for making music in Aberdare and accords with Finnegan (1989) and Pitts (2005) that non-economic rewards were valued more than generating income or gaining commercial success. This suggests similarities in musicians' motivations between semi-rural settings and the towns and villages Finnegan focuses on within Milton Keynes.

Musicians' attitudes and values towards the processes involved in popular music-making suggest that the approaches adopted are meaningful and say something about their motivations to make music. The meaning many of the respondents in Aberdare attach to the popular music-making processes reflects the social and musical values important to them, focusing on the social interactions and the fun of experimenting with their music rather than necessarily the outcome of producing a recording and gaining industry recognition. Similarly, Finnegan (1989) highlights that the motivations of musicians place significant value on live

performances rather than on economic rewards. According to Finnegan, the desire to continue making music in her study was not driven by financial gain and accords with the findings from Aberdare. She notes that while live performance alone might not keep a band together, it was regarded as one of the profound rewards of participating in a band. This experience, built on the shared skills of playing together, was what made public performance possible (Finnegan, 1989, p. 269).

The significance of the relationships involved in popular music-making for musicians revealed the underpinning social values bound up with their musical activities. To a lesser extent, the musicians interviewed talked about the music produced and how they were keen to experiment with music and different instruments, revealing their musical values. Comments elucidated their views of creative freedom and non-commercial attitudes and values that went against what respondents perceived as industry expectations, distinguishing themselves from the commercial mass music market described as 'unchallenging' and 'formulaic'.

There was a sense that some respondents in Aberdare felt that the commercial music industry needed more credibility and was transient, which sat uncomfortably with the importance they placed on the trust and honesty of the close, long-standing relationships they valued so much for their music-making. 'Trust and personal relationships hold the alternative network together, and these are based on values believed to conflict with the corporate structure' (Shank, 1994, p. 226).

Popular music-making in Aberdare links to the concept of proto markets (Toynbee, 2000), where music-making is on the fringes of the commercial music industry and impacts the creative choices made by musicians. To some extent, a non-commercial stance towards making music was adopted, which protects musicians against perceptions of failure and explains a lack of commercial success.

Non-commercial values reflect the attitudes towards do-it-yourself approaches adopted by many of the musicians interviewed. These approaches could also be a response to the lack of resources identified in Aberdare in Chapter Four and possibly borne out of necessity, where there is a lack of funds to pay for professional producers. However, there was a sense of pride in doing it themselves and developing skills (recording, for example), and some of the respondents felt they had more control over what the end product would sound like.

Musicians interviewed in Aberdare aimed for a less-than-polished sound to set themselves apart from what they perceived as mainstream music. There was a sense that doing it yourself was how it had always been in the town, passing down these attitudes and values towards popular music-making through generations. The close-knit network in Aberdare assists in passing on these attitudes and values, embedding them within the conventions of local popular music-making in the town.

A few respondents portrayed Aberdare as a positive and formative influence on their popular music-making despite it being a small town and lacking the buzz and excitement of a city. To some extent, a semi-rural setting influenced the music and revealed musicians' musical values, where some respondents placed a great deal of significance on versatility and having broad musical tastes. Being into 'everything', referring to broad musical tastes, also increased the chances of them being involved in musical activities in the local popular music network and satisfying their desire to collaborate with one another. Furthermore, the value placed on versatility could reflect the small pool of musicians in the town and being versatile might also help satisfy musicians' desires to experiment by trying different arrangements and styles of music.

6.2 Merthyr Attitudes, Values and Motivations to Make Popular Music

This section describes the most prominent attitudes, values, and motivations of interview respondents from Merthyr. In contrast to Aberdare, most of the respondents interviewed in Merthyr were motivated by gaining popularity, success and earning an income from making music, which suggests they view their music-making as a pathway to earning a living. Many of the musicians interviewed expressed a desire to appear professional in their approaches, playing particular venues and drawing on industry professionals to record and promote their music. It suggests that projecting what musicians viewed as a professional³⁷ image was of significant importance to them. This part of the chapter is organised into two sections, 'Professional Image and Income' and 'Popularity'.

6.2.1 Professional Image and Income

Despite most of the Merthyr musicians interviewed not complaining about a lack of money in the same sense as the respondents from Aberdare, where the costs involved in paying for rehearsal space and studio time were contentious issues, many of the comments from respondents in Merthyr did talk about money but in the sense of generating an income to subsidise their musical activities. Some of the musicians interviewed suggested what Juniu et al., (1996) and Appelgren et al., (2019) describe as extrinsic motivations where musicians saw popular music-making as a viable source of income and their main aim was to make a living from making music:

We try to run our image like a business. 'Coz, you got to. [...] and we hope one day for it to be our career. Just earn money by doing what we do. [...] I've been doing it

³⁷ Professional is meant as an attitude towards making music and in the sense of drawing on industry professionals, dedicated studios and paying market rates for services such as recording and promotion. Ruth Finnegan (1989) encountered difficulties defining professional musicians and found that musicians themselves used the term 'professional' to refer to 'evaluative rather than economic aspects' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 15) such as regularly performing with other musicians regarded as 'professional' and could be extended to working with industry professionals more broadly in the case of the Merthyr musicians.

for ten years, and music is still my main focus. I don't think it's going away any time soon, but to make a living off doing it would be, I think everybody wants that job (Freddie, 18, guitarist from Merthyr).

There is a real desire to make music a career and earn an income from their musical activities. Some Merthyr musicians interviewed used the word 'business' when talking about their music-making, which suggests more of a sense of commercial and professional attitudes and reveals their musical values towards making music focusing on income and career:

It's money ultimately when it becomes a business that's what it comes down to. Just like anything else, you gotta invest in the start of something to let it develop, so it's a long-haul game [...] I just get motivated by winning, I [...]. If I put my mind to something or if I'm committed to something, what motivates me is winning really and coming out on top, that's the honest answer. (Rich Newsom, 28, promoter and musician from Merthyr).

The word 'winning' is emphasised in the above quote and means being successful in creating an income. It links with the aims and ambitions of musicians in Barry Shank's (1994) research, where music industry-centric goals such as making money and a living through popular music-making were significant motivations for musicians. The quote suggests that creating a reputation of 'coming out on top' is also a key factor for musicians, moving them closer to what they feel is professionalism, commercial success and generating an income and highlights extrinsic motivations of power (McClelland, 1988) where status, influence and financial rewards are significant drivers for musicians.

Any income made can be used to fund future projects and activities, which helps sustain their music-making, and there was significant motivation to acquire money to be able to pay

for promotion and recordings. Spending money was critical for musicians in Merthyr, where they felt the more money spent on promotion, the better their chances of gaining commercial success:

Money, I think, is the main thing that people have an advantage with, [a band] paid out ten grand on a promotional campaign for their one song, and they just went [clicks fingers] because everyone in the UK pretty much have heard that song [...] Once that lands on some radio DJ's desk, on the radio, selling out tours. Money does help with social media and everything. (Carl, 25, drummer from Merthyr).

There is a sense from Carl that there is a focus on national rather than local audiences when he says 'everyone in the UK', for instance, and suggests that the Merthyr musicians interviewed are more outward-looking than those in Aberdare, where they are more focused on local audiences. There is a sense of an outward focus in the Merthyr interviews in both Chapters Four and Five, where respondents drew on resources and connected with producers and promoters from outside of the town.

Many musicians' attitudes and approaches to making music were quite structured from first writing the songs to obtaining funding to then recording them:

I've got a few songs I'm working on [...] Once I've looked through them, I start looking at new ideas. I've constantly got a list running through my head or written down on a piece of paper. I'm thinking to be making an album got a running structure. I'm going back in with Martin Levine [producer], hopefully in October November for a couple of days. I'm meeting a guy next week to fund the source of the money [...] I'm sending the songs to musicians to see what they think, so it's all moving in the right direction. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Steve's comment above shows a sense of a professional attitude towards popular music-making, where he follows a schedule of works of sorts. Furthermore, Steve seeks out industry professionals to record his music, suggesting particular expectations as to how the music will sound with the aim of mass-market distribution. Working alongside music professionals emboldens a sense of professionalism and points to the musical values he holds, focusing on industry-centric goals. Steve then goes on to talk about the importance of generating an income to be able to continue to make music:

[if you] haven't got any money, it's impossible. [...] What worked with me [...] was through PRS [...] another film I was involved in called The Reverend starring Rutger Hauer. We did the score for that [...] it was getting a lot of play on Radio Wales, some play on Radio 2, so the PRS from that was paying [...] kept going back to the studio then, it was paying for itself. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

Some musicians believed that going about their popular music-making in professional ways in both the approaches taken and the resources drawn upon increased their chances of success and earning an income. Steve's PRS payments and money he can secure from private funders help to fund future projects, and Steve believes that without the finances, it would be 'impossible' to record and release his music.

Some musicians in Merthyr commented on the importance of playing the right kind of venue. What they meant by this were venues where they would get a good financial return as well as receiving a good audience response:

The biggest challenge is having enough venues to play 'cause someone might say can you come and play in a pub or a party, I know it's not gonna be right. I can take

rejection, but if I take the band there and they have a real shit return on it, I feel partly responsible for that. You learn over the years you gotta make sure it's the right place because it's pointless taking a thrash metal band to a christening [laughter]. No motivation to play live every week, especially to half-empty rooms [...] it's more of a case of wanting to be doing quality things rather than just going out and playing every week. (Steve Jackson, 40, singer/songwriter and guitarist from Merthyr).

The primary motivation for some of the Merthyr musicians interviewed was to write and record songs rather than play live, possibly because of the difficulty in finding suitable venues for live performances (Chapter Four highlighted the lack of places to perform live in the town). There is also motivation to ensure booking the 'right' places that can pay friends drafted in to play live, and there is a sense of responsibility to ensure a good audience (not playing to 'half empty rooms') and a good financial return out of respect for friends and peers involved. The comments above illuminate the professional attitudes and musical values that emerged focusing on quality and alert us to the attitudes and values towards live performing experience and image where respondents placed significant value on having positive 'quality' experiences when performing live. Furthermore, being selective ensures to some extent that their music is appropriate for the venue and audience, and they make a good financial return.

The final comment above by Steve Jackson implies a desire to distinguish oneself from bands that play pubs and parties, which could suggest that 'quality' might also mean playing larger dedicated venues and being picky as to what kinds of gigs are played (avoiding parties for instance) is viewed as a marker of success and presenting what musicians feel is an image of professionalism. Furthermore, the desire for respondents to distinguish themselves from pub and party bands reflects their musical values, also evinced in the approaches taken, drawing upon networks of professional industry personnel outside the town to make music.

6.2.2 Popularity

While meeting the financial costs involved in promotion and recording is important, it is also a stepping stone for what many respondents value: popularity. Success for many of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr was based on popularity in the sense of creating hype on social media platforms to get more attention and likes. It made them feel that they looked more successful than they were. There were incentives for musicians where they felt that presenting themselves as popular created opportunities for live performances and exposure. Furthermore, many of the respondents in Merthyr felt that popularity could also boost their streaming figures on digital platforms like Spotify, for instance, thus beginning to create an income stream to some extent:

We need to pay for boosting on social media [...] The only thing it really does is make you look better. It makes you look more notable, which in turn creates a hype around you. It's about creating [...] yourself [to] look more famous than what you are. That's what we found. Some people (talking about audiences) follow the popularity rather than the music itself. (Carl, 25, drummer from Merthyr).

The respondent above recognises that some audiences are attracted to hype and popularity and uses this approach to garner interest in his music:

We paid £500 to have two recording days and then [...] probably talking about £150 to £200 per individual for a single in terms of recording and having it mixed and mastered, then you're talking £350 to £500 for a video for that one single then you're talking a £100 to boost that single. You're not getting any of that money back, but you trade the money for popularity. You're trading the money for listens, building a fanbase, basically. Our first single, we had a good video for it, 28,000 views, really

happy with it and then, the next one, we didn't do a video and it had 6000, and we thought visuals definitely make a difference. (Richie, 23, vocalist and rhythm guitarist from Merthyr).

To 'trade money for popularity' illustrates the significant value placed on popularity, and the comment below explains why popularity is so important:

We've been turned down for support slots for gigs before. The Night Café were playing in Cardiff. I really wanted to support them, and they turned us down. They said the reason why you've not been very active on your social media you haven't brought out any singles, and your traffic isn't that good, so we're not gonna risk putting you on. (Richie, 23, vocalist and rhythm guitarist from Merthyr).

Richie explains that popularity is important to him and his bandmates because of the live performance opportunities and exposure it can provide. Furthermore, musicians' attitudes towards popularity revealed the musical values at work where, for some musicians interviewed, the desire to gain popularity encouraged them to tailor their music for inclusion on different streaming platforms, such as Spotify, targeting particular playlists to gain more traction:

I think the way that we've released [music] has been tailored towards it, so some of them³⁸ said, Hey, we like the track, bit too heavy for me, or a bit too rocky for me, or one of them said like the solo was too heavy for me, so then you know that next time we'll send our lighter tracks to that one and we'd send our heavier tracks to another one, but I think. Yeah, that's how it works [...] you can start to strategize and market

³⁸ 'Them' refers to streaming platform personnel.

who will be best to hear what tracks. I think that's the way forward these days. (Carl, 25, drummer from Merthyr).

The feedback received from streaming platforms helped Carl and his bandmates feel they were marketing their music more directly, being able to target particular playlists and audiences. This further emphasises the musical values of many of the Merthyr respondents for commercial acceptance and success.

6.2.3 Recognition and Remuneration

To summarise, this section revealed the attitudes and values of the respondents in Merthyr towards their music-making and the ways in which they reflected their main motivations of gaining an income and increasing their popularity. Most of the musicians interviewed felt that going about their music-making in what they perceived as professional ways would improve their chances of earning an income from their music, revealing the commercial values of respondents. Furthermore, their attitudes suggested that producing music that met what they perceived were music industry expectations provided a better chance of making money and gaining success.

In addressing this issue, Cohen's (1991) study found that musicians focused on securing a record deal exhibited a 'defensive attitude' (Cohen, 1991, p. 74), viewing their challenges as essential steps toward success, which they believed could only be achieved through hardship and struggle. For instance, the lack of money often motivated bands and enhanced their sense of purpose (Cohen, 1991, p. 56). Furthermore, the musicians in Cohen's study frequently complained about the quality of their resources and equipment. However, they were at the same time proud of the 'simplicity and poor condition of their gear, as it aligned with their overall attitudes toward music-making' (Cohen, 1991, pp. 49-50). For many musicians interviewed in Merthyr, generating an income through making music was a

significant motivation, and they saw a lack of money as detrimental to their ability to do so. This suggests that the respondents in Merthyr are similar to those in Cohen's study insofar as they were more professionally aspirational than the musicians interviewed in Aberdare.

Musicians' attitudes towards generating income in how they go about their music-making stem from their belief that a lack of money can seriously impact their ability to promote themselves. This could partly explain why the music produced in Merthyr tended to aim more at commercial markets than the music produced in Aberdare, revealing Merthyr musicians' musical values based on income and industry recognition.

Respondents' attitudes toward image in Merthyr, where they used social media to project a particular impression of themselves, said something about the importance of popularity. Some musicians created an image to make them appear more popular than they actually are, further underscoring their motivation and desire for fame and success. Furthermore, an outward-looking perspective stimulated many of the musicians interviewed to continue making music where they desired not only local but also national success and recognition.

6.3 Local Motivations and National Aspirations

To conclude, this chapter aimed to explore and compare the attitudes, values, and motivations of Aberdare and Merthyr musicians to better understand how and why they go about their music-making in the ways they do. Along with consideration of the key resources and networks involved, focusing on the attitudes and values of the musicians interviewed aids in explaining their motivations to make music, adding a third perspective and helping answer the research questions this study asks³⁹.

³⁹ How is music making sustained in semi-rural settings and why do musicians make music and adopt the approaches they do and produce the kinds of music they do?

The comments from both the Aberdare and Merthyr musicians interviewed revealed that enjoyment and pleasure (Finnegan 1989, Pitts 2005) were motivations to make music, but the extent was much greater in Aberdare than in Merthyr and might help explain why Aberdare musicians felt that close friendships created meaningful music which heightened their pleasure and satisfaction when making music. The social values of respondents from Aberdare revealed significant value in spending time with one another, reflected in their attitudes towards bonding and friendship and ties in with the close-knit networks and affective ties discussed in Chapter Five.

In contrast to Aberdare, most of the Merthyr respondents' attitudes towards popular music-making were oriented towards increasing their popularity, gaining an income, and projecting a professional image to both audiences and industry actors. There was a strong sense that many of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr felt that following what they seemed to view as professional pathways provided them with a better chance of commercial success and could help explain why they drew on dedicated resources and sought out industry professionals outside of the town to make music. This extends popular music scholarship by highlighting the distinct motivations and values between urban and semi-rural settings. However, the emphasis on enjoyment and pleasure as key motivations for popular music-making, as evidenced by references to Finnegan (1989) and Pitts (2005), enriches our understanding of how personal fulfilment drives creative expression across both urban and semi-rural settings.

Moreover, the contrast in attitudes towards popularity and success between the two towns underscores the value of a comparative approach and the importance of considering semi-rural settings and the local contexts and social dynamics in shaping musicians' aspirations. This perspective contributes to discussions in popular music scholarship regarding the influence of geographical location on artistic practices and career trajectories (Shank, 1994). Shank's (1994) discussion of musicians in Austin emphasises the influence of location on

musicians' aspirations, particularly in a thriving music scene like Austin, where opportunities for commercial success are more readily available. This contrasts with environments needing more resources and performance opportunities, where achieving success may seem less attainable. The significance of place, including physical infrastructure, resources, and support, underscores its potential implications on musicians' aspirations and opportunities for success.

While most of the musicians in Merthyr desired to be popular to some extent, none of the musicians in Aberdare talked about popularity in the same sense as those in Merthyr. Aberdare respondents were more concerned with popularity amongst their peers and the local scene rather than the broader national focus of musicians interviewed in Merthyr. Respondents in Aberdare appreciated other musicians in the town, describing them as 'nice people' and watching the older generations making music inspired them ('life-changing experiences') and fed their motivation to become involved in the local popular music-making. The basic presence of a 'scene' in Aberdare might help explain the attitudes and values of the musicians interviewed in the town, where their focus is on popular music-making and musicians on a local level. The outward-looking perspective of respondents in Merthyr might also help explain the lack of a scene in the town and why many focused on resources and personnel from outside the town to make music.

Respondents' motivations in Aberdare can be described as relatively independent of external influences, where friendships drive their popular music-making activities. By contrast, in Merthyr, a mix of variables influenced respondents' motivations, from the friendships involved in the small group of friends using Lloyd's side room to other musicians seeking professional producers and studios influenced by their desires for industry recognition.

This distinction between influencing variables can be seen in Cohen's (1991) and Shank's (1994) perspectives, reflecting different conceptualisations of the relationship between

individuals and their sociocultural environment. Cohen's research in Liverpool underscores how internal motivations, such as the desire for artistic expression or commercial success, drive musicians' engagement in popular music-making activities, viewing these motivations as relatively independent of external influences. Conversely, Shank's study in Austin illustrates how the local context significantly shapes musicians' aspirations and motivations. The vibrant music scene in Austin, with its numerous performance venues and industry professionals, influences musicians' desires for commercial success and recognition. This difference highlights the dynamic interplay between individual agency and socio-cultural context in shaping human behaviour. While Cohen emphasises the autonomy of individual motivations, Shank underscores the importance of geographical and cultural settings in shaping musicians' goals and motivations.

This chapter aligns with existing popular music scholarship by drawing on theoretical perspectives from scholars such as Cohen (1991) and Shank (1994) to frame the discussion around the relationship between popular musicians and the sociocultural context in popular music-making. By exploring the interplay between internal motivations and external influences, this study contributes to broader debates within popular music scholarship regarding the complexities of creative processes and aspirations outside of urban settings.

Attitudes to expenses and income differed between the towns, and the limitations of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare concerning the costs involved in popular music-making were discussed in Chapter Four. These limitations regarding the costs for musicians in Aberdare might be a factor as to why paying for services to facilitate their popular music-making was less common than in Merthyr. For example, boosting social media posts and employing pluggers and promoters were not used by respondents in Aberdare and, therefore, not discussed in the interviews.

Attitudes towards the kinds of music produced contrasted between the towns where the processes involved in making music rather than the outcome were most important for respondents in Aberdare. The importance placed on collaboration emphasises the significance of their social values and, combined with their musical values, experimenting with their music and keeping what they feel is an arm's length from the commercial music industry (Crossley, 2023). Experimenting with music was highly valued amongst Aberdare respondents, and it shows that non-commercial values are significantly important to them. Some of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare purposely created music that went against what they perceived the mass music market wanted. However, the lack of resources (Chapter Four) and the close proximity between musicians (Chapter Five) could also create pressure on musicians to create something different from other musicians in the town (see Prior, 2015). Furthermore, anti-commercial narratives (Toynbee, 2000) can help insulate musicians against self-perceptions of failure, and they can explain an absence of commercial success because of adhering to anti-commercial values.

In comparison, musicians interviewed in Merthyr were producing music not only for enjoyment, pleasure, and the love of music itself but, more importantly, for them to generate an income and show the commercial industry-centric values many of the respondents in Merthyr held. Musicians interviewed in Merthyr understood success differently from those in Aberdare, highlighting how some values and attitudes differed between the samples. Success in Aberdare focused more on peer approval (a trait of proto markets discussed above), collaboration with friends, and experimenting with their music. While in Merthyr, respondents understood success as gaining recognition and earning an income, which they felt was critical for promotion and recording.

We can identify differences between musicians' attitudes and values. In Merthyr, commercial industry acceptance is a significant factor in their motivation to keep making music. Alternatively, in Aberdare, respondents' motivations were to challenge what they viewed as

musical norms, and they tended to foreground the relationships involved in their popular music-making, which provided meaningful connections with each other through their musical activities.

This chapter illuminates the differing orientations of musicians interviewed in Aberdare and Merthyr towards commercial success and industry recognition. While the respondents in Merthyr prioritise income generation and professional image projection, Aberdare respondents place greater value on peer approval, collaboration, and experimentation with their music. This difference underscores the complex interplay between individual motivations and external influences, reflecting a nuanced understanding of how sociocultural factors shape popular music-making and the differences and similarities to urban settings.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

This thesis is original in its focus on popular music-making in semi-rural settings, an area often overlooked in scholarly research, which predominantly concentrates on urban and city environments. By examining Aberdare and Merthyr through a comparative approach, this study fills a significant gap in understanding how popular music-making occurs outside urban centres. It challenges the assumption that rural and semi-rural areas are devoid of resources and musical activity, providing new insights into popular music-making dynamics in less urbanised settings.

This study provides a nuanced understanding of the types of resources (physical spaces, equipment, skills), networks (friendship, family ties) and motivations of popular musicians in these settings. The thesis argues that popular music-making in semi-rural settings is facilitated and sustained through the complex interplay of resources, networks, and musicians' attitudes and motivations.

Key arguments include the importance of relationships. Strong, close-knit relationships, particularly friendships and family ties, are crucial for accessing resources and generating musical activity in the semi-rural settings studied. The comparative approach enables this study to highlight how different network structures (close-knit in Aberdare and loose-knit in Merthyr) influence the music-making process, collaboration, and the types of music produced. Musicians interviewed in Aberdare and some in Merthyr often adapt non-dedicated spaces (for example, garages and sheds) for popular music-making, and this

study challenges the notion that semi-rural areas lack the necessary resources.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis helped this study to reveal differences in the motivations between the musicians interviewed in the two towns studied. The Aberdare musicians interviewed focused more on the process involved in making music and peer approval. In contrast, respondents in Merthyr were more commercially oriented, seeking industry recognition and financial success, which influences how they go about their musical activities.

Consequently, this thesis significantly contributes to understanding popular music-making in semi-rural settings, demonstrating that such areas can have vibrant, resourceful, and interconnected musical communities. It advocates for more attention to non-urban music-making in academic research, emphasising popular musicians' rich, diverse, and meaningful experiences in these locales.

Drawing on the literature of Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991), Shank (1994), and Crossley (2015) and other pertinent scholars' work, I developed the case for focusing on resources, networks, and musicians' attitudes, values, and motivations to understand how and why popular music-making takes place in a particular location and three main research questions emerged from reviewing the literature:

- What kinds of resources do musicians draw on to make popular music in semi-rural settings?
- What kinds of networks and the dynamics therein help facilitate and sustain popular music making in semi-rural settings?
- What motivates musicians to make music and adopt the approaches they do and produce the kinds of music they do in Aberdare and Merthyr?

The literature reviewed signalled the potential importance of resources and networks for understanding how popular music-making happens. Both aspects, along with a third, musicians' attitudes, values, and motivations, emerged as significant themes from reviewing popular music scholarship. I built upon the approaches taken by previous research (Finnegan 1989, Cohen 1991, and Shank 1994, for example). Explaining each aspect in detail required a tripartite approach in the empirical chapters, focusing on each aspect separately.

The complexity and interweaving of these three aspects became clear when writing the empirical chapters, and this chapter provides an integrated approach to bringing resources, networks, and motivations together and, in doing so, illustrating the meaningful connections between them. This thesis argues that each theme alone is not sufficient to explain how popular music-making happens in a particular place where musicians need resources, but accessing them requires connections and drawing on favours from other actors, and none of this can happen without the motivation to make music and the value that popular musicians attribute to it.

This study defines resources as the physical infrastructure popular musicians use, such as pubs, clubs, studios, garages, sheds, and people's houses. Equipment such as instruments and amplifiers/PAs/speakers, as well as the recording equipment and software needed to make music, along with the skills and knowledge required to use these instruments and equipment. This research defines networks as the interactions and relationships between the people involved in generating musical activities and the connections that act as a conduit to access particular resources. The final aspect, the attitudes, values, and motivations of the musicians involved, I defined as their aspirations and desires for making music, whether for enjoyment or to gain some income and recognition. Understanding the attitudes and values of popular musicians provides insights into why they draw on particular resources,

approaches, and people to make music and what it says about the kinds of music they produce.

I employed a qualitative approach for this study that drew on empirical observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach can limit how well a study can be generalised by the level of detail of the data analysis. Still, I adopted this approach for the different depth of analysis. It provides a much richer account of the processes of popular music-making compared to quantitative approaches. The interview data aided in understanding popular music-making on a micro level, which helped develop a sense of interconnectedness between the key themes of resources, networks, and motivations.

I set this research out as two case studies to allow comparison between them and provide the kind of insights that might be more difficult to show from a singular account of music-making. The semi-structured design of the interviews helped to avoid, to some extent, my own opinions and ideas from influencing the conversation in any particular way and rather, I wanted musicians to tell me about their musical practices in detail (for example, rehearsing, recording and live performance) as they view them to understand how and why they go about these activities in the ways they do.

While the musicians interviewed described their musical practices, I probed further to ask what kinds of approaches they adopted, what kinds of resources they relied upon and who else was involved. Towards the end of each interview, I asked them to reflect on their motivations for making music to understand in what ways their attitudes and values played a role in why they used particular resources and adopted the approaches they did to make music and in what ways this influenced the kinds of music produced.

Semi-structured interviews were a good choice for data collection in this particular study as they helped garner detailed and in-depth information from the musicians and some non-

musicians interviewed. They illuminated the interweaving and meaningful connections between resources, networks, and musicians' motivations towards popular music-making in a particular place.

In what follows, I discuss the key findings of the research, answering this study's main research questions. Then, it will discuss the value of and contribution this research makes. Finally, it will conclude with recommendations for future research.

7.1 Key Findings of Research Results

This section discusses my research findings, looking at how resources, networks, attitudes, values and the motivations of the people involved facilitated and sustained popular music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr. The findings show in what ways they do this, why and who is involved and reveal how the interconnectedness of this study's three key themes (resources, networks, and motivations) play a vital role in semi-rural popular music-making.

7.1.1 Accessing Resources Through Friendship and Family Ties

One of the key takeaways of this research concerning resources for popular music-making is that the evidence from my research showed that Aberdare, despite its smaller size, has a more robust infrastructure for live music compared to Merthyr, and this strongly suggests that the size of the place does not necessarily indicate the provision of resources for popular music-making. For instance, the number of pubs and clubs in Aberdare⁴⁰ compared to Merthyr that accommodate popular music is surprising, given the former is half the size of the latter in population and geographical footprint. Apart from the New Crown Inn, popular musicians interviewed in Merthyr did not mention other pubs or clubs important to their

⁴⁰ The Shepherds Arms, The Globe, The Aman Tavern, Jacs, The Falcon and The Glynhafod Top Club.

music-making. This could simply be a matter of most of the pubs and clubs in Merthyr not hosting live music or offering their space out for rehearsing, for instance.

My research shows relationships are key to accessing particular resources, especially in close-knit networks. Close-knit relationships in Aberdare facilitated access to resources like pubs, clubs, and informal spaces (garages, sheds). Stephen (The Shed) and Paul (owner of Jacs) also provide critical support for local popular music-making, driven by personal relationships and a passion for local music. Due to looser network ties, this personal investment is less evident in Merthyr, where respondents often rely on professional resources outside the town.

Relationships formed over many years between most of the popular musicians interviewed in Aberdare, and landlords in the town and the extent of involvement of pubs and clubs in the musical activities in Aberdare compared to Merthyr suggests that perhaps the relationships between landlords and the musicians interviewed in Merthyr are not as close or the same kind as those discussed in Aberdare. This says something about the generative qualities of close relationships, where they help to create activities and events and, in doing so, facilitate and sustain popular music-making. Furthermore, landlords can be crucial in how and whether these network-resource complexes manifest in small towns.

What is also meant by the opening key takeaway above (and goes some way to answering the first main research question) is that the kinds of resources adopted by respondents for music-making in Aberdare and Merthyr took different forms. Despite this study finding that pubs and clubs were one of the main resources supporting popular music-making (Finnegan, 1989), many resources not necessarily dedicated commercial resources, such as recording studios and rehearsal rooms, were spaces adapted for popular music-making.

Many of the musicians interviewed used resources not intended for music-making, such as garages, sheds and homes. This approach was more prevalent in Aberdare, where the higher network density, combined with the shared values and attitudes (do-it-yourself ethic, for example) of those comprising the local popular music network (longstanding friends), made the creation or adaptation of things into resources possible. In Merthyr, apart from the small group of friends identified in Chapter Five, most of the musicians interviewed travelled outside the town to use dedicated studios and rehearsal rooms and perform live. The point is that where there are loose-knit networks in Merthyr, adapting resources might not be as viable as in stronger and closer-knit networks found in Aberdare.

Chapter Five focused on the popular music networks within each town and found that Aberdare has a close-knit, cohesive network of friends compared to the more complex picture of a loosely knit network in Merthyr. Close friendships provided access to particular resources in Aberdare, such as pubs and clubs and the Shed for rehearsing, and in Merthyr, friendship provided access to Lloyd's parents' side room and highlights the overlapping of resources and networks. The interpersonal relationships involved go some way to explaining how opportunities emerged to access particular resources and help answer the second main research question, asking what kinds of networks and dynamics therein are involved in popular music-making in semi-rural settings.

The friendships in the small group in Merthyr enjoyed spending time together. Still, there was less of a sense of ties of kindness and support like those found in the friendships in Aberdare, pointing towards the altruistic nature of some non-musicians like, for example, Stephen, the owner of The Shed. Stephen showed support for local music-making by letting friends and people he likes use The Shed and not necessarily receive any payment, if anything at all, for it. The close-knit friendship ties helped dissolve the distinction between resources and networks and emphasise the meaningful connections between these key factors. For instance, the distinction blurs between resources and networks concerning the

provision of the Shed as a resource for rehearsing and recording and the close and long-term relationships Stephen has with many of the musicians in Aberdare, fostering a community-driven approach to popular music-making that contrasts sharply with the more commercial and competitive environment often found in urban settings.

Not everyone has the kinds of resources at their disposal like Stephen to offer this resource, and along with the kindness and support shown concerning rehearsing at The Shed, there was more than just altruism at work. I identified reciprocal ties where Stephen does get something out of it. His return of sorts is that he enjoys listening to and watching the bands that rehearse in The Shed. Reciprocity is an important mechanism, particularly in small independent scenes where formal contracts are uncommon (Crossley, 2009). Reciprocity and helping each other out were important in the close-knit network in Aberdare, and it appeared to be a loosely organised bartering system fulfilling the needs of the popular musicians' interviewed in the town.

Reciprocal ties also generated activity around Jacs, a dedicated music venue that played a significant role in facilitating popular music-making in Aberdare. Jacs provided rehearsal space for local bands to practice in return for playing live for free or a reduced fee. Some of the bar staff, sound technicians, and promoters working at Jacs were local musicians, and the venue provided them with an income. Local bands also had opportunities to support larger established acts that played at the venue.

The investment the owner of Jacs has made suggests this is not just a business venture but a labour of love. Paul, the owner of Jacs, is not a musician but an avid live music fan and is good friends with many of the popular musicians in the town, many of whom he grew up with and wants to see Aberdare's musical culture thrive. Paul also involved local musicians in setting up the venue, providing advice on equipment needed, and providing opportunities to work there. The result has been a hub for musical activity in the town.

A typical example of the kinds of ties important to popular music-making in both towns were family ties characterised by a long-standing history between people through which resources readily flow. Family ties in Aberdare involved supplying artwork, videos, promotion, and somewhere to rehearse. There was also a tendency for the musicians interviewed in Aberdare to talk about their bandmates in family terms, often calling each other brothers, for instance, and further emphasises the close-knit networks active in Aberdare. Family ties were also important for Merthyr respondents, helping develop their skills and knowledge. For example, in Chapter Four, we recall how Bethan's aunt taught her how to play guitar and inspired her in her songwriting.

This study found that learning new skills and knowledge for participants in both towns was rooted in relationships with family and friends, which are types of music-making resources that family ties can be especially valuable in delivering. Interactions between musicians are critical for exchanging resources, ideas, advice, knowledge, and skills, enabling the collective nature of music-making. Music-making involves social interactions that underpin the musical activities involved and emphasise the 'sociability...[that]...runs through musical practice' (Finnegan, 1989, pp. 328-9) and highlights the importance of relationships for making music.

The costs involved in making popular music were an issue for the musicians interviewed in Aberdare, where do-it-yourself approaches and drawing on friends for resources mitigated costs compared to using professional industry personnel and dedicated spaces for recording and rehearsing. Combined with the conditions of popular music-making in Aberdare, where endorsement and approval of their peers were important to the musicians interviewed, suggests that they may feel there is little value in paying to use dedicated spaces and the expertise of industry professionals when they can resource these things themselves. Alternately, for respondents in Merthyr, the costs involved in rehearsing and recording did

not appear to be an issue. Popular musicians interviewed in Merthyr mentioned that any income from their music-making generated funds that helped subsidise some of their musical activities, such as recording and promotion.

The different attitudes and values of the musicians interviewed within Aberdare and Merthyr play a role in their different perspectives towards the resources used and the costs involved. This point emphasises that their attitudes and values affect what they see as viable resources and show differences in what counts as a resource for different people. The value placed on dedicated resources (such as rehearsal rooms and studios and drawing on the expertise of industry professionals) by the musicians interviewed in Merthyr suggests that they view the costs involved as part of the course to reaching their aims of commercial success and industry recognition.

Assumptions that there is a lack of musical activity in semi-rural settings could stem from the perception that these places lack resources. However, this overlooks other kinds of resources that popular musicians might adapt and what they have at hand to facilitate and sustain their musical activities. Facilitating and sustaining popular music-making then emerged as less a question about a lack of resources and more about the kinds of resources popular musicians interviewed in Aberdare and Merthyr use. Rather than, for instance, counting the number of dedicated music resources such as recording and rehearsal studios in a particular place, a consideration of adapted resources as laid out in this thesis provides important insights to help answer the first main research question as to the kinds of resources drawn upon.

Furthermore, this study illuminated the interconnectedness between networks, resources, and motivations. In Aberdare, friendship, family connections and a desire to do things themselves provided access to particular resources. It also alerted us to the respondents'

attitudes and values towards different kinds of resources and what they consider viable for popular music-making.

7.1.2 Attitudes, Approaches, and Activities in Semi-Rural Popular Music Making

The section above illuminated the importance of the relationships involved and the kinds of network ties that were most prevalent in popular music-making, such as friendship ties.

Friendship ties were important for the musicians interviewed in both towns but more so in Aberdare. Friendship ties in Aberdare were crucial for musical collaboration, and particular kinds of friendships signalled affective, material, and workflow ties, which are present when participants want to spend time together and, in doing so, generate musical activity.

Examples of how relationships helped generate musical activity include the Thursday Night Music Club, the funk band that formed on a social media platform and also The Last Friday Club (open mic night) in The Globe in Aberdare and in Merthyr the Stone-Cold Sober Jam Night at The Crown. This corresponds with scholarship that found close-knit friendship ties engendering collaboration and stimulating musical activity (Thoroddsen, 2019).

Collaboration between respondents in Aberdare was essential for sustaining some musical events. It illustrates the interlinking of key factors of how strong friendship network ties play a key role in accessing and generating new and valued musical resources, opportunities, socialisation, and cooperation between those involved. This contrasts with Merthyr, where collaborations were more formal and less frequent, usually with industry professionals such as recording producers and promoters. The Thursday Night Music Club in Aberdare provided an opportunity for those involved to express their musicality in ways that might not be possible on a larger scale and was well suited to the relatively fluid and small collective of actors involved.

There was a sense of the collective creative process and inclusivity when respondents talked about the Thursday Night Music Club, where musical ability was not required to participate. The collaboration created a sense of shared ownership concerning the music they produce in the Thursday Night Music Club, and it is an example that illustrates how strong, close-knit network ties play a role in generating new and valued musical resources. This is also a good example of the meaningful connections between the attitudes of the popular musicians interviewed in Aberdare (where they value the processes involved), the desire to experiment with music, and how their friendship networks help facilitate and sustain this activity.

More value is placed on the people (friends) involved in making popular music happen for Aberdare respondents, such as various open mic nights and the Thursday Night Music Club. Friendship, affective, and material and workflow ties played a vital role in generating musical activity, such as the organisation and implementation of the annual music festival Cwmfest. The friendships between the musicians interviewed and pub landlords in Aberdare reveal a circular exchange of resources that helped sustain Cwmfest, where the festival provides an economic boost for the pubs and landlords, and local popular musicians get to perform live and also get paid and is another example of a loosely organised bartering system meeting the needs of both the musicians and the pub landlords. The organisation of Cwmfest highlights the trust, familiarity, and interdependency between respondents in Aberdare and local pub landlords, which are crucial for the festival to happen.

Patterns of connections were based on mutual appreciation, respect, and a form of collective identity. Being a part of the Aberdare music scene gave respondents a sense of belonging, pride, and responsibility to sustain local popular music-making. To some extent, the community of popular musicians in Aberdare passed down social and musical values through generational ties between family and friends. The passing on of these values played a role in facilitating and sustaining popular music-making in the town, influencing younger

musicians and supporting them, not only in supplying advice and resources but also in demonstrating the importance of the attitudes and values local musicians hold dear, such as collaboration and supporting their peers. Influenced and inspired by the older generation of musicians, the younger musicians interviewed in the town expressed their feelings from watching older musicians as 'life-changing', emphasising how important these experiences were to them. The close-knit network in Aberdare aids in passing on these attitudes and values down through generations, embedding the conventions of local popular music-making in the town.

The musicians interviewed in Aberdare placed great value on collaborating with friends, and the processes involved in making music appeared to be more meaningful to them rather than a focus on the outcomes, as found in the Merthyr sample. Spending time with close friends was a major motivator for respondents in Aberdare and, along with the non-commercial values identified in the interviews, could potentially explain why there was more of a focus on the processes involved rather than the outcome, placing more emphasis on the 'doing of' rather than 'making it' as in commercial success. Gerry Dufrain, one of the musicians interviewed from Aberdare, stated in Chapter Six that the attitude of the band he is in is that; 'we'd still be jamming and still be creating music even if nobody ever listens to it'.⁴¹). This is an example that illustrates the focus of Aberdare respondents on the processes involved rather than the outcomes.

In contrast, respondents in Merthyr collaborated less with one another and tended to draw on industry professionals from outside the town, such as managers, producers, and promoters. The ties involved were mostly formal, workflow, and material. The ties were formal in the sense that there was a financial agreement between actors, and they did not necessarily spend time together socially. The loose-knit network helps to illustrate the

⁴¹ Gerry Dufrain, 47, Drummer from Aberdare

tendency for popular musicians interviewed in Merthyr to seek out industry professionals from outside of the town compared to the cohesive, close-knit connections between respondents in Aberdare. Merthyr respondents placed more value on the economic side of music-making. They felt spending money was essential for sustaining their musical activities and gaining industry recognition.

The most prominent attitudes and values of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr were concerned with income, success, popularity, and a sense of professionalism, which were key motivations underpinning their music-making. Some of the Merthyr respondents felt that if they went about their musical activities in what they perceived as professional ways, such as drawing on industry professionals and using dedicated spaces, it would increase their chances of commercial success. Their focus was on the outcomes involved, in comparison to the focus of Aberdare respondents on the processes involved.

How the musicians interviewed for this study understood success and popularity contrasted between Aberdare and Merthyr and provided valuable insights into their attitudes and values concerning their music-making. Respondents in Merthyr saw success as gaining popularity and music industry recognition and earning a fee or income from their music-making, which went towards paying for recording and promotion, for example, and helped to sustain their musical activities.

The drive for success essentially looked different in Aberdare. It was more based around collaboration with friends, supporting Finnegan's (1989) findings that the value musicians placed on the social aspects of music-making were 'both a mark and cause of [...] mutual interdependence' (Finnegan, 1989, p. 269). This is another example of the interlinking of the key themes in this study between the motivations of musicians and their connections with others. The importance placed on the social aspects of music-making is bound up with the

extent to which musicians draw on friends to facilitate and sustain their popular music-making.

Chapter Six revealed the musical and social values of the popular musicians interviewed through their differing perspectives concerning popularity. Popularity for Aberdare respondents is focused on the local music scene and the approval of their peers, and this is linked to Jason Toynbee's (2000) concept of proto markets, where peer approval is more important to musicians than industry recognition. In contrast, popularity for popular musicians interviewed in Merthyr focused more on national audiences and industry professionals, and some emphasised the value they placed on popularity, saying that they 'trade money for popularity'. What they mean by this is that they pay to get their songs on particular streaming playlists in the hope that it will generate more listens, attention, and recognition from the commercial music industry and audiences local, national, and further afield. The evidence from my research suggests that different kinds of networks engender different views and attitudes towards the commercial music industry and how some terms are interpreted, such as 'success' and 'popularity'.

In Merthyr, many musicians interviewed tailored their music for the commercial music industry and its streaming playlists. This meant they would only use specific tracks for particular playlists in the knowledge that was the kind of music audiences and industry professionals wanted to hear. These approaches connect with the value respondents in Merthyr attach to popularity in the sense of market attention, industry recognition and generating an income from their music-making. This suggests that in the absence of other sources of validation, such as local and peer approval, small-town popular musicians look to other sources, such as the commercial music industry and market.

One of the observations this study made was a sense of a more inward focus for respondents of the close-knit network in Aberdare motivated by, for instance, the quest for

peer approval and is in contrast to the outwardly looking and more loosely knit network in Merthyr. The annual music festivals in the towns, Cwmfest and Merthyr Rising, are examples that illustrate these differing perspectives. Merthyr Rising's desire to gain international recognition for the festival was one of the main motivators of the festival's organisers and links to the more outward-looking aspirations of the musicians interviewed in Merthyr. In contrast, the motivations of the organisers of Cwmfest in Aberdare were to 'keep it local' and keep the festival small.

There was more of a sense of "village-like' properties' (Prior, 2015, p. 90) in Aberdare, where everyone seems to know each other. Several factors could emphasise the village feel, such as the geographical landscape of the town and the proximity between musicians, which is much closer in Aberdare than those interviewed in the Merthyr sample. More importantly, the 'village feel' ties in with the more inward focus of respondents in the town concerning their own musical motivations and attitudes (peer approval) and when organising events such as Cwmfest.

The kinds of networks identified within each town also play a role in why there is more of a village feel in Aberdare compared to Merthyr. The close-knit network in Aberdare illustrates the meaningful connections between respondents and engenders collaboration. Spending time with friends generated musical activity mainly for enjoyment and pleasure (Finnegan 1989, Pitts 2005) rather than for commercial or economic benefits. This again illuminates the interlinking of the key themes, networks, resources, and motivations in facilitating and sustaining popular music-making in the town.

This study revealed differences in the music produced within each town, and I believe there are links between previous matters of networks, resources, motivations, and the kinds of musical sounds emerging. In terms of genre, the music produced in Merthyr was mainly rock, metal, and indie music, while in Aberdare, there was more of an eclectic mix where,

along with rock, metal, and indie, included folk, pop, punk, synth pop and experimental music. To answer why there are differences between the kinds of music produced in the towns, it is to some extent explained by the kinds of resources and networks involved, but there is also a need to consider the attitudes and values of the musicians involved.

Understanding the aspirations and desires of the musicians interviewed to make popular music goes some way to supplying insights into the kinds of music they make. For instance, Chapter Six showed that peer approval was important to the musicians interviewed in Aberdare (in contrast to market recognition, which was prevalent in the Merthyr sample), and what they felt was pushing musical boundaries gained them the respect of their peers. Furthermore, the small pool of musicians in Aberdare engendered a desire to 'be into everything', such as listening to and playing different styles of music.

The non-commercial values prevalent amongst the musicians interviewed in Aberdare connect with Crossley et al., (2015), who suggested that musicians in places outside of cities are less likely to conform to industry pressures concerning the kinds of music produced and the respondents in Aberdare valued experimentation and creating music that did not necessarily meet with what they perceived as commercial music industry norms. They took pride in making music that challenged the mainstream music market and doing it through friendships, which supplied them with long-standing, meaningful connections and a do-it-yourself approach that emboldened their non-commercial values.

Many of the respondents in Aberdare took great pleasure explaining in detail during the interviews how good a sound they produced through non-commercial means despite not having access to studios and mixing desks, for instance, and working with relatively simple equipment. Non-commercial attitudes can also link to the value the musicians interviewed in Aberdare placed on experimentation and creative freedom facilitated by low costs and a do-

it-yourself approach, and the evidence from my research suggests that close-knit networks tend to generate experimentation in the music produced and a greater variety of styles.

In summary, the comparative aspect reveals the tendencies and patterning in this study's data, showing that the musicians interviewed in Aberdare used a broader range of resources compared to the musicians in Merthyr. Despite popular music literature positing that places outside of urban settings lack resources for music-making (Gibson, 2002, Bell and Jayne 2010, Spring 2013), and given its small size, Aberdare had a surprising variety of resources for popular music-making, including multifunctional spaces like homes, sheds, garages, and pubs. Nonetheless, neither town was over-blessed with resources, and what emerged through comparative analysis was how differently their scarcity was managed. The respondents in Aberdare relied on close friendships, trust, and proximity to access and use resources creatively, while in Merthyr, respondents often sought professional resources outside the town because of a loosely-knit network and their motivations for commercial success.

Aberdare had a cohesive network of musicians who, through strong friendships and family ties, had access to resources helping sustain their musical activities. These relationships encouraged mutual support and a bartering system for resources and performance opportunities. Social values like spending time together and peer approval were significant motivators for musicians interviewed in Aberdare, driving collaboration and experimentation. In contrast, the musicians interviewed in Merthyr sat within a more loosely knit network characterised by a mix of formal and informal ties. They were motivated by commercial success and professional image, leading them to form connections with industry professionals. Merthyr's local music festival, Merthyr Rising, aimed for international recognition and included broader cultural elements, contrasting with Aberdare's locally focused Cwmfest. In Aberdare, respondents value the process of making music and peer approval over commercial success, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation. In

contrast, Merthyr respondents prioritised the outcomes, such as gaining income and industry recognition, and this also shaped their approach to making music.

The study extends the understanding of how semi-rural musicians sustain their activities by highlighting the importance of multifunctional spaces, close-knit social networks, and do-it-yourself practices. It aligns with but also expands upon existing scholarship (Finnegan 1989, Cohen 1991, Shank 1994 and Crossley 2015) by providing empirical evidence of these dynamics in semi-rural settings. Comparative analysis enabled this study to reveal the contrasting approaches of the musicians interviewed in Aberdare and Merthyr, illustrating how geographical location and social dynamics shape musicians' aspirations and practices, contributing to broader debates on the influence of place in popular music scholarship. Overall, this study demonstrates that the combination of resources, networks, and motivations plays a crucial role in facilitating and sustaining popular music-making in semi-rural settings, offering valuable insights into the distinctive dynamics of these environments compared to urban settings.

7.2 Contribution

This section discusses this study's contributions to academic research on popular music. My research is situated within the existing body of knowledge of popular music ethnography and network scholarship. As outlined in Chapter One, this study planned to explore the ways musicians went about their music-making in two semi-rural towns. This is the first study comparing popular music-making in two semi-rural towns to provide insights into the different dynamics at play regarding the resources, networks, and motivations involved in popular music-making in these settings.

The in-depth comparative approach enabled this study to reveal the characteristics within each town, the resources relied upon, and musicians' motivations to better understand their

similarities and differences. This study provided an enhanced understanding of musicians' approaches and the meaning of making popular music for musicians in semi-rural towns. Comparing the two semi-rural settings revealed similarities and differences, such as the importance of family ties in gaining skills and knowledge and strengthening explanations of particular characteristics and traits of popular music-making in this setting.

Carrying out comparative analysis is useful when looking at a small number of empirical cases to understand the 'causal processes leading to observed similarities and differences' (Pickvance, 2001, p. 15). A comparative approach also helped me to understand the peculiarities of each case (see Tilly, 1984). It encouraged a deeper understanding of a topic, extending analysis without compromising the depth of detail. Furthermore, comparative analysis helps to avoid 'false uniqueness' (Rose and Mackenzie, 1991), where it is assumed that the one case focused on is exceptional and also avoids 'false universalism' (Rose and Mackenzie, 1991), where it is assumed that the one case applies to all circumstances, times and places and strengthens the verifiability of this study.

This study's focus is different to scholarly literature looking at music-making in cities and urban areas (Finnegan 1989, Cohen 1991, Shank 1994 and Crossley 2015), arguing that semi-rural settings are a rich source of academic interest and offer another perspective of popular music-making compared to the tendency of popular music research to focus on city settings. This study also contributes to popular music literature about music-making networks, focusing on the connections between the local musicians involved, continuing with Ruth Finnegan's (1988) focus in Milton Keynes on 'ordinary'⁴² musicians in contrast to studying well-known and established artists. Furthermore, this study contributes to popular music scholarship by providing important insights into popular music-making and illuminating

⁴² Finnegan, 1989, p. xviii

the meaningful connections between each of the three key themes to emerge from this research study.

This study contributes to scholarship on popular music and place, and the findings suggest that the size of the place does not necessarily indicate the provision of resources for making music. Rather, it is a case of what popular musicians deem as a viable resource depending on their attitudes and values towards music-making, and the kinds of relationships between musicians and also non-musicians are critical in providing different kinds of resources for musicians. Furthermore, in contrast to Lucy Green's (2001) finding that popular musicians learn in 'haphazard and random' (Green, 2001, p. 207) ways, this study found that learning new skills and knowledge for musicians in both towns was rooted in relationships with family members, friends, and peers.

This research makes a contribution to popular music network scholarship by elucidating in what ways relationships generate access to resources, finding circular exchanges of resources and reciprocal ties acting as a loosely organised bartering system that was important in sustaining musical activities, especially in places on the fringes of the commercial music market (Toynbee, 2000). Collaboration was highly valued by the musicians interviewed in Aberdare, motivated by their desire to spend time with each other, and a small pool of musicians within close proximity to one another encouraged musical experimentation, supporting similar findings by Prior (2015) and Thoroddsen (2019).

This study also contributes to popular music scholarship by examining the connections between the resources and the relationships involved in making music. It shows that close relationships are important in generating musical activity in semi-rural settings. For example, the kinds of relationships musicians have with pub landlords could explain the extent of musical activity in some places compared to others.

This study illuminates the effects of different combinations of resources, networks, and motivations on popular musicians' approaches and the kinds of music they produce. The comparative approach of this study enabled me to reveal both the similarities and differences in the approaches taken and the attitudes and values of the popular musicians involved. Highlighting these similarities and differences contributes to qualitative popular music and network scholarship more broadly revealing meaningful connections between the three main aspects of this research, the resources, networks and the attitudes, values and motivations of the musicians involved and helped to explain how popular music-making was facilitated and sustained in these settings.

The implications of this study, thinking on a more micro level about the variations in terms of the kinds of resources and relationships involved, reveal important similarities and distinctions between the networks involved and the ways in which popular music-making happens in the towns. Furthermore, the micro-level findings serve to complicate the categories of resources, networks, and motivations in various ways, where access to resources and the activities that happen are bound up with the relationships between people and their attitudes, values and motivations concerning popular music-making.

7.3 Future Research

This research focused on questions about how popular musicians make music in semi-rural settings. It provides a good starting point for discussing the research on popular musical activity in different kinds of semi-rurality, both in and across different national contexts. This approach might yield further insights and provide a comparative basis for ongoing research in popular music and music and place scholarship.

Finally, this research has highlighted the importance of investigating popular music-making in semi-rural settings, which often receives little attention from scholars. The lack of scholarly

attention could risk not recognising these settings as a rich source of information on popular music-making outside of cities and urban areas and as meaningful experiences for popular musicians bound up in complex networks of friendship, family and their own attitudes, values, and motivations. I hope that the results of this research might be helpful in bettering our understanding of how popular music-making happens in semi-rural settings, reaching a deeper understanding of the role popular music plays for the people involved and society more generally.

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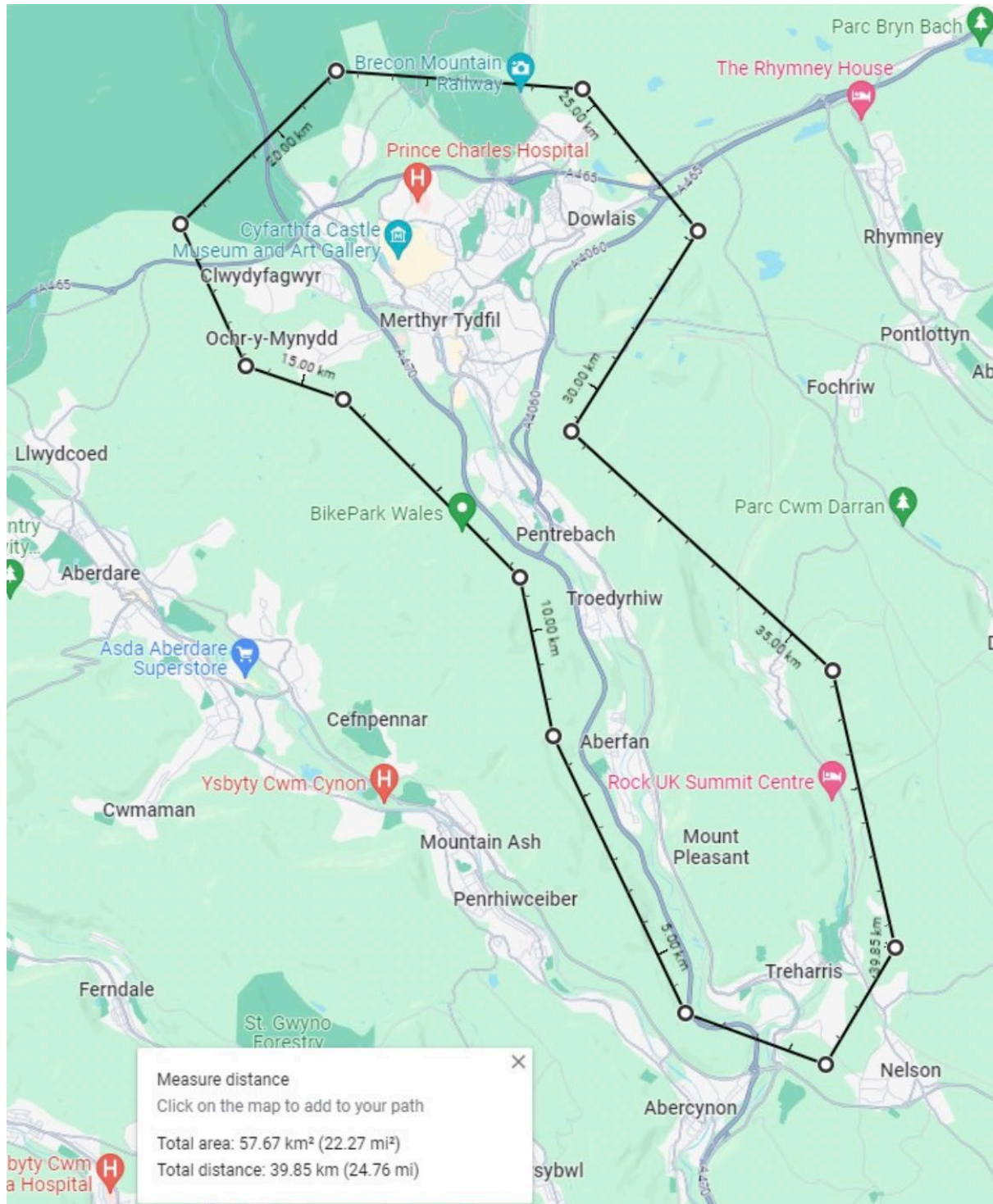
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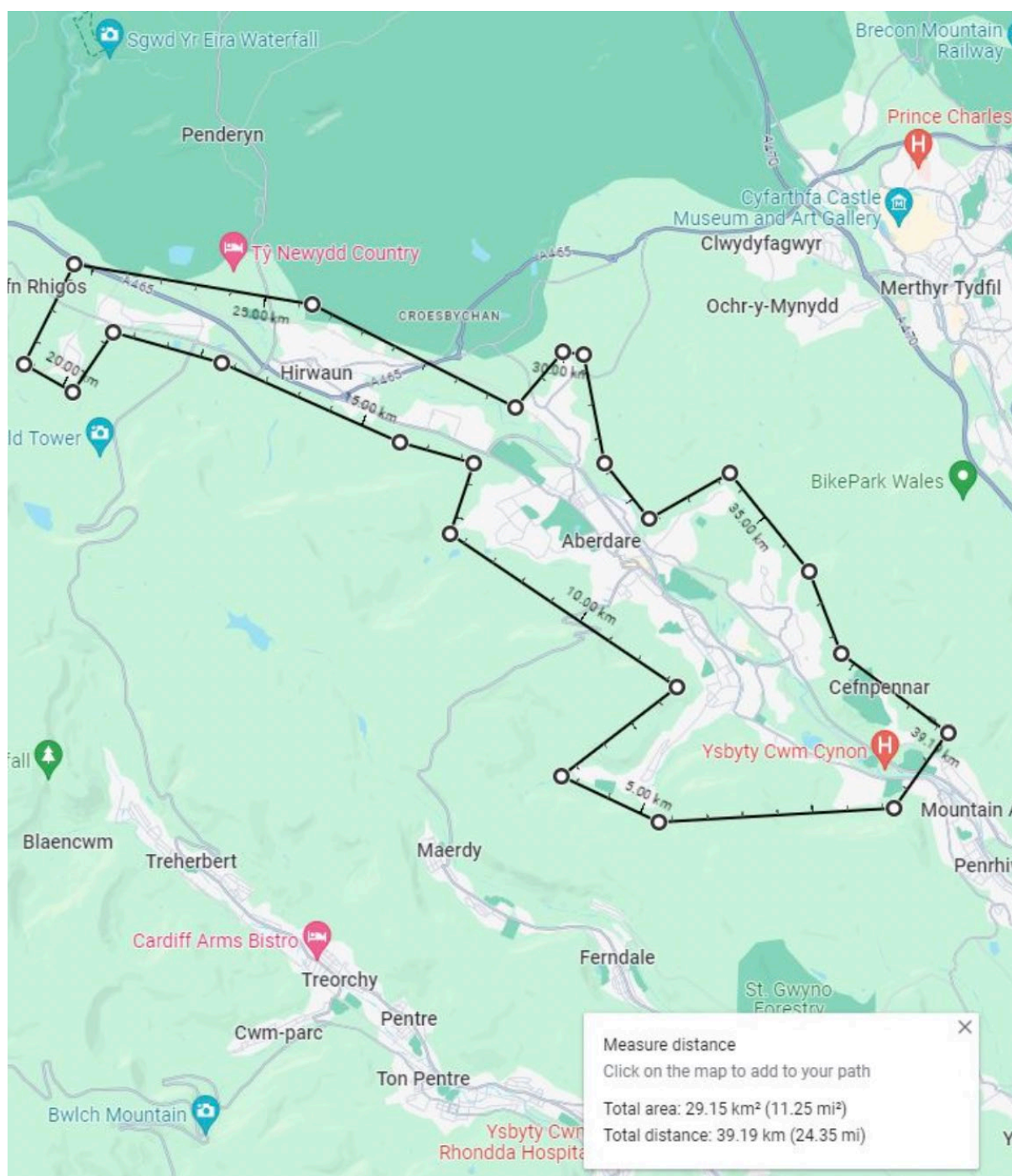
APPENDIX A

Boundary maps of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil

1. Google map image created by the author of the area of Merthyr Tydfil showing the boundaries of the town.



2. Google map image created by the author of the area of Aberdare showing the boundaries of the town.



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Checklist: Consent forms, participant information forms, Interview schedule, notepad, and pen, recording device, batteries.

Opening

Greetings and handshake, thank the participant for agreeing to take part.

If not given prior to the interview, in person, digitally or by post, the participant information sheet will be given before the interview starts. Consent forms will also be given before the interview commences to be signed by the participant. Remind the participant that the interview should take approximately one hour, and is recorded, audio only, and ask if they have any questions before I start the interview.

Sound check and start the recorder [state date, time, place, and name of participant at the start of each recording].

Interview Questions [30-60 mins]

- What music do you like? – Can you give me some examples?
- What music do you play? - How would you describe your music?

- Tell me about your musical practices – The range of different activities involved [**ASK each one individually** - writing, rehearsing, and recording for example]. How would you describe what you do?
- Are there any responsibilities and roles adopted? Who books gigs, finances, and promotion for example?
 - Who else is involved? How do you stay in touch? How would you describe your relationship with them? Give me some examples of your interactions, any particular instances that you can recall? How did you get to know each other?
- What resources do you use in the area? - Why there and not other places? How often?
- How often do you play live? - How often in MT/Ab? - Where is that then? How is equipment transported? Do you get paid?
- What and/or who is critical in enabling you to make music?
- How important is making music to you?
- What motivates you to continue making music - What do you get out of it?
- How do you find the time to make music?
- What factors make it difficult to make music in MT/Ab?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank participant and STOP RECORDING

Closing:

The participant will be asked if they would agree [if required] to me contacting them for follow up questions or to clarify particular points raised in the interview. Make sure I have their consent form and sociogram, if employed, then check contact details are correct before participant leaves, thank the participant for their time.

Anne Cleaton (Researcher)

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10 July 2024



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How Musical Is My Valley?
Exploring How Popular Music-Making is Facilitated and Sustained
in Semi-Rural Settings

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Participant)

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do decide to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from the records and will not be included in any results, up to the point the researcher has analysed and published the results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. Any recordings taken will be used for analysis purposes only.

No third parties will have access to participants' information. The sole researcher only, Anne Cleaton, will have access to the hard data and the supervisory team may be privy to the content to offer advice and guidance for analysis. Any recordings made will be kept on a password protected external hard drive kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researchers' possession until the end of this study, September 30th 2023 when recordings will be destroyed.

Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications. By providing your consent, you are agreeing to Anne Cleaton collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this *Consent Form*, unless you state otherwise.

Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2015). You will need to fill in two copies of the consent form, returning one to the researcher and keeping the other copy for your records. Please keep this information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

In giving my consent I state that:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study and what I will be asked to do.
- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement.
- ✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part.
- ✓ *I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.*
- ✓ *I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.*
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but unless stipulated below these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES

NO

If you answered **YES**, please fill in the details below:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature.....

Print Name.....

Date.....

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

MERTHYR TYDFIL

Steve Jackson:

Steve Jackson is a singer, songwriter and has been an active performing musician in Merthyr Tydfil since his teens in the late 1990s. Focused mainly on Americana and country and blues music Steve writes about local issues and history such as the Miner's strike in the 1980s that hit the area so hard. Steve expanded his musical experience and knowledge at Red Kite Studios in Llandovery and Sonic 1 studios in Llanelli recording his own material collaborating with a friend Nigel Jones in writing two film scores, The Reverend and Risen. Working around family life and a full-time job Steve collaborates with a few local musicians who are also his friends to record and perform his material live.

Bethan Shearer:

Bethan is a 23-year-old female solo artist, singer and guitarist playing her own original material mainly in the style of folk and country music but also mixes in influences from dance music, rock, and Americana. Coming from a musical family Bethan started taking an interest in music from the age of about twelve when her aunt, who is also a singer and guitarist bought her a guitar and offered her guitar lessons. Bethan continued to develop her writing and playing skills and in 2016 enrolled in a local scheme called the Forte Project to help young musicians under the age of twenty-five develop their skills and industry acumen, a year-long course paid for by local government and the Welsh Arts Council. Over the last five years Bethan has produced numerous recordings and has performed for BBC Radio Wales,

the Big Cheese Festival, Hub, and Swn Festivals and plays regularly around the south Wales region. Bethan is currently working full time to develop her music career.

Ed Jones:

Ed is a full-time musician and played drums for a local four-piece band called Pretty Vicious formed with friends all living in Merthyr and focused on a mix of Brit pop, Indie, and punk rock. After the release of their debut single Cave Song on Soundcloud in 2014 and only four local shows the band, still in their teens were signed to Big Machine/ John Varvatos Records and after touring and promoting singles and experiencing many difficulties along the way they released their debut album in 2019. Unfortunately, that band split up at the start of 2020 due to health issues concerning the band's frontman Brad Griffiths. Ed continues playing, endorsed by Tama and Zildjian and also tutors drum technique.

Geraint Morgan:

Geraint is an experienced and seasoned amateur musician who has played the clubs and pubs around the south Wales circuit for over fifty years. An accomplished electric guitar player, Geraint has played mainly in rock and roll, and blues style covers bands and has written and performed his own material in bands back in the 1980s. Since retirement Geraint continues to rehearse and perform regularly with his current band.

Gareth Mitchell:

Gareth is a staff nurse for the NHS and in his spare time he plays in a local Merthyr band focusing on covers from hard rock to rock and roll music. Gareth is a guitarist but also plays drums and is well known on the local music scene having played Merthyr regularly. Gareth regularly collaborates with other local musicians and as well as an active performer in the

local music scene he is a regular supporter of and attendee at local gigs and open mic nights in the town.

Justin Brown:

Justin is an experienced guitarist with a love for extreme heavy metal music but plays Welsh language folk music and runs Caffi Soar in the Welsh centre in Merthyr Tydfil. Justin has been an active musician in the area for over 30 years and as a Welsh speaker promotes the Welsh language through music events held in the Caffi and is actively involved in showcasing local music in both Welsh and English, providing the equipment and a platform for bands and artists, especially those starting out to try out their music. Among the events Justin is promoting and organising is a 'heavy metal DIY night' called Trwm held once a month on a Saturday night giving those starting out the opportunity to play in front of their peers.

Janine Smith:

I approached Janine for an interview because of her involvement with the arts centre, Redhouse, in Merthyr. Janine is the principal librarian at Merthyr Tydfil library and Head of Culture at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust. The Trust are responsible for, as well as museums and the local leisure centre, the running of the Redhouse. Janine liaises between staff at Redhouse, the council and the local college who rent out space in Redhouse. Janine has been in debates and talks with local musicians and artists concerning the running of and the future of Redhouse as an arts centre.

Jacob Dent:

Jacob moved with his family to Merthyr Tydfil from Portugal and was initially working in the local abattoir before taking over the pub The Crown at the bottom end of Merthyr's main high Street. The Crown had been a spit and sawdust pub for many years and was known for providing live rock music although this was not consistent. Jacob took over The Crown, renaming it The New Crown Inn and giving the place a complete refurbishment including a small but appropriate place for bands and artists to play. The venue has an events calendar where all nights of the week except Mondays there is live music playing from local original artists cover bands and tributes to bigger names currently touring across the UK such as Toploader and Wheatus for example. More recently Jacob has extended the pub to include a dining area and the courtyard at the rear of the venue is also able to accommodate live music increasing the venue from 150 to 300 capacity. Jacob has played a big part in sustaining a music scene in Merthyr offering a platform for artists to perform live. In 2013 Crownload Festival was piloted, a one day music festival in the beer garden of the pub and this has been expanded in subsequent years to include the car park behind the pub.

Lisa Jones:

Lisa is a multi-tribute artist specialising in vocal impersonations of different pop artists such as Britney Spears, Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande for example. Lisa is an experienced full-time performer with a busy schedule. She also plays piano and has written her own material in her spare time. I asked Lisa to take part in the study because of her involvement in music and also to hear more from female musicians in the valleys.

Lee Williams:

Lee is a well-known figure in Merthyr's music scene as an ardent supporter of local music and one of the main organisers of the Merthyr Rising Festival. Lee's background is in marketing and digital software and in 2014 was involved with organising and promoting

events in Merthyr for example 'We Love Merthyr' an event set up for local businesses to network with each other. At the same time Redhouse, the local arts centre was open and busy, and Lee was promoting other events in the town when another local man Ian Jenkins set up a small one day event called Merthyr Rising including politics, debates, film and music and asked Lee to come onboard to help organise and promote the event. Lee spotted the potential to expand the festival by including the Redhouse, the main square in Merthyr and other venues such as Caffi Soar to be involved. The festival runs for three days one weekend in May every year but there are doubts about the festival's future with support waning from local council and some local shopkeepers are not happy with the closure of certain parts of the town because of the festival. Due to the pressures of the role Lee has stepped down from the Merthyr Rising team and now owns and runs his own wine bar in Merthyr town centre and often puts on live music supporting local bands and artists.

Anthony Jenkins:

Anthony is a classically trained pianist and guitarist specialising in jazz and funk and is from Merthyr and studying at the Welsh College of music and Drama in Cardiff. He is well-known musician in the Merthyr popular music scene playing for various local musicians usually rock and Americana style as well as his own funk band and various trios and quartets through music college. Despite his age Anthony has a great deal of experience in performing, arranging, and writing and he is in high demand amongst other local musicians to contribute to their projects.

Sam Gregory:

Sam owns his own business in Ebbw Vale about ten miles east of Merthyr and is the rhythm guitarist, vocalist, and main song writer in his band specialising in indie, Brit pop rock music, heavily influenced by local bands The Manic Street Preachers and the Stereophonics. Sam's

band are a tight team with a professional approach and all members have industry experience to varying extents in particular the lead guitarist was member of a well-known Welsh band that received international success in both the rock scene and in the mainstream charts in the late 1990s. Sam is a highly motivated and driven individual with one clear aim, to 'make it' and the band are currently gigging and recording and will be releasing material in the next few months.

Steve Gresham:

Steve is originally from Aberdare but now lives in Cardiff and is the Youth Music Development Officer for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) and this job allows Steve to also deliver the Forte Project across the south Wales area. This project along with other schemes such as Sonig and Young Performers Network supports young musicians with writing and performing their own material but also how to promote their music, improve their stage craft, how to manage finances and their relationship with the industry for example. Steve is a respected and well-known face to many involved in music across the south Wales region.

Lloyd Davies:

Lloyd is a well-respected and very well-known musician in the Merthyr music scene who has played drums in many bands and is currently in five bands at the time of writing and has over the thirty years of experience playing music. Specialising in Southern American rock and blues in both cover and original outfits. Lloyd is self-taught and his vast experience of the scene in Merthyr and his continued involvement make him an invaluable person to speak to about the popular music scene in Merthyr.

Aled Davey:

Aled is a guitarist and vocalist and is an experienced member of the Merthyr music scene and has been writing and performing with bands playing original music and covers for over 30 years. Well connected to other key figures involved in music making in Merthyr Aled fits his musical activities around family life and his day job.

Logan Jones:

Logan became interested in making music in his teens and started playing guitar in a band with his school friends and has been a well-known face in the Merthyr music scene for many years. Logan is known mainly for his solo work which he plays guitar and sings a mixture of covers and his own material often focusing on wellbeing and mental health issues. He also plays in a covers duo and regularly gigs and records fitting it around family life and a full time job.

Phillip Williams:

Phillip is an experienced drummer involved in the Merthyr music scene for over thirty years and is also a sound technician and has worked in theatres and venues in Merthyr Tydfil (Redhouse) and Aberdare (The Coliseum). Phillip has been key in facilitating and promoting various music events in Merthyr such as The Scooter Rally, The Drum Festival and Merthyr Rising Festival.

Grant Miller:

As well as a musician Grant has been instrumental in sustaining Merthyr Rising Festival. A huge advocate of local talent and live music he gives up his spare time around being a self-employed engineer to organise and promote local music events. Grant has been very critical

about the running of the local arts centre Redhouse and with other local people have been trying to persuade the local council/trust to make the centre more inclusive and help keep the venue open.

Kirsty James:

I asked Kirsty for an interview because of her involvement with the Save Our Redhouse campaign asking for more scrutiny and transparency in the way the local Council and Trust are running the only dedicated space for arts in Merthyr. Kirsty is an experienced drama coach with a degree in drama and countless tours under her belt and at the time of interview was a full-time mum.

Rory Knight:

Rory is an experienced and well-known musician in Merthyr Tydfil but has recently taken on a more supportive role to other musicians and The Idea (an indie band from Merthyr) recommended I interview him. With pressures from work Rory found it difficult to maintain performing and rehearsal schedules but still does play at home. Rory was a key link in facilitating local band Pretty Vicious's first recording sessions and has helped many other bands and musicians with advice, equipment and recommending them for gigs.

Rachel Clements:

Rachel has fronted mainly cover bands in Merthyr for over forty years and has a wealth of experience and a huge network of musician friends and colleagues. Rachel initially started out in cabaret but in more recent projects has covered classic and complex rock songs with great success creating a fanbase across the south Wales valleys area.

Sean Williams:

Sean works for the local council but has been involved in music making since secondary school forming a band with school friends but also singing in the school and county choirs and went on to study music at university. Initially Sean played guitar but switched to bass and has played in numerous bands in Merthyr with key members of the music scene and is a member of Merthyr's longest running and most well-known heavy rock covers band.

Rich Newsom:

Rich is a musician and has also just started his own promotion company promoting local bands and fits this around his part-time job at a local call centre but is hoping to be able to do promotion full time. Rich is also a regular volunteer at the Merthyr Rising Festival, booking bands and helps to organise the running of the stage.

Danny Howell:

Danny is the lead singer and guitarist of an up and coming band from Merthyr Tydfil. Danny enrolled on a music course in a local college and this experience spurred him on to start a rock band with his lyrics mainly focusing on people he knows and situations they have been in. Danny's band are due to record their first EP in the next few months.

The Idea:

The Idea are an upbeat indie band from Merthyr made up of four friends all with varying experience in music-making, but all have played in bands previous to this band. Although music-making is organised around their day jobs and family they adopt a professional

approach releasing music and videos and they are working on promoting and getting gigs in the hope to be signed.

ABERDARE:

Andy Roberts:

I asked Andy a drummer and bassist to take part in this study because of his involvement in the Aberdare music scene as both a musician and in a supporting role as the sound technician in the dedicated music venue in the town. The music Andy focuses on in his band is a mix of country, hip hop, blues and funk and he also plays percussion and the Cajon, mainly creating original music but they also include a cover or two in their sets.

Bigfoot:

Bigfoot are a young band from Aberdare who described themselves as psychedelic alternative indie rock and their line-up includes two females which is unusual in bands in the area. All members of the band are either in full-time employment or study with one taking a hiatus in her studies. This band was asked to participate in the study to hear from younger musicians in the area and also to hear some female responses to questions asked.

Furthermore, the band are known amongst musicians in the local area with connections to key members of the local music scene and are often asked to support and participate in local gigs.

Connor Powell:

Connor grew up in Aberdare and was interested in music from a young age forming his own band in 1996 with his friends building up a strong following at the time in Aberdare. The band focused mainly on covers but they did write some original material. Connor has been one of

the main figures in the local music scene constantly making music and more recently has released his own solo albums of original material working around full-time employment and family commitments. In addition to his original material Connor does sing and play guitar in a tribute act.

Dave Threadwell:

Dave is one of the original members of a well-known band back in the mid 1990s where another member went on to form the Stereophonics and he is a well-respected and experienced member of the Aberdare music scene. In recent years, fitting it around a full-time job, Dave formed an AC/DC tribute band playing rhythm guitar and is the main driving force behind getting gigs and promoting the band.

Dave Roberts Holt:

Dave is a key figure in the Aberdare music scene, a bassist and singer and has been in numerous bands over the years both covers and original music spanning from electronica to hard rock. Dave's role in the scene is not only as a musician, he is also one of the main organisers of the local annual music festival Cwmfest volunteering around full-time employment involving fund raising for the festival, organising the set lists in each venue, and coordinating the bands and artists to play.

Ieuan Griffiths:

Ieuan was a key figure in the Aberdare music scene back in the 1990s and has extensive knowledge of the local music scene, but after a serious illness was unable to perform for many years. Despite his illness, he continued to attend local gigs and festivals to support his

friends. Recently Ieuan's health has improved, and he has reformed his band who have recently started writing and gigging again.

Andy Davies:

Andy is a veteran of the Aberdare music scene and has been playing guitar and singing for over fifty years. Andy is a regular at most open mic nights in the area and has been in numerous bands focusing mainly on folk, blues and negro spirituals and has extensive knowledge of the local music scene.

Aaron Lewis:

Aaron is a well-known member of the Aberdare music scene and is an accomplished keyboard and synth player and has been in many bands in Aberdare since the 1990s. The music Aaron focuses on is mainly electronic and pop music covers and he is also in a tribute band in his spare time outside of work and family life.

Charlie Denning:

Charlie is not a full-time musician but is one of the key figures in the Aberdare music scene. His background is in musical theatre being a member in his youth of the local amateur dramatic society. A self-taught keyboard player Charlie, described by other local musicians as Aberdare music royalty with extensive experience being in bands and many years ago signed with a recording label with a band formed with musicians from Merthyr Tydfil. He is one member of Aberdare's most successful unsigned and longest running bands and collaborates extensively with other musicians in the area in a wide range of styles from free form improvisation to ska and rock and roll.

Dylan Andrews:

Dylan is a drummer and bass player in numerous bands in Aberdare well connected in the local music scene. Dylan has extensive knowledge of the local music scene and has experience as a touring musician and tour manager focusing on covers and original music mainly in the punk and rock styles.

Alyn Perkins:

Alyn started out playing covers in a Brit pop style band when he was in his teens. He returned to Wales after moving away to university and has a full time job and a family but is writing his own material in his spare time. His inspiration has come from song writers rather than artists and as well as trying out his songs on guitar at open mic nights, his most recent project which has taken years to realise has involved many collaborations with musicians, producers and artists among others to produce a concept album of seventeen songs looking at the cycle of life dealing with love, loss and other emotions, each song has its own individual artwork by a local artist. Another interview participant recommended Alyn because of a current project they were both collaborating on together.

Harry Dewey:

Harry plays guitar and is the lead singer of a band that practice in the almost legendary Shed in Rhigos at the northern end of Aberdare. The bands who use this rehearsal space (an articulated lorry with a DIY extension on the side) are part of a network of musicians who are also friends and have been in a number of bands since the mid to late 1990s and are well-known in the local music scene. Harry, although an experienced frontman has only been in one band before his current outfit who have now been together for over ten years and have numerous releases to their name. All the band work full-time and Harry is the main

coordinator in the band and describes the music as alternative rock with elements of folk, heavy rock, and stoner rock.

Jim Brenner:

Jim is one of the very few professional musicians in the area mainly teaching guitar and also performing and session work. He writes and records his own solo material and also plays piano and has played in many bands in Aberdare over the years. His main band has a huge local following and have been together for over twenty years and he was selected for this study because of his deep knowledge of all things local and musical and he is very well connected in the local music scene.

Katy and John Morgan (Phoenix):

Phoenix is a covers band in Aberdare and three of the four members including John are highly experienced performing musicians with thirty years plus experience each and the fourth Katy (who is married to John) is a relative newcomer and this is her second band. Two members were in a very successful covers act a few years before this research was undertaken and are well known on the music covers circuit. They have a wealth of experience of gigging in and around Aberdare and provide invaluable insights into issues concerning venues, equipment, professionalism and relationships involved.

Neil Galsworthy:

Neil is a guitarist and long-time member of the Aberdare music scene and started out in the late 1980s playing punk and hard rock covers. Neil has been involved in many bands over the years and also runs an open mic night in a local pub. Neil is also one of the founders of the local annual music festival Cwmfest. His current projects consist of a ska covers band

and an experimental group that create songs from concepts, random word generators and free-form improvisational sessions.

Steve Bennett:

Steve is relatively new to the Aberdare music scene but not new to playing drums, he played in bands as a teenager but stopped when he moved away to go to university. Steve has lived in Aberdare for about twenty years now and in the last seven years has started collaborating with key members of the Aberdare music scene to create experimental, conceptual music in his spare time outside of work and family life.

Gerry Dufrain, Bradley Brannock, Cameron James:

These three musicians are a heavy psychedelic rock trio that describe themselves as Cthulhu math rock jazz. They are an instrumental three-piece that experiment with different guitar sounds, time signatures and concepts with the odd scream of 'any old iron!' at particular moments within one song. All members work or study full time and two of the members have been making music together since the mid 1990s and the third member is a long-time friend and experienced musician. Although all three are accomplished musicians in the local scene this is a relatively new band and they are in the process of building up gigs, releasing recordings and building up a following.

John Phillips:

John is mainly a solo artist and a prolific busker who has travelled across Europe playing music. John is a free spirit and music is his life, he works enough to pay the bills, but his main focus is music. He writes his own material mainly on guitar, but he also plays penny

whistle, pan pipes, charango and harmonica. He is currently in two bands in Aberdare and both are experimental comedy bands.

Mike Thomas:

Mike is one of the main figures in the Aberdare music scene as the moment. He is the frontman of two bands one original music and the other a tribute band influenced by electronica and 1980s pop music. Mike has promoted and coordinated many gigs and events mainly in the local music venue and oversaw the bookings of bands until recently where work and family commitments meant that Mike had to hand his role as booking manager to someone else to give him more time to focus on his two bands.

Warren Baker:

I asked Warren to be a participant in this research because of his many years as an active member of the music scene in Aberdare. He has played guitar in numerous bands and has experienced some industry interest with different projects over the years. Warren has recently started branching out into producing which connects him with many local musicians and not just his friends and band mates. Warren has extensive knowledge of the local music scene and has played in various styles over the years from punk, dance and metal to pop, electronic music and lo-fi.

Christian Lewis:

Christian is one of the youngest participants in this study but has a great deal of experience both as a performing musician (bass and guitar) of original music and covers but also as an event organiser, coordinating original music acts in Aberdare and Bristol. Christian now splits his time between Bristol where he studied music and Aberdare. I was interested in his views

as a younger member of the scene and if there are any similarities or contrasts in the responses compared to older members of the scene and also for his insights from both a city and small town perspective.

APPENDIX D

Artists and bands performing at Cwmfest and Merthyr Rising Festivals

CWMFEST 2019

1. Wager – Aberdare, original rock punk music
2. Fireroad – Aberdare, original MOR Rock music
3. Skacasm – Aberdare, covers 2 Tone and ska music
4. T.W.A.T – original, pop, rockabilly, reggae music
5. Heavy Flames – Aberdare, original indie blues rock music
6. Carolines - Cardiff, originals indie music
7. Trevor and the Sprouts – Aberdare, covers, rock and pop music
8. Parcel of Rogues – Aberdare, covers folk and pop music
9. Dr. Bland’s Bad Batch – Aberdare, originals, indie, hip hop, country music
10. Hang 11 – Rhondda, original, blues, rock, funk music
11. Jamie McCardle – Aberdare, original, folk music
12. The Real Goners – Swansea, original, rock and roll, rhythm, and blues music
13. The Lonely Hearts – Cheshire, covers pop and rock music
14. The Sam Johnson Band – Cardiff, original rock, and blues music
15. Feverjaw – Swansea, original alternative rock music (Collab with WB – Aberdare)
16. Dunkie – Aberdare, original lo-fi pop music
17. Rob Lear – Cardiff, pop, rock, folk music
18. Mitch and the Millipedes – Aberdare, Adam Ant tribute band
19. Crystalline – Cardiff, original rock indie music
20. Common Spit – Aberdare, original maths jazz music
21. Woodsman – Bargoed, original punk music

22. 4 Brothers – Aberdare, original west coast rock, folk, and country music
23. 3 MPH – Newport, original, folk music
24. Angri Kidd – Maerdy, original rock music
25. Stephen John – Aberdare, original/covers pop/folk music
26. Mahouts – Aberdare, original indie, folk music
27. Gaudy Orde – Cardiff, Gloucester and Aberdare, folk/skiffle/vaudeville/comedy
28. Mud on the Tyres – Blackwood, country music
29. Louise and the Feathers – West Wales, folk music
30. Curly and the Gandy Dancers – Aberdare, original vocal ensemble, folk, negro spiritual music.
31. Sunshine Maniac – Aberdare, original indie rock music
32. Shovelface – Aberdare, original heavy rock band
33. Anonymous Iconoclasts – Cardiff, pop/rock/country music
34. The Puss Puss Band – Cardiff, Ambient jazz, folk, chill pop music
35. Pete Jagger – Aberdare, folk music
36. Secret Faces – Brecon, Indie rock music
37. Fiddlers Elbow – Hull, folk music
38. Lost Twenties – Yorkshire, indie rock
39. Tom Auton – Cardiff, rock, and blues music
40. Thomas Davies – Aberdare, folk, rock music
41. Super Marine – Blackwood, alt rock music
42. TUN – Aberdare, original psychedelic heavy rock music

MERTHYR RISING 2019

1. Black Grape – Manchester, original, electronic rock, and funk music
2. Cast – Liverpool, original, indie rock music
3. Sugar Hill Gang – America, original, rap and hip hop music

4. Lowkey – London, original, rap music
5. Neville Staple – Coventry, original 2 Tone, Ska, and new wave music
6. Brushy One String – Jamaica, original, reggae music
7. The Men They Couldn't Hang – London, Portsmouth, Southampton, original, folk rock/punk music
8. The Sandinistas – Tredegar, original, punk pop music
9. Atilla the Stockbroker – Brighton, original, poet and punk, folk music
10. The Adam Hussain Show – Newport, original rap music
11. Henry's Funeral Shoe – Caerphilly, original, heavy blues rock music
12. Du Bellows – London, original, psychedelic progressive rock music
13. Son of Man – Merthyr, original progressive rock music
14. The Now – Swansea, original, indie rock music
15. Pastel – Manchester, original shoegaze indie music (bassist from Merthyr)
16. Bute – Cardiff, original, heavy indie rock music
17. The Rotanas – Cardiff, original rock music
18. Adrenaline Animals – London, original punk rock music
19. Red Rum Club – Liverpool, original alternative indie music
20. Police Rave Unit – Bristol, DJ Dance music
21. Pagans S.O.H. – West Bromwich, hip hop, funk, jazz, reggae, metal music
22. Tracey Island – Merthyr, original, indie music
23. The Moonbirds – Merthyr, jazz, pop music
24. Carolines – Cardiff, originals indie music
25. The Mondaines – Merthyr, indie rock music
26. The Witching Hour – London, original, goth music
27. Al Moses – Cardiff, original, indie punk music
28. Killjoys – Birmingham, original, punk music
29. Diggs – Merthyr, original indie music
30. Hana2K – Cardiff, pop music

31. Jack Mason – Merthyr, original indie rock music
32. Chris King – Merthyr, original, Americana music
33. Charlies Says – Cardiff, indie rock music.
34. The Exiles – Carlisle, punk music
35. The Biggest Thing Since Powdered Milk
36. Acid House Therapy – Bristol, acid music
37. The Red Poets – Wrexham, spoken word
38. Hang 11 - Rhondda, original, blues, rock, funk music
39. Thee Deadtime Philharmonic – Derby, rock music
40. DJ Max Galactic – London, DJ, dance music
41. Bryony Sier – Merthyr, original folk, country, Americana music
42. Bedface – Aberdare, original, indie rock band
43. Stay Voiceless – Cardiff, rock music
44. Craig Thomas – Merthyr, rock music
45. Quality Sounds – Merthyr, DJ – Northern Soul/Mod/Ska music
46. Public Order – Merthyr, dance music
47. Belle Mellor – Cardiff/Merthyr – folk and rock music

APPENDIX E

Transcription of Aberdare Interviews

Interview with Aaron and Christian Lewis, 08-02-2020, The Conwy Inn, Aberdare @ 2:05 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

AL – Aaron Lewis, CL – Christian Lewis, Participants

AC: Hello boys alright

CL: Hello

AC: How're you doing

CL: Very well

AL: Good thank you

AC: Okay, um, a couple of general questions to start, what music do you both like?

CL: Oh I guess it's quite varied um, um I've been brought up on um '70s and '80s post-punk new wave scene that my dad was into um, but I sort of as a result of that always looked for independent music as well like in recent years, so, god I dunno, I dunno examples but I'm bad at it, yeah I'm always looking for new music.

AL: You like the math rock was...

CL: Yeah math rock was my big thing that's a very like...

AL: And a lot of bands down where you live in Bristol, I'm not saying necessarily [inaudible] other bands are there and bands are unsigned...

AC: Like local bands to where you are?

CL: Yeah basically yeah.

AL: Very good bands [inaudible] they're local but they are...

AC: Good quality bands?

CL: They are [inaudible] they do recordings and things but it's not [inaudible] in our local scene [inaudible] math rock, to give you some examples [rattles off some band names from Bristol] there's just loads, they've all got silly names but they're all like wonderful and ah they're all doing creative music that's interesting and different from the commercial norm I suppose? So, yeah.

AC: Would you say you like that intricate sort of 'cause math rock is

CL: Yeah. I mean it, it's, I mean I guess it's intricate without being too pretentious I think there's like a limit they need to be at...

AL: It's gotta be commercial at the same time hasn't it

CL: Yeah, yeah

AL: It can't just be self-indulgent and going off on these weird tangents, it has to somehow narrow itself down to be [inaudible] for people of all different audiences, I mean one of the biggest bands is The Foals isn't it?

CL: Yeah

AL: Right, right they're huge Foals now they're really dominant and they brought two albums out last year, didn't they?

CL: Yeah

AL: And um we were watching a film the other day and one of the tracks was, I think it was Scary Stories to Tell [CL: Okay] that and when they were in the car they were playing a Foals track off one of their recent albums and that means that it's permeated even to America to that level where they were before they were really underground...

CL: Where they started off was like math rock so they're an example of how that's gone, y'know it's reached a larger audience. I guess other bands out of that genre are like Battles, they've sort of, Everything Anything as well that's another example of a band in the genre but they've sort of shifted now but it's how it started off, it's roots, anyway that's what I'm into my father on the other hand [laughs]

AL: I'm afraid I'm very much still lost in the past really, I mean ah, I don't, I mean I don't hate all music that I hear um sometimes I'm I work and the radio's on and I hear the odd track and think [inaudible] ah Blinding Lights that came out the other day that was quite '80s sounding so there harks back to synthesizers sounds that way but um what's the other guy um, [inaudible] a song called Circles is it? [mumbling, inaudible and some laughter] I can find out...

AC: You like the older bands as well the '80s...

AL: I try to keep up as much as possible with certain, he introduces ah he suggests a lot of things, send me a download link from an album he's bought and things like that, I try to keep up but really, I think I stopped following mainstream music in the 2000's really thinking about it, I mean, Brit poppy I loved all that stuff, the Blur

AC: Why do you think that kind of....

AL: I think, I don't think it comes down to whether you're interesting it's an actual thing that happens with people, I think the music you'll always love in your life it happens in your formative years it starts about seven or eight and ends about the age of twenty four? And I think um whatever tools you need y'know for musical nurturing they happen I those years and you, you concentrate on those albums far more astutely than you do other stuff and you keep going back to that stuff so. One example for Adam and the Ants right when I was ten I won a competition the cooperative societies local art competition, it's a true story, it's not Auntie Brenda in the post [laughter] it was an actual tug-of-war picture right and I won the competition because of the expressions on the guys' faces right so they gave me a five pound voucher and I went straight to the co-op and bought that album right [inaudible] and I played

that to death and death and death and pretty much with any album I bought from the age of ten to fifteen I did the same thing you'd read the sleeve notes you really um look at every single thing, you don't do that now, you stream now and um it's not the same really.

AC: Do you stream yourself?

AL: Nah

CL: I do, but this is the point I'd like to make I buy vinyl, I do argue, I, I agree with him [AL] on the fact of the difference sort of thing because...

AL: I'm not disputing that, what I don't like about streaming is that the royalties and the fact that it's all if you can have a million streams it's still only pounds, well that's disgusting really. If somebody's gone to all the trouble of like you wouldn't tell a plumber or carpenter you wouldn't say just [inaudible] um I'm gonna give you this job because you enjoy doing it, it's experience. But with music or writing or anything like that they say you should be grateful for the exposure [CL: Yeah [laughs] and it's much the same way with music but the thing is everybody can make music now 'cause everybody's got a Mac and they've all got Pro-Tools and [inaudible] use sample of amplifiers and guitars...

CL: They can sound like a real band but just done it in their bedroom and nobody can really tell the difference. Y'know obviously there is a difference [inaudible]

AL: So really um but now [inaudible] the industry's did it to itself really it's kind of destroyed um the way people can [inaudible] and real bands get success from slowly building up their skill by being on the frontline of music playing in pubs and all that experience and you become more proficient and you finally go to the studio and produce epic albums who can show how good they are as musicians. Now, I mean they won't sign you now unless you can guarantee a good financial return [CL: Yeah] they look at you and ah is your first album gonna sell um a million copies? [inaudible] I know that but that's the difference, years ago a major label would sign an act and not expect you to make any money until the fourth, fifth album so, they'd allow you to grow the band, now it's like you gotta be instantly financially viable from the get-go so that's the commercial thing, that's the industry thing.

AC: Do you [inaudible] ease of means to be able to do stuff? [inaudible] semi-rural village in Wales, does that open stuff up...

AL: Yeah I understand what you're saying at the end of the day right it's great, not everybody can afford to buy amplifiers and guitars and things like that, they can afford to buy [inaudible] and then they download the appropriate apps or programmes they could use and everybody needs a form of self-expression so um, I'm not against it, I just don't like the way that, I, I mean it's great with things like um, leader of nation[?] and all these other, allow you to upload your music [inaudible] so everybody's got a following and gets their music heard, unfortunately I feel it's kind of bled into the industry [inaudible] as well. There's a fakery, like a lot of what we hear, the charts for me now, it isn't real to me, I hear the odd, good song but I know for a fact that there's very few people sitting in studios with basses and guitars and putting down proper lines and trying to get a good sound [inaudible] '70s, '80s, and '90s it's all tweaked on a computer, we've lost something...

CL: I'd say streaming is beneficial for small artists, yeah because of the point you were making [inaudible] or just this, y'know they don't have the money to like, sort of um,

the PR they can't get the PR behind them it's sort of we have this platform [inaudible] just put our music on there that's the easiest way to share it so it's beneficial for small artists in that sense, like, in a sense of making money that is but the thing about exposure again is just like a dirty word but for a small artist it is [inaudible] I've seen it [inaudible] it gets them further because y'know what I mean at the end of the day they're not gonna print like a record or a CD y'know which will only get picked up at gigs. I mean with streaming there's opportunities to get on playlists and being shared by different [inaudible] that thing so it's um [inaudible] it's more like a networking thing, I think it can be a networking thing 'cause other bands like other people will share it. I mean it's not the same as record or CD in the sense of like the importance of the aesthetic and all that [AL: The tactile...] yeah but at least with streaming it means y'know for example if you went there's ten people in a room who were important like and could you share this? Could you share this? And they all did it you're reaching a large number of people therefore you're probably getting a large number of fans as well and that's where the benefit of streaming comes in so there...

AL: It is instantly shareable isn't it [inaudible] plays one album it's one album what can I do with that? Like you said with a file you can distribute that massively so [inaudible]

AC: I guess what you're saying is it depends where you are on that [inaudible] whether it's work or not

CL: Yeah, yeah definitely [AC: It's beneficial?] but there's a few big bands they often y'know talk about Spotify and I can't, like Tidal as well it's still [inaudible] they speak about it not in negative words but how it doesn't like [inaudible] the number of streams is not great y'know compared to the amount of money they should be making, I mean there are reasons for that from the business side but it's there's an imbalance but I think they are trying to sort it like the reason sort of these streaming services are giving as money as they can because like I read somewhere that Spotify lie the last two years they've been in debt in a heavy way [AC: Really?] yeah, yeah well something like that [inaudible]

AC: Do you think the value of music has been devalued somewhat? 1000's of plays like you said equate to [inaudible] pence or something? So do you think the sheer mass of stuff out [inaudible]

CL: That's a good point yeah...

AL: [inaudible] there's more music out there than ever than there's ever been. You can go on any programme and put a playlist in and it's amazing stuff by bands and artists you've never ever heard of in your life, in the world and it's like [inaudible] from all over the world it's amazing but there's no money to be made really for any artist that's streaming...

CL: It is over saturated in a sense um, obviously there's such a thing as like having too much of a good thing and thing um, even in the sort of um, the more experimental genres like it's still an over saturation because there's still more people than ever y'know wanting to do more experimental stuff but in essence that's a good thing but ironically as a result of all these people doing experimental things it becomes diluted y'know it becomes [inaudible]

AL: It pushes you away as a music fan because um, it's such a huge, the body of work now is quite bewildering I'm afraid to even go on near it 'cause I'll go [sighs] [AC: It's quite overwhelming isn't it] it is overwhelming 'cause you like one thing and then y'know it's in the nature of human beings to collect, so as you start getting into

something you wanna know all them and it becomes an obsession, there's so much y'know. Going back to the music thing, the question was the music thing [laughter] it's all about David Bowie, Black Sabbath personally and that's it like y'know, so, proper song-writing [inaudible] clever lyrics [laughter]

AC: So on that then what music do you play?

CL: So um, well, I'm in a covers band with my dad and um tribute band, so I do '80s covers and I also do an Adam Ant tribute but when I'm not doing that I'm in Bristol doing and instrumental two piece called Common Spit, it's ah [AL: Explain the name of the band] oh [laughs] [inaudible] [AL: It's Royal Blood] it's like a really bad [inaudible] me and a drummer, we don't explain that anymore [AC: Is it drums and bass?] yeah, so it was just a really bad joke to begin with [inaudible]

AL: You use a guitar as well don't you?

CL: Yeah, yeah...

AL: It's effects driven, one thing can sound like the other and vice versa.

CL: Because when we started it was just a joke so like ah right let's have a joke name, instead of Royal Blood let's have the opposite and called ourselves Common Spit um but we stuck with it

AC: [inaudible] what sort of music? Is it the same kind of music?

CL: No, actually it's more towards the math rock sort of thing, well no, I'd say there's an influence of like, I guess some people will say like oh right this isn't like Royal Blood you definitely have the math rock influence as well, like I mean it's definitely more influenced by Death from Above who like did it way before Royal Blood um it's definitely more influenced by them than Royal Blood for sure. Um, it's instrumental so it's like [inaudible and laughing] anyway as a result well we're instrumental so we like take [inaudible] because I mean if we had vocals we'd probably go down more straight and narrow [AL: The song structures] yeah lie songs that centre more around the vocal line rather than what's going on in the background um as a result of being instrumental we take our influence from the experimental bands that we like so a lot of melody is around the bass and even the drums to an extent. There's an importance on how drums are played and all that so yeah.

AC: Are the rhythms used or...

CL: Oh yeah, it is the rhythms, right we're big fans of polyrhythms which is how do I explain it so [inaudible] if there's like an awkward time signature like one hand will be playing on the beat the other will be doing something else so we like to kind of mess around with that kind of thing um, yeah it's really fun like that's the thing I have most fun in definitely 'cause it's the sort of thing [inaudible] but the covers band stuff is definitely like on the [inaudible] sense it's like it definitely makes money y'know that's a common sort of agreement with everybody so y'know it's not a negative thing like I think a lot of people do original music because they like it and then they do covers bands on the side [inaudible] that sort of thing.

AC: What do you think about the covers and tributes that have completely dominated the market, the local I mean at the moment [inaudible]

CL: I would say that I think there's a reason um, like, out I Aberdare I mean you have a general demographic of like people who, like not in a bad way it's the general public so they're not necessarily going to be like I want to listen to this very interesting band y'know it's not, like I said it's not in a bad way, just like they're probably on a night out and they probably want to hear what they're used to [inaudible] covers, so if we're like [inaudible] y'know I wanna go back to the days, it's nostalgia essentially...

AL: Put it this way, if you're having one night out a month and you're working both of you, your time is precious right they think we've got 60 pound and we're gonna go out and have a good time and watch a band are we gonna take a risk watching bands we've never ever heard before who might be brilliant but unfortunately I said there's an apathy around people of a certain age especially in their forties maybe or fifties even where they're afraid of being challenged afraid of having stuff shoved down their throats they haven't heard before they just want a good night and then the way to go is to go and look for um [inaudible] nostalgia [inaudible] minds and hearts and they just think oh that band are playing Pink Floyd tonight let's watch them, or this band is covering Bowie or they're covering um Led Zeppelin or whatever I don't know whatever floats your boat so people will think oh at least if we go to that night out we're guaranteed to hear the songs we love but they might pay a ten pound entry fee and [inaudible] some bands and about three songs in they might say I don't like this, so what they do they counteract the possibility of disappointment. It's sad really um I think the trouble today is that everything's instant everybody can have everything today at a press of a button, spoilt, we're completely spoilt we can get anything you want now you can go on Amazon and [inaudible] online and YouTube. Because um fulfilment is instant people might be afraid to take any kind of risks especially when it comes to money so yeah I think that's part of it I'm not saying that's the whole thing y'know.

AC: It makes sense it resonates with what other people have been saying in other interviews...

AL: That's only an age thing I don't think that applies to younger people I think that applies from a certain age onwards

AC: So it's just a particular demographic...

AL: Yeah

CL: I'd say it's an age thing not in a negative sense, it's like it's just, younger people I think, even around here there's younger people who want to see original music but they probably can't because it's all pubs or a lot of the time and there's not a lot of venues that actually allow younger people to sort of...

AL: That's another point as well [inaudible] dedicated places [inaudible] not just eighteen plus but allowing younger people as well because most, most bands start earlier than eighteen around the fifteen mark really when you become sort of really proficient at what you're doing at least get them on the road and I mean how can somebody that age get a gig and get exposure when they're not even allowed to be in the pub anyway.

AC: What would be your suggestions then as an alternative [inaudible] be there for the younger....

CL: Um, for younger people if they're doing alternative music um I dunno move to the city [laughs] that's honestly, that's honestly like my suggestion [AC: Why's that? What's

the difference?] well I, I live in a city, well I live in Bristol [studying at uni] so there's definitely a difference um, like, of, [inaudible] of the scene where you can grow a fan base because you have a lot of music [inaudible] punters are younger and they go to gigs every night um [AC: Where are these gigs held? In pubs? [inaudible] I, I mean that's only an example like if, to be fair if you're eighteen [inaudible] thinking of going somewhere then definitely go to a city as far I think of the thing of being younger is a sort of problem everywhere though it's just like it's not, because thinking about it yeah I mean there's not many places in cities either which will [inaudible] so it's sort of...

AL: The trouble is every venue [inaudible] a licence, a licenced bar [CL: Yeah] they duty bound by the rules of the industry and it's sad really y'know there's a lot of [inaudible] bands out there y'know literally [inaudible] 'cause what to play.

AC: Do you think the loss of community centres and things like that y'know is affecting the valleys y'know quite a lot y'know austerity, I don't want to bring up politics necessarily. Do you think if the community centres and the village halls and places like that were still available do you reckon...

CL: I think, I think yeah it would be beneficial yeah, because it [inaudible] gives them the space to play...

AL: In some sense you got these places haven't you, where have you played when you've played Ebbw Vale?

CL: Ah the Institute

AL: I mean that's kind of like [inaudible]

CL: Yeah, I mean they have a lot of fourteen plusses there and [AC: Is that the EVI?] yeah, the EVI like I mean like a lot of gig there have done well as a result of lowering their age [inaudible] like they have that licence so it's ah and going back to Bristol again is The Fleece where they do a lot of local, they do local events every week um which at fourteen plus and always do that so it [AC: It says something?] yeah.

AL: I think there's a simple solution to this when we go to music nights especially organised events put different coloured wrist bands on people and then they can't go to the bar to get served with a red wristband y'know what I mean, if you [inaudible] if you sorted out what age somebody was on entry, I mean you put that wrist band on and if it's red you can't be served.

CL: Again that's a thing they've done in the exchange as well in Bristol so it's like [inaudible] I keep forgetting things to be fair in the city there are [inaudible] catered towards us, um, y'know again it's yeah like [inaudible] there's a couple of gigs that I've put on that are just like five gigs on [inaudible] they've done amazingly it's just like they probably would have done well anyway but to be a major sell out because of that younger demographic [inaudible] yeah at the end of the day I just think like, I dunno thinking of myself as a fourteen or fifteen year old it's like oh I'm gutted I have to go to this gig oh actually it's fourteen plus like of course I'm gonna go y'know [inaudible] local or in the city but at the end of the day like when you're that age um if you're into music maybe like you're looking [inaudible] you're eager to get into some sort of thing like whether it's attending or playing so, it definitely, it definitely helps with that age limit is lowered, it's understandable when it can't be but I think there's a correlation in terms of attendance in regards to like age limit so yeah that one point [laughs]

AC: So, talking about your writing processes and um, original music rather than the covers um, how would you describe the writing process?

AL: I'll be honest with you right, I'm not really a songwriter right but what I've always done, I've been a various bands over the years. The first one was a band called Blue Eden that was 1987 um [AC: Blue Eden?] yeah Blue Eden, we were kinda popular locally for a short amount of time y'know, we played the National once and that was rammed um but we really did use the um hype machine with that one, we weren't as good as we thought we were, what we used to do was, I shouldn't be admitting to this but, we used to go around spraying the name on signs and things and people from back then who remember that right on the side of Ponty's underground car park [inaudible] and we did that and people were going oh Blue Eden I know that name oh they're playing in the National I'll go and watch them, and it was mad 'cause there was no such thing as Facebook then [inaudible] well we weren't really that good and we didn't really have any kind of really set of directions all we did was a mix of originals and covers. The songs were okay but what I've always done as a musician, somebody else will write the song and I'll cover it, so it wouldn't be what it was without me but I can't ever say yeah I wrote that, I've written a couple of songs but [inaudible] yeah it's a process but sometimes somebody will come to me like, I was in a band called Wicker Man with Paul Cobby [inaudible] Fatal Blow [inaudible] ended in Skacasm and um Paul was the songwriter but he'd write the song I'd take the [inaudible] in a way and then I'd think what would suit this so, on a certain songs [inaudible] this sounds like 60s jangly thing ah Small Faces kind of thing so what we, I added accordion into it y'know keyboard but I played it in the style of what an accordion would normally do so I devised a line and it fitted beautifully and sometimes something else would fit [inaudible] sometimes that's what a keyboard player does he um, he hears a song, he thinks what's the vibe in this track, what should it really be, Hammond organ for this or I'll add strings or sometimes I'll add vibraphone, there's so many instruments when you got general midi keyboards with all the sampled sounds at your disposal, they whole world of sound y'know percussion strings, everything is there so you think what will fit that, okay, in a sense it's a little bit fake 'cause you're not playing the actual instrument but it's all about adding production values [AC: Yeah, yeah] and then when somebody hears, I remember the Wicker man CD when we did a CD of songs [inaudible] 12 songs on it and every one was kinda different because it's never the same soundscape on any 2 tracks you think this, well that's got that and it's all about making things interesting so people will listen, and that's what I've been doing and it's been the same with every band I've been in. When I was in Replaced by Robots that started out as basically [30:00] as a recorded band that used Pro-Tools and then they decided to go live [AC: Who was involved with that?] Craig Chapman, Dave Holt um Warren Baker and Mike Thomas on bass, Rhys Jones Guitar and Richard Boggis on drums, it's a 7 piece band, they had to be because, you had to reproduce what you created on the programme so it's multiple [inaudible] lines, so I was brought in as the guy who could probably do multi-tasks in the terms of sounds and y'know achieving all the lines that's how it started but we started [inaudible] together after that. The first three or four tracks by Replaced by Robots was recorded solely in Craig Chapman's bedroom in um Pembroke Street [inaudible] [CL: By the Cambrian there] further down [inaudible] and it was all done on a compute but then, then we started to [inaudible] as a unit then and I'd go over there and I'd play my parts [inaudible] choose the sounds and stuff on the computer and I'd have to reproduce them live then, no sounds so I'd have to do the programme bits on my own. So that's how I really started off going from one keyboard, I think now I got three [laughs] so that's how I started with this three keyboard thing and then um, y'know Replaced by Robots got a really good like local following and every show we usually did was really good and

great turn out and [inaudible] yeah it went from the bedroom thing [inaudible] exactly the same that's what I did with them [inaudible] I'll add my line to this now and most of the time it improved the songs, what they originally did was good but then every band y'know that involves other people who go [CL: Yeah] [inaudible] [AC: It adds texture...] it does [inaudible]

CL: I'd been the same playing with [inaudible] I'll hear a song and then add melody to it, whatever I think needs adding to it [inaudible] I play bass so it's like, I think as a bass player I don't want to stay on the root note like [inaudible] I like to think I stick within my sort of constraints but [inaudible] kinda of ways but like whenever, when I've heard, whatever band [inaudible] but what I do now is completely different like I write all the songs so [AC: So how do you do that then? Is it just free flow or...] [inaudible] what it started off with is like I'd write a song like do it on Logic or Pro-Tools so I'll have like drum tracks and all that and then I send it to the drummer and we go in to practice we y'know nail it straight away [inaudible] yeah, yeah if it was solely me [inaudible] progressed like I'll come in to practice like I've got this idea um play what you want [laughs] so um, yeah, it works best that way and I like working that way because I can come up with an idea um and we both work on the same sort of um [AC: inaudible... it develops...] it develops quickly [AC: Does it change into something completely different or?] not really, not really [AL: I think there's a nice specific nature to what you do isn't it] yeah like me and my drummer are on the same wavelength like we both love the same music, as soon as I start playing a riff, he starts playing the drum beats as well [inaudible] [AL: You know really] yeah and as soon as he plays it like I'll be um...

AC: Describe your relationship with each other, how did you meet and...

CL: Alright, so I've known him for about three years now, he's in a really good band actually called [inaudible] name drop um so [laughs] [inaudible] I knew I wanted him to be my drummer 'cause it's that very techy sort of playing over complicated time signatures without being too wanky um and...

AL: They played at Cwmaman Cwmfest didn't you

CL: Yeah

AL: Up in believe it or not the Fforchaman the Boncky [inaudible] it blew me away I gotta be honest with you, it's really good it's like a wall of sound thing y'know. It's really powerful and it's ooh kinda know, it's intricate as well so something's really complicated and it's percussion and stabs and things like this it draws you in y'know you just think bloody hell this is incredible you don't have to know the songs 'cause some music just hits you doesn't it without you knowing the tune it doesn't matter 'cause it's there it's powerful...

CL: That's the thing with live [inaudible] Tom is very good at playing like complicated music [inaudible] I saw him in his previous band which he's still in, um and I was like well um can you be my drummer? And he was like yeah sure why not and that's been a year and a half ago now where we started like playing stuff and that's when I used to just give him things, I think it must have been like a year later it was like let's write stuff a different way [AC: In what ways?] yeah like and I think we've written better songs as a result of that like I've just come in with an idea and to be honest I change parts a little bit as a result of how he plays that.

AL: He's in [inaudible]

- CL: Yeah, because as a result of that like I have a real life context of how my ideas [inaudible] the drums so it's very rare but sometimes we need to right let's fix that um, he's just a very versatile drummer and that's why I wanted him because... [AC: What was the moment when you asked him to be in your band?] [inaudible] I saw his band like ages ago and I was like I wanna start doing this two piece again, like right away I was like you're the drummer because like I said he, doing complicated, like the polyrhythms without making it like too all over the place [AC: Did you know him prior to this?] yeah, so ah like I said I've known him for a few years now and I started this two piece like a year and a half ago.
- AL: It was a different drummer originally though wasn't it?
- CL: Yeah but I mean it wasn't the same, um, like I did it for like for a few months with another drummer from Aberdare and [AC: Who was that then? What was his name?] um Tom Ashford like he plays on like cruises [AL: Laughs] and all that now yeah so did it with him for a couple of gigs but he wasn't into that music, so he wasn't into it [AC: So the music is very important when making that connection?... inaudible.... You met in university?] yeah um met him in uni and then a year and a half later we're gonna do this [inaudible] stupid experimental music and then he said well I want to do this stupid experimental music so that's what we did [laughs] um so yeah I think it's important to like well I think it depends on the numbers of members but in the context of a two piece I think it's both being the same at a player level as well.
- AC: What about rehearsing then, I know you're in Bristol and I'm looking at specifically Aberdare but chip in [inaudible] but you do rehearse around here as well don't you?
- CL: Yeah
- AL: The bands he's in with me yes [AC: Where do you rehearse?] we don't rehearse very often, this is how it works, it's like right you decide what the next batch of songs you gonna do are, we learn them on our own and then we get all our bits [inaudible] the sounds and that, then we meet up and we spend 2 hours, we run through them and um, and we rehearse perhaps once every two months.
- AC: Where do you rehearse then?
- CL: In Jacs
- AL: Usually in Jacs, it's the same with internal politics in any place, things going on with Mike our singer and he works there as a promoter, you [CL] used to do it as well didn't you [CL: Yeah] and um it's all up in the air a lot of the time so [inaudible] can't practice as well and you have to look for other places but mainly in general it's Jacs [CL: Yeah] um, we're using the Mount Pleasant upstairs in Trecynon, we're looking at Cwmaman, um Cwmdare Club aren't we [CL: Yeah] [inaudible] put feelers out on Facebook, we don't rehearse very often [inaudible] pick the songs, we all do our homework, most of us...
- CL: Ha-ha, yeah, we've played together for years as well like four of us [inaudible] in the Adam and the Ants um tribute four of us have played together for years so you know [inaudible] drummers have a huge demand anyway who knows the songs, so we turn up for one practice, it is hard um [inaudible] 'cause we've all got so different schedules so ah especially with me living in Bristol so yeah but we always [inaudible] pretty good [inaudible]

- AL: It's 85% most of the time [CL: Laughs] we all know what we're doing, we all do our homework and make sure our levels and everything isn't it, you just turn up and you're [inaudible] 'cause I'm like I dunno master of ceremonies in a certain [inaudible] I'll always hear the faults and I'll go [inaudible] hang on a minute now [CL: Yeah, laughs] I'll say what are you playing? That kind of thing but it seems you're being arsy but it's not that it's I just want it to be right and not everybody has got the same ear. I mean I'm not trained at all when I started playing music I just did it by ear.
- AC: I think it's experience as well though, being exposed to stuff y'know what I mean
- AL: I think up to a certain level of musicianship and I can't profess to be a virtuoso by any means but when I set out to play something I can usually find a way of making it sound like it sounds on record even though I might not play it exactly right maybe not do as much but I'll find a way of making the same thing simpler y'know what I mean it'll sound the same so [AC: Yeah, yeah] it's the easiest thing to do this 'cause honestly I'm not classically trained [inaudible] huge scales and glissandos and stuff [laughter] and I got small hands my hands but y'know it's all fun and even though it's covers it's still creative in a sense because there's the element of making the sounds right and also sometimes it's so difficult you can't just wing it, it has to be right on the money [inaudible]
- CL: Positive like make it more creative making original music as well [inaudible] you're learning, you're learning like 'cause at the end of the day you're playing songs with many different musicians [inaudible]
- AL: It's a covers masterclass in other people's styles
- CL: Yeah, exactly
- AL: So, [inaudible] you [inaudible] those styles something about learning that song you suddenly start noodling around the house, I'm playing this like that y'know I suddenly took that style on board see yeah y'know
- AC: Everything comes from somewhere I suppose, nothing's original [inaudible]. Um, okay so what other collaborations have you guys been involved in? If you can keep it to Aberdare sorry, I know you're in Bristol but...
- CL: I haven't done any collaborations...
- AC: It could be something you've almost forgotten about...
- CL: I mean the only sort of things I've done is maybe like recording a few bands sounds, I've done the bass line for Headnoise, pretty sure I done [inaudible] at some point [AL: You did aye] yeah that's the only sort of collaborative thing I've done like y'know someone on the scene has asked me ah can you put a bass line on this...
- AC: Why did they ask you and not the actual bassist?
- CL: Um, because of a sense of melody maybe? Um, like I'm very sort of, I started off on keyboards then went to guitar then went to bass, so I guess maybe I'm like more of a melodic ah [AL: Proclivity] yeah [laughs] that's the word um or they might think that they [inaudible] Christian will put a melodic bass line to this [inaudible] maybe yeah, I think I don't give myself that much credit, like people will ask me like to put bass on stuff because they'll know there'll be a quite good melody on it.

AL: He's the kind of person where you'll watch him and y'know think y'know yeah, he's great y'know [inaudible] yeah um he's, usually I mean it kills me sometimes [inaudible] been to a gig and everybody's raving about it and I think what about me then? There's me creating all these sounds reproducing the 80s for you and all they can go on about is him playing Ian Dury and the Blockheads y'know what I mean [CL: Yeah] or that kind of thing there's no jealousy that is but it really isn't 'cause I'm proud of him y'know. I love to see that I love to think of him, he's turned out to be an amazing musician, he is amazing [CL: Laughs] he won't say it himself but [inaudible] a million years so my [inaudible] has superseded me in a sense [inaudible] yeah of course, yeah of course an improvement on yourself different instrument but I'll put his level of playing above my own y'know but I would say that either other kind of um strings to my bow, what do I mean, is that the right word? [CL: Yeah I think so] [inaudible] [AC: Strengths] yeah [inaudible]

CL: Other keys to your...

AL: I'm about the sounds and getting it exactly right [inaudible and laughter]

AC: Um, so how often do you play live in Aberdare

CL: Um, every three months I'd say...

AL: Now, it was more before, um, what it is we took an active decision to not do as many gigs and try to seek out better venues, better payments so maybe over 5 years of gigging with The Spectrums we knew the gigs that seemed to give us the best um atmosphere and the best money. I know that sounds awfully kind of, um, y'know when you're my age and you've spent a lifetime playing in every dive there is and being spat at and y'know you think why am I still playing to like, playing these dives [inaudible] so what's worth my time now [CL: Yeah] I'm not chasing, personally I'm not chasing anything now I'm beyond the years of trying to get signed or any of that nonsense.

AC: That's, that's the sort of um the tipping point then you get to a certain age, I wanna get signed, I wanna get famous, as soon as for whatever reasons that changes...

AL: Well society dictates that, I mean, I mean if I suddenly turn up on TV right, you'll be going, I know Sea Sick Steve did it as a ballad, that's very unique [inaudible] establish that you're one of the session guys in the back of the band which is another thing completely again, no one's gonna be like, doing a double take when they see [inaudible] popular but boring [inaudible] but yeah I, I think something happens to people as they get older they cut their role, their whole energy changes anyway, I wouldn't want to be out five nights a week [inaudible] I done it when I was twenty odd but now that idea mortifies me, so I just go to bed [inaudible] I watch telly then go to bed and I'm up for work in the morning. But like years ago when I was like his [CL] age or something it would be like getting dropped off for work at 6 o'clock y'know from the gig that kind of thing [AC: That's a killer] [inaudible] [AC: I suppose you're experiencing that now?] [CL: Yeah I suppose] [inaudible] [CL: Yeah we got Ireland...] [inaudible]

AC: Are you on Facebook?

CL: Yeah [inaudible]

AC: Um, do you adopt any particular roles or responsibilities...?

CL: Ah you usually do, he [CL] usually deals with the money um I'd say...

AL: The bread head the Malcolm McLaren [laughter]

CL: I'd say like in the covers band there's definitely like [inaudible] [laughs] yeah our singer is very erratic, he's like, someone who needs [inaudible] calm down a little bit sort of [AC: Is this Mike?]

AL/CL: Yeah

CL: Definitely, um...

AC: Erratic to the point where it's detrimental or?

CL: It's not detrimental but it's alright, yeah look just calm down

AL: [inaudible] like last night um, I think you [CL] and him [Mike] wind each other up right, he knows he can wind Christian up and Christian knows [inaudible] so the rest of us just sit there, we try to interfere with their conversations but it's shut down early 'cause they are off on their little thing [inaudible] However much of a pain in the arse Mike can be right, can be, he actually means well he's not in it for himself at all he loves music, he loves [inaudible] everybody, he really does, it doesn't always come across that way but he, that's, that's the crux of it, and um, he's such a good front man [CL: He is] he is amazing, I mean he'll tell you himself he's not a singer but, when he's in the zone he does a bloody good job and over time he's got better and better at singing what he's required to sing [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, he's a punk rocker really like a lot...

CL: I was saying like both bands like, drummer was out, like in the Ant tribute and The Spectrums [inaudible] the drummer turns up and plays, the guitarist turns up and plays, um he [AL] turns up and gets money and plays [laughter]

AL: Yeah but I think you'll find that I am the boss, yeah [inaudible] I used to deal with the bookings a lot more right with The Spectrums I was the one who really pushed that going, and Mike as well but that was my kind of thing at the time [inaudible] get Depeche mode and all that going, I was finally doing what I was meant to do. All these different bands and different things wasn't really what, I like all music but I thought why the hell have I never been in an electronic band it's my main thing and I thought sod it I'm gonna do it y'know and we did it and it became successful, yes a covers band but people have loved it haven't they [CL: Hmm] to be honest it's the kind of thing that could run and run and run, the amount of bookings we've turned down this year is insane [CL: Yeah it's a lot] simply because we're trying to scale it down to push the other act y'know...

AC: You were on about this earlier wasn't you? [AL: Yeah] what were the reasons for that then time is it?

AL: Yeah, I just don't want to be out every weekend I just like to sit in the back in my man cave. I like to put music on, have a drink and just relax [AC: Yeah, yeah]

CL: That's an age thing again because me personally I could be gigging every weekend [inaudible] and laughter [AL: You're doing it now, now] [inaudible] 3 nights a week and I could be doing it [inaudible] like I know on my end I've got a tribute band a covers band but I got another covers band in Bristol as well...

- AL: That's really money orientated though isn't it. I mean I love the money
- CL: Yeah, I think it's wanting to be like busy as well with the music so yeah, I think there's a correlation with age there like...
- AC: Age comes into it quite a lot...
- CL: [inaudible] I really want...
- AL: I'll be honest with you though right, I'm fifty this year right, I gotta be, right, it gives me enormous satisfaction and it really does fill my heart and soul right, to be doing what I'm doing 'cause um, it keeps me alive really, don't get me wrong if I wasn't doing it I'd still be happy, to be out amongst young people and to be known locally as kind of a musician of note I suppose, like I am quite well known on a local level among the people, there's Charlie Denning of Cripplecreek is another one. There's various people you think, somebody knows you, your name is mentioned, he's the keyboard player y'know and there's not many guys around really to be honest, not the ones that have pushed it to the level maybe I have, I really have um, tried to make a name for myself in a quiet way, not like really kinda hungry for it but slow burning over a longer period of time [inaudible] no, not really no, I do love the attention don't get me wrong it's great when people come up to you and go that was amazing and I go, yes, I know [laughter]
- AC: I mean that goes into my next question, how important is music-making for both of you? [inaudible]
- AL: Ah it's incredible y'know
- CL: Yeah, I want to make a career in it personally [AC: Are you studying it in uni as well?] well I don't do uni anymore, um [inaudible] I did a [inaudible] degree, I left because I hated the uni, um it really, yeah it took away the sort of likeability of doing music [AL: He didn't agree with the way they were teaching it did you really really] because the thing is you have lecturers, again this is going off on a tangent, you have lecturers who made it all about themselves and it's like you're not giving any context for me for the future, all you're giving us is a context of what you did and how, and to be honest you didn't succeed and it's like what they could have done is like here's my experience and why it didn't work out but they didn't do that [AC: Is that BIMM?] BIMM yeah [AL: Proper shit [laughs] it kinda reminds me of the old story where somebody says oh, I used to be in the Stereophonics] exactly [AL: [inaudible] you were the fucking people holding them back then [laughs] do y'know what I mean?] Jesus Christ [laughter] [AL: People say oh I had been or could have been but y'know alright I'm not being arsy now but [inaudible] up in the Welsh Harp, I think he, I think he used to play with the Stereophonics right and you got Richard Jones with Fireroad who were all involved in um, I mean there's no really, I don't think there's any recipes of success as such due to the individuals other than the songwriter and, but it's like, but people, not disrespect to them they're lovely people, great like but it's like, but when somebody says do you realise I was in blah, blah, blah you go, right I seen you in that band that went nowhere [laughs] [inaudible] that's my nasty side coming out innit.
- CL: Like I'd say [inaudible] people [inaudible] like the level like Richard's gone [AL: No you wouldn't no] no, it's like [inaudible]
- AL: I have heard plenty of people say [inaudible] Christ Almighty you've played with everyone 'cause everyone's got a band they've played with [inaudible] did you? I

used to play with Stuart Cable years ago right, years and years ago I mean 1989 [inaudible] cover band it's a potch y'know, you can't say, you can't say [inaudible] yeah it is [inaudible]

CL: Yeah playing music is very important um, it's definitely, like music in general, there's like events like as well as playing music [inaudible] I've put on a lot of events on in Bristol [inaudible]

AC: What motivates you?

CL: Um, the fact that I might bring a band that no one else will to the town and thus like bringing this community of people like there's a couple of shows now like where y'know I've brought a band that are really surprising like sold out or whatever everyone's just so happy to see and the band are really happy because y'know a great show for them and I mean that's what drives me mainly I mean, and also the fact that I can make it a career because y'know going into the money thing [inaudible] [AL: Stepping stones towards] yeah [inaudible] to make a career um so, for me personally I was just like, music is very important because I just I can see, I can see how like you can be self [inaudible] and do covers and all sorts and then y'know you can get to that point where it's not a risk anymore because, like I, in the next couple of years I [inaudible] for me personally and [inaudible] I'm doing events and everyone is doing well there's no risk anymore they what to book and there's almost y'know this cover stuff which is regular and like I can move, but yeah, anyway, it's what I want to do and um it's I don't want to [inaudible] I don't wanna be stuck just with, if I can help it, I don't wanna be stuck somewhere [inaudible] sort of thing y'know [inaudible] yeah, yeah in a hospital, that's not...

AL: [inaudible] in Nantgarw like me

CL: Ah yeah

AC: What do you do for a living then?

AL: I work in the Peacocks warehouse in Nantgarw

AC: What do you do then? You are freelancing...

CL: Well [laughs] I recently just lost my job, um yesterday [AC: Oh sorry] oh it's fine I was a porter in a hospital um [AC: Oh right [inaudible]] yeah that's right, we were joking about it, I was getting like forty hours a week there and [inaudible] yeah, um, I was gonna leave soon anyway like ah

AC: Why was you going to leave?

CL: I was just burnt out, burnt out [inaudible] and also [inaudible] and um, so I'm looking, I'm looking to move on to like a music venue now so that's another so yeah, so fingers crossed um that's what'll happen yeah.

AC: Okay um so what factors do you think make it difficult to make music in a place like Aberdare [inaudible] semi-rural...

CL: I'd say, it's like the point we made earlier it's younger people don't have a place to go sort of thing um, and also people are bored, an older demographic who like nostalgia um, I think everywhere [inaudible] average how do you get a forty plus year old

person into [inaudible] I want to hear the next amazing thing in music like it's very rare [inaudible] I know a couple of people...

AL: [inaudible] where the pubs are becoming more like, like The Bute for instance I used to play in there, you never get bands, well you do get, well artists [inaudible] um, I think it's changed so much now in Aberdare it's all going towards meals and um y'know just a singer in the night and catering to a certain age group. Um, even in here [The Conwy] they used to have bands in here, not so many now and I think a lot like this place [inaudible] John? Y'know if you've got somebody in charge of a venue for year after year after year there's no, no disrespect but there's no forward thinking of what next to do it holds things back in that sense 'cause you got too many established kind of patriarchs then [AC: Stuck in their way?] yeah and the town can't move forward 'cause they still got the old guard in charge of all the venues and things like that y'know [AC: But they used to? They were really forthcoming wasn't they with gigs?]

CL: What Jacs is trying to do well hopefully, they're definitely trying to open up a new demographic but I think it's proving hard for them 'cause, it's going to, it's bound to, it's a new thing that's not going to pick up straight away [inaudible] I'd say like since it opened well with a new manager a couple of years ago I think it got better I got a sense of like people turning up, again it's like I think it'll take a few years before that like new demographic like shifts in [inaudible] to their new ways.

AL: I think covers bands are an essential thing in these venues because for them to put on original acts they have to have the financial safety net of, of bands that can guarantee income so they have a big covers band like ourselves The Spectrums or Skacasm or one of the big band ones like y'know [inaudible] all these bands help to get the cash in then they can take a risk on something that's original. Unfortunately it is an act of faith um, you could probably do okay with a local original band if it's promoted well enough but um when you're bringing up someone from further afield um [inaudible] more different again then.

AC: I mean that's looking at like kind of performance [inaudible] views on resources and practice space and recording y'know all the hidden things...]

AL: There's nothing around here...

CL: There's a few places, that's, yeah like even off the top of my head a few come to mind [inaudible] there's a practice space and that's quite a way outside of Aberdare y'know, people have to travel like twenty, twenty five minutes to practice um....

AC: What about the Shed?

AL: Yeah you got the Shed [inaudible]

CL: That's very, that's very DIY as well y'know it's not

AL: [inaudible] practice room per say there's a couple of what's his name? Simon, it's just a couple of Simon's mates smoking blow [laughter] which is great y'know [CL: Yeah very DIY [laughs]] it's mad, even from [inaudible] it's like having a practice in a gypsy campsite [laughter] but it is brilliant [inaudible] I haven't been up there in a long time.

AC: Is there anywhere down the valley didn't there used to be Canolfan? [inaudible] Kelly Jones funded...

- AL: I'm not aware of, I've not heard of that?
- CL: As far as down here's concerned like y'know again apart from Jacs the go to place to go really...
- AL: You used to have the Urdd centre over on um [AC: Oak Street] yeah over there, yeah that's been suggested a couple of times to me, I don't know if they, what I used to find over there the fella would come over after about half an hour, can you turn it down a bit? The neighbours were complaining y'know [AC: That was the issue noise?] again that was the thing [inaudible] this new-fangled music [laughter]
- CL: There are spaces and they can be utilised
- [laughter]
- AC: So is there anything else you think that make it difficult to create music or just go about starting a music career whether it's amateur or professional.
- CL: In Aber, around here I mean I think it needs to be for younger people, so, I don't know the only other, the only other [inaudible] at the end of the day it's like say I was fourteen now and I saw the scene as it was now, it's like there's not a lot of opportunity for me here and it's like why should I bother starting now, at least the local [inaudible] as blunt as it is I know it's like I think if I was me like years ago looking at how it is now I think well I may as well just go to the city or something because it's, it's not like a bit of thing towards everyone else it's like the consequence of being in a small town, like it's just it has [inaudible] towards and um,
- AC: Do you reckon there's not enough opportunity?
- CL: Yeah, essentially and like yeah the thing I sort of think, is as a young person I guess you won't be as driven just because, I might be wrong but I would think there's some people they still feel not as confident to like start their music because even locally, it's like oh how are they gonna [inaudible] in the city if like even locally they can't even get a gig or something so y'know.
- AL: I remember that [inaudible] in the 80s there were a lot more bands and pubs would take a chance on you, I used to get bookings round here quite regularly [inaudible] even though there was no reputation kind of [inaudible] what you've done before they'd [inaudible] they wouldn't pay a lot but [inaudible] that doesn't exist here now not [inaudible] [CL: I'd say like...] I think it's with the venues closing, the Railway Club in the Depot right, they used to put bands on and that's gone, the National used to put bands on and that's gone, I think there's less places now that are suited in terms of space as well.
- CL: I gotta say even 9 years ago when I was doing original music right, there were a lot more venues that would take the risk and just [inaudible]
- AC: So they're just not taking the risk then?
- CL: Yeah
- AL: Not with original music
- CL: But also like I said before it's just, as bad as it is in a way, you'd have clubs that would like to sort of take the risk with letting younger people in there as well [AC:

Does that happen anymore?] I don't think it does, a lot of people are more-strict like um definitely like I know because it's [inaudible] I mean it's unethical I suppose [inaudible] but I know when I used to like eight or nine years ago [inaudible]

AL: I think the fear of prosecution is like it's paramount I dunno? They can't risk it y'know letting people in and things like that.

CL: 'Cause even when Jacs used to be Elliott's y'know it's just like you'd have [inaudible] kids there and keep it on the hush, hush y'know, there's a few places y'know um

AL: [inaudible] if you see now they don't allow any bending of the rules [CL: Yeah] like before it was oh alright but keep an eye on them and things like that but no.

AC: They're usually [inaudible]

AL: They're always [inaudible]

CL: But I say like I dunno, it's I'm surprised knowing that like a lot of places don't think well why don't we try and get 'cause I don't think a lot of places do like I don't want to be like mis-informed it's like. I know for certain there's a couple of places round [inaudible] that maybe should get a licence for I don't know six till nine or something so there's a curfew for younger people then, no one's thinking about it and I'm surprised that they don't it's like [AC: Yeah, yeah] you gotta have a revenue sense y'know [inaudible]

AL: I also feel on a general sense that musical tastes have been dumbed down as well by um what they see on television y'know [AC: The Voice?] yeah the X Factor, a generation [inaudible] they rave about um y'know Janice from Port Talbot, lovely voice, y'know and um, you look at them and you see that she's eighteen stone [laughs] nobody's gonna give her a record contract I'm sorry. No I don't think it's that, it's like more people now [inaudible] Adele, they'd rather listen to that than having songs written for them, we'll take a chance on um y'know people just aren't taking the risks anymore [inaudible] they've been brainwashed in a sense by television and the Cowell thing [inaudible] because people come to gigs y'know and you play something that's universally known in your mind and a person will say play something we know and I think hang on if a covers band is getting that what's an originals band gonna get? [AC: Yeah, yeah] there's that fear y'know of Christ Almighty I'm doing my own thing but leaving myself wide open for scrutiny and y'know for somebody to basically tell me I'm crap [inaudible] there's no better feeling than standing, doing a gig and you know everything's sounding great and then you look at people's faces and sometimes they're looking back in completely, blown away by what you're doing and that's what it's all about just that little moment y'know that gives you that huge buzz and um, it's only momentary I think you're chasing that feeling all the time y'know um, it's validation from people just by their expressions sometimes....

CL: Another thing that might be off point sorry, well it's a hard career to dig into but if you do dig int it well it's very satisfying because you're doing something that not a lot of other people have the opportunity to do so I, so yeah.

AC: And just one other question really, I'm looking at Merthyr and Aberdare what would you say is different [inaudible] in either town?

CL: I think, when you mention Merthyr I think of the New Crown Inn it's like, that's been there for years now and over the last couple of years that seems to have got it's um,

it's demographic I honestly think the difference is only a time thing I think Merthyr got itself sorted earlier. Um, I envisage Jacs becoming similar to what they're doing in a few years and they're getting that [inaudible]

AC: Like Cwmfest for example...

CL: Oh

AL: When you say [inaudible] the trouble with Cwmfest is it's a dead end valley and for most people it's inaccessible and it's spread out over the pubs at least with Merthyr Rising is that what it's called? That Redhouse um...

CL: Yeah, they have it outside don't they...

AL: It's all there and I think people would rather go to one location than doing this back and forth. Devotees of that will always go there and I'm there every year whether I'm playing or not I love it, I like the fact that there's different pubs y'know um...

CL: I think that's another factor as well [inaudible] there's a lot more budget behind Merthyr as well [inaudible] than Cwmfest.

AL: Well, Cwmfest has perpetuated [CL: Yeah] from all the fundraisers they do throughout the year, so they'll do a couple of gigs every year, [inaudible] two on the run up to Cwmfest to get a bit of cash. They do get a little bit off um other people as well, like local businesses and things like that. But I think Merthyr Rising is fully endorsed really, with the council's backing. Cwmfest isn't even though it's been running for years people look forward to it every year, can't wait for Cwmfest, September now great! Lots of bands and um yeah, it's weird really isn't it really there's definitely a difference...

CL: I will say there's a [inaudible] the difference with Merthyr is that they've consistently got bigger acts um whilst also supporting um local [inaudible]

AL: An identity in itself, Merthyr even though they may be doing bigger things I wouldn't say corporate but it's more home-grown here, this town, Aberdare's got a huge [inaudible] and they've always helped each other out, there used to be a bit of rivalry but now everybody seems to be backing each other. If you go over there [Merthyr] it's different um, it's a much more spread out area as well, like the size of the area [AC: It's twice the size] it's huge really Merthyr isn't it [inaudible] and this is it's a narrow valley and everything's closer and um, yeah I prefer it myself to be honest.

AC: Do you think there's a different vibe to the music over here [inaudible] I mean my own findings [inaudible] more experimenting going on in Aberdare than it does in Merthyr that's just what I see on the surface really.

CL: Yeah from what I've seen there seems to be more like not in a negative sense it's more straight forward music in Merthyr that caters towards sort of sounds like indie, rock...

AL: It's going to be seen as a huge generalisation right but bands from Merthyr right when they turn up to play whether it's there or other areas and they look, they always just strike me as lads who've just got a bunch of guitars and do it, I can't explain it they don't seem to be bone fide musicians and the artists of tomorrow, what they seem to be to me are just a bunch of lads out for a laugh and just doing it great [CL: Which is fine yeah absolutely] I don't think it goes, they haven't got a vision as such they're not

thinking of like y'know I wanna be this or I wanna do that, they're just happy to be, and I've seen lots of bands [inaudible] why shouldn't they do that anyway [AC: Yeah, yeah] that is one real difference, they turn up in really generic clothing and there's no image and they look like they're having a great time on stage but you know they're just doing it purely for the love of playing they're not doing it for artistic reasons do you know what I mean [AC: Yeah, yeah] [inaudible]

CL: There's no wrong way of creating music

AL: No, no [inaudible]

AC: There are different reasons...

CL: I think so like generally Aberdare like [inaudible] the more experimental side whereas with Merthyr it's like oh I dunno let's listen to some music, have something to drink out with the lads so...

AL: Some people want to create a legacy for themselves and other people are just y'know let's just get out there and cause mayhem [AC: Yeah, yeah]

CL: I think [inaudible] a difference it might seem generalised but it's not a negative thing [AL: No not negative] there's a difference there [inaudible]

AC: And the last question you'll be glad to know um is,

CL: I need a pee

AL: Oh yeah

[laughter]

AC: So do I [laughter] um, is there anything else you'd like to add?

CL: Um, I dunno, no, not really

AL: Um, yeah, I hope we've covered everything? It's difficult really you ask one question and it goes off on a tangent doesn't it...

CL: I think despite, I mean it's wonderful there's even music going on in local places but it's also important to recognise these, sort of, ah like, well points I suppose like ah right why does this work and why doesn't that work, I think it's the same venue....

AL: I think that phases happen [inaudible] I think there's down turns and up turns [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I think at the moment they're a bit on a bit of a down turn y'know. Creatively there's plenty of people out there, it's a down turn from the approach of those that can help in positions they're on a down turn they're not offering to help as much as they've done, but then in five years' time it could be completely altered again [AC: Yeah, yeah] all of a sudden everybody's thinking all, really making a go at this again and you see that happening y'know even on a local level.

AC: It's like bell curves almost

CL: Yeah

AL: Yeah all the time [inaudible]

CL: The thing is people will eventually catch on to it and support it.

AL: Every five, well five or ten years a new generation of new musicians will come around again with different ideas and different influences and the whole, um the whole scenario changes again, it's constantly changing all the time, so it doesn't make me feel despondent [inaudible] I don't think, there's plenty going on really [inaudible] but the places seem to be minimal don't they, there's lots going on but you always find that they're going on in the same places [CL: I feel it's lucky there's still something going on although it was different to what it was years ago but we are very lucky that people are doing it and trying to fud the spaces to do it in so.

AC: Okay I'm going to stop the recording there and we can go for a pee [laughter]

AL/CL: Yeah, yeah [laughter]

Interview with Alyn Perkins, 17-02-2020, The researcher's teaching studio, Aberdare @ 1:52 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

AP – Alyn Perkins, Participant

AC: Hi Alyn how're you doing [AP: Alright] thanks for meeting me

AP: Thanks for having me late [laughter]

AC: Ah that's alright. Um a couple of general questions first so, what music do you like?

AP: What music don't I like is probably the best one because, um just grew up with my mam and dad's music and obviously you're talking like, the classics so it'll be Tchaikovsky and Dvorak and Beethoven, combined with The Carpenters and Sinatra and Buddy Holly, Elvis, Bill Hailey, Buddy um God, Roy Orbison, err, Del Shannon, the [inaudible] stuff um Mario Lanza, um Pavarotti [laughter] Al Jolson and then me finding my own, and The Muppets, The Muppets, honestly are, people laugh, they're a massive influence [laughter] yeah [AC: In what way?] Um, I love, I just love the zaniness and then the sentiment in a lot of the songs as well. 'Cause I had 2 vinyl's, 2 Muppet vinyl's, one of which I still got and my mam used to play it when she was cleaning the house and um it would be like comic sketches intertwined with songs innit The Muppet songs, and then, we were talking about it earlier, going through an album cover you'd see names wouldn't you, you'd see writers, producers and things like this and sometimes they would open doorways to other things. And I'd see like a guy called Paul Williams that's been this songwriter on a couple of songs, then spotting his name on a Carpenters record as a songwriter on there and then, and then that just exploded, my, my looking for this guy Paul Williams, the amount of hit songs and Grammy's he's won and films he's been in and...

AC: He's the writer rather than the artist yeah?

AP: Ah, he was a writer, he was an actor um and then inadvertently become an artist much like Carole King did y'know in that way being a singer, songwriter for other people again another one Neil Diamond I grew up with my Dad and stuff, so seeing Carole King's name on Neil Diamond and Dusty Springfield and things like this um, Monkey's. So I'd see these names, this name [inaudible] and King um and the same thing so maybe that's going back songwriter wise I'm seeing these names and going that song is by that person but we got these other people singing these songs and then finding out they also do sing probably not initially as an immediate um artist that came on the back of their song writing but Paul Williams then [inaudible] 'cause he's, the amount of people he wrote for, ah he's on the last Daft Punk album [AC: Is he?] He's on um, wrote the soundtrack for Bugsy Malone. He wrote and starred in Phantom of the Paradise, I don't know if you ever seen this film from 1973, Brian DePalma musical, horror, comedy, musical, satire [inaudible] um, what else? He was in Planet of the Apes, one of Planet of the Ape films, he was an actor, so yeah like I started from my mam and dad's music collection, their 45s, their 78s. That feeling of picking up a vinyl and then my Dad had a stacked on as well [AC: Alright] we still got it actually, it's gotta be from the late 50s, ah wooden and you could um stack the vinyl and it would drop the vinyl one at a time, the needle come across, play that vinyl, take the needle back across the next one would drop down so it would be actually stacking up on top of each other, I can't remember how many there was a good eight of vinyl. So they'd stack on top of each other and spin and the needle would lift and

play to that level [AC: Yeah] probably no good for the record at all thinking about it but it still works [AC: Yeah] and that as a, as a piece to look at and then music coming out of it, that thing so I think it was that whole listening experience of having a slot, my Dad always had a Friday night slot after work [inaudible]

AC: The music was a big [AP: Oh yeah] thing in your family then yeah? [AP: Yeah definitely] Did either of your parents play or...

AP: I think my Dad played when he was like less than 6 or something and then um he was told to play out in the garden [laughter] 'cause it was too loud um and then I don't think he played [inaudible] no my father or my mother didn't play anything, just kind of, just lovers of music.

AC: So how would you describe the music that you play?

AP: Um, basically I can only, I started off as a bass player in a band and did a bit of backing and then started writing when I started playing an acoustic, way late probably about twenty four that's quite late really to be playing um, always loved music but um it seemed too hard to play guitar and bass, I was playing guitar but I bought a bass because no one was our bass player so [AC: I love bass] so I just bass, just playing bass and the grooves of the bass and then I started just, playing some chords then just having melodies in my head around some chord sequences. And then the band I was in before then I started writing a couple of songs.

AC: What was the band called?

AP: Um we were first called Suzanne's Garden, we did a couple of gigs in Aberdare, or two gigs in Aberdare, um one in Abercynon and then we were the same band but less of us and we all lived together in Portsmouth then um [AC: Okay] and then we started using the south coast of England and London to gig in and then we changed our name to Parker? I think [AC: As in...] As in um yeah spelt with an ER, more like Parker pens or Parker from the Thunderbirds but it was at that Britpop time as well, '95, '96, '97 but then we changed our name to Harrison then [AC: Harrison?] which is a, we were just looking for, I don't know why we were with the same people playing the same songs, we just had enough, it just felt like, we were writing new songs and y'know how when you. It is a difficult thing when you're in a band, if you start writing sings slightly different, it's a different identity it feels [AC: Yeah] it's like well that name doesn't suit anymore 'cause, could have been as good as anything so we ended up changing the name, same people.

AC: Did you do that again after that, did you change names or identities to go with the music?

AP: Um, we kind of stopped doing it about '98, '99 I think um, but these are my good friends, they're still my best friends y'know from school.

AC: Are they still in Portsmouth?

AP: Ah one's in Mountain Ash and one's in Swansea

AC: Alright, cool so you all kinda came back to Wales

AP: Um, they were all from here anyway, the drummer was from Aberdare, my best friend is from Penrhiwceiber and still best friends with him. Um two of the other people then were my best friends from school in Mountain Ash as well.

- AC: Are they involved in your project at the moment?
- AP: Um, because I roped them in to do a couple of things on it but um three of them are from the initial one and the other one was going to be on a song but then I dropped the song because I dropped like six or seven songs off the album.
- AC: There's another album there...
- AP: This one's like seventeen tracks [laughter] it would have to be a double vinyl I think if it was a vinyl. But yeah it was just a case of these songs, I had loads I'd just been writing um for the last, well seriously from about 2008, 2000, 2007, 8 ish
- AC: So this kinda like, well I say recent but from 2008 this phase how would you describe the music that you're writing now then?
- AP: Um no different to what I was writing in the nineties [inaudible] honestly, honestly I would say it's like form when I first started to attempt to write a song and again how I've had no, I've not had a single lesson, a music lesson in my life and I don't know music, I don't know anything really [Laughs] y'know so the notes there [pointing to a notation chart on my studio wall] mean nothing to me, I have not got a clue [inaudible] [laughter] I probably couldn't do it now 'cause I've got so many bad habits like um...
- AC: It's difficult, I mean I do have people coming in for lessons who have been playing for y'know decades and they want to know what's this and what am I doing [AP: Yeah] y'know it's literally just give me the name of that y'know so...
- AP: Obviously I learnt TAB and I learnt how to play on TAB and this is a chord and where you put your fingers and my mate showed me then, my mate Paul ah Maskell who's my oldest mate that I was talking about we were in a band and I said oh I want [inaudible] playing the guitar and he showed me a couple of chords.
- AC: Okay, and if you had to and I don't like asking artists to do this and it's only for purposes for [AP: Comparing] if I had to ask you to give me some sort of, I don't want to say label but how would you class your music y'know is it, I know what it is but for the recording is it thrash metal or is it y'know, is it rock, is it middle of the road, is it country and western, that kind of thing.
- AP: Over the years I've probably done all of those things, I know definitely in the bedroom we were doing stuff like Ned's Atomic Dustbin [AC: Alright yeah] and I was playing along with Anthrax and Ozzy and um Kiss, um Sepultura, ah Cinderella, going back when we were first doing stuff um. Not a fan of Dylan, honestly I don't know why, it's, um more of a fan of Neil Young so if it had to be anything I think um it's just I dunno because it's not, even though I'm writing on acoustic guitar it's, it's ah guitar based, singer song writing but then my influence is like Badly Drawn Boy and Teenage Fan Club, Neil Young, R.E.M. Queen, Beach Boys...
- AC: So it's hard, like I said I don't like asking people to give it a label as such...
- AP: But on the album I deliberately didn't want it to sound like one thing either like so there are seventeen songs on there which hopefully don't sound like one thing because there's electronica on there, I love the Chemical Brothers, Air 07 y'know is... and Daft Punk um I always liked that kind of and dance. I used to love, what's, the Utah Saints, um KLF um so I said to Warren I don't want even though these are all,

I'm sending him demos which is just me on the acoustic these are the songs completed um but in my head this is the Beach Boys, this one is, this is um Beach Boys crossed with um Human League so I, he says, okay show me, give me some more different demos and I was playing on a Casio, I sent a couple of Casio beat ones with guitar, guitar riffs on them I recorded them on a crappy old cassette four track. Um, but it's hard to really sell that as being, the end product then is, needs to be like this and thankfully like Warren[inaudible] liked pretty much all the stuff and he said are you willing to um, let's try [inaudible] with the one song which is Can A Song Save Your Life is the first one, the one we kind developed in, 'cause in my head there's all these parts, going on, and I can't play them but I can go [imitates a trumpet playing]

AC: So you've got the finished product in there [pointing to my head]

AP: Kinda like, that would sound really egotistical to say it's finished but that, there's this sound painting [AC: Yeah] and like my background has always been art and that's the only thing I can really do, naturally it feels naturally is art so even though it may seem like a, a stupidly huge thing to take on um there's this idea in my head that it's achievable, it's possible just working out how the hell to do it.

AC: So it's like a problem solving exercise as well really.

AP: But when you feel confident and I'm not massively confident in myself at all but I'm confident in myself [laughs] doesn't make any sense but I'm confident in, in, I'm confident that I could probably do it and give it my best and then hopefully, thankfully having multiple friends that may be able to help to do different parts, um, between me and Warren we could have probably, we did do a lot of it ourselves but we brought in friends because wanted this to be um, there's this overall project, there's this thing of just this life, death, time thing and relationships and, and it seemed logical to ask your friends to be involved in it because a few more pride in having people with me that I've hung out with for years y'know

AC: Was it a conscious effort? Y'know was there a concept before you started this with Warren? You already had this idea...?

AP: Um, only in my head type of thing [inaudible] the degree of this album as it is now 'cause um, I've been in bands before and time and getting people together and I started doing some kind of solo things like um, I've never played, I played one solo gig in my life and that was a support slots of three songs back in the '90s and I've never done anything on my own solo until I went to an open mic in Aberdare in the Coliseum and the people who organised it were so welcoming but I was shitting myself y'know and I was a bass player who didn't sing, did a bit of backing um, may have wrote some songs but I always gave them to the singer to sing and then I started stupidly thinking it was a good idea to finger pick some of the songs and sing the ones that I was gonna do, so then my fingers are like that and but they were really welcoming and you could hear a pin drop in there and people clapped at the end so I thought I'll come back next month then, I'll try something different.

AC: Nice bunch yeah

AP: And from there and a lot of the people there, they are involved in the album, the friendships I've had from open mic's...

AC: Who's that? Who's involved in the open mic's and what did they do?

AP: The two organisers were Steven Chandler and Christine Chandler I don't know if you know them? [AC: Yeah] Yeah, so they were the two that organised the open mic and um pretty much just welcomed me, didn't I didn't give my real name for these things so I'd be Dunkie [AC: Where did that name come from?] Um, art, I just wanted to sign off my art, what I was doing at the time was an illustrator [AC: Rather than having your name like?] yeah. I like Gary Larsson's art work and the stupidity of it um I didn't know if Gary Larsson is his real name but that kind of sign off y'know [AC: Yeah] And when I was living in England for um 9 years talking about a condom, I don't know if you know yeah? So that slang [AC: Or an Irish person saying donkey] yeah, yeah I heard that [AC: My grandmother was Irish] [inaudible] Christine would not say it, she found it really difficult to say, to introduce me as Dunkie, she said have you got a real name or another name, I said no just Dunkie [laughter] so they'd be forced into saying Dunkie but then I'd see people around then from a couple of years doing these open mic's from then and musicians see me in the street and go hi Dunkie! Alright! And I'm like that sounds really weird [laughter]

AC: It kind of normalises it then it doesn't make it such a thing but [AP: Yeah] yeah I thought you were Irish for a while [inaudible] it's just slang for a condom [laughter] which I ended up saying, well, it kind of changes sometimes to what it actually is but... What does it change to?

AP: Well I try and be all pretentious sometimes and go it's essentially it's a protection isn't it and my song writing has that ah there's a lot of songs obviously since becoming a Dad as well and um being a son there's, there's this whole thing in my head there's a lot of protection of your friends and your family so then there's that, there's that and whether it was y'know it wasn't meant to be but y'know it just seems like ah this seems like a good thing to say y'know.

AC: It would please some people that answer would

AP: Yeah, to me it's always been a Welsh term right, but I think it's used in pockets of England as well [AC: Is it?] a friend in Middlesbrough said they use it and um Hull as well so

AC: They're not strictly English up there though [inaudible]

AP: Pockets [inaudible] the Celts

AC: Um so going back to um how you came about, the idea for this project. Was the, the collaboration thing a big thing of it to start with or did that sort of happen organically? Or did you think no I want collaboration?

AP: Um a bit of both because it was um Can A Song Save Your Life was the first one, Warren had the idea [inaudible] and he said what um sorry going back to [inaudible] it's time. I didn't want to be in a band, I got two kids, I got a job um and it's hard work and Warren said that's fine I got a job myself, I got my wife, I've got two step-children ah kids he's got two children ah, um, he said how about you come up the house on Sunday for a couple of hours and we'll start with this song Can a Song Save Your Life and 'cause I had all the song from beginning to end, all my songs were like written, everything so all the lyrics, all the structure all the mids [inaudible]

AC: Done yourself?

AP: Yeah so all the songs on the album um essentially I had done, everything was there, so then it was a case of um what we call putting the bells and whistles on and then

it's, so then he said, let's use a song as a kind of um, a guide? What do you want this one, what do you hear in this one in your head and he said I've got a couple of ideas myself um, and we went with, I'm sure it's Instant Karma from, kind of song. So what we would do, we'd have the project and underneath the project we'd have, we'd import a song, not to rip off but in production and how peaks, peaks and troughs, we always talked about the peaks and troughs of the song. Um...

AC: Is that dynamically then or...

AP: Yeah, we were always talking about like um, the dynamics of it all is like, even though it's me strumming it all out on guitar or picking it all out on guitar, but in my head this would be the drop, this would be the lift y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] um I said something, he said I got, so he'd have some ideas, I'd have some ideas then we'd start layering it. I think Can a Song had about seventy-five layers on it, I think.

AC: And as regards to layers in songs is that a lot?

AP: Um, I [inaudible] I think it is and that wasn't even one of the biggest on the album and one of the [inaudible] said about that, 150 something layers on it [inaudible] I'd say plus because there's one of the vocals itself in one section which is like the Beach Boys had 127 layers just vocals on it [AC: Harmonies on it....120!] ah 127!

AC: What are people doing what is he saying?

AP: One person [inaudible] yeah notes duplicating notes for, um all different. Y'know how different, you know how different musical instrument and different vocals add a different colour in some sense so yeah there was a lot of that going on.

AC: So this is coming back to the art again for you thinking in different colours and...

AP: Yeah I think so. Can A Song then we, we started working y'know on it and it seemed to really start coming together within that first 4, 5 hours down Warren's. Um, do you wanna come back next week, I said yeah alright, I'll come back up next week and we'll carry on working on it and pushing it um, I said okay we need a trumpet on this do you know a trumpet player? Ah I do but he's in Brighton, well I know one from an open mic that I did a gig at, I can ask her? Um, I need female backing vocals so we asked my friend Lucy I grew up with in the first band, sang on, but she lives in Kent now, so I said the next time you're around would you mind coming and just putting some backing on this. Another friend I got in just to put backing on, he's a country and western singer um writes his own stuff in um Ponty way um top of Ponty, can't remember the name of it, Beddau [AC: Yeah, yeah] Um, and he's been a good friend over the years and we've written some stuff together and played together so I brought them in and violins, the one trumpet player could play violin as well so [inaudible] find somebody then [inaudible] A friend recorded an album said if you play synth or play the parts of false things as long as you put a real one in there and lifted it in the mix, the human ear will always go to the real instrument and I love listening those classic albums, now classic albums are made and how things are achieved so that's cool because it can make it sound big underneath but that one instrument will just, or double the one instrument and lift it make it sound like it's an orchestra so there was a lot of that going on.

AC: I'm quite interested because you talk a lot about the production of it and y'know like we're saying the layers and the texture and that much more than other musicians shall I say y'know where does that interest come from? 'Cause you're right in deep there aren't you?

AP: Only 'cause I'm used to, a lot of people will have their headphones on and when my dad had his Beatles stuff um probably didn't mention the Beatles 'cause it's so obvious. My Dad is a big Beatles fan he saw them twice in Cardiff he did so he'd have the 45's ah never had the album weirdly he had the 45's and I put them on and because they are in mono, you'd if your stereo, obviously the headphone wouldn't work one you'd only hear part of the song [AC: Yeah, yeah] So I'd be listening and there was a faulty lead or something, crackling and the first time it happened I was like I can actually just hear John's vocal with a bit of drum and stuff like that [AC: Yeah, yeah] and when I realised that these mono recordings were what they actually were, I was constantly like then like y'know [inaudible] with everything I could find [AC: Trying to identify different things] ah I know you can hear the harmony [AC: Yeah, yeah] and then you start pin pointing things then, it's just that, I think probably. [AC: That's cool] even though I'm not, Warren said you should go creative [inaudible] on the producer he said, I said I'm not the producer, you're the one doing the producing and all but me and him are like on the same page, we're on the same page [AC: Yeah, yeah] type of thing.

AC: How do you and Warren know each other?

AP: From that, that's the first time [AC: Oh right!] that was weird um, his wife Lizzy is an illustrator in Aberdare and um, um I messaged her and said I really like your art work it's cool and we were talking [AC: And you didn't know her before that point no?] No, not at all. I do that I just randomly message people and go [inaudible] 'cause if I was um, if I was creating something or, it would be nice just to hear someone out of the blue go, that's really kind of touched me in a way y'know or really enjoyed that so I tend to always be annoying like that and then [inaudible] [AC: Yeah, yeah] and Lizzy said um and I was talking to her more and she liked her music and the film and she said, and I was in no way like coming on y'know because happily married and it's like she said you'd get on more with my husband [laughter] and um I was like yeah and she's got a film group on Facebook um, so um, I followed the film group on Facebook and started chatting to him and he said oh I was in a band once and what do you do and I sent him a couple of demos and he said oh these are really good would you like to, do, I'm trying to go into production a bit [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, would you, would you like to come up and have a in, I was like yeah alright.

AC: I think that's really cool, so social media...

AP: Well weirdly, yeah, from that but he saw us play with my old friends in Abercynon back in 1992 and he deliberately came to that gig he said because he said he was friends with the drummer in that band and at that same gig Stereophonics came to that gig as well, so he had come to see me play this gig, I didn't know him then, I didn't meet him then but he was there with his friends and a couple of his friends are on the album playing [AC: Who are the other friends on..?] Charlie Denning is one of them, plays keyboard um [AC: Did you get um...] but I knew Charlie from other bands and through friends and [inaudible] another band as well.

AC: Yeah, Charlie [inaudible] like Creek I suppose

AP: Well, Stereophonics he was in, former Stereophonics, I knew him from Silent Runner.

AC: Silent Runner yeah that's it, Gerry on there as well

AP: And Gerry, Gerry's Warren's brother-in-law

- AC: Yes, yeah they're [inaudible] family orientated [laughter]
- AP: So yeah I knew a couple of them that he brought to the gig and I knew Richard the bass player from the Stereophonics 'cause he was going out with my best friends sister and I was in art college with Kelly as well [AC: Alright] but um, different, different kinds of friends but I would obviously go and see them play and stuff like that and Stuart as well [AC: Yeah, yeah] knew Stuart from [inaudible] they all came, this is prior to them being signed as well so Warren was there [AC: Yeah, yeah] I always remember you lot? 'Cause you played stuff like Blur and um, Pixies and, we done one Oasis song and this is like the first album of all these bands and then we're doing our own stuff [AC: Yeah, yeah] and he aid you just done Park Life and Park Life had only just come out and you done Park Life as a song [AC: So really current sort of...] yeah and he said no one was doing it 'cause everyone was doing The Eagles and AC/DC and stuff like that he said [AC: Yeah, yeah] we were doing um Pixies and Birdland and um Indie bands like [AC: What Birdland as in the?] the band [AC: Alright not the [inaudible] no um, [inaudible] I was thinking whoa cool! [laughter] I don't think that would have worked with our set up [laughter] but I'm aware of [laughter] yeah. They must have taken the name from, there was an Indie band, a British Indie band in the 90s called Birdland.
- AC: Oh okay [inaudible] I just know the song...
- AP: Yeah, that's how I met Warren [AC: So how long ago was that?] he couldn't shake me then. Um would it be... I dunno, four years?
- AC: Alright, so it's been quite a while you've known each other yeah?
- AP: Only through doing this yeah [AC: And so] and a friendship has grown from that [AC: That's cool] me annoying [laughter] coming round to his house and...
- AC: So, this project has taken four years to...
- AP: Um it [AC: To reach this point] yeah we recorded all the songs and like I said we dropped three of them, no six or seven songs we dropped, I brought them in, um when we started [inaudible] songs and they weren't finished so they were, my head is like oh no let's move to another one 'cause I'm [inaudible] something's not right here for a minute so let's walk away from it so, let's get this one done I'm like ah no, I think Warren kinda knew and he said okay let's try a different one then. So I just pull out a song that I've had y'know preparation, I always say to my oldest boy get prep, get the prep done. I done nine years in catering, get the prep done [laughs] and so um songs I'd bring in a song and let's try this one, try this one so then the ones we ended up trying seemed to flow quicker and then they were leaving the other one's behind a bit and then they just didn't sit some of them y'know thematically, then I could see all these songs then had this um weird kind of theme, narrative thing going on.
- AC: Is there like a, like a concept running through it then?
- AP: Hmm it is um, it's not nice it's always a cliched thing isn't it the whole concept album but I think it is a concept album. I won't probably sell it as a concept album but I think it is a concept album because the songs go into each other as well, so they actually slide into one another so it's a typical kind of Marillion um where those songs sometimes you wouldn't know where one ended and the other one necessarily started so, I think you will know mostly on this thing 'cause um I wasn't that clever [laughs] but they do slide into each other um...

AC: What are the themes to the different songs, you don't have to...

AP: I think, essentially um it's a life to death thing and time, time is a whole, I love, I love time and the concept of time and um time travel um not necessarily time travelling in its whole scientific way, the whole parallel universes even though it's fascinating. That whole travelling through time and looking back on your time and um reflecting and ah growing and um start seeing oh I knew that guy twenty years ago I once saw him play a gig there and um that's weird twenty years on we're in a room together making an album so that thing with Gus I was in art college with him and he's done the art work for the album so there's, I'm just fascinated by, the pieces y'know, how things come together...

AC: I think it's like you're creating a network?

AP: Yeah, and that's a horrible, that's a horrible name as well that network, all networking y'know [inaudible] it is, it is kinda widening your...net

AC: If you want your web, your musical web [inaudible]

AP: It is, it is um, just that thing y'know how things evolve and but there's a lot of that on the album it's kind of, as a Dad and as a son there's a lot of that. I lost my Dad as well so um I felt like, I dunno. Do you know Celia Diamonds? [inaudible]

AC: No I don't.

AP: She used to live around the corner here with her husband Dave. And I didn't meet Dave until I was in work with him and he was fifty two when he passed but he become a really good friend. He died of cancer he did and um, that hit me, that was before my Dad passed and he loved his music, massively loved his music and seeing that there [pointing to some of my concert tickets that I've framed and put on my studio wall] is something that he would, he had, had, all The Smiths tickets he sold on [inaudible] and Ramones and Tom Robinson and things like this so, I'd be looking at them, I love looking at them and kinda things like that and he um left a hole in my life, really like um, it was, it felt, even though I lost my nan when I was a kid and things like this it was the one that really like kinda hit me, I got no one, I got no one to talk to anymore [inaudible] um, and I felt, that was the first one and when my Dad passed then and um I was, I was just like really kind of, I was writing so a lot of this was coming into the writing and then um it just naturally appeared that I was writing these songs about celebration, and, and hope and not necessarily dwelling on the fact, shit! I feel like shit. Um so I was kind of, I always tried to find hope in things [AC: Is it like I sort of therapy?] Yeah it's definitely like [AC: A strategy] therapy kind of thing because when we were listening to some of these mixes and the good thing about having all these different people involved is that I could step back as a, as a song writer type thing because I didn't feel necessarily like they were mine anymore. And it gave me that nice distance with some of the songs as well because I'm so used to just hearing me and a guitar then I, we started putting these things on there and I could step back and not necessarily feel like, it's not my name, this, this Dunkie name which is again is external [AC: Something to hide behind?] and all these friends are on there and I'm like, so if I hear that mate who done twenty seven vocals, harmonies that builds into this crescendo kind of piece, I'd be crying listening to the mixes back and then trying to be, right, we need to bring that down, we need to, I can hear bleed here we can do, so me and Warren are bouncing these thoughts back and fore all the time and it felt like therapy [laughs]

AC: Yeah I know I can understand that.

AP: I had bereavement counselling and I talked about it a lot and how like music is important.

AC: Um so you are saying this started about four years ago, did your dad die just before that then?

AP: Um, yeah, my dad died um, ah, less than a year before I met Warren [AC: Okay] I think, or a year after, it was about 13 months I think maybe after my dad died.

AC: Okay, so that was kinda like...

AP: I started, I remember the week before my dad died, I wrote this one key song on the album um called The Memory Tree and it was based on this book by um a German um children's illustrator and it was essentially about a fox that died in the woodland, it's a great book and should be brought into schools ah for primary because it's, it, it talks about the, the coping and managing of bereavement on a universal scale but aimed at children. And a fox passes away in the woodland and all the woodland animals then start talking about the life of the fox and it's this open up and try your best to kinda talk. And as they spoke about the life in the place of the fox, the sapling starting growing through the ground and the more stories and things they told about the fox, that sapling grew and grew and turned into this massive tree that the animals then used to nest in and, and take shade in and take shelter in and things like this and I took that book out for my children, didn't know about it, went to the library and saw this cool art work like I said I see a piece of cool art work and go fuck that's effective and really nice. Quickly skimmed it in the library and went I'll have that, take it home, and my kids were in school, I'd been off work for a little, for that week then y'know and then I thought I'd read it before I read it to the youngest and then broke my heart just broke my heart and I had my guitar in my hand and I was just like strumming something and I had this melody and this song just came out which is probably, probably the most upbeat song on the album [laughter] [AC: Really?] yeah, probably, it's probably the most kind of upbeat um kind of celebration of life [AC: Ah I suppose yeah] on the album. It's, it's been picked up a lot of the time and I've contacted the author, again, blindly, and said this book of yours broke me y'know but in a good way and she started telling me why she wrote it when she lost her grandmother then so we become friends, not friends, friends like online chatting friends with the author of this book but I've constantly told her what I'm doing and is it okay because I've been pretty much inspired by your book to write this song and I've not ripped it off but I've taken this one line from the book um in the chorus, it's called The Memory Tree and the book's called The Memory Tree then, so that and some other songs then, um, were pretty personal and [AC: Yeah, yeah] and um Warren heard them and said and we started recording them and then I had all these mixes so then when I put them all together these mixes of different songs on shuffle okay I was like, that one, if we put that one there, that one there, so it's leading somewhere now and um you need something else, this is where we started pulling songs out and pulling another one in [inaudible] taking some stuff out, yeah and I can see then this, if I was listening to an album, there's a, there's an abstract narrative here um, and then, this is where we started bringing them in to each other slightly and then at the end of the album kinda does this full thing where it all flip and come back round again [AC: Is that mirrored in the pictures also?] yeah it's on the art work it's on Gus's art work because he um, like I say, Gus has given me free reign 'cause I wanted the lyrics and then a piece of art work to represent that so on the album there's seventeen songs and there's seventeen pieces of Gus's art work to accompany each song and then a couple of little other ones which are within the album, just on page

but um I couldn't see anything in Gus's which would represent the cover um, and I said I've got this idea for the cover, if it was a bigger picture, and again I don't know if it's gonna happen but if it was a vinyl and a gatefold vinyl it would need to join, it would need to go across that so when flipped it, um opened it, it goes across like Fugazi does and like Misplaced Childhood does and Script For A Jester's Tear, they all go across on the inside and the out and you're listening to the music and you're submerged in that little universe yeah. So I said there's this thing where life to death, seasons and I said is there, might be a Season's End thing? I said is it possible we could do, do you remember, oh what's his name? He um, y'know that comedians' name...Emo

AC: Ah the thin guy

AP: Yeah he used to have a funny fringe and he'd talk about the [AC: He'd be really...] what has four legs in the morning [AC: Ah yeah] and, and two legs in the evening and three legs in the night and there was like this like pretentious answer that it was man because he crawled and he went no, and he'd say it was a 4 legged man, a donkey and you cut one leg off and you stick another one back on [laughter] and there was that thing where it's this, that thing of Spring, Summer, Autumn and then Winter, years I talked about Autumn leaves being a metaphor for y'know [inaudible] and I lost my auntie, my great auntie through dementia who was a good friend to, was like a sister to my Dad and this connection that they had like brother and sister when she had dementia um he couldn't visit her 'cause he had cancer and she couldn't visit him 'cause she didn't even know him anymore so there was this lifetime that they had of um seventy years of, in that last tail end they couldn't be together type of thing y'know so there's this one which celebrated memory and the next song after it is kind of a crushing [inaudible] that if you, even then, you don't, there's a possibility that you might not be able to celebrate a memory from yourself because it's been taken away from you so focus on dementia as well then.

AC: It's quite truthful in, in...

AP: It sounds really depressing it does

AC: Nah it doesn't

AP: It sounds like really maudlin and everything, but there's if you've had enough of it by the end by the time you come back around again, there's pockets where it's like [makes an exploding sound] like that and there's bouncing songs within it and um things as well so there are pockets, it's meant to be this kind of journey thing.

AC: There's a lot of symbolism as well and

AP: Metaphors in the writing and in the lyrics and when you say, I like to play something when you say something it might sound like I'm saying this but I'm not actually saying that when you see it written down oh you're [inaudible] the same.

AC: It's one of those sentences you can say in two ways

AP: Like um 'save us from our souls' um was one of the lines but I meant it as arseholes AC: Ah right okay] but it sounds like I'm saying it as arseholes [laughter] because he sounds like the kind of singer who would say our souls but [inaudible] actually saying arseholes [laughter] so there's a lot of play on the word um, Morning, Morning Sun one of the um when the morning sun ascends was one of the lines, that's the one about my dad um, but it's essentially me trying to pull myself out of bed in the

morning so it was [inaudible] morning son it was meant to sound like the morning sun [inaudible] yeah I just like playing. And then the album then, the art work if you look at it, from the one side it goes from Spring, to Summer, to Autumn, to Winter and if you were to put those canvases because he done them in a way I gave him this idea like I didn't want to force him to put where to put brush, I was like can you, are you able to cover these things? And put a fox in it...

AC: So he just had words and themes

AP: Yeah he had all my kind of ideas he'd heard the album I sent him tracks. A lot of the time I hadn't heard the songs he hadn't even heard the songs when he agreed to give me the art work [laughter] honestly not heard a single song and he give me the art work. Um then he did them on two canvases, the two canvases together will join and if you ut that canvas next to that canvas they'll join that way as well so...

AC: There's an exhibition in that in itself just the art work

AP: Yeah, we're trying to do stuff like that to try and incorporate the two of them.

AC: There's quite a lot of things you can do with that as well as the audio thing there's the visual thing and then there's the actual story telling behind things as well y'know so it comes from lots of different artistic points of view.

AP: Cultured, it is like a cultured way but um and then again if you don't um, um just as a listener y'know when you're looking at the vinyl and got this cool art work and um sometimes it will [inaudible] evoke something in the music as well isn't it so

AC: Okay, so um...

AP: We've gone way over your one hour

AC: That's alright I just got a couple more questions and...

AP: I end up yapping

AC: What do you do for a living anyway?

AP: Um, [sighs] [whispers...I'm a tax officer]

AC: Oh are you, that's alright [inaudible] 'cause it's Monday isn't it I thought...

AP: No it's half term, so I booked that off

AC: That's cool...

AP: That was an MOT check so it sounds like [inaudible] I would love to have been a teacher but, I did try.

AC: Um so I was going to ask how do you find the time to fit, y'know all this around you've got family and work and all that kind of stuff y'know.

AP: Ah like I said I think probably prep [AC: Yeah] right. These songs existed um, um as songs as structured verse, chorus, things, lyrics um before I met Warren, so they existed um, and they were just for fun y'know [inaudible] gigging

AC: There was no deadline, or anything put in place...?

AP: No, there was no deadline with me and Warren either [AC: Yeah] initially, initially it was like get these songs done, um get an EP is it get a couple of songs on an EP I was like, yeah, yeah I suppose it's alright um, I don't know what I'm gonna do with it um, and then I think we went past 4 songs and we got to 6 or 7 oh this could be a mini album, do you want, I've got a couple more and then, honestly I think we recorded twenty four songs all together, plus the B sides because we did B sides for the singles as well. There are a couple of B sides on the singles which are covers um, and they are to a production level as well um, reimagining of, of certain songs um, but we only did them on a Sunday [AC: And that's all in Warren's studio?] in his bedroom, which is smaller than this [my teaching room] maybe?

AC: Really? This is small

AP: He's got a Futon like on one side, down one, maybe about the same but it's kind of truncated a bit so [inaudible] yeah [AC: At your place...] his place, Warren's [inaudible]

AC: But y'know the writing and all that?

AP: The writing was um, I don't need much sleep, I've never needed much sleep, I can go to work on four hours sleep um [50:00] and I'll still, [inaudible] recently I can't do it as much, I've tried it but um, even within the last ten years I would stay up until four o'clock. Not necessarily to write y'know, Theresa would be, we watched something, I'll go to bed now and um, I said okay, she said will you be up in a minute, I'm oh I don't know? I think I can feel something brewing [laughter] [inaudible] I'm playing and I can feel [AC: The cogs going?] I'm terrible at remembering lyrics as well and if I don't get it down there and then, I know if I don't record, anything even if it's on that [pointing to his phone] or way before that on my four track or anything, if I didn't get it down it would be gone. So the next day I've got files and files of [inaudible] and chords and picking things because I will forget it so and if then something kinda develops there and then, y'know when you're in that moment, it's like I gotta get it done, I gotta get it out, even if ah in this kind of, I haven't got a second verse written but I've got the melodies [inaudible] the second bit so. I did that for years like on the mornings just recording things and then I might play them in the car then and then go okay, I, because if I don't write them there and then that experience, that moment is gone and I'm always afraid that I won't get the right sentiment said, musically fine and we can go back to the music but I gotta lyrically feel that there and then 'cause the next day it's probably not going to happen. [AC: I know what you mean yeah] so I try my best to lyrically, I hate lyrics, lyrics are oh! They're a nightmare.

AC: It's difficult, I don't know if you found but when I was writing stuff down [inaudible] cheesy y'know [inaudible] and it's fine, it is fine really it's just when you're looking at your own and it depends what you're writing about I suppose?

AP: Yeah, try not to be, I try not to be like too personal as well y'know but I've inadvertently done that losing people.

AC: I think yeah I think it flip flops y'know

AP: Even when I wrote I wrote y'know universal theme but I hated hearing I this, I that y'know that woes me [inaudible] thing y'know.

AC: So it was more that sort of collaborative, and again we come back to this word it's the group thing you're more focused on rather than the individual, even though there are individual things in it.

AP: Yeah, the, the way a song makes you feel, so going back to a singer songwriter it's like different shades of song writer I'll say Paul Williams how can you write for The Muppets Buggy Malone and [inaudible] Paradise to Planet of the Apes? Um I think he had an alcohol and drug addiction back in the 70s as well and then he's on the last Daft Punk album and um y'know if you look at Paul Williams and the [inaudible] that he wrote for, but they were songs and Carole Carpenter made it sound like this, then, Dexter Fletcher is it? In Buggy Malone, or um, or um, Jodie Foster would make it sound like this, so I just liked, and through Myspace, 'cause Myspace was the first social media thing I fell into, I met friends a good six friends, they're still friends, good friends who I've never met who are on this album and three of them are on this album and three of them I've never met.

AC: How do you get the material back and fore?

AP: Just file sharing.

AC: Oh right and where are they from?

AP: One's in Massachusetts, one in Sweden [AC: Wow] um and the other is in Plymouth, Ah Devon way? I think? He's the one who did all the vocals

AC: Why is it these people and not the singer down the road or the other guy down the road and...?

AP: I don't know everyone down the road, really. But I know these musicians that move me, to find them um musically and then build up a friendship with them and they're mates now y'know, my friend in Massachusetts I've never met her but she's met my son 'cause she's driven all the way down from Massachusetts to New York which is 6 and a half hours to meet my son for fifteen minutes [AC: No way?] um, when he did the school trip. And then when I lost my dad, ah three days after the funeral I met her son in Caerphilly Castle 'cause he came, he came on a school trip to the castles of the ah UK.

AC: What are the chances of that?

AP: And I said what castles is he going to, she said Caerphilly, I said right okay [inaudible] don't come, no, no you can't go now and I said no I gotta see him [AC: Yeah, yeah] just tell your teachers I'll be there um to meet him and we went around, me Theresa and the boys went and met him and he's known me since he was like 4 through her, oh this is Dunkie sending me another song and, and talking so he met me open arms [inaudible] and he was like twelve or something like that [inaudible] um and she did the same with my oldest [inaudible] I was saying my Swedish friend helped me with this song about my Dad which is on the album which we did for the um Rowan Tree Cancer in Mountain Ash, 'cause I had bereavement counselling there and he helped me, we were just recording this song, he'd heard my demo and he did a full on production, he said let's do this like [inaudible] and when he did I was like, he said what are we gonna do with it man? I might give it to the Rowan Tree and do, so we did like a charity gig and then sold the singles to give to the Rowan Tree because just to raise awareness of what they can provide there um, um Warren heard that one, and that was the big y'know the first kinda big production of a song and, and he had lost his mother to dementia and yeah we started, we started working

on this one back and fore from Sweden [AC: That's really cool] um like again just like when we got the time, he's got a job, he's got four kids [AC: Blooming heck! two's enough!] so yeah it was just this thing of meeting people.

AC: So I'm just gonna it's not, it's not just meeting people is it, it's having that connection it seems to be more to it...

AP: Oh yeah [inaudible] y'know when you start talking to somebody you know when you get on with them and got a common interest and they're not like their [inaudible] [AC: Yeah, yeah] and all of that side of things, um and you're on that same wave length of, of treating people right and enjoying each other's company and even if weeks pass and you don't talk to them you know you can just pop up and go, how's it [AC: Continues from that y'know if it's like you only seen them yesterday] yeah so they have these um, Jennifer in Massachusetts and um Stephen in Sweden who's Glaswegian actually um, um become really good friends [inaudible] and they're on the album and I had to get them on the album [AC: Yeah, yeah, well it's part of that meaning of your relationships with them as well isn't it] yeah and I don't like my own voice so I got Jennifer to sing lead on, on the last one on the album, and he's singing lead on another one. But again going back to the whole singer, songwriter I don't have to be the person that sings, tried my best not to sing over the years, there's other people like, no, no, no I'm not singing that, leave it that sounds good, no this is just my guide [AC: Yeah, yeah] not just me [inaudible] oh shit!

AC: You're doing the Paul Williams thing trying to...

AP: Trying to flog it off to other people [laughter] but again so I can listen to it and enjoy it [AC: Yeah, yeah] 'cause I don't want to listen to my own voice, it sounds like the biggest egotistical thing ever innit. What have we got on in the car oh it's my [AC: Me!] [laughter] I think Childish Gam, Childish Gambino said that that um the [inaudible] he said, he's picked up his friend in the car and listen to his own music and they were like, is that you? He went of course it's me [laughter] why are we listening to you? 'Cause I like it! [laughter] at least, he said I don't come around to you, 'cause you made a sandwich all day and then when I come around to your house and you make me a sandwich, did you just make a sandwich? [inaudible]

AC: There's nothing wrong with listening to your own music man, that's cool [laughter] [inaudible] yeah, yeah y'know, um I was going to say what factors do you think in Aberdare or places like Aberdare, particularly Aberdare make it difficult for people to make music? If there's any?

AP: To make music, to actually create music? [inaudible] I don't think anything should stop you creating music, to, to write a song and not even like, I think, I think it's gotta be a personal thing really and I know your focus is on the community, or it could be any community here but what stops someone maybe being inspired to, to to play something, to write something, to create something, art, where there is, I say art on the bigger [AC: Yeah, yeah] bogger side of things from just giving yourself a bit of time to, to think oh I'm enjoying this, I'm gonna give myself a bit of time here and ah then give yourself a little bit more time tomorrow night and then balance it. Um I've been in bands with my friends in the past and it's difficult to get a gig and y'know it's always hard I'm talking in the 90s to send a tape off [AC: Yeah, yeah] and then wait for um a couple of weeks. Oh we haven't listened to the tape yet, we'll phone you back right, I hate doing all that, I really hate doing all that kind of thing, I found, I found it easier now by doing the third person kind of thing that I can contact and say there's this product I have called Dunkie [AC: Yeah, yeah] so I fell a bit easier but

then when you're trying to flog yourself and everyone else in the world is doing the same thing or attempting to do the same thing um, it's hard, um...

AC: So did you say getting gigs was a problem for [inaudible]

AP: I don't think it should, if you're a band I don't think it's any problem to get a gig but um, if you're an original band it might be a little more difficult because um, it's a business now and even Jacs on the doorstep but um they do, do original bands but their money has to be coming in and obviously tribute bands are the ones that will bring in the money.

AC: It seems to be the thing at the moment...

AP: You can certainly get a balance, somehow, but there's plenty of like open mic's around, everywhere y'know I follow a lot and y'know they're in Rhondda, in Ponty, in Caerphilly, in Newbridge, in ah Newport, in Tredegar [AC: Do you think the open mic...] open mic's were definitely for me, the thing that got me off my arse a bit.

AC: Do you think they're more prevalent now or are they the same as they've always been?

AP: I think, I think, no I think they're definitely more than they were

AC: Why do you think that is?

AP: Um, on a, on a cynical side of things 'cause it's good business because you're not paying the artists to perform. So then let's put on an open mic, um, and I'm speaking from being here and kind of seen this and experienced this for helping certain places do this when the venue, the pub itself may not even offer like a pint for the person that's playing y'know um I'm not saying y'know there's gotta be a give and take in, in everything, so if you're willing to give like nine years for your pub every other month or every month or every two weeks or something to get new musicians in to play some songs, cover versions, originals, have people buying your drinks there, there's gotta be um, you gotta be bloody kind to each other otherwise you gonna have people walk away or and then someone else will come in oh well if you're not going to do that I got plenty of other ones that'll bother with for you as well so you won't carry this open mic, and a lot of these open mic's it's not the pub themselves that's putting them on it's a person that's deciding that I got a PA system shall I, shall I bring a PA system in I know friends that can put on some music, so you will find some that will give an incentive of a token, if you go up and play you get a token and they give you a pint. Others and, um, talking about Steve and Charlie where they were having to give their own money to play in the Coliseum in the end the open mic's came to a point, we didn't give them that, they'd get a voucher and a pint to play, then it was like seventy five pound for the room booking, then you'd have to charge people to get into an open mic, that essentially was okay an open mic in a nicer venue, but three pound to go into an open mic then and if they didn't get the people in they would have to give it out of their own money and cover the cost so I, it's a, there's a fine line somewhere there's gotta be a bit of give and take here. I've seen people advertise looking for a musician on a Saturday night in Ponty, um looking for two hours, pay seventy five pound. Now I don't know what the going rate is but I did soon enough know what the going rate was from the comments that came after it going, do not, no one take this y'know because seventy five pound for two hours on a Saturday night [inaudible] and I was like it kinda makes sense I suppose but I, I by the time I get paid I can count on one hand...

AC: Grant had a gig Saturday night with the Sabbath band in Porth, seventy five quid he made. I mean there's four of them [AP: What's he in?] ah Sabbath Bloody Sabbath.

AP: Ah okay I've seen [inaudible] for a while

AC: They're great...

AP: Yeah, yeah I seen them, I've seen Children of the Gravy as well...

AC: Don't see them [laughs] [inaudible] [AP: Cardiff...] they get more gigs than Grant's band [laughs]

AP: The covers band and particular, if you do a cover of loads, if you do a tribute to a particular one I suppose there's a niche there isn't it and you gotta try and sell a Sabbath band in every pub [inaudible] I don't think a Sabbath band is going to go down well in this pub, but if I make a tribute band, Foo Fighters or U2 or The Killers and I do this and okay we'll give you a go so I think you gotta play the game probably. But I'm not into doing all that shit I've done that, this is why I get more enjoyment doing what I'm doing and if anything evolves from it which it kinda has now because I've had to put a band together to play these live so I pulled in and asked these people, certain people who've been on the album, do you fancy having a go?

AC: Who's playing on it the live set-up?

AP: On the live?

AC: Warren I should imagine?

AP: Yeah and um then, Dave Robert Holt [AC: Okay yeah] so he plays on one track on the album, he was meant to play on the other one but I dropped it um he's known Warren from bands they've been in together. Um Gareth Anthony's on keyboards who I supported once in a gig, my Dad was again, weirdly this one, if, my Dad was in hospital, two weeks before he passed he was in hospital then he came home for palliative care and he just went kinda thing but um there was a gig I was meant to be supporting this band with and I'd said yes to them a couple of months before when my Dad was, my Dad was only diagnosed like a month before he passed. Um and I was like in Prince Charles [hospital] haven't you got a gig tonight, oh yeah I don't want to go I'm gonna cancel it. He said visiting closed anyway so you can't stay here where are you gonna do go home? And I was like, yeah I'll go home [laughs] and he said well why don't you play the gig and I was like I don't want to, nah I don't want to. And then I drive back and my Mam's like you might as well play the gig and I was like right okay so I went and done this gig in Tongwynlais first time [inaudible] mutual friends, I didn't know this band apart from one person and I was there to support them and I'm not a gigging person anyway. I would do it if someone asked me to do it [inaudible] I met these two people in the band then, she played trumpet and violin on my tracks live that night and she hadn't heard the songs before [inaudible] 'cause she's a teacher and she said what, so we played a couple off-set and she said how many more do you want me to do and I went can you really get up and play them and she was like yeah so she did 4 and the keyboard player played the keyboards on one of my songs and he'd never heard the songs before and um they were lovely like and um obviously I kept in contact with them and then roped them in to doing some things. So both of those are um playing in the band but trumpet player and violin isn't though, she, she's got so many things on.

AC: Who is it do I know her?

AP: Um, Tongwynlais, Charlotte um Goodwin her name is, so she's [inaudible] and Gareth is on keyboards. Rob Lear I don't know if you know him [AC: I know the name yeah] Rob Lear is like a phenomenal singer songwriter, successful and played on Radio 2 and...

AC: I seen them down in Cwmaman I think the band were called Lear? Maybe?

AP: Oh yeah it was at one time yeah [inaudible] that was his band he's been in a couple, that was his band but he went solo then, he's done two or three solo albums [AC: Right] I saw him through open mic's, when he got up and played, I was like what the hell is this! Shit! [laughter] and then I don't know how it happened we became friends with him and then he invited me to support his album launch in Blackwood Miner's Institute [AC: Okay] I was like why are you asking me for? 'Cause I like your sound and I like the way you are innit. I'm gonna shit myself I haven't got a band I'm on my own. He said ah just do your best y'know innit so I ended up doing this gig and just my heart, I've had anxiety attacks in the middle of performances and I like, my voice may be doing one thing but in my head I'm having an attack [inaudible] I don't know how I held, I don't know what [inaudible] he's playing in a band and like how have I got Rob Lear to be in this band? Playing synth [laughter] [AC: He's not playing guitar or singing no?] he's playing, he's doing a bit of the vocal line just shaking something, he said whatever you want me to play I'm in the band, as long as you want me, yeah so he was just going [imitates plonking a few notes on a synth] shaking [maracas] and I was like, I'd look across and I was pinching myself what the hell is he [laughter] our drummer a friend of Warren's from an old band um, a friend who I work with who's never been in a band before, not on the album, plays guitar and he's got a pedal board like the size of this, room and he's never been in any band before and I've roped him in to playing. Um and he's music mad and um the theory side of it is phenomenal [AC: Is he from Aberdare then?] no he's from, this is the thing they're from all over the place, he's from Cwmcarn [AC: Right, so it's spread out quite a lot isn't it?] [laughs] Tom Crow who's a friend of Rob's he's from Newbridge and he's in the band. Ah but this isn't a band I keep saying this isn't a band this is just a band that happens to be playing these songs 'cause this isn't a band um [AC: It's like a collective almost isn't it?] yeah [AC: Cooperative] super group kind of thing [laughter] Because I don't want to be in that position where we're a band 'cause I know there's no money to be made in it and I can't expect you to drive from Cwmcarn for practices [AC: Yeah, yeah] and the gigs, that don't pay out. I've been in these places on my own which is, I'm quite happy to be on my own and Warren's happy to just play a gig and nothing, just play a gig [inaudible] and all these other people have agreed no, it's just a gig and there doesn't seem to be this discussion where we all know there's no money in it type of thing, they all just wanna play these songs live, which is a lovely feeling but I feel like you're taking the piss now 'cause, this doesn't feel right [inaudible] that many people in the band y'know [inaudible] so I don't feel like, this isn't a band, band this just happens to be, we're gonna do some gigs to promote the album. Again, when I get the CDs I wanna make some money like 'cause it's cost me two and a half thousand pound to make [inaudible] CDs, I think?

AC: And that's all out of your own pocket I should imagine?

AP: Yeah it is, there's this label behind it but they're only going to be distributing them which I'm not getting any money from...

AC: Who's the label then?

AP: Sound, s, w, n, d, they're Swan, they're a new Swansea label [AC: I know yeah] but we've had, me and Warren have had interest from an Australian label, a South African label and a Chicago based label as well and all of them want to release something with us as well so, and there's this Universal Music Distribution label thing which is possibly on the horizons, like Universal [AC: Like the Universal?] yeah [laughs] [AC: Wow that's amazing] I know, yeah of the [inaudible] thing 'cause I was just talking about it, I don't know anything like that, it's just jinxing it but [AC: I know yeah] the Australian label want to do a 7 inch and they wanna do 300 copies colour vinyl and they're willing to pay all of it up, up front, that's gonna cost them over 2000 Australian dollars they said, so something off the album or something new, they wanna do it within this next six months. This South African one wanna do 50 and, but they're UK based South African and I've heard their stuff it's like proper Indie [inaudible]. Then this Chicago one is, [inaudible] with someone else but I hate even saying this one because it frightens me because um Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios ah there's a guy there that's heard it and he's passed it on to Peter Gabriel as well. Also I'm just like [inaudible] but if Peter Gabriel just hears the album that'll be enough for me [AC: That's great] [laughter] but there's just these, I'm not even thinking about it because been in this long enough to know nothing happens really [AC: You can put it on a back-burner...] it's nice to know there's people interested, if something comes our way but yeah, just don't wanna say it nothing like, it's [inaudible] allowed 'cause it's jinxed.

AC: No, I'm with you on that. Um can I ask you about a little bit, I won't keep you, keep you about ten minutes longer um about the videos um ah the video I've seen online, ah what was the idea behind that? How did that come about?

AP: Is that the Rabbit Hole one or the Can a Song one? Was it the one with the masks?

AC: Yeah the one with the masks.

AP: Oh both of them have got masks in them, My degree is in animation and film so I've always kinda written short stories and concepts that ah um nothing more that I've just got this idea and then again late night typing away and aim to do 2000 words or something, so kinda there's a lot of these kind of stories and I kind of love my films and music kind of, even if it's a song and it's just a song I've heard mate's songs and gone oh in my head I imagined this, so I done a lot of those kind of concept writing ideas even if it's something... Um and again got back to this Memory Tree with the fox um, I had this idea for Can a Song Save a Life before I even met Warren that I wanted to make a video even before the song was as it is now not even like a touch of it in Warren, is I had this idea for um people in masks to be made. Didn't actually make that video 'cause the rain came down and poured it off so I was meant to make one video on the Saturday and one on the Sunday and they were gonna be interlinked the same um masked characters and some of the people were gonna cross over from one video to the other because they're gonna be linked. Um rain comes down and stops the Saturday so we um aimed to get Rabbit Hole done on the Sunday and we did it but I said look to the people, ah local photographer's and said um that they don't want to worry about a [inaudible] 'cause I had them for 6 hours

AC: Who's the local... was it Les Davies?

AP: No um Rhos Anthony, ah Rhoslyn um she's ah Foxy Noir Photography and Andrew [Button?] I think they're from Aberaman um, I'm thinking they did some work with Warren before? [inaudible] I'd just been chatting with them and I said look I got it all written, I'll do all the editing myself all I need you to do is shoot it 'cause I haven't got the cameras. I got these masks and the masks from Wintercroft this company online

called Wintercroft, Steven Wintercroft is the head one and they're like twenty page PDFs that you gotta cut up and literally stick together [AC: Yeah, yeah] old school like Bunty put the dress on the body [AC: Yeah, yeah] but this folds and A goes to B and double A goes to Double [inaudible] there's so many folds in them um, each one of these masks takes about um two to six hours to make.

AC: Whoa really?

AP: Because it's prep, there's all this prepping, because you can't just put, you can't just cut out the PDF the paper is too flimsy to like make a mask out of, so you gotta paint, you gotta glue them onto card, hard card first, then you gotta cut out the mask, then you gotta um crosshatch and cut and fold to get the pieces then you gotta stick the pieces to get the relevant size then you got your mask but obviously mine needed to be a bit more sturdier 'cause I wanted to make fifty of these things. So it took me um close to two and a half three years to make these masks because in my head way [inaudible] I was like I wanna make a video for this one day [AC: Yeah, yeah] so my mam's attic is just full of these masks [laughter] But I contacted them and said look I got this idea I wanted to make this video and um I sent them my demo 'cause I said look I am going to be doing something, hopefully a bit bigger in production but um don't suppose you could give me a discount? Because I'm gonna be spending about 125 pound on your PDFs because they're like four pound fifty per PDF. When you got one of a fox, print it off as many times as you want.

AC: Yeah, it's like the old dress making patterns

AP: Yeah when you got one you can make a, different colour dress don't you and, and then on top of that then I wanted to stick the lyrics of the song on the masks in multiple languages not that anyone's gonna know in the video but in my own head they're so the masks all have Can a Song Save Your Life as lyrics on them in different languages so I don't even think you can see it on the video but it's there [laughter]

AC: That's really cool isn't it, the detail again it comes back to that art...

AP: Again, getting your friends then to come up a mountain on a pissing day the next day and carry the masks all up, boxes and boxes of these um up Caegarw mountain in Mountain Ash.

AC: How many of you were up there?

AP: Um, about thirty and maybe the kids because having, I've done a lot of face painting and special effects and stuff like that and with the kids when there's parties I do the face painting for the kids, so I've known lots of parents for the Mythryn do you want to come up the mountain with your kids [laughter] some dodgy bloke will put a mask on you for six hours [laughter] so I had the concepts and they all stupidly agreed because they know that's the stupid thing I'd always ask so and then um I dunno a lot of trust people have in me and belief that I had this idea in my head even if it's not going to work but they all came up the mountain and didn't make the Can a Song video because of the rain but I said to the guys that made it I said 'cause we can't do it could you film people in between the shoots so I can do this kind of making of video ah so the Can a Song video is essentially this behind the scenes of the Rabbit Hole video [AC: Oh okay] but the Rabbit Hole video is um it's meant to be about miscarriage 'cause the point of the song on the album is we'd lost a child so it's going with that but it's done in a kind of I don't think you'd know.

- AC: I wouldn't have picked up on that at all...
- AP: If you see the Rabbit Hole one they're all around and Warren is the owl [AC: Yeah, yeah] have you seen that one?
- AC: I don't think I knew anyone maybe Lizzy possibly?
- AP: I'll send it to you Warren is, this kind of therapy, therapist and there's this couple sitting around the log and um essentially, it's therapy for the loss of a child and the children start coming from the woodland from different pockets with the masks on and stand behind the parents. Um the parents are not aware that the, the children are there and um this focused on this young couple who, you see in black and white have lost a child, it's just his mother and father playing in the woods, in black and white and the one child just goes off and they lost the child in the woods and um the child gets taken away by these two other rabbits into another place type of thing [AC: Down the Rabbit Hole?] yeah um and then it inter cuts back to the therapy group, so that's probably one of the more poppier ones on the album so you might not know that it's, what it's about [AC: Yeah, yeah] but I know a few people thought it was about something else but um yeah we lost a child between the child we have now so it was um about that.
- AC: Did you write that at the time? Or did you wait [AP: Um...] a few years of incubation if you want before you could write...
- AP: I think the Rabbit Hole song um was done on the back of a film of a Pulitzer book called Rabbit Hole. Um the film had Nicole Kidman in and oh god thinking... but um it was about a weird time travel thing where she, there was this young boy, killed their son by accident, have you seen that?
- AC: I think I have seen that yeah.
- AP: And she forms a relationship with the boy who was killed so that was called Rabbit Hole [inaudible] and when I watched that, it was a couple of years after we lost the child and um and the child, I say child he was um about ten weeks when we lost him but it was, it was y'know compared to people who've had to give birth to the child and, it's nothing I suppose but to me it just kinda just really chucked me it did I was shit! That's two years now and that child would have been two next [inaudible] now the one we have now is five years but we wouldn't have had him, so there's this alternate thing possibly y'know split um so um yeah so I ended up writing Rabbit Hole which is a badly drawn around the block song but in a punchy poppy way about miscarriage, so it's there, the subjects are all, yeah the concept I knew had to be about um about loss, but in a, in a way not necessarily obvious [AC: Yeah, yeah] and Can a Song was a different way as well and that was also about loss but [inaudible] the pied piper kind of thing, but I didn't get to do that one but I still would like to make that again [AC: Is that on the cards?] it was in my head, so, [inaudible] so it's in my head and if this um, let's just say this Australian company want a single and are willing to do, they said three hundred 7 inches I said to Warren it would be nice if we could have, actually get the 7 inch [1:25:01] Can a Song 'cause it seems to be the key one of the album [AC: Yeah, yeah] and then we make the video again, the way I'd wanted the way I'd written with the masks because this company Wintercroft, tag it in all the time as well y'know on social media so it's this building up, we say network of friends as well and companies that are willing to like tag you in to...
- AC: That's great, you're a very good networker, I know you don't like the word...

AP: No, I don't like, no I think it's a friendship thing more than anything [AC: Yeah, yeah] because I'm promoting their stuff and I don't want anything from it, they give me a discount but initially I was like I love these masks, people should see these masks, so um yeah if I could tag in [inaudible] I was just thinking it was organic I think.

AC: Okay, and the very last question, is there anything else you'd like to add?

AP: [laughter] I could just go on I could [laughter] I apologise

AC: No, that's...

AP: I probably haven't talked about the community enough 'cause I, there, I haven't discussed about, but I think I have in a way it's these open mic's, this is how I met people. Um, and through meeting people, they know different people so meeting Warren opened me up to these musicians that he had become my friends as well and likewise so that net has become bigger as well hasn't it, then if you're looking for a musician, 'cause Warren's idea was um this was ah, ah experiment producing for him 'cause he wanted to get some production skills so he had Headnoise and his band there um quite electronicky but then he loves Radiohead, he's a massive Radiohead fan so he loves those layers there and he wanted to develop as a producer and because I had all these different ideas for songs he was able to kind of okay what's this gonna be like then um, I, what if we go down this route or something and then bringing in those different people [AC: There's a lot of material for him to get some...] get his teeth into [AC: Yeah, yeah] yeah and me annoying him going back and fore going nah that's not, I'm pretty much open, like, even like, um I wanted this Human League [inaudible] he said are you sure this is what you want? I said no it's gotta be this poppy Human League kind of um, I can't remember what I said now? Ah Death Cab for Cutie um, Sugar it was it was Sugar um it was essentially like that but I was influenced [inaudible] all through this by Richard Matheson, the fantasy, horror, sci-fi writer, most of the album and it was an influence from the books of his that I've read there as well, who Stephen King cites as a, if you pick up a Stephen King book Richard Matheson's name will be on the front page or on the inside page.

AC: I'm a massive Stephen king fan I've never heard that, I might have...

AP: Have a look at those, y'know those first bits, um, and usually he will say y'know those like Dean Koontz says this [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, he um, Stephen king had I Am Legend in his back pocket. D'y'know that film? That's Richard Matheson he wrote that in 1954 he did, he wrote for the Twilight Zone um, so Stephen King had that in his back pocket he said for most of his early years and if you know Stephen King and as I grew up on Stephen King you look at his works you'll go oh that's Richard Matheson form that book, that's that one...

AC: I've never read any of the Richard Matheson books so...

AP: It was hard work to find it because no bugger knows who he is and when you start saying about films or books that have been turned into films he used to work on the Twilight Zone, key episode of the Twilight Zone people will go oh I know that one! [AC: Yeah, yeah] [inaudible] records he wrote, do you know that one? Kevin Bacon film.

AC: Oh I know the Kevin Bacon thing um...

- AP: Richard Matheson wrote that in 1956? That book d'y'know the um the Incredible Shrinking Man? [AC: Yeah, yeah] he wrote that [AC: Did he?] he wrote that back in 50 something.
- AC: It's like y'know the composer of Happy Birthday, it was two sisters no one ever knows that...
- AP: Never gets the credit for it...
- AC: Probably Donald Trump these days I dunno?
- AP: I love that [inaudible] and yeah and y'know I don't know how I managed to jump onto Richard Matheson then but that, my head goes like that. Yeah, 'cause Sugar, Sugar was kind of lifted from um What Dreams May Come, have you seen that film with Robin Williams when he's dead and he's trying to, he's in this other world with Max von Sydow and it's kind of this painted landscape of, not heaven but this is [AC: That rings a bell, I have seen it] um he wrote that book and I, I loved that book thought stunning, um Robin Williams' character dies and his, he's up in this ether and his wife can't live without him and he's lost his children as well and his wife takes her own life and then slips into this kind of purgatory and he needs to get out of his level of this ether and he needs to, ah sacrifice his soul to kinda get hers out of purgatory, to get her out of it um [inaudible] but um I remember reading that book but there's a section in there where he just thanks her all the time and it's page after page saying thank you and he's trying to get her out of purgatory and um, so my wife suffers from depression and I've suffered from it and there's been a lot of that and I remember when I was writing thank you it was essentially a love song thank you is that bit in that film always stuck [inaudible] just pages of thank you, thank you for being the mother of my children, when you did this, this and this and um, that song just each line begins pretty much with thank you and [inaudible] the middle 8 was essentially lifted from the book [laughter] and Richard Matheson's daughter heard it as well and she contacted me 'cause I messaged her saying I just want to say your Dad, going back again blind contacting people [inaudible] your Dad has um yeah has inspired me so much over the years and um she messaged me back she did and she heard the song and said oh thank you [AC: Thank you!] [laughter] he was like 92 when he died.
- AC: Is he a British author or American?
- AP: Californian, yeah he wrote y'know the Twilight Zone where there's a monster on the wing [AC: Oh yeah, yeah] he wrote that episode.
- AC: Gosh it's one of the most well-known ones isn't it, yeah. That's with what's his face?
- AP: William Shatner was in the original one, John Lithgow was in the [AC: Lithgow in the remake wasn't he yeah] and there's one where essentially a poltergeist where a girl disappears in the middle of the night and her parents try to come in, they draw a chalk outline on the wall and they put a rope through the wall 'cause she's gone into this other land [AC: Yeah, yeah] in the Twilight Zone but essentially poltergeist did that.
- AC: Yeah pretty much it is yeah.
- AP: And like yeah, Steven Spielberg's first film was Duel have you seen that with the truck. And that truck there's this guy in a car [AC: Did he try and kill oh no! yes I know!] and he's trying to get the guy in the car and you never see who's in the truck

[AC: Yeah, yeah]. Richard Matheson write that book [AC: Oh I loved that movie] and it's the first Steven Spielberg [[AC: I didn't know Steven Spielberg done that?] yeah it's the first film he directed American TV film [inaudible]

AC: Eerie, 'cause you never saw the guy y'know...

AP: Which is essentially Christine or Maximum Overdrive [AC: Yeah, yeah] but yeah I think, so I think there's that thing where going back to reading people's lists on an album cover and seeing a name because I was a big Stephen King fan but I, probably through interviews and those horror magazines, he'd talk about a guy called Richard Matheson who wrote this post-apocalyptic kind of zombie film which isn't a zombie film, or book um, and I tried to find this [inaudible] book back in the 90s, like gold it was you just, impossible to find, no one knew who it was and then when the net started off I imported this book called I Am Legend which was the book he write in '54 and then it just opened me up to this world of him but, doing that same thing where [AC: Yeah, yeah] finding a name [AC: Yes] or hearing a piece of music or seeing a person that has, that has moved you or moved them in the way they created something and then I think it's probably, that's how I've ended up my head's just full of shit [laughter] y'know just juggling [laughs]

AC: My head's full of shit the same as you [laughter]

AP: [inaudible] I just ramble...

AC: [inaudible] the conversations here [laughter]

AP: Ask me to open up proper like um, proper [inaudible]

AC: No that's absolutely fine.

AP: I don't think you'll make any sense of it.

AC: This is brill [inaudible]

AP: It's just a case of getting people to support each other in the community y'know, and that thing in Jacs now coming up at the end of the month the 28th I think? They're trying to say this is what we are [inaudible] radio station, did you know we exist, 'cause we're right behind the town centre, [AC: it's only down the road from me as well y'know literally] businesses y'know could be using this, they could be tuning in and advertising um and play music, local bands, 'cause Gareth plays bands, local bands so [AC: It would be great yeah] and Jacs is next door. there's this venue that is there.

AC: they could do a love sort of broadcast, that would be cool.

AP: Yeah, I think it's what this 28th this thing in Jacs is, it's an invite for everyone to come along, it's free and this is kind of open, how can we help you and how can, y'know vice versa how can you help us [AC: Yeah, yeah] what do you think? Have a look on Facebook or I'll link you to it if you like?

AC: I think I've [inaudible] but if I'm not yeah...

AP: For you then to meet other people there then [AC: Yeah, yeah that would be really interesting] and um even to get a um show, to get local musicians on there and chat about oh business [inaudible] because they're looking, it's on a volunteer basis, it's a

community show so you could have a radio show and play some tunes intercut with people speaking, like you've got them here.

AC: Yeah that would be quite nice actually yeah. Got me thinking now, 'cause it could be like an evening with [AP: Yeah] I quite like that with different bands yeah.

AP: 'Cause me and Warren I pushed it to Warren the other day and I said I know time is of the essence but how about we do a TV and film radio show? 'Cause Warren loves his TV and he said now you've got me intrigued what have you got us involved in, I said we'll play music or songs that have appeared in films, discuss the films. We'll do a um film quiz, on the community [inaudible] we're get the Facebook thing going so we can pitch something out and we'd do a random selection. We have two people on we'd do a quiz and then the gift could be um, the prize could be like two tickets to Vue Cinema [AC: Yeah, yeah] in Merthyr or um two tickets to a gig in Jacs, to show and expand that web, this is what is out there and also draw people into the community, oh that was on the radio the other day.

AC: So they all feel a part of it then rather than...

AP: Warren said I like that idea let's pitch it to Jacs [inaudible] so we are hopefully gonna pitch it to them.

AC: Oh cool that sounds really good.

AP: But um y'know a bit of enjoyment innit...

AC: That's the thing though isn't it, fun, it's supposed to be at the end of the day.

AP: Yeah if any of this isn't fun then, there's no point.

AC: If the fun's not in it then it's like the gambling adverts, y'know when the fun stops, stop [laughs]

AP: Yeah

AC: Maybe, I dunno, I'm gonna stop this um...

AP: Go on...

Interview with Andy Davies, 08-01-20, Delico Deli Aberdare @ 2pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

AD – Andy Davies, Participant

AC: Hi Andy how're you doing?

AD: I'm alright yeah fine.

AC: Thanks very much for meeting me. Um, so a few general questions first just to get a sense of where you're at [inaudible] um, what music do you like?

AD: Blues and jazz

AC: That's a very succinct answer there

AD: Yeah

AC: What about other types of...

AD: Well, I'll listen to anything, my, my tastes are pretty eclectic [inaudible] I love classical music, I listen to classical guitar, classical music um, well anything to me that sounds good I don't care, I don't classify it, if it's good that's it I'll listen to it.

AC: If you like it, you like it yeah?

AD: Yeah, yeah.

AC: So, what sort of music do you play at the moment?

AD: Well, blues and jazz

AC: Are they fused together or...

AD: They're fused together. I've also done um folk music as well in the past, well still do, I still play um the folk stuff.

AC: So have you got um, different bands for different kinds of music?

AD: Different bands?

AC: Or different ah collectives then or do you just do solo stuff?

AD: Oh mostly solo, what do you mean what I play myself?

AC: Yeah.

AD: Mostly solo, I've been in bands and ah I prefer to be on my own.

AC: Why's that?

AD: Well, I can do my own thing then and I don't have to worry about whether they are following me or I'm following them so I much prefer it on my own.

AC: Can you think of any instances where the band situation, something happened to force you...

AD: No it's just a general overall thing that's all [AC: Yeah?] Perhaps I might want to wander off and do a lot of improvising on my own on guitar and then you got the drummer and bass player and the other guitar player and they're looking at me and where is he going now?

AC: It gives you freedom?

AD: It gives you freedom yes, yeah.

AC: Okay. So um tell me a little about your musical practices, so the activities you're involved in for example how do you go about writing stuff?

AD: I write songs yeah, I've always written songs yeah. I've recorded them on CDs over the years. Um, I don't do so much gigging now, I go out to these open mic nights um locally, 'cause there's quite a few around.

AC: Where are they?

AD: Well there's Bradley's got one, the café down the Ynys has got one, ah the Globe in Cwmaman has got one, the Aman Tavern, used to be called the Boncky has got one.

AC: Are they every week then?

AD: No, on a monthly basis [AC: And they're different days?] different days.

AC: So you could have a whole week of...

AD: Oh yeah, yeah...

AC: Of open mic then

AD: Yeah

AC: And how popular are these?

AD: Oh they are quite good, they are quite good.

AC: Who's putting them on is it the landlord?

AD: Well, the way it works is that somebody will go in and ask the landlord if he fancies doing it and usually they'll agree because it brings people into the pub and unlike a band they don't have to pay them a lot of money. They might pay the guy who brings his PA and sets up and runs the night um but they don't have to go forking out a lot of money for a band.

AC: And who usually comes to these open mic nights?

AD: Oh, you get a lot of solo singers and duos, acoustic mostly, they are acoustic mostly.

AC: Are they local people or do they come from outside?

AD: Oh yeah they come from outside, they're local, mostly local but you do get other people who've come over from other valleys y'know and um a bit further afield.

AC: Okay and um, the people, the guys who organise it does it tend to be the same people or...

AD: Oh yeah

AC: Who are they then? Do you know who they are?

AD: Well, Huw Chidgey runs the one in Cwmaman in the, ah Boncky oh sorry in the Globe. The one in the Aman Tavern is run by a guy called Neil Galsworthy in Cwmaman

AC: Neil Galsworthy alright

AD: Neil, um let me think, oh the, where else did I say? The Aman Tavern...

AC: Um...

AD: Bradley's

AC: Yeah

AD: A guy called Alan Price runs that

AC: Alan Price?

AD: Yeah, he also runs the one down in the Ynys in the cafe

AC: Is he in any bands Alan Price?

AD: He used to be, he used to be in bands, he used to be in band years ago called [inaudible] Peronti [AC: Right, I haven't heard of those?] right, well they were quite big [AC: Alright] they were quite a big band, excellent band.

AC: And what sort of music was that then?

AD: Well, they'd do a lot of cover numbers of rock, rock I'd say.

AC: Okay and Anthony Price you said or Adam?

AD: Alan

AC: Alan sorry. Okay like you said they're on every month then [AD: Yeah] that's happening right now [AD: Yeah] [5:16] What about rehearsing and, we talked about the Gandhi Dancers earlier so how do you go about rehearsing?

AD: Well, we just meet every, every Tuesday upstairs in the Rugby club down yuh for an hour and we sit around the table on the top floor, nobody bothers us, we're left to our own devices and we just, got all our songs on, perhaps one guy will, one of us will bring another song in and say now look boys can we try this? We try it and if it works we, we rehearse it and practice it and bring it into the set. That's what we did last night, we did an old classic American bluesy folk number called um John Henry and we spent most of the hour work, working on that song [AC: Okay] so a few more rehearsals now and we'll probably adopt it and use it when we go out on y'know on a gig.

AC: So how did you lot all get together then?

AD: Oh we've known each other for years.

AC: So, friends

AD: Yeah. It was an idea I had in my head for years and years that I wanted to do this um black prison songs and work songs and gospel and blues and we do a lot of hand clapping and thigh slapping and all the rest of it to give [inaudible] rhythm, so it's accapella so it's unaccompanied, there's no instruments.

AC: It's all singing...

AD: It's singing and clapping and all [inaudible] the beat and y'know they are black orientated music. It's stuff that I've listened to for decades and I've had this bee in my bonnet about getting this group together and it happened, um we've been going for over a year now, two, two years!

AC: So it's quite a young band then

AD: Oh aye, two years it's been going

AC: Okay, so how many people, what's the set-up?

AD: There's only four of us

AC: And do they have specific roles then?

AD: Well, well yes we will arrange a song and say so and so will sing the lead part and we'll all come in afterwards um, it varies from song to song y'know.

AC: Is it like ah y'know a leader [inaudible] hierarchy...

AD: Well there's no hierarchy as such because it depends on the song and perhaps one of us, like Gary has got a deep voice so if it's a real deep um work song or a prison song then he'll take the lead and we'll follow him.

AC: Okay is it all men or is it...

AD: All men, there's only four of us anyway

AC: And ah have you done any recordings?

AD: Yes, we were in a studio, ah a recording studio, err back in October.

AC: And where was that then?

AD: Down in Ynysybwl

AC: What's that then?

AD: It's called Coda Recordings, it's a guy who used to, still plays in a band himself he's got a fantastic studio um at the top of his garden and we went there, spent two and a half hours recording ah eleven songs. We've also recorded on a little mini disc player

upstairs in the rugby club and ah, well actually the recording in the Rugby club was just as good as the one in the studio [laughs]

AC: Oh right really?

AD: Yeah. In fact some of the songs turned out better

AC: I suppose it's got that um...

AD: So we [inaudible] gonna do another recording now.

AC: So how did you get to know this guy ah in Ynysybwl

AD: Um, Gary knew him from years and years ago, one of the guys in the band and how he knew him I don't know he just knew him, knew of him and he got in touch and ah we went down then.

AC: Okay have you heard other people's work

AD: No

AC: Didn't know anything just knew him as a mate.

AD: Well, when we went down first of all to have a look at the studio and when we saw the set-up which he had which is incredible, it's a real professional studio, it's really good, so we thought right we'll come down [inaudible]

AC: Is he expensive? You don't have to say how much but was he reasonable

AD: It was reasonable but um but it did cost us quite a bit

AC: Yeah, yeah.

AD: No I don't mind telling you it cost us 120 quid which is not bad considering he did all the mix down himself and all the EQing and everything and he added some bits and pieces on top like the sound of a hammer bashing on a, on a rail to give it this authentic rail sound y'know, yeah so, he, he did a good job.

AC: So he was kind of bringing a little something to it as well...

AD: Oh aye, but he said he had to admit, he said I've never done anything like this before, I said I bet you haven't.

AC: So there's no, nobody that you know of around here or [AD: Oh yeah] surrounding areas who do anything similar?

AD: [inaudible] singing in a group, there's nobody, nobody in the country that I know who are doing what we are doing [AC: Seriously?] I've never heard of anyone and people who have heard us singing whenever we've gone out have said the same thing, this is unique I've never heard anything like this.

AC: It's um, it's interesting though that this comes from a Welsh mining village, I mean there are comparisons [AD: Oh God yeah] y'know is there anything maybe a little bit more ah subconscious on a subconscious level of things drawing on it I don't know?

AD: I'm not so sure? I don't know? I wouldn't go as far as to say that but I know that um, of course a lot of the Welsh did go out to America and they worked in the coal mines in Kentucky and Pennsylvania and all that so they would have had some influence on the music over there, so I'm assuming that's the only influence really.

AC: You like that, you've grown up with that music?

AD: Oh yeah.

AC: [inaudible]

AD: Well I was fortunate coming up as a teenager in the 60's you used to hear this stuff and I know a lot of kids these days don't hear it they don't hear it. Well we used to go up Aberdare park on a Sunday and we'd sit by the park lake and they had this post in the middle of the island with big, huge speakers on it and they'd have Radio 1 on, ah John Peel had a programme on for two hours from 3 o'clock till 5 and he'd be playing all this stuff and he would play [inaudible] Robert Johnson and the blues singers and all this and other, what was considered weird stuff and underground stuff and we'd hear and we'd go wow y'know. You'd hear, perhaps the Rolling Stones would do a song and you'd have it on the album and you'd see the name Morgan Field and you'd think oh who's this guy? Turns out it was the [inaudible] singers for Muddy Waters. Y'know so that's how the influence we had but I don't think kids these days hear so much of this stuff. There are some, 'cause when you go to open mic nights there's a couple of um, when I say kids now I'm talking about teenagers um...

AC: Does the [inaudible] come to [inaudible]

AD: Oh yeah, yeah there's quite a few

AC: What sort of stuff do they do then?

AD: Well, um it's good to hear that they do their own stuff, a lot of them do their own stuff.

AC: There's not much um scope to do um to do the [inaudible] music outside of open mic's is there?

AD: No, no, that's always been the case it's the same with bands um, most pubs want cover bands you got people who don't want to hear stuff they don't know. They want to hear stuff they know, they can sing along to [AC: Kings of Leon] yeah.

AC: Um, so who books gigs who does all the sort of admin and promotion and things?

AD: What now of the bands?

AC: Yeah.

AD: Pub landlords I think, pub landlords do it.

AC: I mean you got Facebook I suppose and things...

AD: Yeah there's that but the landlords will probably have a list of bands that we can call on. He'll probably ring them up and say do you fancy doing a gig say next Sunday night and ah yeah okay and they just turn up.

AC: So do you get called rather than you calling the pubs or is it a mix...

AD: It's a mixture of both, I mean at one time we used to send recorded CDs and we'd send them off a CD with about three or four songs on and then if they liked what they heard they'd give you a ring and off you'd go. It wouldn't just be locally it could be anywhere y'know we'd go up to London um, down the West Country to Gloucestershire up to around the Shrewsbury area.

AC: Recently now over the last couple of years is that a similar sort of set up then?

AD: Oh yeah it's the same

AC: So you send your stuff out

AD: Yeah

AC: Are you targeting particular things or...

AD: Not at the moment, I'm not [inaudible] now but I know bands that do and then there are bands then who set up a circuit, they played in these pubs before and they know, um, they might be booked months ahead if they played there say tonight then in about two or three months' time the landlord will say right can you come back again and that's, that's the way it works. So they have a circuit of pubs that they play in all the time with the odd one now and again that they haven't been to, festivals so it's all that kind of thing.

AC: Talking about festivals um, Cwmfest, that's been going on since 2008 is it?

AD: Yeah, yeah.

AC: Who keeps that going y'know how involved are you in that?

AD: Oh I only play there

AC: You don't know anything about the, the...

AD: Oh, I know the people who run it, um, but um, a guy called Dave Holt has taken over. Neil Galsworthy had a bigger say in it but Dave Holt is the main man then y'know and they book all the acts they get grants, money, I think they get it from the Welsh Arts Council? And from the company that put the wind farms up they gave them money as well so they can book bands and pay them.

AC: Right 'cause it's all free isn't it the festival?

AD: Ooh yeah, yeah

AC: Um and do the landlords of the pubs I suppose they're just glad to have the custom so they don't charge people.

AD: No, no, they make their money on the booze and the bands are paid out of this central fund I don't think the landlords are involved in paying them.

AC: And um, it seems to be pretty sustainable

AD: Oh yeah

AC: I mean it's lasted

AD: Oh yeah. There's been a few dodgy moments some years where they didn't know where they were going to get the money from but somehow they've always managed to do it, y'know, they're, they're determined and they, know what to do.

AC: Is there like a committee or something?

AD: I think there is?

AC: An actual committee?

AD: I think there is about three or four of them.

AC: You don't know who they are do you?

AD: Well, I know Dave Holt um, and I don't know the others. Neil Galsworthy used to be involved with it but I don't know if he is anymore. [AC: No] he's put a lot of work in over the years [inaudible] Dave took over from him

AC: Are they volunteers then Dave and...

AD: Oh aye [inaudible] they all got full time jobs and they do it for the love of it, they just want the festival to continue 'cause it's been a great exposure for a lot of acts and they're not just local either, they come from all over the place.

AC: I mean what do you think, speculation now what do you think are the reasons for sustaining itself y'know I'm thinking over the valley there with Merthyr Rising that's looking dodgy and...

AD: Is it? I don't know?

AC: Well apparently, something I'm just wondering how a smaller village is sustaining a festival?

AD: Well, I think because they get the grants and because the people running it are determined to keep it going [AC: that's commitment] and they do a damn good job of it y'know

AC: It's effective isn't it

AD: Yeah

AC: Um how would you describe your relationship with the other guys in the Gandhi Dancers?

AD: What do you mean now? In what way?

AC: Um, on a day-to-day basis y'know

AD: Oh we're all mates

AC: How often do you see them outside of...

AD: Sometimes I don't see them from one week to the next, sometimes you'll meet up in town and y'know that's about it really. Mostly it's when we meet on a Tuesday [inaudible] yeah, yeah.

AC: Um, so we talked about the Rugby Club being a resource in the area. Is there anything else you've used, it could be an equipment, buildings other people....

AD: For what now?

AC: For your music making

AD: Um, um, do you mean just for the singing group or myself personally?

AC: Everything, anything...

AD: Not really, we, we rehearse in the Rugby club, I play at home um, I've got one pupil that I teach, a fifteen year old lad that had a guitar for Christmas and he wants to learn to, to play it, um and that's about it really but I do play at home y'know.

AC: So you don't need to go to rehearsal studios [AD: No] has that changed in the last few years or y'know did you used to have to go and [AD: No] you've always been self-sufficient?

AD: Yeah, when you're, and when you're playing on your own you can do it in the bedroom or, I'm lucky I've got the top of my garden I got decking and on top of the decking is a summer house and I've run electricity in there and I go in there, shut the door and just sit in there, which pleases the wife 'cause she don't, she's been listening to it for over fifty years, she don't want to hear anymore [laughter] so she's happy with that.

AC: Everyone's happy yeah?

AD: Yeah.

AC: How long have you had this, this summer house?

AD: Oh, we moved to this house um, in 2012 and I think the following year I had, we bought, bought the summer house and it's only a small one and erected it there and that's it. So we've been there yeah, 7 years.

AC: Um, so how often do you play live?

AD: Not a lot these days um, I only do the open mic nights which will be about once, twice a month

AC: And how long would you play for then?

AD: Oh, you'd do three or four numbers

AC: Okay

AD: Yeah, three or four numbers

AC: Would they vary then or have you got a set you do or do you use it to...

AD: Oh it depends on what I feel like on the night. When I'm going to the open mic night I'm thinking y'know what shall I do now and I'll get there and think right I'll start off with this and then onto the next and onto the next.

AC: So there's no sort of definite plan just...

AD: Sometimes there is I might decide to do um, perhaps I'll do all blues tonight I think and then I'll dig out some songs from the jazz repertoire and when I say jazz I mean songs by um Cole Porter and things like Ella Fitzgerald I used to and Frank Sinatra.

AC: Do you read music as well?

AD: No, I don't read music I never have, I've never had the need to

AC: You pick it by ear?

AD: I pick it up by ear

AC: Okay, do you get chord books and stuff to [inaudible]

AD: Yeah, oh yeah. Oh, I got chord books but I mean I know so many chords now after over fifty years of playing, that doesn't mean I know them all 'cause there are thousands [AC: There's loads isn't there] still coming across chords that I, I haven't met before, um but uh that's what I do.

AC: Okay, um, so this is a tricky question but is there anything in Aberdare anything or anyone that is absolutely critical, apart from yourself that you need for making music? [AD: Critical?] yeah, it's just essential. [AD: I'm not with you? I'm not quite with you there?] um, y'know is it something that you use or something that you rely on that without it you wouldn't be able to do what you do.

AD: Just having the venues because it hasn't always been the case y'know there were periods where there was nothing going on around here?

AC: When was that?

AD: Oh going back say in the '80s [AC: Oh really?] the 1980s. it was difficult to get gigs and all that then.

AC: What do you think the reasons for that were?

AD: I don't know, just, just [inaudible] I mean now of course it is, ah this valley and Cwmaman y'know has always had great music, I think we're probably the best of the valleys and that isn't just my opinion, people who've come from outside have said it that there's more going on here than is in the other valleys and I know Merthyr's got things open mic nights over there but um [AC: It's twice the size of Aberdare] yeah it is, there's a lot, a lot of talent around now.

AC: So do you think there's um, I know there's a lot of talent um there's plenty of people doing music, do you think there's enough resources as in venues and places to...

AD: There is now, there is now. I mean you can always do with more but uh, there's enough, from my point of view it's great. Y'know there's four or five venues I could go to so that's not a problem [AC: That's quite ample for a town this size?] oh yeah it is for me

- AC: Um, so how important is making music to you?
- AD: Oh very, I do go, I do go through periods where I might not pick the guitar up for say a week but then when I do pick it up I get fresh sort of inspiration from it. That um, it's like a farmer they will leave the fields fallow, so they won't plant this year, but then next year when they plant the fields are more richer and it's the same with music, if you don't play for a while and next when you do actually pick it up you've got fresh ideas y'know um, new directions to go in.
- AC: So it's that sort of um, anticipation of new ideas that's important, keeps you going I suppose yeah?
- AD: Well I used to find when I used to teach guitar I used to have [inaudible] who could already play, in fact I taught Kelly Jones from the Stereophonics at one point [AD: You should have said that straight away laughs] well he was a pupil of mine for a year [AC: He done alright] he's done alright. So, he could already play it's just when he came to me, I saw him a few years ago, when he came he couldn't use his little finger to form a chord [inaudible] so I showed him how to go about it, he's never forgotten about that he reminded me about it. But um other people used to come to me and they'd been playing for years but they all say the same thing they reached an impasse a block they don't seem to be going anywhere, playing the same thing over and over again and I'm bored and jaded with it and I'd say okay let's play a simple G chord, now lift your finger off that string there and put it down on the second fret on the third string or the first fret of the second string and lift it up and down and up and down, play, and they look at me as if the sun shone out of my arse [laughter] why the hell couldn't I think of something like that? It's so simple.
- AC: But you gotta know it to be able to [AD: Yeah]
- AD: So they would go off then and though it was absolutely wonderful that they broken, they had something new [inaudible] well I've had to do all that myself. I mean I've been in states like that um but somehow I've just managed to overcome it myself.
- AC: I suppose learning that yourself the hard way if you want [AD: Oh yeah] is it makes it a little easier to convey it to someone else then?
- AD: When I started playing back in the 1960s I was fifteen years old and the first guitar I had was a shed, the action was about that big on it [indicates a very high action with hand] I could only play on the first three frets. But then luckily I managed a few years later to afford a decent guitar and of course I just used to be a strummer, strumming Bob Dylan songs and Donovan and the odd Beatle number and then went to London. We went to, at that time there was a folk club in London called Cousin's Club and it was the place to be in London where all the top people would go to Cousin's Club and it was down in Soho in a place called Greek Street and it was a real dive, literally it was down in a cellar and it was all and it would start say at 7 o'clock on a Saturday then they'd boot you out at midnight and you'd queue up again to go back in for their all-night session from 1 o'clock till 7 in the morning. And I saw some fantastic people there but the first time we went there was a guy called Davey Graham. I don't know if you know Davey Graham? Well, there's a tune that he wrote that everybody plays even now called Angie, not the Rolling Stones one, Angie y'know it's a phenomenal piece to play and what it is, is a bass run around an A minor chord and you put a capo on the second or third fret and you play this bass run and while you're playing the bass run you're playing the melody along with it and you gotta fit the melody in with the basses and it's quite a tune to crack and when you could play that you've

arrived, you are now a guitar player you're not a strummer anymore. Well the first time I heard it, I saw Davey Graham playing it, me and my mate we come out of Cousin's Club it was a Sunday morning and I was shell shocked, I'd never seen a guitar being played like this before and I thought I'm going to go home now and throw the guitar away or am I going to dig my heels in and get half as good as he is, well I took the latter course. But this piece right, I've heard people playing it, loads of people playing it and they've all got their own different version of it and you can look it up on YouTube you'll see a guy called Bertie Ash, Paul Simon has played it [AC: Alright okay] 'cause Cousin's Club was the place and ah I was there one night and John Martin [inaudible] John Martin was on the bill and I had my guitar 'cause it was a folk club you got up when the guest was taking a break, the guy who's organising would let you get up and do three little numbers so I took my guitar that night and I was playing a tune called an old blues number called I'd rather be the devil than be my woman's man and John martin had recorded that so he had done his bit now, he was standing over there and I started playing it and I knew that he had recorded it but in a different way to me, but it didn't matter he just grabbed his guitar and sat on the stage, looked up at me, nodded 'cause he never said much and started playing along with me, so that's my claim to fame.

AC: What a wonderful moment yeah.

AD: Not that I played with John Martin but he played with me [laughter] But my guitar hero at the time was this Davey Graham and Bertie Ash, Bertie Ash is just fabulous.

AC: I'll have to check him out

AD: Oh yeah you gotta check him out. He had, there's a fantastic thing on YouTube where he had his 60th birthday party and he played in a church hall in London, North London and it's worth looking up Bertie Ash's and you spell Ash J-A-N-S-C-H

AC: Ah right yeah

AD: Right. So you can look him up and look at his um concert

AC: I'll have a look at that.

AD: Have you heard of Ralph McTell? No? Well, all these great people were on there, and I've, I've seen them all and they've all had a major, major influence on my playing.

AC: So what motivates you to keep going, keep doing music?

AD: I just feel I've got to do it, I miss it if I don't, you could say it's almost like a drug [AC: It's like an addiction I suppose] yeah.

AC: Perhaps it's been part of your life for so long [AD: It is yeah] for it not to be there...

AD: I've gotta do it.

AC: And do you think the sort of the relationships and the interactions that music brings about play a part of it as well y'know making those relationships with other people...

AD: With other people, oh yeah definitely

AC: Have you made any surprising or unexpected friendships through music?

AD: Um, that's a difficult one that is because you get to know all the musicians, I know most of the musicians around here but it's through music that I know them, so yes, I would say yeah.

AC: What was that then just going to gigs or...

AD: Yeah, and we've all been together played in different um places around here over the years and we've all got to know each other and we still y'know, still interact.

AC: So, I don't know if this one applies 'cause it's aimed at people working full-time, how do you find the time to make music?

AD: It's no problem I'm retired

AC: That answered that one

AD: Yeah

AC: Um, and what factors do you think and I mean for yourself and other musicians all those involved in music in general what factors in Aberdare make it difficult...

AD: What to play?

AC: To play to write to even start or any aspects...

AD: I don't think there any, nothing that makes it difficult

AC: There's nothing that limits what people do?

AD: Um, no I don't think there's anything that makes it difficult especially if you're a solo player you got no problem, y'know you're on your own you can sit in your bedroom night after night strumming and playing and improving your playing and writing stuff and then you do have the open mic outlets. There are, there are some young kids that come along to these open mic nights but I know a lot of kids who play but don't have any output, they're in school or something

AC: So bedroom players yeah?

AD: Oh yeah, either they don't want to play, perhaps say, 'cause it takes some guts to get up in front of a crowd y'know and play [inaudible] and a lot of them probably feel they're not good enough, this that and the other [inaudible] so that would be a restricting factor.

AC: Do you think there should be something, I don't know something around here to [inaudible] outlet...

AD: Well they got the outlets with the open mic's [inaudible] you just gotta get out there and do it [AC: Okay and] and a lot of them are probably too afraid to feeling they're not good enough [inaudible] they would sit in front of an audience and go to pieces. Now I know, I remember reading years ago that um , when you go and perform you lose 25% of your ability through nervous energy...

AC: At least...

AD: Right, terrified of making a mistake forgetting the chord, forgetting the words and it had a bearing on your playing and even after all this time I still when I get up feel a bit edgy y'know...

AC: So what is it depends on well how long it's been between performances...

AD: There's that as well

AC: Okay, and ah lastly is there anything else you would like to add?

AD: Um...

AC: Have you got anything coming up ah

AD: Well there will be another open mic night in Bradleys on February 7th I think is the next one, they do it the first Wednesday of every month. They missed it this month but I think there's one coming up now on the 7th of February. Then of course there's the last Friday club in Cwmaman in the Globe run by Huw, Huw Chidgey then I think it's the 3rd Sunday of every month in the Aman Tavern that's on, so I'll probably go to one or two of them. There's also a lovely open mic night it's down on the Lord Nelson in Nelson [AC: Alright I know] it's on the first Thursday of every month. Haven't been down there for a while but um I used to go there quite regularly.

AC: Do you meet up with any people when you do go these open mic nights?

AD: Oh yeah, yeah

AC: Do you plane to meet up with people?

AD: Oh no, no, no they just turn up, when I first went down there I went down there with one of the guys in the Gandhi Dancers and I didn't know anybody down there but it don't matter, once you get up and start playing people soon come and talk to you asking good God how did you do that and what, what key are you in and this, that and the other...

AC: [inaudible] is there anything else you'd like to add?

AD: Um, I think that's about it really.

AC: Sure?

AD: Yeah

AC: Okay I'm going to stop the recording....

Interview with Andy Roberts, 31-01-2020, Jacs, Aberdare @ 4.13pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

AR – Andy Roberts, Participant

AC: Hi Andy

AR: Hi Anne how're you doing?

AC: I'm alright thanks, thanks for meeting me

AR: That's okay

AC: So, I'm going to ask you a few questions, so you're a musician as well as what you do here yeah?

AR: Yes

AC: So, you're kind of straddling two...

AR: I don't know if you knew as well I record and produce music as well

AC: I didn't know that

AR: I also have a home studio as well so, yeah it's almost the whole run of things the only thing I don't do is promote shows for that, I used to do that a long time ago so

AC: Okay, that's interesting [inaudible]

AR: Yeah

AC: [inaudible... and talking about the recording device position] So I'm going to ask you a mix of questions some about, I say supporting personnel as you've seen in the abstract [AR: Yes] it is what it is there, so I'll kind of flip flop between the two. Um but first of all just a few general questions, so what music do you like?

AR: I actually, I'm one of those people who likes all genres of music and mostly sort of jazz and funk at the moment but like genuinely I've been to dance festivals, I've been to rock festivals, jazz festivals you name it. Not a huge fan of the charts I'd say but there's stuff in there y'know, Billie Eilish is pretty creative with what she does y'know like catchy as well so pretty much everything

AC: So is there anything you dislike? In particular?

AR: Happy hardcore [laughter] off the top of my head is the only one I couldn't sit down and relax and listen to that y'know

AC: Can you give me some examples of that?

AR: Oh Scooter

AC: Alright yeah

AR: People like that, proper pounding dance music, um, kick drum on every beat, things like that nah it's...

AC: It's a bit much is it?

AR: It is a bit much yeah, like electronic music is like glitch step and glitch funk like that which I do enjoy using samples of big bands and funk bands as well as using their dubstep techniques is really exciting, but no, the mindless stuff that, the rave, techno, trance, just the one sound all the way through it...

AC: It's an acquired taste I think [AR: Yeah] yeah. Um so what music do you play then?

AR: At the moment I play percussion, hand percussion, bass in um, like we'd call ourselves a country hip hop band but there's elements of blues in there and elements of funk...

AC: What are they called?

AR: Ah Doctor Bland's Bad Batch [AC: Okay] so um, we've just finished obviously after two years of recording it because we're doing it at home we can take our time but refining the songs they're a whole lot different on the record now, just released the EP unofficially sort of thing so...

AC: Was that in your studio...

AR: Yeah, yeah, yeah,

AC: You recorded it and rehearsed it there yeah?

AR: Yeah, exactly, so

AC: Who's in the band with you?

AR: So, we got the lead guitarist, songwriter and harmonica player then is a guy called Tony Hands and um my partner Star plays the washboard and tambourine and percussion, and she sings as well in the band and there's a guy called Mike Burden who plays acoustic and electric guitar as well so there's only four of us [inaudible]

AC: Do you all sing...

AR: We all sing there's 4 part harmonies as well so [AC: Okay] Tony's good at his rap, uh yeah, we do we play country songs and rap over the top [inaudible]

AC: Okay, that's interesting, so what sort of I don't know attracted you to do that combination was it accident or on purpose?

AR: Well believe it or not um I, I'd been to Cwmaman festival obviously Cwmaman festival for many, many years has been running, Tony was in a band called the Sam Antonio Freeway which was just like a duo, um I got up and jammed with them on percussion, ended up liking it, they came around and did a little bit of recording, ended up fleshing it out then ah a bit more, we did a lot with that I just really enjoyed the, the looseness of it, the improvisation but at the same time bringing in hip hop beats like time, almost sampled hip hop beats on the Cajon or like I play a, it's called a Cajongo so it's a wooden conga um playing things like that on there and we had a rhythm ring as well you can get a lot of like rhythms you wouldn't expect to hear like the classic Cajon [gives a vocal example] it's not, like we do train beats, we do hip hop shuffles, we do triplets, 6/8 things like that as well ah a lot of syncopation, so you, you start taking simple instruments to the next level as well as still providing that avenue for musical expression d'y'know what I mean, like it's tight but it's also free and the chemistry then between us playing with each other is always great, so...

- AC: I'm quite interested in your choice of rhythms and things 'cause they're not vernacular rhythms are they? For round here...
- AR: No, no, but then as a songwriter like I've written songs for my own bands, different outfits, different types of music over the years, I had writers block for like 7 years and it's because I feel anything else is too simplistic and I'm too critical of my own work but then when it came to percussion in this group then, you can be simplistic but say take something like the Purdie shuffle on the drums, 16ths on the hat, ghost notes on the snare, it sounds simple but it really pads out the low end especially in the band when I didn't play bass, um it would fill out that low end, two guitars then would have the interplay and the voices would provide some of the low end as well but, bringing, bringing that complex sort of like funk rhythms and things it's that simple music, I think it gives it more polish it makes it more sonically interesting.
- AC: It sounds like you're after some sort of um texture as well rather than just y'know, ah y'know 4/4 good tune, nice chorus...
- AR: Everybody, everybody knows what a four piece band acoustic guitar strumming and singing it sounds like y'know what I mean everybody's heard that. And when we do covers as well we don't do them straight we do them exactly as we do them so we, we do a cover of Pantera, Cowboys from Hell [AC: laughs I've gotta hear this!] um, there are a few YouTube versions that are good quality as well so um, we do Beastie Boys, Fight for you Right to Party, we do Coconut by Nilsson, um Bloodhound Gang, Bad Touch and then there's like little, not gimmicks, in each song but there's little things that we do, like we do a jazz medley, like proper swing like jazz medley with ah the Grand Old Duke of York, St. James' Infirmary a few other like really old classics, but then for the Grand Old Duke of York we put that towards the end of the medley and as we are going through the verses, the first time through we sing it normally, the second time through we won't sing the word up and we'll invite the crowd to join in and the second time through, third time we won't do down and the fourth time we won't do up or down, so it's like when they were up they were [omits the next 'up'].
- AC: Yeah
- AR: And you catch people out and it's y'know taking something old and making like putting our spin on it from our bizarre brains if y'know what I mean, Tony loves Monty Python ah really obscure comedy like really cynical as well. We've all got our own flavours and then when you put it all in the musical pot y'know what I mean it's, yeah.
- AC: It sounds good, it sounds like you're encouraging sort of audience participation as well...
- AR: You got to y'know what I mean who wants to watch a shoe-gazing band? That's also trying to be a party band, you can't have them both y'know what I mean, I used to sing for a band called the Spirit of Boogie, local sort of funk and soul tribute twelve piece like brass section the whole works, I used to, when I used to sing for them, 'cause I'm used to being a musician playing an instrument I found [inaudible] the majority of my energy onstage was actually bringing the audience in [interruption by another member of staff and musicians bringing in projector equipment]
- AC: What were we saying? Oh, bringing the audience in...
- AR: Yeah as the lead singer, the majority of my energy, rather than thinking of what I was playing or how I was phrasing things on an instrument or the rhythms if I was playing

bass or drums, I'd be thinking about right how could I move and how can I use my voice in a way that'll entice people to keep watching and enjoy themselves so, so it probably looks really easy but James Brown, ah y'know all these [inaudible] bands like that is [inaudible] he's all about the sort of back and forth and they're all classic songs. But then when you're in an original band you gotta make your own stuff as interesting as something people have heard a million times and I think to do that, coming from a musicians point of view is to play interesting stuff that you don't hear and other musicians then and people will think oh [inaudible] haven't heard that before it's cool, who are they? It brings people...

AC: Have you got any examples of things you did with Spirit of Boogie and then any examples of what you did to get audience participation in um the other band then?

AR: Um so the Spirit of Boogie would be for example Rose Royce Car Wash y'know the song starts with that classic kick drum intro [inaudible] yes clapping get people walking the stage making use of the space ah engaging with people, I know, I know it seems like I've the Butlins thing to do but Redcoats know how to bring people in [inaudible] make them a part of the band and they feel less inhibited and more likely to enjoy themselves giving everyone a better night musicians feed off it as well so, and compare it to the current project because I'm playing percussion I gotta hold the bass line gotta hold that, the whole rhythm section I play a, nowadays I play a fretless Ashbury bass and um a kick drum at the same time so I'm literally the entire rhythm section and what I can do then, keep the pocket but also give that little improvisational flare when there's room for it [AC: Right yeah] and that makes people think number one, wow look at that guy doing two things at once and singing and number three check this instrumental break out to the ghost notes and the slides and y'know, it's, it's a different angle but...

AC: Yeah, yeah that's really interesting. Um, so you described, said sort of country kind of

AR: Country hip hop

AC: Hip hop kind of thing so, um so you can, are you just in one band sorry?

AR: At the moment yes

AC: Okay, so tell me a little bit about the writing process, how does that happen do you all get together or do you do it separately?

AR: Well lucky, um Tony is pretty much like a fully formed songwriter kind of guy he'll come up with the lyrics and the riff and it'll all be there. When we were recording the EP then, the songs are radically different to how we perform them just because we had, y'know I've been recording my own songs for fifteen years so I've got the, the expertise and knowledge and the producer background to think what can we make from this, could even do it like that oh could do this, um, so really I did help write some of the songs but more in the production kind of way and sort of like let's bring them out of their shell let's add this part, what about y'know putting a Hammond on this, ah 'cause I play keys as well, or like for example we got a song called Shut UP and Play which is quite like Latiny inspired and um, because I like collected bizarre musical items I got a, err piano organ a [inaudible] piano organ so it's basically an electric accordion with the err chord buttons, major, minor, 7th and the full keyboard then [AC: Oh nice] and we recorded that with a stereo bar as a like a sort of 'cause there's Latin you got that [gives an verbal example of a melodic run] so we put that on there as well obviously you can't take it out and play live and mic it up but bringing, putting things on the record then, really matches the songs, matches the

genre and the feel of the band. So it's like you buy the record you'll hear these songs you come and hear us live it'll be the same songs but in a completely different way but just as entertaining.

AC: Is that offer kind of two things or is it too...

AR: I think it's just because I, coming from the last couple of projects I did for myself it would always be as straight as it could be and as close to the real thing and I just thought y'know I got all of this stuff and I got all these ideas why not arrange it, why not produce it and then let that speak for itself and the live performances then, they'll evolve on their own. Like when I first started I was just doing percussion and I played bass as well. Like Mike started out playing acoustic guitar, he's more of an electric player so he plays electric now. Tony used to play a lot of lap steel um, we don't do that much anymore but we've got like other slide guitars that we bring in different tunings so like the live gig always evolves but, on the record, then you want to put something down you can listen to in ten years and think that's not dated y'know that's its own little bubble like a good record y'know what I mean never sounds out of place in any time

AC: Yeah, yeah. That's the aim really y'know

AR: Yeah, yeah

AC: Um, is the live performances then, um is that just off the cuff [AR: Yeah] it just happens

AR: We will practice maybe once before a gig but hardly ever and it's really difficult to get the whole band together 'cause Mike lives in Cardiff and the rest of us obviously Aberdare based um so, it's a more a case of imag, imagine we were session musicians, we can trust each other to do the gig that's what it is that trust and the chemistry, knowing that no matter what happens it's gonna happen and it's gonna be what it is. Y'know what I mean there's no, we've been doing it, well Tony actually has not been doing it as long as the rest of us but, in terms of his confidence building he's come on leaps and bounds he's, yes, he's good, he's good at what he does, he needs a drink maybe, he doesn't drink often, he does need a bit of Dutch courage to go...

AC: That's alright [inaudible] Um, so rehearsing um, you said you don't really rehearse at all [AR: No, no] if you were rehearsing where would you go?

AR: I'm lucky enough to have like a live room in my house [inaudible] yeah it's like I got a, it's an end of terrace house but it's like a doubled living room with bay windows, so in the back end of the house 'cause we got kinda sliding doors, I've got the grand piano and double bass etcetera...

AC: A grand piano in your house? I need to come down to your house [laughs]

AR: Seriously [AC: I can't play it! Laughs] double bass and instruments of that size and a seating area in the bay area so you can [inaudible] spread between the two rooms, there's enough room in theory to sort us out [inaudible] amps, you could, you could use it as a live room set so we would practice there any time and then we have recorded like say [inaudible] channel recording there as a practice just to see where, to see how that turns out [AC: Oh and you filmed it as well yeah?] yeah, yeah.

AC: What were the results of that then? [inaudible] it's on YouTube as well yeah?

AR: It starts off a bit shaky and I'm not a perfectionist, I am in my own way but, it's not I'd say about 75% effort, once it gets going it's good but it's because nobody actually thought when we were doing that take that we were recording and that's how I like to surprise people then. 'cause people you know what red light fever is right?

AC: Absolutely, yeah, yeah

AR: Totally manic to start everybody, as soon as they know it's on they go urgh I can't do it anymore so every time now right, do a practice click the button, do the practice, we'll just have a jam and chill out, cool, that's the take alright, yeah.

AC: It's gotta be a bit sly hasn't it

AR: That's the producer side of things, you just want to get the best out of your musicians and y'know doing that is part psychology and part philosophy and part music as well so.

AC: Yeah, it's interesting cool. So, um the recording you said you done an EP um, can you tell me, have you got any little stories about incidences that happened while you were doing it or y'know something interesting...

AR: Yes, in what kind of, kind of conflict or are you looking for...

AC: Anything just those interactions and things happening...

AR: Okay, so as I mentioned it started off, the band started off as the Sam Antonio Freeway, we, when I joined and Star then eventually later joined, we were five with [inaudible] we dropped the Sam Antonio but the Freeway [inaudible] six months a few gigs under that moniker and I was fully committed that was the band and y'know this is how we're gonna record it. We recorded all Sam's guitar parts, great voice as well and he was basically the lead singer of that point, Tony is a background singer ish but he would write the songs. Um we recorded a good five or six tracks a lot of time doing it and Sam decided he didn't want to be in a band anymore [AC: Why?] He was more interested in doing solo stuff, um, he was also doing like um a music tech degree or course in Merthyr college so he wanted to put his skills to use obviously I already had the recording, I knew what I was doing, I don't think he felt he had room to grow in the way that he wanted to take the band whereas we were much more loose chemistry band-based jokes laughs and also that hip hop laid back chilled vibe but he's more y'know Chris Rea and more like that soulful singer, song writer [inaudible] so we had to take everything, the first thing I was like right can we just delete Sam's voice and his guitar and just use what we got, okay. Fast forward a year, we've re-recorded everything the only thing that survived is one drum part from the original recording sessions which is on one of the fully produced tracks that we've put up on YouTube Steve Down Under with a music video. Um, we recorded maybe 'cause, 'cause we're a [inaudible] you can do whatever you want y'know what I mean, so if you get bored, right let's do a new track what do you, oh this is now a song. We made 7 or 8 okay, there's a song that Tony wrote about a friend of ours called Country Jim, called Country Jim okay. The chorus, you might have to delete this or edit it, He's a cunt, he's a cunt, he's a cunt, he's a cunt, he's country Jim, take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of him right [laughter] That's the chorus, we had recorded a really nice live percussion and full ah recorded version of that and we started working on a newer version sort of like drums, a bit more of a produced country feel. I thought, because I was clearing space on my hard drive one day, all alone in my studio I thought right we'll delete the old Country Jim's

we're not gonna use that I deleted both Country Jim's I deleted the entire song off my hard drive. The only surviving version now is an mp3, it's lacking like half the backing vocals and I had to explain then to Tony, yeah y'know the 77 ties you did the lick for Country Jim, yeah it's all gone.

AC: How did he take that?

AR: Well, he was annoyed at first but he's very much like me in the sense of well if it's done it must have happened for a reason d'y'know what I mean so we'll just get on with it, we still have re-recorded Country Jim but we ended up doing like two or three different tracks instead since then which made it onto the EP which we had no intention of doing to perform we never even played live, so it's like...

AC: Swings and roundabouts

AR: It brings different things out

AC: It sounds like this Tony is quite philos, uh philosophical about things then?

AR: He's very set in his ways so when we, when we got to the final stages of the EP now and it features like full drum kits, samples, keys stuff that we don't do live. I was arguing for 'cause we're only a four piece I was arguing for a drummer 'cause a drummer would be amazing even if percussion and drums and it's a small cocktail kit maybe three or four piece kit 'cause [inaudible] doesn't know I want a drummer in the band, number one because we don't know them, number two we got like a kinda band ethos type thing and we're all very similar in our habits if y'know what I mean? So, it, it's he didn't want to introduce somebody to the band that number one we didn't know and number two we weren't sure whether they would gel with us. Now I play drums as well, so I said to Tony let me play drums, no, why? 'cause we won't have y'know you gotta play something else so [inaudible] we had a bit of a tete a tete about it but in the end I put my foot down and so like you can say you wrote these songs and they're your babies as much as you want but if you listen to the record 50% of that is clearly me, 'cause you would not have done any of this without my input, what we've done together really and I'm not all about staking a claim I'm not selfish but I think this kind of sound we would need a drummer or at least a real kit and snare to get that feel. So I said to him look if you don't want me to play drums I will just play bass in the band and you won't have a drummer and see how you like that, y'know in a sort of this is mine I want it play this now [inaudible] drums and the bass y'know so, it came to a compromise, in a previous outfit I played the kick and the bass at the same time so you know I can do that [AC: Like White Hills isn't it?] yeah, yeah, and Star then on the tambourine on the left on the off-beats the two and the four you've got that [vocal demonstration of the beat] and ghost notes on the bass as well you can percussively use that so we reached that compromise we reached that in June, we didn't play a gig until New Year's Eve and it was a headline gig we've got a residency in the Nos Star Hostel in Cardiff, so last Wednesday of every month we host the open mic and every New Year we got the gig like for the past four, five years running...

AC: What's the [inaudible] I know Tony's in Cardiff?

AR: No he's an Aberdare boy he lived in Cardiff for a while [AC: Alright] he was a chef it's been his main thing for a while but he ah started hosting the open mic there after going a few times after starting to play and he really hit it off with the manager, a guy called Steve, hence Steve down under our song is actually about Steve the manager of the Nos Star, um...

AC: So do you write all your songs about things...

AR: No not necessarily like one song Suntan Superman Tony wrote about five years ago about some roid heads in Aberdare spray tans and things like that. Um, we've got the other song which is basically just a tongue twister put into lyrics so 'how much hotter would that otter in my pocket be if it stuck it's finger on a socket on a rocket see' [then sings it over a couple of times while clapping]

AC: You can't get that wrong can you [laughs]

AR: Trying to play and sing that at the same time, play a conga and sing it [laughter] yeah nightmare but it's Tony's [inaudible] like. From my own song writing perspective when I first wrote songs they were about random things and they did have that real joie de vivre that Zappa, Monty Python influence because I feel silly music is often the best music. Music that takes itself too seriously sometimes is just boring y'know you think these people, say you wanna make a metal album and you want to make it exactly like a metal album that's what it'll sound like, but if you wanna do a song and you wanna put a slide whistle and accordion and a sample of an elephant on it and you also end up writing a good song, it's not gonna sound like every other song it's not gonna be that [AC: It's interesting isn't it] yeah, like the name of the EP is Did You Just Assume My Genre? [AC: Alright] 'cause every song on there is basically completely different there's no unifying theme apart from the people who play the instruments and the, the production sort of thing but

AC: So, what would you say your, like bands often have identities however clear or subtle they may be what would you say your identity would be, the way you present yourselves....

AR: Like a modern Vaudeville, like a modern rootsy anti-folk, anti-country, anti-pop but it's so anti it's already come back full circle on yourself [laughter] and it's fully self-aware of like it's like broken a fourth wall of music and it's not always obvious to audiences that, that is going on. We're, we're a muso's band really 'cause we're all muso's, we all like y'know, Tony likes technical country playing and harp playing, I like people like Steve Vai and Victor Wooton virtuosos ah Mike's [inaudible] John Denver the old school the finger picking so we all, we've all got our own little avenues of musicality we go down and obviously then it all just comes together so there's no, I don't think we could define it as this is our identity, I think, the one thing we're struggling with is the band name 'cause you've already forgotten it but yeah

AC: It's a long one though isn't it

AR: We struggled for ages and y'know it was a committee decision for that at the end of the day what's in a name d'y'know what I mean, the songs are good they remember the songs, that's your hits y'know your streams or whatever, whatever it takes nowadays [inaudible]

AC: The songs are the main thing really

AR: I will say as well Tony was never really commercially concerned with any of these songs they weren't all for sale they weren't for profit they weren't for touring there's no goal to y'know play Wembley it's like this is my music and I would love to be able to, [inaudible] King, that really early sort of when he used to do stuff all on his own and take it to his house and do weird things to it and bring it, that, that's his like vibe and my vibe is very, it's evolved it used to be very clean very technical production like

that super clicky sound [AC: Yeah] compressed snares and now there's a band called Vulfpeck which I'm really into, um check 'em out just everything, everything by them, Vulfpeck [spells the name] just everything. Their gimmick, their identity is um, every song that do and every one of their albums is also recorded live, videoed ah videography and put on YouTube so any of their songs you can watch, sort of like Snarky Puppy in a way but much more low volume, low volume is what they call themselves but much more low volume [inaudible] there's a song called 'Corey Wong' and you'll get the below volume reference instantly, watch it till the very end...

AC: Corey?

AR: Corey Wong yeah. When the new member of the band joined Corey Wong, this was his song [AC: Okay] that he played yeah [ac: That's interesting] Volfpeck if you haven't heard of them [AC: No I haven't heard of them yeah] proper, I've been obsessed by them for like 2 years now.

AC: Where are they from?

AR: America, they're all from um Ann Arbour in Michigan [AC: Alright yeah] they all went to the same music school

AC: Oh so they're trained musicians as well yeah

AR: There's like, there's a Svengali of the band who, I like to think he's like me, 'cause he plays everything, he did all the early stuff the other musicians are his friends, like they sold out Madison Square Garden in September and they are the only unsigned uh they're not unsigned they're on their own label, the only independent band ever to sell out Madison Square Garden

AC: That's a feat in itself really I mean for a signed band

AR: Three years ago, they released an album on Spotify called Sleepify which was fifteen tracks of pure silence, four minutes each. Jack Stratton the band leader said guys can you just all stream this overnight for us [inaudible] they made twenty grand before Spotify shut them down, they used that twenty grand to fund a totally free tour for their fans across the U.S.

AC: Clever band

AR: Yep

AC: It's great isn't it. I like the reference to John Cage's 4.33 yeah [AR: And then turn it into] extending it [laughs]

AR: And made twenty thousand pound off of it

AC: Yes. That's cool. Um, so we done recording um just tell me a little bit about what you do as supporting personnel so you can use Jacs here as an example if you want.

AR: I started in the summer doing the supporting personnel side of things when I first started gigging, and, and it was when I was about sixteen, seventeen, eighteen back in the studio bar in Merthyr err after Martin who actually still promotes here funnily enough

AC: Martin Williams?

AR: Yeah

AC: Mark's brother yeah?

AR: Yeah. After Martin left, the Studio Bar a little bit of [inaudible] me and my friend young up and coming plucky dudes, he was doing the promoting side of things and I was doing the sound side of things so we did that for like a year and a half and I only did it to get my own band gigs [AC: Yeah] 'cause I was like oh it's there y'know the audience I got paid for it as well, not very much and for a kid it was just fun to do um but I realised then quickly how fickle the scene can be and y'know how strange certain days of the week are sometimes, certain days of the month. Here then in Jacs um, I came in December [inaudible] the kind of managers sort of jumped in the deep end [inaudible] and the guy before sort of didn't go very well so they [AC: Who's the guy here now?] ah Barry and Amanda ah Fitzgerald [AC: Okay so they're the ones here now] yes, general managers, they did manage this place two years ago ah but they left, they came back I coincidentally left my job in the solicitors in Cardiff and I asked a friend of ours Mike Thomas ah do you know if there are any open mic's or something I can run up in Jacs as err off chance, it's something I'm familiar with. Mike pointed me in Barry's direction, Barry mentioned that oh we've only just taken over and everything is a bit up in the air at the moment and I said, Well, do you need any help behind the bar 'cause I worked, worked in hospitality for about five, six years as well so I'm more than comfortable that side, this side of a desk whichever. Um, I jumped in then mostly behind the bar but obviously the sound system here, the guy who was doing sound, he done a degree, I think he done it in Falmouth err music tech but he wasn't, he said [inaudible] full motorised faders, nine mix out, ten mix out on there. He wasn't fully comfortable with the desk and I was gagging to have a go so, me when we first came here the [inaudible] was a mess the stage was a mess so nothing was rigged up properly so me and the guy did it in about five hours we spent re-rigging everything, re-rigging the desk up, read the manuals in two days just to know what's happening obviously I'm not I wasn't the sound guy at that point but I just wanted to make sure it was going easy over there so it was going easy up there so that Barry and Amanda have one less thing to worry about and then um sort of came on as a shift manager then so a responsible person would close down every now and again when Barry and Amanda weren't around and fag breaks things like that. Obviously because it's that's when you come to the economic side of things as well and y'know the downturn, the recession lack of people so the more economical it is behind the bar the more the venue can sustain itself so I find myself doing then a lot of jobs which I'm okay with I'm happy to do 'cause I've been coming here since it was Elliott's and I've been playing here since it was Elliott's so for me to now come full circle and do all the stuff I was doing years ago is great for me and it's local but ah Rhys the sound guy then last weekend ah he couldn't handle it basically. We were doing the sound check for a Prince band, ah names, names will be omitted I'm sure but ah

AC: I won't put any names in if...

AR: It wasn't going great in the sound check, there were um certain tensions risen um

AC: Between the band and the sound guy?

AR: No between Rhys and everybody else 'cause he was stressing out ah he started screaming across the room at people to come and help him and things like that. I'm busy stocking upstairs I'm y'know supposed to be running the bar, I had to go over and help him, fix the sound and then Barry just says to him look if you can't do the

sound and you need someone to help you, either you do the sound or and he just went okay bye! [AC: Oh really?] yes, just after the sound check right you're gone. So I was like looks like I'm on sound tonight and thinking what's he done to this desk, what is everything um it went really, really well ah the band were really, really appreciative and supportive as well um so that's wat I'm doing full time working the desk so like tomorrow ah we've got the rugby so I'll be on the bar from 1. We've got Think Floyd in the night who are bringing their own sound engineer so I'm sure I'll be around to help him out with the desk to start with let him know but I'll be behind the bar all day tomorrow.

AC: Is that common for bands to bring their own sound tech?

AR: No, it's the first time, they, Think Floyd tomorrow need about four hours to set up

AC: What are they doing then?

AR: I have no idea

AC: Are they doing a proper massive Pink Floyd thing?

AR: I don't, unless they got as giant inflatable pig, I don't know why they need four hours to set up but there you go

AC: Twenty minutes job done [laughs]

AR: A named Pink Floyd tribute act that will remain anonymous [AC: Laughs, oh cool] so I'll be behind the bar tomorrow then and then Sunday I think there is the open mic so I'll be doing both, that desk you can control remotely [AC: I've seen you with an iPad walking around] so I'll have the iPad and ah sort of surf do the acts on the open mic bring the house music and I'll close down on Sunday as well then so from a supporting side of things I do most of the jobs [inaudible] the only thing I don't do like I said is book the shows so...

AC: You seem quite happy to do that is it...

AR: A passion

AC: They say y'know talking about coming back here and doing the jobs that you wanted to do, so is it because it's Aberdare or is it because sustaining y'know what's your motivation behind...

AR: Everybody wants to work with something they love right. Everybody wants to do a job that's not a job, this is the closest I can get. When I was in when I worked in the Ty Newydd Hotel I was hired as a management trainee apprenticeship scheme kinda thing back in 2012 and um I eventually because it was such a small company there weren't no manager positions so I thought like basically became like reception manager and like night manager but that was just me y'know looking after the whole building so I, my job satisfaction then came from doing a good job in a hotel y'know there's no Santa? There's no, no music venue but at the same time you are serving people, hospitality, um welcoming, cleanliness things like that, that uh taking pride in your work I found that really, really satisfying if somebody just walked into my bar just after I cleaned it and like smirk at the granite and be like wow, I'd be like yeah, yeah that was me. Won't do it in my own house but [AC: Why not?] well no I don't have to impress anyone in my house you aint paying me y'know what I mean. The better this place looks the more money you gonna spend. The happier you are here the more

money you're gonna spend and the more justification we've got for doing more things for people d'y'know what I mean

AC: I suppose it's that sort of image [inaudible] and for sustaining whatever that is you're involved in whether it's the hotel or here

AR: Exactly you gotta be local you gotta be pro-active as well y'know you can't let stuff come to you, you gotta make it gotta work for it and let people know

AC: I was going to ask you as well you said you left a job in the solicitors in Cardiff

AR: Yeah I was a para-legal yeah

AC: That's like a good job y'know

AR: Yeah

AC: What was the story leading up to that?

AR: My degree is in philosophy [AC: Cool] right, um I never had any interest in law whatsoever, it was a personal injury firm and call centre to-boot, so even though I was a para-legal all I would do is answer the phone tell you I was there to help and support you and ask you what happened. And it would run the gamut from car accidents, millions of car accidents ah to medical negligence, ah criminal damage, ah assault and things like that. Um we would also do all of the work of the British Medical Association all doctors and lawyers that was us, that's um we would do the Royal Nursing Association as well and um public liability claims, doctors liability claims. Before that I worked in EE as a technical err service operator, so I'm a techy guy anyway, so phones and things like that, no problem for me [inaudible] I got that job then from my previous call centre experience and my telephone manner and my general [inaudible] to pick things up and do them. I learned a lot about how the law works, I learnt a lot about um the way the council works and things like that. I feel I'd taken enough from that job and a lot of my work I was taking home not like actually to do but the things people were telling me sometimes you can't get it out of your head and sometimes you think oh God alive then other times they would introduce unfair targets and the target in this place, I need you to sign these ah this 42 page document without reading it on the phone, yeah the faster you sign it the better. You do have fourteen days to cancel and opt out it's completely hassle free, please sign it now or I don't get a bonus. [AC: That's an awful position to be in] absolutely yeah and especially when somebody's telling you they lost their toe because a log fell off a fireplace in a pub and there was no fireguard [AC: Hmm I can see why yeah] all sorts of stuff. And I heard some ridiculous things as well [AC: Made up stuff yeah?] one guy changed the location of his vehicle parked on the road 6 times to make it fit where the bus hit him right. I had somebody blame the floor for them falling over [AC: What the floor came up to them?] No, no I'd been out all night it was 4am I was in a kebab shop I'd been drinking heavily all night, I stepped out of the kebab shop and fell over! I whacked my head and it was bleeding so who'd you blame? It was the step innit! Okay it wasn't all those pints you had then [laughter] no! Also we can't take the floor to court sir I'm sorry so. I heard a story about a local woman, we didn't just do local stuff it was all over the UK. Local woman pushing her pram down the road on her way to the park with her granddaughter in the pram, there was a dip in the road in the pavement, the pram fell over the woman fell over onto the pram okay, hurt the little girl, she twisted her ankle as well. So who's responsible, the council. Why? The floor it had a dip in it. Okay was there any markings? Yeah, there was a thing around it, but I didn't see it 'cause the pram went over it. Okay, ah I need to make a

claim for my granddaughter as well, I'm really sorry you can't do that. Why? Because you've directly caused her injuries, so your granddaughter would be suing you, you'd be suing yourself, you can't do that I'm afraid. Who's gonna do that for her then? Oh your daughter could do it as in her legal guardian [inaudible] ever signed the documents [inaudible] and you think that's my job trying to convince this is worth taking to court. It's no win no fee.

AC: So did you feel that job was a bit soul destroying?

AR: I am not a lawyer, I am not a para-legal, I'm a musician a creative person. I had to read 50% of my daily job off a script. There was no room for error because if you say the wrong thing somebody could take you to court. They're lying they told me I could do this! Actually I didn't I said maybe but [AC: Yeah I can understand...] it's not my, I enjoyed it and I was good at it but as you say I was a para-legal now sounds cool but I just answered the phone [AC: Don't say anything about that] exactly

AC: Um the other thing you mentioned earlier was when you were working in the Studio Bar in Merthyr. You said um the experiences over there, ah you got to know that the industry is quite fickle [AR: Yeah] I sensed a bit of, did you experience a bit of negativity...

AR: Well, like I mentioned about the south Wales metal scene like that was in its hey-day at that point, bands like Notcha and Midasuno just coming out. I hated that music it was just noise to me I preferred like Gary Moore or people like him, Joe Satriani things like that. Um, when I wanted to book bands that I liked, a band called Cornerstone [AC: Oh yeah] [inaudible] I booked them for my own birthday and I played with them, um, but I booked people like that and other bands right, nobody would show up. We booked bands that I've never heard of a band called Athena this is a perfect example, they were it was a weird like [AC: It's a stationary shop?] Oh I dunno, it was like that My Chemical Romance era that strange [AC: Emo...] Emo kind of yeah, sold out, literally best night we ever had I made like 600 quid just for myself. All we had to do was cover the door staff and then we had the money for the tickets. Sold out and I hated every second of it and I was like well I haven't got a choice here have I, so...

AC: Is there a difference between what sells in Merthyr between Aberdare?

AR: It's true

AC: Is there a difference?

AR: I don't, I wouldn't say so. When you're looking at Merthyr versus Aberdare, you're looking at the Crown versus here [Jacs]. If you, if you're looking at the venues you'll see the stand out where the touring bands would go. The Crown hasn't even got a stage, so, but they've had people like Toploader there y'know what I mean and they've had y'know East 17 [inaudible] or somebody from East 17. Yeah y'know if they're on the circuit book 'em you'll sell the tickets but I think we then, we are more of a music venue 'cause we invested in that [inaudible – background noise setting up for opening in Jacs] I know Jacob [from the Crown] he's a lovely guy and money is money and he's put a lot into that place, so much into that place but not strictly as a venue, he's and to split it between the restaurant and the renovations and the patio and all the rest of it y'know so it's been a bit of a spread. We only had [inaudible] when this, before this was Jacs, the Soul Suite, they put the floor in, so we didn't have to worry about that, all the ah red furniture that was all there [AC: Yeah, yeah] that stage I technically helped build okay this is the, this is the story. A band called

Pilgrim about two years ago played, I played bass and were rehearsing here just before it turned into Jacs it was still the Soul Suite branding everywhere and um we were playing on the floor 'cause there was no stage, over there in the corner. The owner came up to us, a guy called Phil who I know now very well but [AC: Phil?] Phil Taylor. He came up to us, he's a rock fan, he didn't know us from Adam right. Boys, you're a rock band, he'd only owned the place two weeks if that. What would you want here as a rock band? Literally no idea who we were and we were like right then c'mon then right we want a ten thousand watt PA system, ah full 32/24 channel mixing desk, proper stage, ah riser for the drums etcetera one month later it was all here. We came, we had to rehearse two weeks later [inaudible] building the stage.

AC: How did he, did he get funding...

AR: He owns another company called ah Taylor Made Facades which make [inaudible] mouldings ah very, very niche stuff, so quite...

AC: [inaudible]

AR: I think it was err yeah, yeah to buy this quick turnaround into a venue and then run both businesses side by side then so.

AC: And where's his business then is it in Aberdare?

AR: It's a local business as well yeah, it's just down the road. Do you know what time it is by any chance? [inaudible] but AR asked to wind up the interview because he was starting work in a few minutes] Yeah Phil asked us what we wanted literally within a month it was all here. Literal it's top [inaudible] stuff, d'y'know what I mean so that was unheard of.

AC: Why did he do it?

AR: I don't know but I'm glad he did, I'm really glad he did 'cause that's the stuff that's still here now and if it wasn't for our recommendations it could have been radically different if you know what I mean [inaudible] like action, on, in the right way to, to make something that it's supposed to be or what, a dream d'y'know what I mean.

AC: It's like individuals understanding what musicians need rather than [inaudible]

AR: Yeah, he knows his forte and he trusts other people's expertise y'know what I mean.

AC: Okay and just give me a brief sort of sweep of the network of people [inaudible]

AR: We've got Phil the owner, Phil's family own, I say part share of the companies as well. Ah Barry and Amanda Fitzgerald, general managers, myself, and the bar staff and that's it, oh we got Mike Thomas ah promoter ah I think Martin does a bit now and again as well I've not had much chance to know what's going on. That's about it really, in terms of the full spectrum.

AC: You all know each other very well I'm assuming?

AR: Barry and Amanda inherited some staff from the previous ah guy, I came with Barry and Amanda not 'cause they asked me to 'cause I sort of came um and we've got to know each other differently now [inaudible] a WhatsApp group, the first thing this is the Jacs family and we do call ourselves a family, Barry and Amanda very, very, very supportive they're very good bosses very ah the kind of boss you would want, that

genuinely y'know ah give you enough rope to hang yourself but at the same time that rope you can use y'know to ah set yourself free y'know more your ship as you wish, if it passes the test, weather's the storm so...

AC: Okay so it's quite open-minded and...

AR: Yes, Obviously things gotta be done, certain, certain ways but, they are flexible so y'know if I find a new way of doing something they will listen and if it doesn't work we'll do it a different way again but anything I would suggest is always is listened to, taken on-board and sort of considered. Y'know we are a team then because as I say again Barry and Amanda's expertise are not necessarily in musicianship or sound design or lighting or anything like that so I'm happy to share what I got and the years I've been doing it, to achieve a common goal and aim to make everything good for everybody who comes here, everyone who works here, everybody that gets on that stage. A uniform awesome experience is what we want.

AC: Okay, yeah and just one more question then, what factors do you think make it difficult for music-making in a semi-rural environment like Aberdare?

AR: There's no factors that make it difficult to make music there's factors that make it difficult to sustain the live music, beer tax, business rates, recession, cheap booze in supermarkets the ones everybody else says y'know [inaudible] yes [inaudible] a lot of people in the musician community hate the fact that tribute acts sell out constantly, it's hard to sell an original night but if you look at Henry's Funeral Shoe, Massive Wagons, Big Foot um and they're just rock bands y'know there's other acts there's other local dance acts, things like funk acts, things like that sell out, the Moonbirds they're not a rock band per say but people in Merthyr absolutely love them and they were sell out gigs and they're all originals.

AC: Why do you think that is? Have they got more of a following?

AR: Do you know who Everyday Heroes are?

AC: No

AR: Another local band a younger bunch of lads, they started around the same time when we were in Pilgrim much younger than us. People just latched onto them they liked them, they liked their songs, it was like Black Stone Cherry but from Pontyclun or whatever and they do it really well and as well they're doing festivals, Wild Fire and things like that so I think it, it's fifty, fifty it's half the musicians putting themselves out there and really wanting to do it and putting whatever passion they got into whatever music they want to make and 50% people come in and actually listening instead of not coming at all, so even if they hear they might like even if they're in that room [pointing to the pool room the other side of the bar] they might think oh that's a cool riff!

AC: Do you think there are more people attending gigs now?

AR: Coming up now yes it is getting better and that's partially because we've been pushing it like hell here at least because the past year wasn't too great in terms of like feedback from people, sound, the way the place was being run wasn't amazing so obviously let down everybody else, people have an opinion on the place, so we are pushing it forward now to do the next level, ah hopefully to the stage where we can start booking um bigger acts y'know what I mean and be a touring venue for y'know some of the like the local promoters like Big Day Promotions, I know Aled

very well from, I worked with him. It would be cool if he came up here and put a couple of gigs up y'know what I mean I don't know how well they would sell? But That's not my job I'm not a promoter. We are here to make sure everything happens here is as tip top as it can be.

AC: And do you see this being a long healthy

AR: I'd love it to be [inaudible] I got a mortgage just down the road so I aint going nowhere and all I got is time so.

AC: Okay anything else you'd like to add?

AR: No, I just think it's really, it's an interesting subject for a thesis and I think a lot of things other people have said I would probably have said as well but I just hope that my particular input because I'm so sort of across the spectrum I hope it provides some insight into the, at least a small window y'know what I mean, but yeah.

AC: Okay thanks Andy!

AR: Not a problem thank you Anne.

Interview with Bigfoot 12-01-2020 Costa Coffee, Aberdare, @ 3.24pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

BF – Bigfoot, DH - Darren Harper, H - Hilary and D- Dai, Participants

AC: Hiya guys how're you doing?

BF: Alright aye [inaudible]

AC: Thank you very much for meeting me, thank you. Um just a few general questions to start. Um can you just tell me what sort of music you like listening to?

D: I'm quite into my Ben Howard from the ah late '60s all that kind of psychedelic era, um I'll listen to anything though to be honest. Quite into my jazz as well, a bit of folk music [laughs]

DH: A bit of everything...

D: Yeah

AC: What about you guys?

DH: Um, yeah '60s, '70s is my era yeah

AC: Any sort of stuff then or?

DH: Yeah it goes from blues ah rock to folk so [AC: Okay] country yeah

D: Wide variety

H: I think that's the same for me we all kind of like completely different genres of music, there's no set genre we all like in particular.

AC: Do you all like the same stuff sort of roughly?

H: Roughly yeah [laughs] not always [inaudible] um, I think, I would say I'm getting more into like the pop stuff that's coming out now not in recent years but now I'm into a lot of like Grimes and like all that kind of stuff like, I like experimental music but I don't know if these boys are quite still like rock 'n' roll era

D: Well he is [signalling to DH]

H: Yeah [laughter]

DH: That's what's good about us we're very open minded to each other's musical tastes and y'know we say ah have a listen to this and we listen to it so, like that's what keeps us going together...

AC: Okay, so what sort of music do you guys play?

D: How would you describe that um? Psychedelic alternative indie rock? That's what I've been describing it as [laughter]

DH: So many labels these days innit?

D: The thing is the other three guys in the band they all got um, they all got very different music tastes compared to us as well, um...

AC: How does that work then? How does the dynamic work?

D: We kind of get a sprinkle of everything so like I grew up listening to folk music, my dad was really into his folk music, so with my writing a lot of it, a lot of it is very um

sort of a mesh between folk, jazz 'cause I'm quite sort of into all the chord voicings and things like that and then obviously Darren [DH] you've grown up listening to blues and rock [DH: Yeah] so then that's what you bring to the table your lead guitar lines and like Hilary grew up listening to the Eagles and things like that so that's [inaudible] harmony on that sort of comes through doesn't it. So like I said we get a nice sort of ah bit of everything [H: We all bring something to the table] yeah.

AC: So it's quite an eclectic sound would you say?

BF: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AC: I mean I know I know but just for the viewers if you want to call them...

DH: We'd be interested to hear y'know someone's take on our music and come up with a label for it 'cause we haven't.

D: We just always say alternative 'cause we haven't got anything else to call it

DH: Yeah

AC: The thing labels can sometimes be a bit misleading or restricting...

DH: I suppose it's good in a way yeah 'cause you can be y'know pinned down to one thing

AC: Yeah...

H: I mentioned Grimes and um recently she's posted online about how she sort of started out not a petition but a movement to try and get a new genre added to like Spotify that, that represents her music 'cause at the minute there's no, there's nothing to represent her music and I feel we kind of feel like that. When you select, when you upload your music to a website or a [inaudible] platform, it doesn't, there's nothing really there to represent [laughs] what we are necessarily so...

D: Yeah the other thing with us is the genre for us tends to change from song to song, like we got one song [laughs] that's quite psychedelic and quite, quite ah '60s, we got another one that's quite um, [DH: More country then] yeah, yeah, yeah. There was one, a song to brush your teeth to, that was how it was described [DH/H: Yeah [laughs] [inaudible] I think it was just 'cause it was a bit up-beat a bit poppy I guess.

H: It's a morning song

AC: A morning song [laughter] um, so tell me a bit about your musical practices where do you rehearse, where do you write? So if we start with writing. Where do you write and how do you go about writing new songs?

H: Um, it starts as a separate thing usually

D: Yeah, Darren [DH] and I are usually the main song-writers, um Darren will have an idea, he'll say to me ah I got a new idea, oh yeah let's meet up and we'll have a jam, come up, come up my house and we'll just, we'll sit there and just start working through stuff won't we [DH: Yeah] that's how we've always written [DH: Yeah] um, and then occasionally um, each of us will have something we've written completely on our own and we bring that and then it's can you add anything to this? Can, would you change anything?

DH: And then we take it to the band and that's when the layers are added on then like ah the drums, electric guitar, keyboard, saxophone, so ah yeah it comes together then.

AC: Do you do that sort of um, a lot of bands say they use WhatsApp and things like that to sort of exchange ideas, do you use that sort of thing or do you see each other in person?

DH: We do some recordings don't we.

H: Or whatever, we, we make we always record, if we remember to [laughs] um, and yeah we exchange things through WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger.

AC: You've got your own little group? [DH: Yeah] sort of private group so you can message each other and things like that.

DH: So each of us can listen to the track and come up with ideas then.

AC: Okay, and where do you tend to do your writing? You mentioned your house, is there any other place you go or is it just wherever?

H: We did take one holiday once [DH: Oh yeah] to attempt to write together [laughs] but Qum... [laughter]

AC: Tell me a bit more... that's exactly the stuff I'm after [laughter] sort of ah the instances of...

H: Yeah um [laughs]

D: We booked a holiday cottage in Brecon for a week and then four of us? [H: Was it?] [DH: Yeah, it was aye] The four of us went and um planned to get some writing done, we only [DH: We got two songs done] I thought it was only one, wasn't it? We stayed there four nights and got the one song done [laughter] [DH: Yeah two] we took a bit too much of a holiday rather than a...

AC: It was more of a get-together?

DH: It started off on the first night and then the rest of the week was ah, leave that out yeah [laughter]

H: It's good 'cause we get to know each other in the band because we, we didn't really know each other before we had that holiday so much so it's good for like me to get to know the boys more...

AC: How long have you guys been together then as a band?

D: Two years now?

DH: Yeah, around two years

H: Yeah

AC: So quite sort of early days really then? [DH: Yeah] y'know two years is a long time to be gigging.

DH: We've been gigging since, what was it, ah a year and a half something like that? 'Cause for a while we were just recording. We done it backwards in a way we went straight into the studio before we recorded like [AC: Okay]

D: The thing is three, three of us, Darren and then Doz the drummer and myself, we used to be in a band together and um that split up and I'd recorded some demos and put them on SoundCloud and the drummer messaged me and said oh it would be a waste, we can't waste the songs you got and can't wait to do the songs Darren's got, so we said oh let's save up a bit of money and go in the studio and record an album just so we can listen to it in the car kind of thing um and then it all came out alright, we were quite happy with how it sounded so we just started gigging then carried on going didn't we [DH: Yeah]

AC: So, three of you were from another band then, what was the other band called?

DH: New Revival

AC: New Revival, and how long was that going for then?

DH: Three or four years? Three years I wanna say

D: Say two or three years [DH: Yeah]

DH: But that was a completely different style again that was ah more hard rock [inaudible]

AC: If you don't mind me asking how did it, why did you split up why did it end?

H: I think it's relevant to this whole interview of being like in a semi-rural area and then the struggle of having to um y'know do everything yourself and there being no support really from anyone and tensions will rise I guess from [inaudible]

DH: Spot on really yeah

AC: So what do you think it is being in an environment like this y'know it's not in a city what do you think that contributes to y'know the splitting up of or damaging of band relations?

D: There's not like a support network and I think that's the problem and there's one tidy music venue in this whole valley really [DH: Yeah] that has its own in-house PA and goes out as a music venue and not just as a pub [AC: You mean Jacs yeah?] yeah. So like when that's all you got to work with you're just playing that every other week and it's hard work then and it's a bit demoralising when you, when you play the same venue a few times. I mean it's been nice for us when we've been able to go down to Cardiff and do a few gigs in the city but [H: That's money again then...] yeah [H: Drive out there you have to or hire certain equipment or it's, it all adds up it's hard to maintain.

AC: So what, talking about the logistics to do gigs further afield so how do you get your stuff around the place y'know who's driving who's...

D: There's about two or three of us driving usually then innit and we share lifts then

DH: Cram it all in the car like

AC: You just share [inaudible]

H: I'll have an amp on my lap

AC: Oh right [laughter]

DH: Again if we had the money we'd probably get a van like that would be much more cost efficient than y'know and easier and long run but something to think about innit [H: Yeah]

AC: What do you all do for a living or are you studying?

H: Well that's like, when we had that holiday one of the members she plays saxophone she was still in university or she was just starting, she was doing exams to go to university so she couldn't join us for that, um we are a bit [inaudible] really 'cause our age difference is quite big as well so we still got a lot of people who are studying, some of us are working and some of us are in-between [laughs]

D: Quite a mix mind 'cause, what does Doz do? Housing officer or something like that? It's along those lines it is [DH: Yeah] and then Darren's a postman and I work in finance for a funeral company [laughter]

AC: That's a real mix isn't it, What do you do Hilary?

H: I've dropped out of university [laughs] um and I'm looking for a job.

AC: What was you doing in university?

H: Um, drama, English, and creative writing

AC: Oh right in Cardiff?

H: Aberystwyth

AC: Okay, so has that um, has the band sort of been going while you've been going back and fore?

H: Um, I can't remember [inaudible]

D: I think it was a little bit

H: Yeah, I was just sort of starting as I dropped out really yeah I guess yeah.

AC: So that didn't affect commitment I suppose seem to [inaudible]

H: No not really no, it all happened at a good time like I guess yeah.

AC: Okay, so where do you practice?

D: Ah Cardiff Speaker Hire usually, is that it? [DH: No] no?

DH: No it's MusicBox

D: Ah MusicBox

AC: Alright so it's out of town out of Aberdare

DH: It's a great practice venue the equipment's brilliant there um the only thing it's just the cost again, so we'll probably start looking for somewhere more local.

AC: Have you always practiced down there?

DH: Yeah

D: No we used to practice in Merthyr [DH: Oh yeah that's right yeah] back in the day um, when we were first starting out we used to practice, it's in...

AC: Is it NuStudioz?

D: Mountain...

AC: Oh Mountain... that was on Goatmill Road yeah?

D: That's it yeah, then they put his rent up and he had to sell the place, big shame 'cause that was a nice place to practice that was.

AC: How often do you get to practice then if you've gotta go to MusicBox, I bet it's a bit pricey isn't it.

DH: Yeah um,

D: We tend to do it in bursts, like we practice once a week for about I don't know about two months then we take like a couple of months break 'cause we're gigging or we got other things on we come back to it.

H: We always practice in-between at home or individually, yeah. But to actually pay for a space to practice is always, we always go to Cardiff.

AC: Okay, okay and recording you said um you done it cart before the horse kind of thing you done the recording first so just tell me a little bit about that where was it how did you get about to be doing the recording there y'know what's the link?

DH: Well, it was recorded at EVI studios in Ebbw Vale with ah Nick Bryant ah how did we choose it? [inaudible]

H: There were quite lucky with that really [DH: Yeah] again it wasn't something we, the opportunity came to us more than, yeah, that's the first thing we've been lucky with [laughs]

D: The other place we were looking at was Sonic [DH: 1] Sonic 1 studios down in Llanelli?

DH: With Tim weren't it yeah

D: Tim, yeah the price he was charging was a little bit more than the EVI were charging and EVI has Nick working there who [DH: He's got a good track record hasn't he] yeah.

DH: He's worked with Oasis, Teenage Fanclub, ah the Darkness so that was very appealing

AC: Yeah, yeah

DH: Great band [The Darkness]

AC: They're a very stayed, shy kind of band aren't they? I'm joking

DH: I was going to say, what? [laughter]

AC: Um, okay, so, um what collaborations have you been involved in? And when I say collaboration I mean the band you can just be talking about that and... basically how did it come about how did you guys decide to make music together? If there's a story behind it even better y'know.

D: Well, you had the three of us who'd been in bands before but then to get the rest of the people in so Hilary's my fiancé I knew she was a good singer I knew she could do nice harmonies so I was like right let's get Hilary in she can sing. When it came to do the album we didn't look for a bassist really did we? [DH: No] so I just laid the bass down and the acoustic guitars down, but then we wanted something that was a bit, not obscure but a bit more um, not just an ordinary four-piece y'know drums, guitar so we wanted someone on saxophone um but the problem was some of the songs didn't want for sax, some of them were more sort of piano orientated weren't they [DH: Yeah] so we needed somebody who could play sax and piano and there just so happened, lucky for us that Hilary's cousin played both to a quite a good standard so then it was like oh yeah let's, let's ask Becky see if she's up for it [laughter] I think she was only seventeen at the time wasn't she?

AC: How old are you guys at the moment?

D: I'm 28

DH: I'm 28

H: 22

AC: Oh gosh I feel so old [laughter] um, so you kinda kept it to friends and family it's fair to say? Is there a reason for that? Would you have put an add out? Would you have been happy getting a complete stranger in?

H: I think it was just more, I, I had faith in bringing Becky in 'cause I know she done all her grades in school and like she's grade 8 on piano, so I know she was really good and it wouldn't have been worth the effort and the time and the money of like looking for someone else, and like putting ads out and things.

AC: So it's not just a question of someone you knew it's like they had to be a certain [H: Yeah] level.

DH: Yeah we would be open-minded to people who we haven't met before

D: That's what happened with Dave now [DH: Yeah] the 6th member who we've dragged back in to play bass with us, none of us knew him before [DH: Except Becky is it?] I think, well I don't think she even knew him she only knew of him [DH: Yeah] from working with other bands isn't it, um.

AC: How did it come about that, y'know how did that conversation come about really?

DH: Well, live we didn't have a bass player and obviously the bass is a big part of the sound innit, we need a bass player and Becky's oh I know a guy, I think she saw ah Dave's band [H: Yeah and they'd just broken up hadn't they for, I think they'd just broken up] yeah [H: So he was free]

D: I think they had broken up because of them the drummer, the drummer passed away didn't he [inaudible]

AC: What band was that?

D: Rapture, Rapture

AC: Are they from Aberdare?

DH: Mountain Ash, Aberdare yeah

AC: It rings a bell. Were they a young band?

DH: Yeah

D: Yeah, say early twenties

AC: So that band split up then after the death of the drummer [DH: Yeah] yeah okay. And um, did you go onto Dave and ask him directly or was it another member of the band...

DH: I think Becky just messaged him on Facebook ah do you want to come to a practice like? And ah ever since he's stuck with us hasn't he.

AC: So social media linked you up [DH/D: Yeah] basically then, okay, okay. Um so what are the responsibilities and roles that you guys take on like y'know books gigs who organises this who does that.

D: It's all of us [inaudible] we just chip in as and when, that's one of the problems I think um being around here is trying to find the management to do that [AC: Yeah, yeah] I think it's like you said earlier it's one of the things that can contribute to everyone arguing and everyone splitting up, 'cause some people feel like they're doing more work than others and it just...

H: I think everyone knows our strengths in this band so that's pretty good, like we're not, we all have our individual skills, like Becky is really good with social media, she's always posting on social media, like I'm good with like I sometimes do art for the band or like any kind of design element I'm good with that and then you boys kind of handle the rest of the music side, getting gigs and doing that kind of thing.

DH: Yeah we all communicate with group chat and try and ah y'know spread the workload around equally as much as we can.

AC: How often do you guys meet up then? Outside of practising? Gigging?

D: Once or twice a month we usually try and meet up with one another just to chat and say right this is what we want to do next. Right, you do this, you do this and you do this and then everyone gets a little bit to do and then just go from there then.

AC: So you don't sort of see each other y'know like a couple of times a week or anything like that?

D: No, not as a whole band like that, separately away from the band I might see Darren a few times a week or Doz once, twice a week [DH: Yeah]

AC: Okay, okay, so um what resources [oh it's typical it's bloody raining now] um what resources ah would you say that you rely upon in the area to, and it could be anything, where you get your strings from anything y'know.

D: I don't think there's anything I rely on around here [inaudible] anything I need to buy or whatever I'll just order from Amazon or online [DH: It's easier]

AC: What about physical infrastructure as well y'know is there anything you could not do without that...

DH: There's um, there's a guy who lives in town practically on my doorstep he's brilliant with guitar set-ups and repairs so that's [AC: Is that Geraint?] yeah [AC: Oh okay] really handy having him.

AC: So you keep all your guitar tech stuff local to him yeah?

DH: Yeah, yeah

AC: And how did you get to know about him?

DH: Um, through my guitar teacher [AC: Who's that?] Jim, [AC: Oh right] at the time he taught me guitar.

AC: I live the street above Jim [DH: Ah, is it?] small world innit we're all close like y'know [DH: Yeah, yeah] Are you still having lessons with Jim now?

DH: No I stopped a couple of years ago.

AC: And um, how did you get to know about Jim as well?

DH: Oh that's going way back um, I think it was like my parents suggested him 'cause they're around the same age um I wanna learn guitar innit so I'll try with Jim and ever since we've become friends then like as well so

AC: Okay and do you find knowing Jim 'cause he's on the scene as well, does he, is he useful then? For getting gigs or for linking you with any other people, do you find that? [DH: Sighs] you can say no if you like [laughter] [inaudible] [DH: Um]

H: [inaudible] people out of their way I guess?

DH: He's pretty busy with ah with his own band at the minute type of thing like um, but we will support them soon, I've been on to him like [AC: Oh right] yeah Cripplecreek trying to arrange a gig so.

AC: So there's a possible gig out of that sort of link in the network [DH: Yeah, yeah]

D: There's a few people around here like that around here that you know though, tend to get gigs out of. Like Dai Hill's another one isn't he?

DH: Yeah, Dai Hill from Heavy Flames

AC: Alright yeah, yeah. Have you supported or played on the same bill as them then?

DH: We will be supporting them now in March in Jacs, um, I think we played on the bill with them in the Llwynccellyn as well [inaudible]

D: That was our first gig as well wasn't it?

DH: One positive aspect about having a small community like is that we do try and help each other out, try and put on events and stuff.

AC: Do you find that the local bands tend to pull in other local bands rather than I don't know somebody from London?

BF: Yeah, yeah

D: Definitely

AC: Okay, and um, how often do you play live in Aberdare?

D: Once a month at least I would say

DH: On average yeah

D: Yeah

AC: Once a month you'd say?

D: Yeah, well, I guess, I guess it depends doesn't it. We try not to play Jacs too often like.

DH: We don't want to overkill it like

D: But, in Aberdare it's probably about once every two, three months but in general we like to gig at least once a month once a fortnight. We try anyway. It's hard going getting on bills and that.

H: We're a lot more focused on like playing festivals and things now [inaudible] not just Aberdare [AC: Festivals yeah?] yeah [AC: And whereabouts then local or anywhere?]

D: Anywhere in the UK [AC: Yeah] we're happy to drive anywhere.

AC: What do you find the response is, y'know you were saying about getting gigs and that and it is difficult you don't want to saturate one place. What tends to be the response when you're looking for gigs 'cause I know tribute are quite the favourite so it's difficult for original music y'know?

H: Yeah, have we ever supported ah like a tribute band? Have we done that? I can't remember...

DH: No

D: Is it Merthyr Rising or Crownload? Whichever one and there was a Bob Marley tribute on after us

H: That's right, yeah, yeah that's right, it brings in a crowd. It does tend to bring in a crowd to you 'cause everyone comes to listen to music they already know, so...

AC: It's kind of a good thing, do you find it's like um, it's a bit of a barrier being in an original band?

D: It can be, it definitely can be um, I think places tend to, the thing is you want to get the punters in see don't you, it's like I can understand it, if you own a venue or a pub, you want people to stay there and buy drinks at the bar but bands playing songs you don't know, then why would you stick around. But if, if you're into your music like we are then you would but the average punter's really there to hear Wonderwall so...

AC: Or the Kings of Leon or something like that [D: Yeah]

DH: I think in the city original music um is listened to and taken on-board more by the audience. Around here I think people just want cover bands or just something y'know they know and can relate to type of thing.

AC: Why do you think that is though? It's an odd thing isn't it?

DH: Um...

H: I think it's a valleys thing at the minute like. It's a valleys mentality if you went to the city I feel that I feel that people want to listen to original music more than they do here like, we do have a couple of faithful fans and like most bands do around here but, [DH: Yeah] nothing...

AC: Stuck in their ways a bit maybe?

H: Yeah

D: It's a strange, it's a strange one for me because [stutters] early '90s or [inaudible] '90s you wouldn't go see Stereophonics when they played in the Coliseum y'know what I mean 'cause you'd rather go and watch the cover band's that's in the Mount Pleasant down the road like.

DH: I bet they were playing More Life in a Tramp's Vest and people were saying like play Bon Jovi! [inaudible] and two weeks later the album's out oh I'm a fan now [laughter] it's backwards to be honest with you, I don't know?

D: Everybody starts somewhere I suppose [laughs] just support local music come on!

AC: Yeah [DH: Yeah] um, I'll try not to keep you too long I realise we're all getting a bit wet now, apologies

BF: That's okay [inaudible]

AC: Um, how important is making music for you guys?

DH: I couldn't live without it

H: I'd say exactly the same, I couldn't if I wasn't doing this, I'd

AC: What motivates you to keep going?

DH: It's to keep writing better songs like, try and better the last one you wrote

H: I think it's definitely a personal thing for us, I don't really have, I have aspirations to do something with the music but as long as I'm, we're always making good music with each other and collaborating with people, that's all we really want like, I don't want to be famous [laughs] I've never wanted to do that.

AC: It's not the fame thing then [H: No] it's more about the interaction and the music...

H: We're all like, from very musical backgrounds like in school or in uni or wherever we've been, very musical backgrounds so we don't want to lose that. Even if, even if we don't get anywhere [AC: Moving the recorder out of the rain]

AC: Um, how do you find the time to make music then as well? If you're working or studying and things like that?

D: I just tend to sit down and pick the guitar up and have a play. If whatever I'm playing I don't like I'll put the guitar back down. I've always said it to Darren we're both very different in how we approach writing aren't we [DH: Yeah]

AC: So what, so what's the difference? What do you do then?

DH: Um, I could write a lot of bad songs before I find a good song and with Dai I think he's one of those fortunate people who sits down and they can just come out there and then like.

D: It's just a...

AC: A flow sort of thing is it?

DH: Yeah

D: But like I've said to him if I'm writing stuff and I think ah this sounds rubbish then I'll stop and I won't plough through with it [inaudible]

DH: I'll try and persevere and try to make something out of it, of it doesn't end up going somewhere chuck it away then [inaudible] yeah I gotta keep myself y'know

H: That's why It's good to collaborate 'cause something that you might throw out or something that you might throw out ends up being good once we all come together [D: True] so...

D: It often happens the ones he says to throw away I quite like [laughter]

AC: I suppose that's like you were saying where the collaboration comes in so don't throw that away, keep that in and [H: Yeah]

DH: Definitely

AC: And what sort of factors would you say make it difficult, you mentioned a couple of things about living in the valleys, can you think of any other factors that may y'know constrain your music-making?

D: Money, it's always money

AC: What would you do if you had an endless supply of money?

D: We'd spend months in the studio just going over [DH: We'd do a second album...] yeah, I mean that's, that's the thing you can only afford to pay for one day in the studio and you try and do a song a day so ah

H: Yeah we're only ever able to record anything like on weekends, like can't do week nights so we have to try and arrange a weekend where we're all free to do recording [AC: Okay]

D: And you're always trying to rush through it aren't you? [H: Yeah] you spend all morning doing the drums and the bass and then quickly get everything else done.

AC: Yeah, yeah and how expensive is studio time, what are we talking an hour?

D: Can be, it depends where you go, it's anywhere between 200, 300, 400 a day

AC: A day yeah? And you'll be glad to know, last one [laughter] Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DH: I think that covers it all I think doesn't it?

AC: Can you think of any other sort of anecdotes or stories about how something became to be and or anything like that? Y'know funny instances with the band.

D: Err

AC: Terrible instances [laughter] [inaudible]

D: I think everybody has their own tiffs when it comes to bands doesn't they, you want what's best for everybody when it's not happening you start taking it out on each other but we all kiss and make up the next day so it's all good.

AC: So you're all tight, you're all okay BF: Yeah, yeah, yeah] relationship wise and everything yeah?

D: I know it's going to be a cliché but it's like a family innit?

AC: A lot of people have said that to be honest yeah about their bands and things. Anything else you can think of?

H: I can't think of anything?

AC: Thanks for sitting in the rain guys [laughter]

DH: Thanks for the coffee

AC: No problem.

Interview with Charlie Denning, 10-01-2020, Tantrwm Studios/Offices, Aberdare @ 1pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

CD – Charlie Denning, Participant

AC: Hiya Charlie How're you doing?

CD: Hello, I'm fine.

AC: Right, so there's a few questions for you, um, so the first one, what music do you like?

CD: Oh God, that's a difficult one that isn't it

AC: It is, it's really general, difficult y'know

CD: Um, I'd probably say the same as most which is, most music, kind of there's always stuff you come back to and that's more I would have said like prog rock, funk, nice West Coast acoustic harmony sort of music [AC: Okay] if um music incorporates all of that then you're pretty much guaranteed I'll like it.

AC: Okay, would you say it's more sort of vocal based stuff or...

CD: Not really, I would say rhythmic [AC: Okay] so it's definitely the rhythm I go with or get onto before um melody and definitely vocals I never listen to lyrics. Lyrics completely pass me by I y'know always have done, I'll have to listen to something a lot of times to get any lyrics because I'm not really concerned with the words I'm listening to the song [AC: Yeah, yeah, yeah] I know there's other people who'll be the same here like, like Bob Dylan fans for a start [AC: Yeah] Can't do Bob Dylan [AC: No?] Can't do him at all it's horrible noise [laughter] but I get why people do like it because you listen to, if you listen to the words and all of that it's oh it's like poetry and things like that but I, but I'm not listening to the lyrics [laughter] listening to this whining voice [laughter] and that [imitates a harmonica badly on purpose] [laughter] Nah.

AC: Okay, so you're not a Bob Dylan fan then?

CD: No, not at all! [laughter] if that helps? [laughter]

AC: So what music do you play?

CD: Um, lots of different err stuff. Um, I try if possible not to be stuck to one kind of style, but as it is the way I've learnt over the years because I haven't had so much lessons I've basically got stuck in a kind of style that I can give to other people. Um, which means the way I play is the way I've learnt to play myself which isn't particularly good but, but it's me.

AC: How would you describe that style then y'know?

CD: Again, rhythmic very syncopated. I enjoy playing stuff that, that syncopated feel [gives a verbal example – similar style to the opening to Superstition] y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] between the left and the right rather than both playing simultaneously.

AC: What sort of music would you tie that in with?

CD: That would be more like funk [AC: Okay] more like that kind of so you're sitting on kind of supporting the melody rather than being out there so you're, I, I do consider myself more, and this is why it works good in Cripplecreek, as part of the rhythm section when I with my playing and with Cripplecreek we got ah Carl playing piano so Carl very much does the traditional keyboard [AC: The melodic side...] that's it that style and I'll be filling in between the bass and the drums y'know making that giving that something to sit on rather than, I mean the melody sticks out obviously I want to play a melody but largely I feel and because of singing as well it's easier.

AC: Okay, okay so was it a question of sort of listening to the music and thinking that's what it needs?

CD: It was yes definitely it was at the start um 'cause I look right back to err ooh going back a good number of years um, thirteen, thirty years and even when I listen to stuff then I can see where I am not so I can see clearly I took something and went oh this works [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I've just stuck with it and the thing with it as well, I feel, is it can be applied in different areas [AC: And different styles of music?] this, this is what I'm saying it can go in, I can play in um, there's Cripplecreek which is I don't know how you'd say that kind of West Coasty again got a bit of a proggy feel now and again. Bluesy, um there's Cool Beans which is out and out just experimental, um, Skacasm which is Ska music so, y'know again fits in with that nicely, ah Spirit of Boogie which is funk it obviously fits in with and then we got the Thursday night music club which is a real properly experimental [AC: Where's that?] oh we get together it's like a collective, so we go it's me, Arv, it's anyone who wants to be involved that's the idea behind it, you turn up on the night, we do a night um, no-one has written any songs but people got y'know someone might have an idea, then we record that idea and as they're recording that idea everyone in the room is listening to what's going on and then going oh hang on I, I, I'd want to put that on b'there and there's no argument about oh I don't think that, it's a case of no you're in the room you want to do that you do that and then that sculpts that song in a way that is only lead by the people in the room [AC: Okay] so, over the years I think we've done, I think we're up to 16 album's worth of material [AC: Okay] Lots of y'know lots of it is difficult to listen to [laughter] but then, then there's quite a bit of it that stands out as, wow, that's really good but you can also chart and you can tell 'cause each phase generally, we'll generally end up with a, phases we call them um, not albums y'know [AC: Okay, yeah] and each phase will be the songs [inaudible] and then ends up turning up might not be able to commit to doing further on. So you can see the different flavours then as you go through it but, but the different people involved have made it sound like this then and then the next one 'cause you might have 50% of the people on the last one but then 50% other different people which, then it goes like that, the next one would be 20% of people down there then forty and eighty [AC: Yeah] It's generally me, Arv and Courtenay Probert

AC: Okay, and who was the instigator of this then?

CD: It was um me originally it came out of we offered a, for people to sign up to the website when we first did a Creek website I'm going back, again way, way, way back we offered a thing where there's the most interesting song title we would record it, we would write a song and, and record it, you didn't need to know anything else just give us a song title we would [inaudible] that one and then we'd write that song all in one, one evening and record it and do it like that. As it ended up it's, it was just me and Arv who ended up writing and recording this ah um, a song called Rabbi Jones and his 5000 followers [laughter]

AC: What was? That was the name?

CD: That was the name that people, someone had given in, so it was like alright then, y'know there was a couple of good names to choose from but that was the one that stood out as [AC: Yeah] well y'know what can you do with that like? So, so that was the winner, so we recorded that it was me and Arv um, and we realised that it's quite fun doing it like this, initially put it out to the rest of the band to go look why don't we start doing this, this is a bit of fun um, and I think at the time Jim was doing quite a lot knew he wasn't interested. Paul has always been unless he has to go out he won't go out, so we realised that when it was just going to be us two in which case that's

not going to be very interesting 'cause it'll all sound the same so we just put it out from there then [inaudible] got on board and...

AC: How did you disseminate the information? Was it Facebook and things like that then?

CD: Um, not back then no, that would have been, it was just friends you'd be speaking to friends, look, look we're going to do this you may as well turn up like and it just gave that lot of friends who just want to do music but have not, haven't done music itself y'know so a lot of the people that were there don't play instruments [AC: Oh right] but they like music so it gives them a chance to be part of that thing as well, it's, it's really nice and also it, it's just because you don't play an instrument doesn't mean you're y'know your opinion's not valid [AC: Exactly] y'know you still understand music, you still sort of want to y'know if I got an idea for something you can hear that go [AC: I like or I don't like] yeah so it's very much, there's nothing holding it being any particular thing, it's only what those people in the room want it to be.

AC: Did any of those people who didn't previously do music have they gone on to do other stuff? Or kept it to that?

CD: No, kept it to that, it's very much that kind of, confident in the room but y'know take me outside of here and y'know. We've done live stuff where we've had y'know they've been involved then in ding that, whereas they wouldn't have done the live gig with anyone before [AC: Okay] and some of these live gigs are mind blowing [AC: That's really good yeah] The first one we had was in um Cwmfest in the Globe a good couple of years ago, and we succeeded within the first two numbers we succeeded in completely emptying the pub apart from two people [laughter] we went from a full pub to two people in two songs.

AC: What happened?

CD: It was brilliant [laughter] Well we started, we started that particular one off with um, monkey noises, so you'd have one person erm just started at the time there was, I think there was seven of us doing it and there was only one guitarist so we had I guitarist and then all seven of us then were just singing [AC: Vocals right?] yeah singing [inaudible] [AC: Okay] [laughter] so it starts with someone doing a low monkey sort of noise [gives impression] and then, others join in a little louder and then it gets gradually louder and louder and louder till in the end all seven of us just jumping around going wah!! That pretty much emptied half of the pub and then the next one is a, it was a, a very chanty number so it's a call and response where it would be, what do we want and everyone's a new messiah [laughter] when do we want one, nowwww!!! What do...and so, by the time we'd finished that yeah, they'd gone [AC: There's a tumbleweed...] yeah [laughter] but it was brilliant, it was brilliant, kind of like, yes! And from there we, we'd made, the next one we did was actually heaving all the way through and everyone got it and everyone was enjoying it 'cause everyone knew what to expect but [inaudible] look this is going to be something, this isn't going to be somebody getting up and singing the Stereophonics songs [AC: yeah] this is going to be challenging yeah! C'mon let's have a bit of fun with this.

AC: Where was that first gig, oh the Globe isn't it [CD: Yeah, the Globe] where was the second one?

CD: The second one I think was in the Con Club [AC: Okay] it was ah, ah thing that Eggy had done um one of his nights he used to put on and he had two rooms so you had one, the big room with lots of bands in and the side room where they had acoustic acts and things and we were in there and the place y'know it was rammed people

jumping up and down and grabbed 'cause we had taken a lot of percussion instruments they were all banging things and [inaudible] the audience, it was that kind of, well that does work [laughter] 'cause everyone then, 'cause that's the idea it's not supposed to be a you sit there and we do this, The whole idea of the Thursday night music club is that everyone makes this different, whoever's in this room should be making or adding to this song [inaudible] and they're enjoying it, don't just look at it y'know as something you can rate [AC: Yeah] you can't rate it, take it for what it is, this is y'know, we are enjoying ourselves, that spills over if people are open to it and the moment it's infectious then, once one person goes oh this is bonkers yeah!! Yeah you're right!

AC: That's fantastic, and when you do your Thursday night thing where do you often meet then?

CD: Ah it'll be round someone's house

AC: Oh it's not like in a...

CD: No, no we don't have a rehearsal space or anything like that no.

AC: And where do you tend to end up then? Is it a regular place?

CD: There used to be, I mean we haven't got together for a, about a year which is the longest period of time where we have not done anything. Um, when I had the shop in town we used to go there y'know regularly [inaudible] that's the thing 'cause you, it's not something that just takes two hours and we're done y'know [inaudible] it usually we start at seven and [inaudible] early hours of the morning, sort of finishing and then that's the way it'll go for a few weeks and then we'll have one phase done and then there'll be a little bit of a break just until we get together next time.

AC: Okay, and why is there a break at the moment?

CD: Um, just everyone's [makes a noise] disparate and we've not gone anywhere where we can really go [AC: Right?] to make a noise [AC: Right, yeah, yeah] y'know late at night and just do it in, in people's houses [inaudible] and, and a lot of them, like Arvey's down in um Pontyclun, is it Pontyclun? I can't remember but he's down there that way, Courtenay is in Cardiff um, he was down in west Wales for a long time but he's moved back here now. So, I, over Christmas we were discussing it and there's yeah, there's one on the cards 'cause Courtenay's house is detached in Cardiff so it means we can make as much noise as we like. [AC: Fantastic] yeah.

AC: Um, okay so going back to um like your current bands at the moment. Um, which one are you doing the most with at the moment?

CD: Ah Skacasm

AC: Yeah. Okay, so where do you, I'm going to ask you about your musical practices and what's involved in that but feel free to bring other bands [inaudible – phone rings] Um, how do you go about writing and stuff like that? Is Skacasm covers?

CD: Skacasm is covers...

AC: What about original material?

CD: Original material, then it would be Cool Beans that would probably be the um the one I do most with.

AC: How do you go about just writing your songs then?

CD: Again it's very collaborative that one is, that, that, very similar almost to the Thursday night music club. Um, someone will have an idea, they listen to that idea, I mean it's more of a formed idea than in the Thursday night music club but it is a case then of you're listening to that [inaudible] I'd like to put this on this, words are hardly ever written, y'know they, they, they're really are written all together [inaudible] and a lot of that stuff is, it's almost a stream of consciousness when you're writing the words, 'cause everyone will put their bits together to something y'know you've got this finished musical form ah y'know that, that works, then you have an idea, it's usually a word will, will come up [inaudible] or there, there is a line that someone has randomly [inaudible] we'll start learning the music, there'll be a certain part where a line just seems to fit and you've just starting saying [inaudible] when you take that line and you go right okay then and then you start, generally this is the way I tend to write ah lyrics I'll just start, just with that line in mind, not thinking too much about it but words that will revolve around that and then just throwing them into a cohesive sentence until at the end of it then, well there you are, I, I generally find well anyway, that's probably me finding excuses but I can look through the lyrics then and then I'll go right ah you know what this, this can mean, finding the meaning in there from what you've written then and [inaudible] ah well done! That works that does.

AC: Um, can you give me an example of a word that's triggered something really cool or a phrase that...

CD: Ah Kong

AC: Kong?

CD: That was the last one that, that was the last one we wrote

AC: As in King Kong?

CD: As in King ah well it was with the music we'd written there was a certain part where's there's like an obvious chant that was Kong, Kong as you're writing it down and that became then, ah so we've wrote it but it also then, when you, when you looked at the words it wasn't just, it was actually about the Id y'know inside you [inaudible] you're confident part [inaudible] [AC: Okay] so it, it flipped then to a well it was kinda just writing about but because it was vaguely y'know because the stream of consciousness around writing you got that in mind working out words to go in there but then after you've read it because it's not writing a story like oh he did this and this happened and this happened we are being very vague with your y'know association with the subject of Kong, it actually meant then that the, well that actually sounds mental where y'know it's the inside of you the Id it, it's y'know so you've given the name of Kong 'cause you not mentioning anything to do with apes or anything like that 'cause like I said it's a vague tie-in to the subject it is giving you a different subject and gone ah right so you can see this in two ways

AC: Okay, and were you all together

CD: Yeah

AC: When that was sort of

CD: Generally, the way it's tended to work is that I'll be writing the lyrics and write the lyric down but then those lyrics won't fit, y'know because [inaudible] yeah, yeah, in mine I think that's but I'm not sitting there going la, la, la, I need to fill that melody y'know it's kind of I got the space I need to fill so I'm putting the words in that, obviously when you go to, because it's been written fast words don't take we don't sit there for days and days wondering what I'm going to write next, words to a song will take about half hour, possibly an hour maximum.

AC: So you're pouring out of words

CD: Exactly, and then, and then as you go through it you go that one doesn't fit so you get rid of that line and rid of that line there and then you go well actually that line feeds really nice so if I piece that thee and then you'll have and you put it and you think oh that doesn't fit then, so Neil will generally look at something and go and try and make that fit in so the end product really is y'know it's lovely

AC: And is that like, would you say that's the way you write whoever you're writing with? Is that just how it works for you or is it common...

CD: It works, that's what works best for me. I find when I'm writing for Creek that it's more y'know I will have more of a, I find it easier to write with a story with Creek so y'know there's something I want to say in that I can't really do the stream of consciousness I don't know why? [AC: That's interesting] but I y'know stories are easier to fit in to that structured way of...

AC: Is it because there's more of you or...

CD: Possibly...

AC: You got more of a history of playing or...

CD: Yeah, they, they're set things y'know it's kind of like and I think there is, there's a lot of the band like to have a sort of structure and be more structured in the approach to things whereas I quite like the chaotic approach to stuff and I know that the chaotic, a lot of my stuff that I write for Creek y'know you can't tell who writes what they all go under the same banner so we all say y'know they're all our songs, it's not, not so, we all y'know refer to things as y'know that's your song and your song and you can tell who's come up with the idea, you can definitely see who's song y'know [AC: What are the tell-tale signs then?] Paul will have a big chorus [AC: Oh right is that true?] any chorus that's got a big whoa catchy harmony Paul will have that. Jim will always be y'know nice intricate guitar parts y'know they, they're quite well sculpted songs. Um, Arv he, he's quite a tricky one but his are usually deceptively difficult, they seem quite simple, they're always y'know quite resting on a groove or something like that but then there'll be something that he'll throw in to just [makes a sound like a cymbal crash] and me they usually find it's more of not set to any key so you'll have the more accidental chords coming [inaudible] well not free-form it's, it's there but I tend to find, I tend to try not to stay if I'm writing in D to stay and use chords in D y'know chuck an A flat in somewhere, whereas just so it's [makes a noise like wir] and stands out [AC: Spice it up a bit] Yeah, yeah.

AC: And so that's the writing um what do you tend to use in the area for rehearsing and recording for example?

CD: The, with Cool Beans we're lucky enough to have um, one of the members he lives up in the country park b'there y'know where the poly tunnels are? Well, he lives there and he's got a [AC: That's Steve isn't it?] yeah that's right and his garage is all set up he's got, so his drums are y'know we just walk in and just switch everything on, don't even set-up the keyboard [AC: Ah that's great] um [AC: So there's no overheads really?] no, none, none whatsoever and we can take as much time as we like, make as much noise as you like 'cause you're out of the way. Um, err Creek we practice 'cause Carl lives up North um, and Arv's away a bit we only practice once every three months possibly? Possibly longer? [AC: Is that a particular place then?] at Jac's it will usually work out or the Shed up in Rhigos. I mean that, that's got a history if its own.

AC: It's a time capsule

CD: That, that, that's worth doing a paper on its own, over the years I think everyone has gone through there, everyone

AC: It's an incredible place

CD: Ah Skacasm, we don't practice

AC: Not at all?

CD: No, um, 'cause we're playing so I said almost, almost every weekend we're gigging but it, it's, it can be a bit annoying because it's the same set [AC: Right yeah] constantly [AC: Smarts a bit sometimes] yeah, but when they put the money in your hand at the end of the day you're going oh right then [inaudible] it's a hard life innit [laughter]

AC: What about recording, where do you go to get stuff recorded?

CD: Um, I don't, I haven't been and done a professional recording in years [AC: Really?] I think the last time would have been Family Tent Cripplecreek, going right back, oh that's, that's going [AC: A long time ago] a long time ago, twenty years? Probably. Done loads of recording...

AC: I remember seeing that in HMV and I went hey!

CD: Ah then, yeah I haven't done, oh sorry I did one recording with Elvis, Elvis Preseli going back a number of years and that was in Meirion's studio [AC: Was that up in Cwmdare?] No he had it in town [AC: Oh underneath the tattoo shop] yeah that's it, b'there. But every, everything else I done has been home recording

AC: What sort of stuff do you use to record?

CD: Um, Audacity usually

AC: Okay

CD: Arv likes, prefers, so when you record with Arv he prefers to use a separate y'know a proper, not a proper but a, a mixing desk recorder [AC: Okay] [inaudible] kind of thing um, but personally I find it easier using Audacity yeah [inaudible] Up in Steve's 'cause he records all the Cool Beans stuff he uses Logic I think but again that, that's straight onto his laptop.

AC: And he, he's the one that deals with it all, the Logic side of things?

CD: Yeah

AC: Yeah, 'cause that's another set of skills again

CD: Yeah, that's something that's [trails off inaudible] I got too much going on like [laughs]

AC: Um, so we've been talking about different collaborations you've been involved in, can you give me any anecdotes or stories about how they became y'know the Spirit of Boogie and all those different things that you're involved in.

CD: Well, we've done the Thursday night. Um, Spirit of Boogie was a joke, a laugh joke thing that happened on Facebook [inaudible] well it was one of the, one of the boys um just posted a little thing on or set up a page I think it was where he's going I'm gonna y'know set up an imaginary funk band, who's in and you had y'know the original band ended with quite a few people saying I'll play this and I'll play that and it got to the point where when we were looking having a laugh and telling jokes on this page and things like that they started [inaudible] that quite a few people were like well I'd really like to do this like, is there anyone else really, just one gig like and as it was there was a charity ah gig coming up which was important to a few people on the page and I said look why don't we do it for a laugh then, we'll just y'know um, it was in, it wasn't Jacs then it was Elliot's [AC: Okay] funnily enough a photo come up on my phone just err just this morning y'know the memories thing comes up and that was that gig eight years ago. Um yeah like I said it was people who were putting things, like I'll do keyboards I'll be the keyboard and then you had to come up with your own name and you'd make your funk name up. And like I said there was a good twelve people on that then who said c'mon then we'll do this and we tried it a couple of them fell by the way-side 'cause they didn't really want to commit to anything so we ended up the first gg we did there was ten of us? And it went really well and it was a case of ooh look this has gone well shall we keep doing it?

AC: How did you coordinate the rehearsals for it y'know ten...

CD: Nightmare [AC: Yeah] nightmare and that was a lot of the problem we were coordinating rehearsals um and then you'd have some people who were just not turning up to any rehearsals so that's how they, falling to the way-side y'know look you can't be the singer if you're not at rehearsals it's that, y'know it's that simple like [inaudible] so it, so it went um, but it, it worked out well I think, y'know it's pretty, it hasn't changed that much as a line up to be fair.

AC: Where do you rehearse then?

CD: Up in um again up in the, the bass players got a garage that's all set-up up in Hirwaun

AC: Who's the bass player?

CD: Pete.

AC: Pete what?

CD: Pete Cohen [AC: Alright] he lives in Cardiff but his father lives in Hirwaun and he, 'cause his father plays in a band as well his father's got the garage set up [AC: Okay] so again you can just walk in and just plug the mic's in and it's ready to go.

AC: So it's self-sufficient

CD: Yeah and we practice about once a month probably. Over Christmas we don't because Wayne being a tax man he ah accountant that's the word I was looking for y'know it, it's his busy period and he's like look I can't, I can't do anything between um over December until the end of February so we have like three months where we don't get together but it's generally about once a month and we try to get two new songs in, every, every month.

AC: Okay, um, so these bands different bands then do you have specific roles that you all have to adopt?

CD: I think they fill in, I think you're, there's, there's never a discussion, it's never about who is what or what have you but if a band is going for long enough then people adopt certain roles [AC: Like an unsaid sort of thing?] yeah. It just happens someone will step up to do something 'cause you realise that it usually comes from the point of how far someone's willing to go and put up with stuff before they have to do it. So, so it's different things are different triggers for different people.

AC: Do you think it's whoever can dig their heels in for longest? Is it like that?

CD: Oh yes, I mean Paul is exceptional [laughter] Paul gets away with doing absolutely nothing and has for years and years and years [Inaudible] yeah, he just stands there we could be all falling around and he'll just stand there looking around aimlessly while everyone else is [makes shouting busy noises]

AC: So who would you say has the lion's share of the non-musical aspects of the....

CD: In, in Creek it's definitely Arv, in Boogie I would say it's between myself and Ben.

AC: Ben, who's that?

CD: He's the sax player ginger hair dreadlocks

AC: Alright

CD: You would have seen him around here

AC: What's his surname do you know?

CD: Err...Evans? Ben Mered, Meredith

AC: Oh right I think I recognise that, yeah.

CD: Um and then Cool Beans, it would be me and Steve and Skacasm it's the singer, that's my that's the only band where I just go well look just tell me. I'm not, I'm not interested, don't put this in but I'm not interested in the music [AC: No I know] I'm not interested in any y'know I'm only here because I'm getting money

AC: It's nice to just sit back I should imagine

CD: Oh it's lovely, it really is 'cause I really don't take part in any, I'll go and help, I, I, I'll carry gear and stuff and set it up and things like that but the actual painful side to gigs and the logistics and...

- AC: Yeah, oh that's quite nice to take a back seat 'cause if you're doing it in lots of other y'know collaborations. Um, so, we've kinda touched on this a bit can you think of any other resources in the area that you draw upon for your own music-making?
- CD: Jacs is a major one, I don't think people realise how fortunate they are to have something like that there. Um, y'know the only resource I think that I can say is the community, it's the people here. There's so much I do that I wouldn't be able to do, regardless of recording or set or gigs or things like that but I wouldn't be able to make this music without an environment that was y'know made you think you could do it and made others think they could do it.
- AC: So what would you say about this environment that makes it conducive to that?
- CD: I don't know 'cause I've always been doing it so it's kind of I mean right from the age of thirteen the first band I've continuously played in bands since then non-stop and it goes right back 'cause I remember when we started at thirteen um there was a lot of the older generation who was lending us stuff, PA, drums, um all that and without that, so they obviously y'know it's, it's the community of musicians y'know without these people around you you're not going to move on you could stay in your bedroom all you like and have all the equipment and be able to record and have all these songs but you need people around you to make good music, you need people around you I really don't believe in any one person ever being able, I don't care, I, I know people do go out there and do it but I'm sorry but that's not just you.
- AC: Yeah, it's a whole raft of people who...
- CD: Exactly, yeah and it's everyone involved that makes that sound that way
- AC: That's kinda like what I'm looking at here really is the musicians themselves, those support personnel, the whole network that's required to make this happen
- CD: And I think because, because it's been something that's been around for a long time, like I said, I remember old people my parent's age when I was thirteen being in bands and doing these kind of things and without, without seeing that other people can do it, you never get the idea that you can do it. Y'know you see them on the telly and you hear them on the radio and [inaudible] put a record on and things like that but when you see normal people playing music and you realise oh, I, I could do that [inaudible] it's not anything really special y'know anyone can do this, it's not an exclusive club
- AC: Yeah, yeah so do you think that could explain y'know the sort of bell curves in activity then [CD: Yes] how much people have been...
- CD: I think, I think what, especially with um this area I think a major player in y'know there was a definite dip in, in activity with bands around here and I think a lot of that is to do with the Stereophonics getting big, then people you coming back [inaudible] and you see people going oh I can do that but the problem was the people who were getting into bands then were doing it because they wanted to be the Stereophonics. So, after, after six months of finding out this shit is hard like, if you're not enjoying this stuff right, you're not going to get through this. Y'know there's not going to be y'know first and formally you have to be enjoying it. There were a load of bands then a big surge and then I realised that shit this is hard and then just crumbling 'cause most of the bands that came up over that time, I look at a lot of the people who are in these

bands and they just don't play anymore [AC: Alright] they played in that band and that was it. Nah I don't play anymore.

AC: And was it because, were they setting y'know unrealistic goals [CD: Yeah] y'know.

CD: Well, it's just do it 'cause you want to do it ultimately because at the end of the day no-one can take that away from you, if you're doing it for, for the love of what you're doing, I enjoy this. I mean personally I find it therapeutic [AC: Yeah] y'know we've all had terrible times in our lives and I find y'know that having music means for that period of time we're doing music I can't think of anything else it's impossible to think of that because I'm, thinking of this, you can't think of two things at the same time while you're playing music [AC: Okay] it gives you a little bit of respite where you go [breathes a sigh of relief] and then it finishes, right I feel stronger now.

AC: Yeah, it's just a little step away from reality

CD: Yeah, it's only a little drip you don't want it regularly just gives you that little bit of [breathes again] breathing space and that's, that's more important than being famous and y'know this is sustainable, sustainable is the way to go with it. If you, if you're hoping to get it don't do it because you want to be massive, 'cause that y'know that's a very small chance that that's going to happen, tiny!

AC: Yeah, so that sustainability err thing you're saying there it's um, it's not so much reliant on what's around us and more reliant on whether people have got realistic expectations...

CD: Yeah, yeah and I found, I think and I hope it doesn't sound a little bit too presumptuous but I think it's bands like um Creek, um and musicians like myself, Neil, um and a lot of people I've played with are partly responsible for keeping that thread going 'cause you got, you get the crash but then there's also, y'know there's a core that's running through, still allowing people to see well look this is, this is just fun regardless of money, regardless of anything else and keeping so, so it keeps it alive through it and then builds it back up again and that's, at the moment I think we're on, in, in a nice upturn at the moment.

AC: There's some nice young bands [CD: Yeah] coming through...

CD: And they're doing it for the right reasons, you can see, they're doing it 'cause they love doing it.

AC: Yeah, yeah a couple of bands in mind, Shovelface is one

CD: Oh fair play to them like

AC: I do like them. Can you think of any other bands coming up, we got Shovelface and Bedface as well...

CD: Yeah, I mean Headnoise, I don't like them but I think what they're doing is, it's quite ah y'know it, it's a little bit different [AC: Yeah] Again don't put it on there I just don't like it much. Um, and this is the other thing that I find as well being in bands you tend not to get out and see many bands [AC: Okay] 'cause you're out, you're playing you never really get out y'know 'cause you're playing. Oh you're playing down there are you? Oh I'm playing. I'd love to come down but I'm playing and when you're not playing you think ah I fancy a night in [laughter]

AC: It's nice to have a quiet night

CD: So, this is why I like the Sunday afternoons sort of idea of doing things because [AC: In Jacs?] yeah, they haven't taken off particularly well but, but that kind of, that kind of thing is nice for me because I can be down there all afternoon and I can be home, I mean if I'm not playing, be home in the night nice and early, it's nice and chilled out.

AC: Um, okay so how often do you play live around here in Aberdare?

CD: In Aberdare? [AC: Yeah] Um, dunno, once every three months possibly?

AC: Is it the same, tends to be the same places then?

CD: Yeah well there's Jacs. Um, I think we might be having a gig in the Conwy end of January with Creek [AC: Alright] we haven't played in the Conwy for a, and he hasn't had bands there for a while.

AC: How has that come about 'cause it's not been a venue really...

CD: No, um, just speaking to John [landlord of the Conwy] ah the barman. It's Harvey's father's birthday [AC: Okay] on that day 70th birthday and he wanted to do something to celebrate and they were talking down there and John said well look I'm looking at getting bands back in here again y'know, I'll have you in here and y'know and you can celebrate your father's birthday, alright then [inaudible] we used to play loads

AC: Yeah there used to be a lot of gigs there. Why has John changed his mind?

CD: 'cause he's a miserable prick [laughter] he really is, he's [inaudible] he's really [inaudible] I don't like going in there. I only went in there the other night 'cause the Tap was closed

AC: [laughs] but is sort of y'know, has he had an idea or is he just trying to get a bit more...

CD: I think he, [inaudible] y'know the way it used to be, he wants that vibrant feel coming back in but I don't think he realises that he's gotta smile [inaudible and laughing]. Um, I mean there were some fantastic y'know nights going on in there. 'Cause that's the, that's the nice thing about somewhere small like that, you're limited to what you can take, so you gotta strip your gear right down, I mean we'll probably do it acoustically. But then y'know you got everyone it's, especially, you don't need a lot of people but y'know if there's a decent number of people they're there so all you're all breathing the same air [inaudible] y'know it's more, y'know seeing people the whites of their eyes and all of that like and that, I quite like that, 'cause it's more organic than as well, I feel, when you feel like they are with you, you feel more confident in, to be honest let's do something there, let, let's not just roll out the same old things let, let's change it up 'cause [inaudible] with Creek what we do quite a lot which is nice is we'll play around with songs so there won't be a rehearsal to learn how to do something all of a sudden Arv will start a song and instead of playing it in a 4/4 he'll hit a reggae beat and then we're like ah we're doing that are we? [laughs] oh y'know we'll hit the middle of a song and [inaudible] it just goes somewhere and it goes somewhere then that at the end of it you realise that we're never gonna do that again and that was brilliant.

AC: It's almost got sort of um, it just reminds me of the Last Waltz sort of

CD: Yeah, yeah it, it's [inaudible] we are learning that at the moment

AC: Oh are you?

CD: Yeah,

AC: 'Cause I know someone in Merthyr...

CD: Yeah, we got a, we, we've been trying to do it for about two years, we've had the idea for it, but we get together so y'know little [AC: Yeah, yeah] that w, we're about halfway through at the moment. And, and that was our idea as well, to do it in its entirety, but they haven't done it in its entirety [AC: No] they've only done a bit so it still means well hang on we could still don this.

AC: Where would you do it then the Coliseum then?

CD: No, that's too big, Jacs probably

AC: Okay that would be cool

CD: Yeah. We'll get guests up to do, so we, we'd do it exactly the same as the film

AC: That would be awesome really cool

CD: With different people getting up. The only thing I've insisted on is um, that I, sing the Neil Diamond song

AC: Ha-ha cool

CD: 'Cause that's shit [laughter] and I really y'know croon that up a bit it'll be lovely

AC: I'm looking forward to this [laughter]

CD: Yeah we're about half way through

AC: Oh that's cool, it's interesting

CD: And they're all sounding really nice so hopefully by the end of the year who knows.

AC: And who else is involved with that then?

CD: It's just us, just Creek and then we'll [inaudible] have um, we got a horn section, the Boogie horn section will do it. Um, my daughter will do the um, what's her name, I can't remember her name now, Joni Mitchell [inaudible] yeah Joni Mitchell [AC: Ah brilliant] so she'll do that, yeah so um, it, it's gonna get y'know people will be joining in for the bits that other people join in on the film. They won't be there all the way through it'll really be [AC: In and out] yeah [AC: Popping up and down on the stage] yeah

AC: So what motivates you to continue making music? What do you get out of it, well you've kinda touched on what you get out of it but what keeps you going?

CD: Um, I, don't know? I just don't think I could stop. I find, like, like now January, it's quiet and [AC: You find it a bit...] yeah, a bit twitchy. Um, I miss it when it's not happening. I get an immense amount of pleasure, immense it, it's y'know and I know

it's [laughs] sounds a bit weird and it, it's not perverse but it's almost sexual [laughter] it, it's but in the right environment it is, it's not because, because I don't play on my own, I don't practice in the house [AC: Right, it's that...] I struggle with it I get bored or I go off on one y'know and just sort of but it, it's when you're with the right people and that's not everyone I play with but it's certainly most of them, oh y'know it's nice, you're all on the same page you're all almost breathing together.

AC: Is it that sense of belonging

CD: Yeah, freedom, there's and, with those kind of bands as well, there's, there's a certain, [inaudible] y'know you can be yourself you can relax if I wanna, if I'm y'know if someone pissed me off I can tell them. Fuck up will you, you're getting on my tits and they will tell me the same

AC: And that's good yeah?

CD: It's really good because none of will have y'know, no one will take it then as a [rurururur] and nope we're comfortable with each other.

AC: And have there been any instances with other musicians where it hasn't gone y'know where you... y'know whatever but...

CD: Yeah, yeah, yeah it does. It has.

AC: And has that had an effect on the music or [inaudible]

CD: Um, yes. The dynamic is all wrong for me then and if ever there's that kind of thing the dynamic has to be a spread for me that is very important.

AC: What would be your complaints about these interactions...what would you say has been not good?

CD: 'cause it all becomes about one person then, so that, that, the way I would do things, if I y'know, if I lose it, well not lose it you got the freedom, so you're tapping into it before you lose it because you can be comfortable you're not holding y'know, that's winding me up that it [AC: Yeah] at the moment everything's there you just say it, it just comes out and then what you get is, is the other person or people or other members of the band can respond in a calm and controlled way y'know still with a bit of a laugh and a joke but, but you get, you put it to bed without people getting angry. Now when you discuss things, and you gotta have a mind-set in yourself as well that I'm not always right [AC: Yeah, yeah] you can't have that, the moment you think that you're always right, then it becomes all about you and it becomes your band and I don't want to be in anyone's band unless it's y'know, it's why people, I hear people talking about other musicians and they'll say oh aye yeah, my drummer or my keyboard player or anything, if ever anyone has said that and I'm there, oh he's my ah my keyboard player [laughter] no, no I'm not! I play keyboard in the band, I'm not your keyboard player, get that right, [inaudible] but it's that idea y'know it's, look we're all in it or, or you can count me out. And I know there'll be controlling sort of but, everyone's got a voice and everyone should have a voice and the moment someone becomes the bully and wants their own way all the way through then, I know bands who are like that and I know people who play in bands like that, but I don't know how you could be in a band like that?

AC: Y'know in your experience do those bands tend to sustain themselves or do they...

CD: They do tend to sustain themselves um, but, whether it's for in my opinion the right reason or not is the thing. I, I y'know I can't see that there's much fun in there, there's not much, yeah, deep going on for the rest of the band members.

AC: Do you think that can have an effect on what they're producing then?

CD: Yeah. Well, well it becomes stale and everything sounds the same because there's that one person has got the, y'know he's the be all and end all so none of these will have an input, they just play your song.

AC: You don't have to mention names or anything [inaudible] but um, are there any bands that you know of that are gigging round Aberdare now that are using that same formula and it's not working.

CD: Yeah, Fireroad, err Chris Summerill um...

AC: Just so I get a sense of what I'm hearing in the music to understand what...

CD: Yeah, yeah it's...

AC: Formulaic?

CD: Yeah, yeah

AC: And if you think Fireroad they're doing quite well aren't they? So I mean how does that work?

CD: Yeah, but this is what I'm saying if, I couldn't. It's almost like everyone's part of it for the end goal to be famous and the problem with Fireroad is I think they've, they've, got to a level which is as long as you're enclosed in that bubble feels good but I don't think y'know the glass ceiling I don't think they'll have a breakthrough on that one, and, um, I think you would need something different to be able to do that [inaudible] no they're responding to um a scene that is very formulaic, that's the scene they're in y'know it, it's quite a popular scene but all those people there only want to hear that, so break out of that you're gonna have to do something that might piss some people off [inaudible] but, but it's that kind of thing so if you think too much about it the music suffers.

AC: Yeah, okay that's a fair point, your, your sort of perspective is without sounding patronising to other music is you want to get more creativity, more sort of...

CD: Yeah, I think that's the only way [AC: Unexpected...] back to sustainability, you can't keep doing the same thing, it gets tired.

AC: I think Aberdare is a good melting pot.

CD: Yes, definitely

AC: People feeling like they can

CD: Definitely, 100%

AC: I mean you've got your band, Gandhi Dancers is something very different

CD: Yeah, I don't do that anymore [AC: Um...] yeah but that kind of thing let's give it a go

AC: Yeah, do you think that's the same in most Welsh valleys?

CD: I don't know? I couldn't really say? I don't feel it's the same in Merthyr. Merthyr is very much going through what Aberdare did a good couple of years ago on the whole, well lots of bands are forming to be famous [inaudible] like the Pocket Devils, I was part of the Pocket Devils in um, from Merthyr and, and that band I think, I think that's where I take all my [inaudible] 'cause that band was all out for, fame and fortune, that's the only reason they were there. We'd be doing showcases, you'd have A and R men coming up to you afterwards saying ah I loved the gig but do you know what I think, I think you should be more like this and then the, we'd be going back in the van then and the boys would be going right so, what we're gonna do now we're gonna change this, yeah but then next week when we do it another guy would say you need to be like, and you gotta change again, y'know where's your conviction y'know! And, and, and it, that really, and when I toured with the 60 foot dolls as well, that was just after the Pocket Devils. So that section of being in the music business and, and trying, follow that sort of route, oh it was horrible, it was really horrible I hated it, there wasn't any freedom y'know you had to always be, y'know you can't do that because of this. I can do, I can do this, this is mine, if I want to do this I will do it.

AC: It just seems the opposite of what you'd want?

CD: Always playing to, this audience want this, yeah? Well how are we to get other audiences in, appealing to these audiences. Ah but if you do that they won't like you. But someone else might like that then! And over time what happens is you grow a much bigger audience because you're appealing across a wider, y'know it's all about the now.

AC: Yeah, yeah, so that was like a big sort of...

CD: A big, big thing, yeah and it really got me going do you know I don't want, I thought I wanted this, but I realise that's not what I want, it's not what I want at all. What I'm doing now is what I want, I feel incredibly blessed to be around the people that I'm around and lucky enough to be in y'know a good couple of bands who I really, really y'know like every one of them, love playing with them. I mean my family have just got used to it over the years y'know back in the early days y'know it was quite tough, you know what it's like y'know with a young family, but it's become so, the bands are almost like an offshoot of the family y'know they, they oh you're practising tonight alright then.

AC: Extended family.

CD: Yeah it's just accepted y'know every night of the week, I'm out, pretty much.

AC: Are you out pretty much...

CD: Well, yeah between because I do shows as well, I do rehearsals for shows um, so I'm in one night through the week Monday to Friday and then it depends what I'm playing Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

AC: Are you busy all this weekend?

CD: No, not this weekend, nothing in January, January is quiet, so it's nice, y'know

AC: You get a bit of downtime

CD: Yeah, usually it's a maximum of two gigs on a weekend, sometimes I'll get a whole weekend busy but it's usually 1 possibly two so we still make sure then that look the nights that I'm not off. 'Cause I've learnt I have to make more effort, I can't just do this y'know 'cause it's not fair on everyone else and I love being with my family

AC: Yeah, I love sitting in the house

CD: Yeah, so, so it's that kind of well this y'know does shoot on to the other side when I'm home [inaudible] make a fuss and when I'm not, when I am out and stuff I want to make a fuss make sure everyone is sorted before I leave the house y'know just because y'know look I am looking after you and I really appreciate you, you understanding 'cause I know it's difficult me not being around all the time but y'know we're in it together

AC: You've got a cool balance?

CD: Yeah, that's what I mean if I had a, if had a loads of money now phwoar I'd be living the dream [laughter] but money's y'know

AC: Yeah that's the thing isn't it. Um, so, what factors make it difficult would you say to make music in Aberdare or a semi-rural village like Aberdare?

CD: Rehearsal spaces, definitely.

AC: So it's physical infrastructure?

CD: Yeah, yeah, you gotta be lucky enough to know someone who's got, the only place you got is Jacs and that's not a flexible rehearsal space y'know where you have to, it has to be this night.

AC: What would you suggest y'know if you could suggest something and it would be implemented tomorrow, what sort of infrastructure do you think...

CD: I think a lot people make the mistake when they're setting up um, rehearsal spaces, they kit them out and put all the stuff in there so y'know you got all that outlay in there, all it needs is a room, y'know if a band's too lazy to take their gear somewhere then y'know do they really want to be doing it?

AC: They're not likely to be gigging much are they?

CD: Exactly, y'know so I think yeah um, just a space and that space because back in the day we were using community halls, church halls and things like that, now church halls and places like that they don't like doing now there's a lot of complaints [AC: About noise?] about noise from around it so you can't get these spaces anymore. No most of the church halls around here I've rehearsed in back in the day but they won't, they won't open it out to bands now, and again I think bands, some bands have shot themselves in the foot 'cause they won't treat it with respect y'know they'll go and trash the place or they leave cans or y'know it's that, c'mon, so, I can see why it's not happening but it's just if there were the availability of just spaces, not a purpose set-up place, just the community sort of realising that this is an important thing and neighbours just, y'know

AC: Soundproofing and stuff possibly?

CD: Yeah but then that costs money and people are not going to do it, so I think it's an understanding by, I think, I think people have just got more selfish as well, 'cause they've got moved on, they want things their way y'know your neighbours, yeah there's not so much of a community in that respect. This is why I think I like the music 'cause there is a community y'know we don't live next door to each other but we all, we all kinda know each other and we all y'know.

AC: What about upstairs in pubs and things?

CD: Again used to do that but then pubs are not open through the week a lot of the time [AC: Oh right yeah I suppose] so you got the weekends and again it's, I don't know why actually 'cause the Mount Pleasant used to do it and they don't anymore.

AC: The White Lion used to do it as well didn't they?

CD: Yeah

AC: Is it possibly the same reasons maybe, neighbours [CD: Yeah could be] being left and things.

CD: Or it's just not worth the hassle

AC: Yeah possibly

CD: Y'know a couple of quid here and there, what's the point?

AC: Yeah, but again y'know it's helping [CD: Yeah] that community music thing isn't it?

CD: The amount of charity you used to do y'know I mean it might be I've just got sick of doing charity 'cause you're constantly asked to do something and it pisses you off when you are asked to do a charity gig, I'd like to support charities but then you turn up and the people organising the night haven't made any effort whatsoever because it's free! Doesn't cost them any money, the charity gigs I've done and have been paid for have all worked bar none, they all worked because there's, there's a risk element in there, they've gotta find money to pay the band, so they have to sell these tickets otherwise it's coming out of my pocket. The moment, when it's free generally a lot of people can't be arsed it'll just be friends and family turning up and that'll be it

AC: That's the mirror opposite of what it's trying to achieve [CD: Yeah, I know] it's really odd.

CD: And it took me, it's only in the last couple of years that I've really cottoned on to that being the case because I, I've done more charity gigs than I've been paid for and well you just seen it, right you have gotta work on this because if you don't work on it this money's coming out of your pocket.

AC: So, is it fair to say that everything's gone more commodified? We're all thinking through pounds and pence and things? We're not valuing it...

CD: Yeah and you also got this [inaudible] the value on yourselves. People will perceive you as good or bad on the amount you're charging, which is bonkers.

AC: And that can flip I should imagine?

CD: Yeah it's ridiculous like

- AC: So perhaps it's that shift then to a more monetary perspective
- CD: And that's also shifting the way people do bands hence maybe two tribute bands because tribute bands are bringing in the coin at the moment, that was going way back ten, fifteen years you'd have one or two tribute bands and they were big y'know they were getting paid the big cash, whereas they're ten a penny now [AC: I know there's a lot] there's loads of them
- AC: A lot of tributes and not so many originals coming out just loads of tribute and cover bands.
- CD: Well you tend to find now that it's almost catching up with the amount of pub bands y'know the valley's song book bands, they're almost neck and neck now [AC: It's bonkers] and to be honest I can see why because with valleys pub bands, a lot of them, you can see one and you may as well see the same old band next week y'know it's the same songs and it's the public that are doing that [AC: It's the demand] yeah 'cause I, I want this song and I want this song so they play those songs and those people like it but then what I found with Creek we almost, we always go out to do a predominantly original set, two 45s but it, it'll be mainly our stuff perhaps 60/40 but it's still the weighting is our own. And you can guarantee the first half if you're going into an old pub, first half will be dry so you're not getting anything back [inaudible] no, keep on going, we'll keep on pushing but the second half they're on-board 'cause we've kinda gone look we're not doing that, we don't do that, that isn't us but we're doing something that you do like just, just let yourself like it. Just because we're not doing that song it doesn't mean, and by the end then y'know so we've, I'm incredibly proud actually of the way that y'know we've managed to keep it that way and always kept it that way. Look, we're an originals band, yes, people want to hear a few covers but the covers we throw in are not particularly y'know the one's that everyone knows [inaudible] so it's, it's, it's nice to be on the other side so, to be able to do these things and proving look you can do it you can go out and do your own stuff in a pub environment [inaudible] it just takes digging your heels in and not losing faith, if you lose the faith [inaudible] and no-one can be arsed and everything y'know, what's coming off there, if you can't be arsed there, they can't be arsed there. If you are enjoying yourselves on that stage and they're almost y'know you're not bothering with us then this is just gonna be a rehearsal and we'll just enjoy it and go for it and by the time you're half way through they can still see well they are really enjoying themselves why am I miserable then? So then they get on-board with it then oh right c'mon we may as well all be doing it.
- AC: I quite like that, that's good. And finally, is there anything else you'd like to add?
- CD: Nothing I can think of?
- AC: We've covered quite a lot, I'm going to stop that there.

Interview with Connor Powell, 19-01-2020, Telephone @ 2.05 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

CP – Connor Powell, Participant

AC: Hiya Connor how're you doing?

CP: Good thank you Anne, very good

AC: Good, good and you read through all the consent forms and you're happy to go ahead yeah?

CP: Yes, yes

AC: Okay, fantastic, so the first question is what music do you like?

CP: Um, I got a very limited taste in music I gotta be honest. I'm very much the Beatles, Oasis, Stone Roses a couple of other bands will join that little trio, Ocean Colour Scene, I was a '90s child so, well I was born in the '70s but I was a teenager in the '90s so I'm very kind of Britpop influenced and guitar based bands really but yeah I've always said to people for if I've got the Beatles, Oasis and the Stone Roses you don't really need anybody else. I am a fan of songs so y'know I got a playlist on my Spotify with about 70 odd songs on it but if you asked me to name the band I probably couldn't even name you the band like y'know

AC: Okay so it's like apart from those main bands it's just

CP: Bits and bobs like yeah [AC: The song] bits and bobs like here and there

AC: The song for what it is rather than [CP: Yeah] who it's by [CP: Yeah, absolutely]

CP: Okay so what sort of music do you play then? Again it's like the bands I've already mentioned really, it's all guitar based music, it's heavily reliant on melodies, um, and yeah it's, it's kinda that sound, I always say to people if you're a fan of one of those bands then go and have a listen to one of my albums 'cause I think you'll probably like it.

AC: Okay, I'm going to ask you a few questions about um your musical practices um [CP: Yeah] starting with your writing practices [CP: Yeah] how do you go about writing songs?

CP: Um, I've, for me, song writing is done sat on the end of my boys bed when I put him to sleep at night and that's how it's been done for the last ten years now. So literally...

AC: Really?

CP: Yeah so um, they'll always want me to sing them a song to go to sleep, so I'll take that opportunity to write and then once and d'y'know what my wife said to me the other day y'know when you write songs I've never actually seen you write anything and I don't, I don't write anything down, I will, I'll potter around on the guitar while I put the boys to bed and if anything comes into my head or sounds good as I'm playing along I'll get my phone out and record it and it will be like literally a thirty, forty second long clip and then after about three or four months I'll go back to my mobile phone and I'll discard anything y'know on second listen doesn't sound very good and anything that does I'll start building a song around that then [AC: Okay] and I'll start writing from there. And that's pretty much done at the stage where I start recording a demo song properly so the lyrics and everything would be written at that point [AC: Okay] sat in front of the home studio as I'm about to record a three and a half minute demo of it on acoustic guitar. So it's very, it's a strange writing process yeah 'cause like I said my wife is right I don't actually write anything down I never write lyrics down [laughs] it's ah [AC: You've got an incredible memory] [laughter] well no I haven't that's the thing I need the mobile phone and y'know the lyrics I um, I chuck words together I'm trying to work out the melody as I'm recording that night y'know when I'm putting the boys to bed and I'll chuck any kind of words together they don't make sense or anything it's just about getting the melody and as soon as I've got that little pattern then I'll build the lyrics around there and like I say they normally come

when the demo then I'll start putting the lyrics in place and just recording the demo over and over and over again until I've got a song there and then of course when it comes to going in the studio properly and recording y'know you're kinda prepared then I can hear it in my head hear it, everything that's due to go around that little acoustic demo I can hear everything where the drums come in where strings might come into play, where the piano starts you start to hear it in your head then and how it's gonna sound. It's good, I for me it's the most exciting part of the whole process if you said, if you give me the option of sitting in the house writing and recording a song or going out and doing, playing it live, I would sit in the house and write and record all day long, it's the creative aspect for me and then hearing it back is, you can't you can't put a price on that, it's amazing [AC: Okay that's interesting] unless it's a rubbish song then it's not very good [laughter]

AC: I mean do you find there's any creative processes happening while you're performing y'know new ideas in the field if you want?

CP: Um, not really 'cause I'm not that um, if you take for instance if you look at different musicians which no doubt, you're gonna speak to ah Jim Brenner is a super talented guitarist so he might have a gig one night where he'll play something completely different from what he played the night before 'cause he's that good he can do it and he can formulate many ideas around part of a song. For me the whole create, the whole creativity goes into creating it in the first place, I might put a little different melodic line um but other than that it's very much the song is as it is [laughter] I don't know whether that's lazy y'know I'm happy with the original I don't want to change it y'know

AC: I mean you mentioned y'know going into the studio and getting drums and maybe strings and things put on there, who do you draw upon then other musicians are they from Aberdare those who do extra roles?

CP: Um in terms of my process of being in the studio recording music um one of my best friends Meirion Townsend I don't know if you know Meirion?

AC: I know the name

CP: Well yeah well he's um a producer and he produced my last album, he's produced a couple of singles released I released a football song for Wales a couple of years back ah and he's been kind of, it's been me and him and when I talk about strings, like most records unless you've got y'know a thirty six piece orchestra it's all programmed strings but you can make them sound as good as you want them to sound y'know so and he'll put drums down and we'll play all the parts between us. So basically it's a case of I'll write the song and send him the demo and tell him what's in my head what it's gonna sound like and we'll go in and produce it and he'll produce it with the [inaudible] together.

AC: How did you ah get to know Meirion?

CP: I've known him since he was about seven, we lived next door to each other basically so yeah, yeah I didn't have an option in it unfortunately he was just there [laughs] and I'm going to be usher in his wedding now next month or the month after I gotta [inaudible] yeah a couple of weeks' time, yeah.

AC: I mean what was the y'know can you remember any particular time where you got together and thought right this is good to do work together y'know?

CP: Oh yeah I got, I can remember it like it was yesterday. Basically Meirion was ah when Meirion was about 9 I woke up one summer holidays I got woken up by the sound of paint pots being banging in his garage so I took a little stroll up the road wondering what the hell's going on up here and he's created this drumkit out of paint pots [laughter] he had one cymbal [laughs] and he was brilliant on them honest to god he was brilliant on them, and he was playing these paint pots and all of a sudden his dad got him a drum kit and that Christmas I think my mother and father bought me a guitar which I was a bit gutted about 'cause it was something I had to learn, I'd just finished school and I didn't want to learn anything else but there you go and then me and him started jamming on our own and um it probably sounded absolutely dreadful but we thought we were brilliant, we only knew one, only knew one song and it was All Along the Watchtower [laughs] a good song to know like innit and um we spent the summer doing that and then we had our first band and Ragsy, do you know Ragsy [AC: Yes I do] you know Ragsy and he was our singer and it kinda went from there really.

AC: What was that band?

CP: Um Probe [AC: Ah right] it was ah 90, '96 we started '97 we kind of, '97 the band was myself, Meirion, Ragsy, Scott Howells, do you know Scott? [AC: Yeah] Scott Howells and there was another boy in it called Steven Gregory, he's dead now [AC: Oh right] he died about fifteen years ago he died in a motorcycle accident but he was an unbelievably good guitarist unbelievable and he was bear in mind he was only sixteen, seventeen at the time we all were, so that was the first band really and y'know um it was, it was quite a big thing around Aberdare we used to play the Railway Club and I can remember the first night our first ever gig as a band, proper gig um we were playing the Railway Club we all got there for about five o'clock in the afternoon, Friday night probably y'know it was like an [inaudible] for us, we'd have bottle of beer, probably got too drunk we thought, y'know it weren't just a gig it was a proper night out and I can remember one of the boys looking out the window and me saying is there anybody waiting to come in? He said anyone waiting to come in! they're queuing around the block! And we looked out and honest to god they were queuing around the block, 'cause we'd gone out to see, the weeks building up to it we were going out to the Black Lion when that was open selling these tickets to everyone and anybody and they all, they all turned up y'know yeah it was brilliant! It was brilliant that was the start of it for us really.

AC: That sounds fantastic

CP: But yeah they were good, they were good days, they were good days, carefree and we just, I can't think if we were doing any original songs we might have? I was always writing songs and they were always my songs but it was mainly that Bripoppy stuff y'know.

AC: Sort of covers as well though mainly?

CP: Yeah it was, it was mainly covers we might have one or two originals in there.

AC: Okay

CP: Yeah we probably did.

AC: So what helped you sustain your relationship with Meirion?

CP: Um well we were just, we were y'know we were he was almost my younger brother really, y'know we grew up so close with proximity to y'know where we lived it weren't just about the music, the music probably helped it y'know the fact we were linked probably brought us even closer together, um y'know but then, I don't know that's just the way it is he's always been one of my, my best friends y'know and we know our family he's ah all friends y'know they'll come down with their child and we'll go up with our kids and there'll be utter chaos but then ultimately when we get in a room together to make music he knows exactly what I want and I know exactly how he'll do it and it just, it's almost like a little bit of um, well we just know each other's work it just quick, a very quick process because we know exactly what we want out of it [interruptions, sorry etc..]

AC: How long were you in the studio for roughly?

CP: My last album, I, we, the way we worked it is we basically we went up, we picked Sundays throughout the year over the course about a year, two years maybe? We picked the Sunday obviously because of commitments I couldn't just go up there every day of the week so we picked maybe one Sunday every six weeks and, in that Sunday, we'd get a song finished and we would start another so um, yeah, we'd focus on getting in one song a session done and of course Meirion would do his mixing and the stuff like that afterwards then. So, in one session we'd have a song tracked, and I was probably up there from ten till six on a Sunday so eight hours flat out in a studio um

AC: That's a lot yeah

CP: Yeah, but we done it over two years y'know really it started with the football song in 2016 and then I said to him look listen I got an album it needs to go and be recorded so he said great let's do it and then from there until it was released in February 2018, so I say we finished about the end of October 2017 so it was about an hour, a year and a half. [AC: Okay] I know but if we'd done it in consecutive days that album would have been done and dusted in ten days that's how y'know that's how, essentially how long it took us but it was just panned out over that long period y'know.

AC: Um well I know you're um well a solo artist now [CP: Yeah] um, are there any collaborations you've done recently or not so long ago um, err, y'know sort of involved in music then?

CP: Um, not really, not really, because I'm trying to think now [laughs] I don't think so um, I'm a bit of a control freak so I couldn't go and couldn't go and write with somebody, I couldn't write a song with someone, that could never happen because um, it's, I mean, well it just wouldn't, just wouldn't happen, I written a Christmas song right [AC: Yeah] and I would never release a Christmas song but I spoke to my boys' school 'cause they got school choir and I said listen how do you feel about um recording this song, recording this song um that I've written and they said yeah great and it could be a project over the course of a year, twelve months or whatever so I sent them the song and they were like wow that's really good and then they said can you come in for a meeting and when I go in for a meeting they said oh we can get the kids involved in like writing the lyrics and then I said no, that's not, that not happening [laughs] there's no chance they're not getting their mitts on this song like. I said no the lyrics are written, the structure is all written I just want them to sing, I just want them to sing on it, so that's as much as I'll get to in terms of collaborating with anybody. Going on stage and doing gigs with people is fine um but I don't really do

that, I got another little band which is like an Oasis tribute but it's just a bit of a knock about a bit of a hobby really, in terms of my own music nah I don't really collaborate.

AC: Okay, the Oasis band who's that with then?

CP: Oh they're boys oh actually Dozzer Griffiths is from Aberdare, he was in a band called New Revival and he's in a band now called Big Foot, he's the drummer [AC: Yes, yes] um, so yeah he was in that band with me, he's only just knocked it on the head after last, at the end of this, last year which y'know we knew was coming all left on good terms but it's boys from outside the valleys really, outside the Cynon, Aberdare valley anyway, but yeah.

AC: Why did he knock it on the head?

CP: It was just I think it was just we were doing a lot of gigs and to be honest with you, it, we were all feeling the same about it and I, I get um I don't get that much satisfaction out of it either because A you stand there sing somebody else's songs for two hours, you get all these y'know applause and you come off and people are telling you how brilliant you were and actually when you sit back and think, alright [inaudible] I just sand someone else's song? That's all I did like? It's nothing to be proud of, it's great don't get me wrong it's good but if you can play guitar and sing anyone can do that y'know I'd rather have that kind of appreciation for going up on stage and doing my own songs [AC: Yeah] y'know but um, yeah it's, I enjoy doing it because I enjoy going out with the boys and having a crack and y'know I love the songs I'm singing but actually I sometimes sit back and think there's nothing really much for me to be proud of and whether that's because I write my own stuff and I've got that view of things if I didn't perhaps I'd think there's everything to be proud of doing it but for me and so I think Doz is feeling the same y'know so I don't know how long this will last for me but y'know it's just my hobby

AC: Yeah, yeah, I suppose you get paid for the...

CP: Oh yeah, yeah it's what brings the money in y'know doing your own original stuff it earns you no money whatsoever y'know you might be lucky to get the odd gig where you might come out of there y'know with a couple of quid in your pocket [AC: Yeah] but y'know these type of gigs are y'know you've almost like sold your soul for cash really but it's needed in this day and age unfortunately [laughs] you get nothing for writing your own music, you chuck it up on Spotify it makes you absolutely nothing you don't sell any albums, you don't sell records any more, y'know it's, y'know it's taken me, if I had a million plays on Spotify I might be able to afford the petrol to take my family to Narberth on the weekend, that's just what it's like y'know

AC: Why do you think that is the case with original music compared to covers and tribute bands?

CP: Because it, it, it's unless you're a die-hard music fan or is, or whose horizons are open and they can take in new music left, right and centre, I got friends like that who can listen to anything because they, their ears and their mind are prepared to take in new stuff, I aint I wouldn't go out and watch original music personally because I, I in my mind there's a 90% chance I won't appreciate it, now that's me talking as somebody who writes songs so y'know and the thing is, is the appetite really there for it when you go out around, well for a start if you go around the pubs and clubs in south Wales nobody goes out anymore anyway so you can chuck any band you want, in, in, in the pub most people are sat in the house, they'd rather sit in the house and watch Britain's Got Talent or the X Factor and [inaudible] get um y'know four

cans of Carling in y'know 'cause it's cheaper [AC: Yeah] and y'know they're trying to build up [inaudible] with families and so on, so to try and get people to the pub is one thing and then the landlords to try and get people to put acts on in there, now they're mainly tribute acts 'cause it's a niche and people will say oh we love that band there's an Abba tribute act down the pub next week let's get up off our arse and go down like so and, so there is no music in original, there is no money in original music, people put on their own events, they'll charge on the door, they'll charge five quid for people to get in and looking at that five pound they're splitting it between three or four bands because they've had to put three or four bands on to try and bring in as many people as they can y'know and even [inaudible] music releasing if you take the, the, the owner of Spotify or the chief executive of Spotify whatever, whatever his title is worth more money than Paul McCartney and he's never written a song in his life [AC: Oh my god fathers] that is just the, Spotify for me is a great thing it's accessible music for everybody but if you are an original artist there is absolutely nothing in it for you, nothing in it for you anymore so y'know unless you're a superstar and then you got to have the video that goes with it that has 900 million views and with that comes people advertising to back your video so the money comes in that way so it's just a different world, a different world of music now [AC: It is] and it, it's good for some and it, it's not good for others it depends how you wanna look at it, if you want to go and make an album anybody can do that now 'cause you can have software on your computer in the house and I've, I've released I've made albums, two albums at home and just about to make my third one now and so anybody can make an album but that also means unfortunately that it's cheapening the whole thing [AC: Yes] and y'know so it's y'know it's a good thing and it's a bad thing if you want to make money it's a bad thing

- AC: Yeah, why do you think y'know it's, what you just said I totally agree with y'know um, why do you think people still, especially up in the valleys y'know outside of cities I know you're living in Cardiff now but especially in semi-rural out of the way places why do you think people persist making original music and experimenting y'know like they do in Aberdare?
- CP: 'Cause they're creative people y'know the valleys is a hot bed of talent y'know not just music, football y'know sport, rugby, it's a hot bed of talent. When I think, when I was growing up in Aberdare my friends, my whole friends and my whole friend list back at one point in time and this wasn't because we were into what we were into it was just the people we were, we were all creatively active in bands and like I say that was, that was, we were friends before that happened so there was a spark that happened a spark y'know inspiration in us all and if we weren't doing that we were up the field playing football we were good at that as well y'know and that's not just about my bunch of friends that was the case for a lot of people in the valleys y'know there's a real hotbed of talent and I sometimes go through my friends list and I'm thinking of people [inaudible] that like see Ragsy, Catherine Southall, Jim Brenner, Scott Howells, Meirion Townsend, Dai Hill, Dave Holt they're all mates of mine and I could go on and on and on about, Neil Galsworthy, Paul Rosser y'know all these people I know well and they're all very talented too [AC: Yeah] y'know they're all good musicians, they're all real musicians who can stand their ground like with the best of them, they are and talented people they're not just, they write good songs, good music y'know very talented people and y'know I'd like to put myself amongst them, never judge myself [inaudible] but they might say the same but y'know I, I think I'm part of that and [inaudible] quite proud of that actually.
- AC: Yeah, I think, 'cause I've seen sort of over the past there's been like dips, highs and lows in the sort of intensity of music making y'know around here why do you think that is?

CP: Well, the kind of, from personally speaking the initial high for me was around the mid '90s and of course you can tie that in with the Stereophonics. Um we probably seen our first dip in my collective group of kind of people that are involved with me maybe about four or five years later you thought you weren't getting anywhere so all of a sudden things calmed down a little bit. There was certainly a rise in about 2008, 2009 when I started making that film and it went out it kind of there was another I don't know if it inspired people to go or again they were looking at back on memories they had so yeah you'll have peaks and troughs you will have peaks and troughs but y'know the people involved their ability won't be lost through that it'll just be whether they're able to do something or not and y'know another you gotta think about is y'know the, the, the game we're in, live music creating music is where do you play? There's pubs shutting down left, right and centre, y'know when people do go out they don't want to listen to live music they just want to have a dance and listen to y'know some DJ with a laptop programming songs in y'know so where do you go where do you go to do that and then, then it's down to a venue doing that and then that venue allowing you to do that so, in Aberdare you had the likes of the Railway Club, the Shot and Shell, Jacs now was a great place to go and play music and y'know further afield you had places like the Tabernacle up in Talgarth, that Alan Magee one which I was lucky enough to play more than anybody I think? Or more than anybody, um so, there's a lot of dependencies, there's a lot of dependencies, places to practice y'know it's all little things like that and if they aint there if they aint in place and of course, of course with your own little group things like family and kids and all that comes into play and but um yeah so I think there'll always be a little rumbling in the background of people making, of people making music but yeah you'll see kind of when it's when there's a big vibe about it going on y'know the peak you'll have a dip, peak you'll have a dip [AC: Yeah] it's just the way it is I think?

AC: What you, you're speaking about venues and places to rehearse and things what do you think makes it difficult for people to make music in Aberdare is that one of the factors do you think?

CP: Um, well you certainly need a place to rehearse and there's probably plenty of places out there but um yeah if you haven't got anywhere to play together then that will be difficult. I don't know what it's like up in Aberdare at the moment whether there is plenty of places. I'm down in Whitchurch now I could probably knock on the door of a couple of kind of working men's clubs and what have you and borrow their hall for a couple of hours on a Wednesday night y'know and there's places outside of town like Green Rooms and there's dedicated practice rooms y'know but um, yeah so I don't know I probably wouldn't use that as an excuse we certainly need it but there's plenty of places to go and look for them [Interruption] I was going to say that the live, places to play live that's a different kettle of fish because y'know there, there's gotta be an appetite for it, there's gotta be that and ultimately the venue wants to make money which is why they don't want to put live music on and do they take a chance on bands singing their own songs? To pull in a crowd? I dunno? Probably not.

AC: Things are quite tight at the moment as well

CP: Mmm absolutely yeah

AC: That probably exacerbates the situation

CP: Exactly it does

AC: Um so what do you think Aberdare has got to offer then? What's the pros rather than looking at what it's limits are...

CP: The people it's got the characters to do it. Um and it's got and I was one of these it's got a lot of people that dream like y'know and that's what you need, you need that, you need to have the vision you need to. I used to wake up every morning thinking it won't be long, it won't be long, I won't have to go to work for much longer, it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen, I used to say that every day, never did happen but I'm glad I did used to wake up thinking that [AC: That's lovely] rather than thinking it's never going to happen, it's never gonna happen and y'know I say that to my boys now y'know and what's the saying if you never dream how can you have a dream come true y'know you gotta think big like and Aberdare has got people like that they're willing to put their talent out on the line, they're willing for people to laugh at them on stage they don't care, y'know they'll give it a go and musicians do that. You are putting your reputation on the line when you go on stage every time you step on stage but you got a mind set and think actually I'm prepared to get up and have a go and y'know and that's a big thing.

AC: Are there any um, out, not outstanding but things that stand out to you moments in Aberdare music making that can be recently or a bit further back in time, is there anything...

CP: Oh yeah, many. There was one gig we had um we well there were two, two particular gigs with a band called Dayreeler. After Probe we had Dayreeler, me, Scott, Scott Howells, Meirion Townsend, Daniel Owens and John Amos [AC: Right] and that was our band Dayreeler and we basically, we practices in John Amos' front room up in Penywaun. So our following and we did have a following were basically a load of Penywauners and it was brill, brilliant [laughs] we used to turn up places where y'know there'd be, we played a gig in the Coliseum once and we were off our heads by the time we got there to sound check and um, we were, we were supposed to be, there were about eight bands, Battle of the bands, I think it was battle of the bands or a showcase I can't remember what it was now there were about eight bands there and we, there were only three changing rooms oh there were two changing rooms sorry and there were seven bands in one and us in the other [laughs] no one would share a changing room with us, it was wild and then we had, we had another gig then up in ah where was it Blackwood or somewhere? And it was another battle of the bands with two bands from Aberdare, there was us and I can't remember the name of the other band. Anyway we all went on a coach together so the two bands, hire a bus took loads of people, fifty, sixty people with us, and we had this, this, this battle of the bands up in Blackwood I think and apparently one of the judging panel was a Dad of one of the other band members and we lost and how we lost is unbelievable 'cause we were a really good band played all original music all my songs and anyway about 90% of the people there came to see us. Ah it kicked off [laughter] it was mad like and I can remember like there was loads of doormen and bouncers they scooped us all out the back and everyone was chanting 'we are the mods' and ah guitars got broke, next we were all around the back and I turned around and my Dad was next to me! [laughs] He was like Connor what the bloody hell's going on? [laughs] I said what are you doing here? He got scooped out as well like, so but yeah and then like I think going back on the bus then it was only us on the bus those, they found their own way home. But yeah there were moments like that and if you speak to someone like Meirion he'll say I wasn't particularly proud of that night because y'know it was more the people around us really but we set the scene like y'know but. We just had a good time I think, just a good time of it, nobody got hurt y'know a couple of reputations got damaged maybe [laughter] but nobody got hurt, yeah.

- AC: Oh that's funny. Do you think these battle of the bands things, have they seemed to have um dies a death, 'cause you don't see many anymore?
- CP: Nah they should, should never have happened in the first place [AC: No?] Nah I don't think so I mean it's such, such ah, how can you, who makes the decision right? Music is such um an eclectic, it's such a varied taste in music innit there's no right or wrong [AC: No] in, in football you have a cup competition and the best team, the team that wins all its games gets to the final simple as that. But in music this is like y'know there's, there's no answer to it there's no right or wrong, there's no right or wrong why should, why should one genre of music be favoured over the other or one band's songs be favoured over the other just 'cause one guy likes them more than he likes the other bands [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know it's. I get the concept to win prizes and it's done good things for some bands right it's done very good things when they win studio time so I'm not knocking that side of it, but the whole concept of battle of the bands really, I don't know it's for some people but not for me I would never [inaudible] in our time, in fact if it done anything it knocked our confidence [AC: I suppose yeah] that's all it did really was knock our confidence 'cause we saw, we aint as good as those, in our heads we were better than those but nobody else saw that, well that's not true, that's not true.
- AC: That's a good point yeah, 'cause it's often just seen as a positive isn't it
- CP: Yeah, yeah, yeah absolutely
- AC: Um, so how important is music making to you?
- CP: Very important [AC: Okay] it's um, if you're a creative person and I am then, err, ah, I could live, I could live without it but it's very important it's a big part of me now, writing songs and in the studio now recording my fourth album, in my own studio I'm doing it all myself this time but y'know it's um, I love it, I just love it and for me it enables my boys to see that you can create something of your own, be proud of it, they know all my songs, they were there when they were written so y'know they've grown up listening to my songs more than anybody else's and that's not from me forcing them they'll, I'll often find Jayden my oldest one of my CDs in his CD player listening to songs y'know I'm super proud of that [AC: That's lovely that it] yeah it is innit [laughs]. And in the creative processes in it it's not, for me it's not just about um, the songs itself I love, I love packaging them up as well so I love doing the artwork and if you look at my art work a lot of it will have my boys on it, in some way or another and it's all photographs taken by my friends or myself so all the artwork is all done quite organically as well and I love doing that side of it as well I love packaging it up 'cause then I listen to the record and look at the artwork and it all kind of ties in together. It becomes something becomes a visual rather than just something you hear as well y'know
- AC: Yeah, yeah, that's lovely that it so it's kinda like a whole experience really
- CP: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely from start to finish, I try and do it all myself
- AC: What do you do for a living then? Do you get paid for your music or do you do something else?
- CP: No, I got a full-time job I work for the council so um I've worked there for about twenty-three years really, it's the only job I've ever had. Um, I mean in the early days when I started work in the council I would spend half the day writing songs in the filing room [laughter] in fact people would find pieces of paper and come up and say

Connor um, is this, is this a new song? I'd say oh shit [inaudible] [laughing] finding lyrics written everywhere [laughter]

AC: Do you get paid for you music? Are you getting any sort of income from it?

CP: Yeah, you get PRS and stuff like that y'know I get songs played here there and everywhere and on radio stations and stuff so y'know you get your PRS cheques come in, not a great deal of money but, and also you get your Spotify returns again next to nothing really but um y'know live music yeah I get paid for doing what I do with the Oasis stuff but that's all a hobby like we were saying it brings in a bit of cash, it allows you to do the original stuff so y'know that bit of money I might make y'know in the next couple of months will go towards buying new mics and things, stuff for the studio to record a new album and y'know things like that really [AC: Yeah]

AC: So the original stuff seldom gets paid I'm guessing yeah?

CP: Yeah, well it depends y'know I'm in the position where I can pick and choose the gigs I do I'm an original artist they usually will be in venues like Acapella Studios or at the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle has gone now but y'know Acapella Studio in Cardiff, lovely venues which are nice to play acoustic music in I won't go out and do the pubs and clubs, I might do the, someone might ask me to do the odd Thursday night in some random pub which I might do if I fancy it but yeah, it's y'know like I say I, I tend to pick and choose and just do good venues really which kinda suits that scene y'know acoustic guitar, sit down glass of wine, job done

AC: Yeah, yeah, it's different atmos really isn't it

CP: Yeah

AC: Um, so how do you find the time to fit it all in?

CP: I don't know well there you go I write my songs in the night when I put the boys to bed and recording will literally be stolen hours here and there [inaudible] yeah like now I'll go home now chuck the dinner on and probably have a couple of hours in the studio and that couple of hours will be spent maybe just putting down a piano track y'know by the time you get there that's all you get out of it but it'll be worth it, um and then the gigs will come y'know on the, on the nights and the weekends then. Yeah so you make the time if you want to do it, you make the time I suppose there's a bal, there's a balance to it as well like y'know you got kids to sort out and the wife to keep happy but y'know.

AC: Yeah, yeah it's a busy time

CP: Yeah [laughs]

AC: And the final question is, is there anything else you'd like to add?

CP: No, not really no

AC: Okay

CP: Well, what is this all in aid of Anne did you say? I know you did tell me a couple of weeks ago didn't you

AC: Um, it's for my PhD it is

CP: Ah okay

AC: Um, I'm doing a study on popular music in Aberdare and Merthyr and I'm comparing the two 'cause they're seemingly similar, similar places y'know [inaudible] but the music-making that goes on in both of the towns is really different and I'm just trying to unpick the underpinning motivations and relationships involved y'know.

CP: Hmm, yeah

AC: 'Cause Merthyr is twice the size of Aberdare, it's got a lot of potential but it's just being shot down all the time it's not sustaining itself, whereas Aberdare is y'know you got Cwmfest going since 2008

CP: Yeah, see that getting shot down all the time will become an inspiration to many people to write music. Y'know and that's it's kind of um, that could be a driver behind an individual

AC: Hmm, possibly

CP: Y'know it's y'know we're not living in y'know Beverly Hills, we live in Aberdare and Merthyr y'know there's no palm trees, no sunshine every day, y'know a lot of rain, it's dreary it's difficult for people y'know financially not everybody is well off and y'know sometimes that is an inspiration for a lot of people to do something [inaudible] it was for me.

AC: Yeah, oh definitely

CP: It was for me and [inaudible] I think in terms of the two different places being different you might be right but in terms of their major outlook and where their inspiration comes from. I don't think they're too far apart. I lived in Aberdare and went to school in Merthyr, so um...

AC: What school did you go to?

CP: Bishop Hedley

AC: Ah right, Afon Taf I went to

CP: Ah did you? Did you? So y'know they got, I go and of course a lot of my friends are from Merthyr so it's yeah I get what you're saying but I think in terms of the inspiration and the type of people they're not a million miles apart [AC: No I...] talented y'know a hot bed of talent.

AC: I don't know I mean I think I got my own experiences of Merthyr growing up

CP: Yeah, yeah

AC: Growing up and that, I lived in London for years and then moved to Aberdare so. I just found it I don't know there seemed to be more going on in Aberdare which I was shocked at

CP: Yeah you're probably right. I think it's um, I think it's yeah, I think it's, I always used to think when I was in Merthyr oh I'd hate to live here, I'd hate to live here and y'know it is kind of, when you think of Aberdare and I'll tell you the best example of Aberdare

when you come over from the Maerdy right [inaudible] I went to school in Merthyr lived in Aberdare, worked in the Rhondda, so when you come, when you drive through the Rhondda valley you go up over the Maerdy mountain then you see Aberdare opens up and it's just a massive open valley, it's almost like the sun starts shining through really. I had a sense of [inaudible] I was coming home from Merthyr to Aberdare it did seem brighter, it did seem that your prospects were a little bit different y'know but um hmm, yeah you might be right.

AC: It's nuanced

CP: It's interesting

AC: Yeah, yeah it'll be subtle but there's loads of academic theories and stuff that I'm that I'm looking at as well which will bore the pants off you but y'know it's that, that initial difference y'know it seems to be more DIY more organic and less commodified in Aberdare maybe?

CP: Hmm, yeah maybe yeah?

AC: There's too much um funding and money put into big projects in Merthyr, but they never seem to come to anything y'know

CP: Yeah, yeah you could be right yeah, I get what you're saying yeah

AC: And it's not the people I think it's the relationships necessarily with um y'know funders and

CP: And politicians

AC: Yeah that kind of thing but we don't seem to have that problem as much in Aberdare then? [CP: Yeah] it's bigger there's more, Ponty is probably the main bit of RCT whereas Merthyr it's right in Merthyr isn't it, the council buildings and all that [CP: Yeah] everything y'know

CP: Yeah exactly ah interesting, interesting.

AC: My rambling thoughts on it [laughter] right I'm going to stop the recording there [CP: Yeah] I'll just stop that.

Interview with Dave Threadwell, 18-01-2020, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 1.08 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

DT – Dave Threadwell, Participant

AC: Hiya Dave, how're you doing?

DT: Not bad, yourself?

AC: I'm alright thanks, well, first question then [DT: Yes] is what music do you like?

DT: Um, err anything most stuff ah predominantly guitar based music, um anything with a good hook um, ah I just listen to anything I'm not closed minded ah yeah anything that takes my fancy, or wouldn't normally listen to classical music maybe that's the stuff I wouldn't listen to um, not in as classical guitar [inaudible] it's not that, I don't mind it, it just doesn't kind of, doesn't fire my imagination so...

AC: It doesn't get you excited?

DT: Nah it doesn't get my juices flowing so I kind of stay away from that but anything really.

AC: Okay [laughs and says bye to family] they know you're staying here yeah?

DT: Yeah they do [inaudible]

AC: Okay, so what music do you play?

DT: I play the guitar so I play guitar-based music ah. I used to play the cornett when I was growing up [AC: Oh right] so but that was err I no longer have a cornett so I don't do that.

AC: Would you go back at all?

DT: Um I wouldn't mind having a wee go to see if I could, I could suss it out again [AC: Yeah, yeah] I had more musical training than on the guitar so I would be interested to find out if I could actually [laughs] make anything of it yeah, so...

AC: Okay, um so tell me about your musical practices so, um, do you do any writing for instance?

DT: I do yeah for myself [AC: Yeah] um, so it's predominantly because um is that stuff will be in the house and I'll come up with snippets and I'll like a little bit and I'll join, add another little bit to that y'know lots of bits, I did um [laughs] the sub-conscious is a terrible thing I sat the other day and it was um a derivative of um y'know Blackbird the Beatles song [AC: Oh yeah] Blackbird on the chords [inaudible] potching with one of the top chord on the progression and I went ooh that sound nice and I added a bit to it and oh yee! Shocked myself come up with this thing y'know I'm the kiddie and then um I recorded it and then I sent it to Jim all chuffed with myself and as I, I'm sending it I'm thinking um it sounds a bit like Silent Lucidity by um Queensryche and then I [inaudible] and then um Googled, not Google I YouTubed it, I was crestfallen, it was silent lucidity exactly wasn't it, it was like y'know, it was very, very close to it I was like yeah...

AC: Subconscious plagiarism

DT: Yeah, yeah, well I'm gonna blame it on subconscious [inaudible] but no I just do stuff in the house

AC: So y'know what um, is it just free flow or do you have an idea, do you write anything down?

DT: No um what I tend to do these days I don't know if it's the same with yourself but memory is what lets me down, so I'll come up with something and then um the phone can ring or the door will be knocked and I'll go back to it and I'll have forgotten it, I

might be able to remember the chord patterns perhaps but I won't be [inaudible] so what I tend to do is to come up with something, these days, [inaudible] something I like try and get it on the phone 'cause these days the sound recording on a phone is pretty good [AC: Oh yeah, yeah] so um, so that's what I do, I got loads of different snippets and ah, and that's what I tend to do. Nothing I do is actually ever good enough to take public

AC: Oh no way? Really?

DT: Well, perhaps I'm just being over judgemental I'd like to, I mean Thursday night music club is pretty good 'cause ah anything goes with that.

AC: Where's that?

DT: Well it used to be [inaudible] Charlie and every now and again Jim[inaudible] Courtenay and just some of the local lads

AC: Oh, is it in Charlie, upstairs in

DT: In Spectol yeah

AC: Yes,

DT: [Inaudible]

AC: Yes, yeah

DT: Have you heard any of the output on that?

AC: No I haven't?

DT: It's insane, insane. But that's the good thing about it, it gives no kind of um, it's just a case of like right, right you have an idea and basically it could be anything and somebody'll add something nonsense to it and then someone else will add nonsense to it and eventually you come out with [inaudible] crazy thing. And um it's quite [inaudible] but um, liberating y'know it's quite good. So I'd like to [inaudible] to that forum so folk can just get, get their teeth into it [AC: Yeah] see who comes in?

AC: From what Charlie was saying it was quite, well it was very free-form there was no structure as such

DT: No [inaudible] you'd turn up and if somebody had just like ah a few chords or just had something, something, what about this then all of a sudden y'know there's Harvey'll do his bit and Charlie will do his thing it was very organic, it was cracking [inaudible] a place for talking shit as well so...

AC: So it was a kind of social gathering as well as [DT: Yeah] musical yeah? [DT: It was really good] Was there any memorable moments of Thursday night club you can think of?

DT: Oh yeah um so [inaudible] I'm trying to think so, ah, ah, a couple of I, um, of college friends I um, going through there was only [inaudible] um a bit sketchy y'know we were one of the ones who would kinda ah a bit lazy and [inaudible] and all that kind of stuff [laughter] I remember um, so one, one of the lads I bothered with in college was getting married [inaudible] so what I did was um, I booked it well in advance but

my passport expired in the in-between times, so I booked it, booked the flights and all the rest of it and then my passport expired right so this [inaudible] for me, the one that sticks in my mind 'cause there was so much lead up to it so what I had managed to do, I had lined all this up months and months in advance ah I booked a car hire in Italy, booked the hotels on the other side of the flights and I'd managed to, with work I'd managed to try and save some money on the car park but um agreeing with one of my customers that I could leave my car in car park for the duration [inaudible] all up I'd managed to get accommodation down in Bournemouth where we were flying from. Got down there and I think at the time, my ex missus Cerys I don't know, do you remember Cerys? So um, my ex missus she put her, her bag on the carousel and she checked in to our flight and um, she was looking all fine and then I handed my passport over and the geezer goes I'm sorry, I'm sorry sir but I think you need your passport adjusting its expired or it was going to expire when I was out there and um of course then this trip went all to hell in a hand basket so I um. So what happened was that ah um, ah we then drove all the way back up to Aberdare still trying to investigate going to Newport and getting the passport [inaudible] I didn't go to see my mates wedding so we ended up [inaudible] so what happened was I went back to Aberdare because um me and Cerys had a big sort of row with all the pressure [AC: Oh yeah] so she goes up to, she goes home and I, to let off steam I go down to Thursday night music club [inaudible] I think earlier that week I had gone down to the house and because back in the day it was in Harvey's, I'd gone down there, I laid a couple of riffs down I liked and just learned a couple of riffs then and um Harvey kinda knocked the structure to it, 'cause I just had a couple of, couple of little mix and Arv said we'll do that for so many times we put a structure on it. So that was already, that was on the boil and when they were down there that night I didn't realise they were working on it and then that turned into the um the passport saga [laughs] that was and that was, I then left and all my lyrics pertaining to the [AC: Passport] 'cause I must have just bowled in looked like hell y'know [inaudible] and um so they, so they kinda had this big um kind of comedy structure on it and it all went really well so [inaudible]

AC: And it helped you mentally to get over this...

DT: What I did I actually sent it to the lad I um the lad I'd missed his wedding so I sent him a copy of the song [AC: Brilliant] so ah, so that's one [inaudible] the Thursday night music club Jesus Christ

AC: [inaudible] saving, saving the day really?

DT: Well, I'm not really, I'm not really sure [inaudible] to grasp it he was too annoyed yeah [inaudible] [laughs] I still say ah so yeah, it's good though. So that was Thursday night, that was the Thursday night club. I can't remember what sparked where were we what was the question you'd asked?

AC: I was asking you about your musical practices.

DT: Oh right yeah

AC: Right, um rehearsing and that [DT: Oh right yeah, yeah, yeah] tell me what bands you are in?

DT: Oh, right oh, High Voltage is the only band I'm in currently ah and [inaudible] because it's easy and we've been doing it in excess of ten years we don't practice

AC: Oh right, not at all?

DT: No not at all. Because I think it's because there's several reasons because Dai's voice suits the Bon Scott era, register of DC because Brian Johnston's register is higher [inaudible] while Dai's voice suits um Bon's style so um, um so we tend to do um all the Bon Scott stuff and that's the era I like and the rest of the boys like as well um and we're been doing that for um [inaudible] of course because Bon died so you've only got a finite amount of songs to choose from [AC: Nothing new to learn] no, so we'd just sit with that and um, and I kind of play that, the thing is we don't really need to practice. If we're gonna, if we've got a gig what we tend to do um is that um, ah, the DC stuff is all in, we just seem to just turn up the studio and just [inaudible] to each other and play so it's not all in concert pitch, so when I was initially learning it was a nightmare because instead of them having to, so you learn one song against the record and of course the next song's in a different pitch, so you have to detune or tune up or whatever, so what I did was um, [inaudible] from CD bunched it onto tape, I've got a tape machine where you can alter the [inaudible] so it speeds up and slows down [inaudible] so what I did then was I changed the tape to the guitar and then put it onto mini disc 'cause I got a mini disc of in-key AC/DC stuff and then before a gig then, especially if we haven't played for a long time is what I'll do I'll run, I'll pop it on and then I'll run through that in the house just so I can remember that the solo's in [inaudible] the intros and then you're also trying to remember the with the DC stuff is there are, linked y'know as you're well aware the specific stuff that folk will recognise then, gotta get that bit right, yeah some things you can noodle but certain bits you need to get on 'cause they, that's the...

AC: There's distinct moments

DT: Yeah little riffs so you [inaudible] so just to refresh my memory 'cause I don't know what it's like with you Anne but because I've been doing it for so long, the same stuff so long it's like telling your favourite joke um, so you tell your favourite joke and you know it inside out and then one day is you go to tell somebody the joke and something will spook you and you'll just forget a chunk of the joke. I don't know if that's ever happened to you like?

AC: Yeah

DT: And I find that's the same with um, I find that's the same with the DC stuff and that's why I, that's personally why I have to come and knock through the day before um a gig in the house. Which can get, can get a little bit boring 'cause it's, it's the same stuff [inaudible] I find the bits that I, I just end up noodling over bits that I wouldn't normally noodle [inaudible] it's a step up so that's we don't we never practice as a band we just turn up and do the gig.

AC: Are others the same as well do their little bits make sure they're okay

DT: Um, I've never really, I've never really asked the boys but um, I've never really asked the rest of them what they actually do is that um I think Paul is an encyclopaedia, encyclopaedia he's got like um well he's got um almost a [inaudible] hasn't he in terms of um, I think he's got perfect pitch, lucky bastard! I think so?

AC: It can be a hindrance as well though

DT: Have you got perfect pitch?

AC: No

DT: Oh haven't you

AC: I'm glad

DT: Oh really is it that a hindrance?

AC: I had a friend who has perfect pitch and if the recording was too slow or too fast it would mess with her head

DT: Oh you're joking?

AC: It's never bothered me

DT: No, no, no wouldn't bother me either

AC: I think good relative pitch is

DT: Ah okay, maybe, maybe that's what he's got 'cause I don't know anyone, regardless the boy just [inaudible] sorry if he's heard it once he's just able to recant it so um

AC: That's great yeah

DT: So, so I don't think Paul does, he just knows um. Dai, Dai just sings in, the DC in High Voltage and he tries to turn up with a sheet with the first couple of lines and he's away then and um then I think Dylan listens to it in the car or whatever. I don't know how he would practice along he's the drummer in the car but he just listens in the car. Then Wayne, Wayne again like an encyclopaedia um structured player um great knowledge, he's a better guitar player than I am although I've never told him, I'll never tell him person [laughs] definitely more structured.

AC: Wayne Bending is it?

DT: No Wayne Barlow

AC: Oh Barlow sorry

DT: Wayne Bending's ah a bass player in Skacasm

AC: Oh sorry I was getting names mixed up

DT: Yeah, [AC: Barlow] yeah 'cause he plays in the Spirit of Boogie as well and Trevor and the Sprouts as well. So he's got loads of projects on, he's um he's ah, he's [inaudible] in valleys bands at the moment is Mr. Mr. Barlow, so we don't tend to, that, that would be my [inaudible] in terms of the live music

AC: So, any recordings apart from your own recordings at home?

DT: Okay

AC: Have you done any recordings recently or are you likely to be doing any?

DT: No, I wouldn't mind, I have said to the boys recently for the DC things there's loads of kind of some shonky footage in um in crowds, taken on um [inaudible] I see loads of that everybody seems to be filming but I've never seen ah been able to locate it, don't know what's going on? Um, but um, I've said maybe we should do a showreel

or whatever because it didn't, what's happening with us at the moment is um because, because some of the boys are in other bands um and they're getting ah more coin, they're getting um, better pay days ah from it um, 'cause initially when we started you'll remember um quite popular in all honesty [inaudible] had quite a lot of, quite a lot of um bookings 'cause it was slightly different from anything that had been and of course because we're playing the same sets in the same pubs [inaudible] seeing us in the last twelve months you've pretty much seen us maybe even longer y'know if you've seen us the last I don't know five years y'know that you've seen our act [inaudible] very similar um maybe even the set list is the same chronological order so um, a few things, um, um, um, are kind of dwindling [inaudible] part of the landscape of the err um pubs [inaudible] locality. Since the smoking ban reducing this as well and I don't know if you've seen this as well, the smoking ban has affected pubs' trade regardless of live music but of course then there's less ah heads in the pub anyway there's some people [inaudible] have used bands to try and get more heads in but people have just decided to stop doing bands, 'cause [inaudible] so um, so it's a double edged sword in that respect there is um [inaudible] to promote because um people in the locality [inaudible] need to now go further afield kinda a saturation point and of course then it means the bookings kind of start to [inaudible] some musicians forums on um Facebook to be able to look at and then there's the other thing is that we're all lazy which means um, do we really want to travel to a gig y'know it's 'cause we got a foot in either camp we're not a covers band and we're not a tribute band because we don't do the full DC act we do AC/DC covers so y'know we can't really, I feel, we could get bigger bucks if we [inaudible] the trouble is both Wayne and I share the lead lines so one of us would have to dress up as Angus for half the set and then the other, so um, so we don't do the dressing up we don't do the daft ah kinda running around the stage we just play the songs so we're a covers band but only a DC covers band.

AC: I was gonna ask you 'cause the climate now is tribute bands are raging y'know and with you guys it's kinda like you're straddling [inaudible]

DT: I think that um, I think um at the moment and I don't know why this is, if it's a conscious decision [inaudible] I think we try to do the um actual tribute to [inaudible] y'know we're kinda judged by the parameters, how you do the [inaudible] at the moment we're concentrating, I say concentrate just kind of ah, we just kind of [inaudible] in that respect um I think that over the years [inaudible] slightly different, alluding to more of a show and one of the ideas that um I was discussing with somebody recently um and it was his idea rather than mine [inaudible] was maybe have a projector with like DC images behind it all that kind of stuff just to make of an...

AC: An experience?

DT: Yeah [inaudible] even if we're not doing the [inaudible] like dickheads then there's something in the background and [inaudible] is quite regular um over the years [inaudible] where someone would kind of, if we do ah, if we do the gig and it's not necessarily [inaudible] it's like [inaudible] whatever and somebody says this is an AC/DC tribute act they're expecting you in shorts and all that kind of stuff. Um, um, so y'know so [inaudible] material rather than [inaudible]

AC: But it's not [inaudible] to that is it, like you were saying earlier [inaudible] together [inaudible] distinctive [inaudible] the die hards like

DT: Yeah, yeah [inaudible] if we did the full act then I think we'd treble our fee y'know so there would be a pay-off yeah, um 'cause the demand is there for it. I've seen like

bands like Hell's Bell's up in Cwmaman Institute and they were bloody excellent, really, really good um they had the whole, I think they even had a great canon and [inaudible] but then they did um, the Brian Johnston stuff as well, so ah um, they were very good

AC: So what collaborations just generally speaking and when I say collaborations it could be bands you've been in or the Thursday Night Club and things like that. What collaborations have you been involved in and how did they come about?

DT: Um, oh god alive collaborations, as far back as I can remember...

AC: Think of the one's I dunno that made you laugh the most

DT: Okay

AC: The one's that stick out the most for you for various reasons it could be something terrible happened or something brilliant.

DT: Over the years we've had a few kind of um milestone ones [inaudible] I was in a band with Charlie and Gerry and Paul and Mr. Famous Pants himself as well [Kelly Jones] so that's fairly a milestone um, [inaudible] everyone [inaudible] at the start of playing, I started um, in bands with um [inaudible] Charlie and Paul and Gerry were, ah, were ah mates we always knocked around and they were the kind of, they [inaudible] so Charlie and Paul [inaudible] all in music [inaudible] the same as I do now, they were kind of more [inaudible] fervent about it [inaudible] I think I used to go and watch them practice and then I was learning [inaudible] guitar at the time and I think [inaudible] Charlie needed two guitar parts for it and Charlie was on the keyboard and didn't want to [inaudible] so Charlie was [inaudible] the guitar part or he wanted to do [inaudible] Dai's learning um, and then so I just kind of stumbled [inaudible] a Les Paul it was like a Les Paul, Les Paul copy and the rustiest strings in Europe [inaudible] bits of skin and [laughter] [inaudible] so he lent me that and I kind of started and um, [inaudible] and then I think I was the first one to learn to drive so [inaudible] carting the gear [inaudible] that was good um I've got some cracking footage of us all as kids, we were up in the Canolfan I don't know if the boys have spoken about this [inaudible] Canolfan and um so ah Cable used to be in a band I think initially called Passiondale and then it went into King Katwalk, with k's and um so the Canolfan up in um Cwmaman, do you know where that is [AC: Yeah, yeah] so we all used to practice up there and um so all the bands would leave gear [inaudible] somebody, I can't remember who it was, I think it was Gerry's brother-in-law at the time had um like one of the early camcorders so and then so we got hold of this camcorder, 'cause all the band's equipment was up in the Canolfan for some reason they decided to have some [inaudible] flight cases and [inaudible] [AC: Quite crammed?] yeah so [inaudible] I had to interview [inaudible] I cringe watching that video [AC: I'd like to see that] oh my god I don't ever want to see it again but I think it's only me and Gerry [inaudible] but yeah [inaudible] it's cringe worthy but one of the moments on there is ground breaking is that um Cable's band [inaudible] and then we're were up there as kind of Silent Runner so we were up there and [inaudible] we were all messing around and then um Cable come in half way through to get some stuff [inaudible] at the time doing some carpentry wherever [inaudible] the day he drilled through his finger [inaudible] so we got some footage of that, um so that's my memories of Silent Runner [inaudible] never had the balls to play live, if the rest of them hadn't kind of dragged me kicking and screaming into it and also for quite a few gigs, there was one particular song where 'cause I don't have, I don't know about yourself but there's certain songs [inaudible] Eric Clapton's Wonderful Tonight right, I know, I know right [inaudible]

AC: Slip into a coma

DT: Yeah you're right, what I used to do was just turn down, turn down, I would not play on that song I'd just turn down and I would [inaudible] I'd be doing the chords [inaudible] it would just come across as bored [inaudible] ah this is rubbish and um so, so, for a while [inaudible] and that kind of um [inaudible] in terms of our involvement, there's stories within stories there [inaudible] [AC: Over equipment?] yeah [inaudible] so in this meeting what happened was um [inaudible] so we carried on [inaudible] gig up in the Boncy [inaudible] I was going away to uni and um Paul was going away to uni, Charlie was going to go to college and I think um Kelly, Kelly was a year younger than us [inaudible] he was going to go to college as well um later on sort of thing and [inaudible] my old man came and saw us on um [inaudible] on our last gig, he did actually say to me if you don't want to go I'll understand if you wanna stay and do this sort of stuff and I remember thinking nah don't be daft dad, this is just, this is just [inaudible] never really [AC: You were doing it for other reasons] no I was just doing it for fun it um, I had no um designs or desires to kind of [inaudible] it was just a bit of fun y'know and um [inaudible] bizarre that he said that to me um I don't know if it was a bit of reverse psychology or not I don't know I've never asked him that, I should do. So um, so I went away, Paul went away, Gerry went to Bath, ah Charlie and Kelly stayed in the valley and gigs would come in and we'd still go and do it, then every now and then Paul couldn't make it so [inaudible] Mark Everetts would cover Paul [inaudible] using other musicians to kind of cover um if one of us couldn't make it [inaudible] come back from Birmingham [inaudible] skint as fuck [inaudible] the band eventually split [inaudible] no more gigs and then maybe a year later and we got to hear [inaudible] being split and Charlie had a couple of mics out of there Charlie was still doing [inaudible] music in the valleys and I think during the [inaudible] the money used to go towards the PA and [inaudible] and I think [inaudible] Gerry used to get money for cymbals and whatever [inaudible] instead of having a five way split Gerry would get some of his money to get gear and then the rest goes towards the PA [AC: Yeah, yeah] we did have money [inaudible] and what happened then, and also we had a [inaudible] band, we had a grant from The Prince's Trust [inaudible] did anyone say about that? [AC: no?] oh alright, there's another story in that as well, so um, I think Kelly applied for The Prince's Trust grant and ah then we got 500 quid which is good, so that went towards the PA we bought a PA with the gig money and The Prince's Trust Money and um as a result of that is we were playing Treorchy Boy's Club I think [inaudible] was it Treorchy? Tylorstown, Tylorstown, Tylorstown sorry not Treorchy, Tylorstown Boy's club was like next to the Spar [inaudible] so anyway [inaudible] had money from The Prince's Trust ah as well and then what happened was that Prince Charles was coming to the valley to see where the money had gone, and we were set up as a band ready to play for him [inaudible] all the amps were on but apparently the [inaudible] wasn't enough because it was picking up the security geezers mic's [AC: No way] [inaudible] so we had to we couldn't play live for him we had to knock all the amps off and we were going to strike up as he came in [inaudible] had to knock them off because the [inaudible] it was picking up the security [inaudible] The reason I fell out with Kelly ah was because [inaudible] I was skint [inaudible] and I heard the boys were getting their share from splitting the band and I went and said well where our share and effectively um, Oscar, Kelly's dad then he got involved and he was basically keen on making sure [inaudible] couldn't get sold and continue on [inaudible] Oscar um he put money in as well 'cause I remember him saying I bought the PA! Maybe Oscar did put money of his own in I don't know, that's what I fell out with him for anyway um, and probably because of if I'm honest with you um over the years it's taken a while to come to grips with it is that um I held on to that for far too long [AC: Really?] yeah, yeah I was probably, I held on to that for far too long in terms of y'know um,

[inaudible] and as a result I felt I um, I couldn't allow myself to enjoy in the whole success as in y'know [inaudible]

AC: Did that affect your own music-making? How you approached playing and

DT: No didn't have any affect, none at all no it didn't um, o don't um, I'm not as good as the rest of [inaudible] I would probably class myself as a hobby player rather than a musician, but those boys I bothered with are musicians y'know, yourself, you're a musician [inaudible] I'm just a hobby player, I know a few chords and I [inaudible] show off

AC: There's different definitions of musicians I suppose isn't there...

DT: So no it never had any bearing on [inaudible] what I did um [inaudible]

AC: It might put some people off or make them [inaudible]

DT: I never thought well he can do it and I can too [inaudible] I always actually thought that I'd like um [inaudible] genre [inaudible] fame and fortune as a result of that but as you get older you realise I'd rather just have the fortune please, I don't want folk raking through your bins [inaudible] I don't want any of that kinda stuff um I'm quite happy to walk [inaudible] the thought of having the um y'know the scrutiny it would drive me crazy [inaudible] a little bit of notoriety within your peers I think, the rest of it, it can go whistle.

AC: So, well you've kinda answered this really, are there any responsibilities or roles adopted like in the band, one person books the gigs, another organises [inaudible] I mean [inaudible]

DT: Um, no I think that um it tends to all fall [inaudible] the gigs come from all of us, maybe um, probably more, 'cause he's the front man well I perceive him to be the front man, I'm happy for him to be the front man, I'm just in a band playing guitar it's fine [inaudible] I think because of that maybe the landlords approach him or generally what happens if we're playing somewhere regular and a landlord from another pub [inaudible] he'll come up to Dai [Barrow] [inaudible] here's the number and all the rest of it so, so sometimes I just give Dai's number but then [inaudible] come to me 'cause maybe they know me [inaudible] they can talk to me so um [inaudible] responsibility [AC: an active role not by anyone really...] I did initially because um [inaudible] so there was me, Nathan Sherwood and Tim Jones [inaudible] I knew about Dai Barrow 'cause Dai Barrow used to be in a band called Burger Van which [inaudible] but also Arv and the Creek asked me to step in and play guitar for Dai's I think it was 40th at the time? [inaudible] Dai likes things like Judas Priest, what did we do? I think there was a Rainbow thing, ah Rainbow whatever it is and um there was a DC number [inaudible] a whole lotta Rosie, I remember Arv playing a million miles an hour and I was like shit! [inaudible] that's how I knew Dai's voice was suited to the Bon Scott stuff [inaudible] that was for his 40th [inaudible] the mighty creek so um [inaudible] and that was fun and ah Dai, Dai Barrow sang [inaudible] up the White Lion with the boys and they went yeah fine great so ah, 'cause I'd been in, I was in a band with um, Nathan, Lizard with ah Gary Ryland [AC: I know Gary, yeah, yeah] yeah, yeah.

AC: What happened with that why did that...

DT: So, oddly enough Lizard split in here [Wetherspoons Aberdare] Lizard split up on, up on that table up there and what happened there was in the end it fell down to, we had a little bit of interest 'cause whether, um like him or loath him Mr Ryland [inaudible] I

got no axe to grind with him I know he's [inaudible] locally but that's life isn't it, so um ah what happened was we were doing well and building up a head of steam and only a very small head of steam [inaudible] um nothing major and um all of a sudden then it happened about writing royalties we had to copyright the material. Um and as far as I was concerned is that so in Lizard somebody had brought this structure to this song [inaudible] somebody [inaudible] I brought something, somebody else brought something and we all worked on it and it came out in an end product and um my opinion was that we should have some solidarity, that's it all in and this is the phrase I think I used up there um, all in bottle of gin, all out bottle of stout! I think it was a cheesy phrase but basically it was along the lines of um, we've all worked on it [inaudible] split 5 ways the writing royalties but then somebody would say ah but yeah, no, I did that one it's mine.

AC: Who was saying that more? Who was causing the problems more? [DT: Um...] or were you all....

DT: It was less that and more the lack of, the drummer basically went nah I didn't write any of that, no sorry, he didn't say that he didn't feel that he had a right to any of the writing credits on the songs 'cause we'd arrived [inaudible] but no you did the drum parts! [inaudible] 'cause that was my argument that [inaudible] none of this pre-Madonna as in well I brought this to the party y'know 'cause even though you've brought this to the party, that solo's mine, do I now join in and say I wrote the solo?

AC: It gets messy then doesn't it

DT: Yeah, yeah, y'know you've brought the [inaudible] and I've added embellishment here [inaudible] over the top of that so there's that [inaudible] 'cause I argue that's mine, to be fair um and um at the time is that I was sitting pretty 'cause I could have had writing credits on all of it [AC: Yeah, yeah] or the lion's share of it, my name [inaudible] but that [inaudible] that's you and !! The bit I was aggrieved at [inaudible] also the drummer was happy with it as well? He was okay like no, no [inaudible] we wrote this so I always felt that the danger with it was it had been too easily divisible um which it was um [inaudible] all I can say was if we'd had serious interest [inaudible] saying to one member of the band we like you but the rest are shit and they're gone then.

AC: Did you feel you were tight then?

DT: I always thought [inaudible] that's what it highlighted to me was as in well [inaudible] it's either we're all in or I'm out and we split [inaudible]

AC: That's a shame really 'cause the vibe I'm getting from a lot of people in interviews is that tight knit sort of y'know you're part of a gang aren't you.

DT: Yeah, yeah and that's part of the appeal for me [AC: Yeah, yeah] yeah definitely [inaudible] y'know I don't think I play music with anyone I don't like y'know which is pretty lucky really yeah um.

AC: Is that through choice or did it just turn out that way?

DT: I think it was a mixture of both um, [inaudible] who you hang about with. If I get right on your tits even though we play together the chances are we're not going to socialise do y'know what I mean it's just one of those things, naturally gravitate to [inaudible] you wanna spend time with. I'm wondering whether it's [inaudible] I mean [inaudible] music communication forms and things like that [inaudible] somebody's

saying perhaps you won't want to hang around with them. I don't know if that [inaudible] over analytical [inaudible]

AC: [inaudible] gravitate towards like-minded people

DT: Yeah, yeah and [inaudible] extremely talented [inaudible] my favourite Lizard story is [inaudible] talking about that individual [inaudible] so we had a gig down in um Ponty and I think it was quite close to the university so we're all set-up and we're kicking off, a good mixture of covers and um originals [AC: Yeah, yeah] you know what it's like you got to kind of pepper y'know if you go down to a new [inaudible] the material is fantastic which ours wasn't but it was okay so u you pepper it with covers don't you [AC: Yeah, yeah] [inaudible] so um, we'd struck up we'd done a couple, we're getting into things are getting hot and sweaty then um I think it was Won't get fooled again by The Who, for fuck's sake [inaudible] so we're playing and [inaudible] and then um the guy starts fucking about with the um mic and he's giving it stacks [inaudible] he starts swinging the mic! Of course then the mic [inaudible] SM58, so the SM58 comes [inaudible] starts swinging it and it comes off the end of the um [inaudible] into the crowd right, hit this geezer [inaudible] Gary's there scrambling about to get the mic [inaudible] the band we were trying to play but how the hell we managed to pull it together [inaudible] showing off and [inaudible] oh tremendous [inaudible] that's my favourite Lizard story [laughter] Christ.

AC: Um, where are we at? Um what resources do you use in the area as in um [inaudible] places, people anything like that?

DT: Okay

AC: For your music-making at the moment

DT: Um, because um [inaudible] although there is a fella called Stephen, Stephen Shed as he's affectionately known as [inaudible] Stephen Bryant, he's a lovely fella [inaudible] his music knowledge is encyclopaedic. He got um a converted um [AC: How would you describe it?] it's a converted trailer it is, it's a [inaudible] shipping container and it's been converted then so [inaudible] so we only use that, he's very good he doesn't charge anyway as far as I know?

AC: He still doesn't charge?

DT: No he doesn't charge anyone. So what he does he tends to have um drinking buddies um sat in it's like an L shape [inaudible] the length of the container and he's added ah cobbled on a square bit he's added and him and his buddies sit in the bottom and they get to hear all the local talent they get to hear the good and the bands ones so they sit and get um, tanked up yeah, yeah [inaudible] and they just enjoy the shows, so they get to hear, get to see all the new stuff that's coming through, so I just think it's entertainment for him and his mates [inaudible] for instance when um [inaudible] been able to make any gigs and Boggis used to [inaudible] the drums for us, is that Boggis wants to go through the material 'cause he's not familiar with it um [inaudible] up to the Shed and we'll have a knock through in the Shed so [inaudible]

AC: Do you just ring Stephen up or message him?

DT: Yeah, yeah I text him directly, Hi Stephen y'know it's actually a nightmare 'cause one of the boys, Paul doesn't have a modern phone with WhatsApp on so it means a fuck

load of texts, ah c'mon Paul, get a bloody smart phone! Um so it's a shed load of texts and eventually [inaudible] and eventually you'll get up there and [inaudible]

AC: Is it very infrequently you use that then?

DT: It's as I say, if it's the normal lie up we don't practice, but if it's, if it's um a change like I said that's the only time we need to practice [inaudible] Dylan isn't always able to make a gig um [inaudible] Boggis will stand in, Boggis wants a run through 'cause it's not his thing [inaudible]

AC: How often do you say you play live in Aberdare?

DT: Oh right, at one stage it was maybe [inaudible] but now maybe two or three times a year maybe four times a year something like that.

AC: Is that to avoid saturation or are there other reasons for that?

DT: We would play [inaudible] um weekly um it's a case [inaudible] avoided the saturation but the saturation is catching up with us as in y'know [inaudible] um this year I know we got two in the diary at the moment, one in March [inaudible] in The Bush 'cause he'll have his [inaudible] so he's in The Bush and then we've got the um we've got one in July 18th for the um Motorcycle Club [inaudible]

AC: Where's that then?

DT: They have a [inaudible] up in Rhigos so it's Aberdare Motorcycle Club [inaudible] it's called the Sheep Army Rally and then um they have like a big Marquee and [inaudible]

AC: And you've already done that before?

DT: Yeah we've done it a couple of times, it's good fun yeah.

AC: So you've already established sort of networks

DT: Yeah, yeah

AC: With the people there...

DT: Saying that they came to me as in [inaudible] an established network yeah possibly [inaudible] they seem to come out of the blue, oh my old girl's ringing do you mind...

AC: Yeah, yeah.

DT: I tell you what I just won't answer it, there we are.

AC: Are you sure?

DT: [inaudible] I'll call her back

AC: Um where do you tend to play when you do play in Aberdare?

DT: Ah Jacs, the White Lion, um The Bush, um yeah, those three really, those three places. It used to be um what the hell's its name? The Rock, early days but um I think she's having less and less live bands. Maybe it was her husband Peter was it?

It used to be what the hell's her name now? Anyway [inaudible] I can't remember her name [inaudible] I think he kind of liked our style of music more than, it wasn't her bag. So whether she's still having bands, she still does have events down there [inaudible] no, less and less. So we used to get a regular slot in The Rock but Pete passed away so and we used to get [inaudible] we'd be down Mount more often and that was maybe because our drummer was from Mount, so we'd be in the Butch and be in the Pleas when [inaudible] had it [inaudible] yeah Jeremy [inaudible] The White Lion and The Bush we'd be regulars, we'd be there all the time and then Jacs now and again [inaudible] it's a bit limited really when I think about it, there's not many, I guess there's [inaudible] puts bands on now and again.

AC: Why do you think then 'cause it's, when I moved here sort of 2002 or whatever it was, everywhere seemed to put live music on, it doesn't seem to be the same anymore I don't know?

DT: No I know and I think it's to do with the smoking ban [inaudible] as in frequenting pubs as a thing I think that's um had an impact [inaudible] to the [inaudible] trade do they call it? [inaudible] I think?

AC: Do you get paid for gigs?

DT: Yes, unless we do a charity, we agree to do a charity and so yeah only about 250 [pounds]

AC: And you split that between you?

DT: Yeah, fifty quid [inaudible] I think great y'know. fifty quid to turn up and show off [inaudible] [laughter] [inaudible]

AC: And how important is music-making to you?

DT: I love it, I love it, it's um, the way that I would put it was that growing up, um, so I was ginger, Scottish right [inaudible] hated it as a youngster, hated being ginger and I hated the fact I had a weird accent [inaudible] it was my differences [AC: Your defining features] I feel very similar [inaudible] I never hated music [inaudible] with music is a special thing that I do, special kind of, not club as such [inaudible] things, something that's for me [inaudible] the other thing is like I said [inaudible] that's enough [inaudible] it's my kind of thing [inaudible] when you're playing [inaudible] you're not thinking about the bills and thinking about y'know what's going on at work you're just thinking how it feels in the next passage really, whether you nailed that bit or [inaudible] so I, it's escapism yeah, yeah.

AC: What motivates you to continue making music? You've kind of answered [inaudible]

DT: I just love it, I just love it yeah.

AC: So you wouldn't stop doing it?

DT: Fuck no [inaudible]

AC: How do you find the time to make music? What do you do in your day-to-day activities y'know?

DT: When the kids were young, because they were so young it um, I was lucky enough to have in the house I was living in, a basement [inaudible] and I had my [inaudible] and

my stereo set-up down there. When they were young and it was the right time [inaudible] down there, yeah [inaudible] but it was there if a managed to [inaudible] to do it. Whereas now um I [inaudible] I've got an electric on the stand in the house and I've got just purely because ah I'm lazy and can't be arsed to carry it upstairs I've got my amps in the living room as well. I've currently got three Marshalls in the living room [laughter] [inaudible] the kids are always bitching about it, Dad! Shift this! [inaudible] so we'll do work, I work from home as a sales rep so if I'm not on the road and in the house, or whenever I'm in the house, relaxing or whatever, I'll go and put the kettle on and I'll pass the kettle and pick the guitar up, next thing I know it's quarter of an hour later [inaudible] I didn't really have time to do that. So um, [inaudible] I did actually ah a relationship of mine ended as a result of doing that [AC: Really?] I dunno, you could always edit this off couldn't you?

AC: I won't mention names [inaudible]

DT: It's okay I'll leave you decide whether or not [inaudible] I'm gonna say it so um if you use it you go ahead. But um we'd just finished having sex, um and um, so we'd um....arrived to say right, is that um, okay like most gentlemen [inaudible] I shouldn't class myself a gentleman [inaudible] after sex I need a wee right, so what it was I got up and went downstairs for a wee and the lady I was seeing at the time was French Canadian and she loved coffee and [inaudible] she was really into her coffee, so I went downstairs for a wee and to make her a coffee and I went for a wee and then put the kettle on, make her a nice cup of coffee I thought it was a nice gesture and as I put the kettle on I did exactly what I just said a couple of minutes ago which was I pick the guitar up [inaudible] she's upstairs [inaudible] basically then you [inaudible] bugger, we've just finished [inaudible] and he's fucked off downstairs and playing his bastard guitar, so she comes downstairs rah, rah, rah and I'm like this, whoa! I'm actually making you a cup of coffee [inaudible] and I just picked it up y'know I just passed it [inaudible] so it's not like she was unmusical

AC: She should have picked one up and had a go [inaudible]

DT: I'll tell you what this aint for me [laughter] thanks very much, that was the start of the ball that went nah you're alright thanks [inaudible] she was a nice, a nice lady so, apart from that but um...

AC: Your music got in the way?

DT: Yeah kind, yeah kinda, but yeah I mean it's not as if um, I don't really, in this circumstance I hadn't actually [inaudible] go and put the kettle on you're fifteen minutes gone, I hadn't done that I'd just put the kettle on, just waiting for it I hadn't even [inaudible]

AC: There's some people who love it like that [inaudible] and it doesn't matter [inaudible]

DT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I dunno [inaudible] I think her point was we'd just finished [inaudible] being intimate upstairs y'know and playing guitar instead, left her upstairs kinda just lying there going what's he doing? So I don't know yeah [inaudible] is that the door? Is that the door? Do you know how to use it? [inaudible and laughter]

AC: Um, so what factors do you think in Aberdare generally make it difficult for people to make music of all ages? What do you think limits or strains the music-making, the means to do it?

- DT: [inaudible] the means [inaudible] what was your first guitar like?
- AC: Oh my gosh, it was a Marlin Slammer, I loved it, it had a neck that thick [indicating very thick] it was awesome.
- DT: Yeah, I think the first ever guitar I had um I think because like many parents um y'know my folks bought me it [inaudible] a possible fad, they wouldn't have gone out and spent a fortune because a, they didn't have a fortune and b, they were going like well is this like the time you were in whatever it was [inaudible] it's always been music and um, the first one I had the action y'know [inaudible] so I think a mixture of um, a mixture of finances [inaudible] 'cause it's not [inaudible] wealthier than [inaudible] and I think also then it's, if they don't have and it's because of that factor then is that we don't have a credible music shop, I think people have tried it but of course not everybody has the disposable income to invest x amount of pound to get a starter guitar for their kids or, who does let's face it [inaudible] or when you start to progress like um a proper Fender for a grand [inaudible] the closest I suppose we got now is um is A Strings in Ponty, they're incredible but I don't think that business model would work in Aberdare.
- AC: Why wouldn't it, is it purely because of our economic situation?
- DT: [inaudible] our demographic yeah 'cause Ponty is central to the valleys [inaudible] all the [inaudible] our geography only a small percent will then be um recognise the need for [inaudible] and also have the disposable income to [inaudible] Aberdare, a small proportion [inaudible] which is a shame really 'cause we got the population, there's 22 thousand [AC: 33 thousand] 33 yeah, is that the population or the households?
- AC: Oh I don't know about house-holds, it's 31, 33 thousand...
- DT: We should really when you think about it sustain an independent music shop, so um I think that's [inaudible] a mixture of um social economic forces in disposable income to sustain a music shop [inaudible] you could get a really shit instrument and you could be really good I feel but then not actually realising the instrument you're playing on is cack, y'know it might take you 4 years to learn y'know teaching and one day they'll go to a mate's house who's got a really tidy guitar and they'll go shit! How did I cope? I'm like Malmsteen! [laughter]
- AC: Do you think these like music shops would provide a hub for Aberdare? Places for people to meet up, do you think it's lacking a place for people to hang out?
- DT: I wouldn't say that um, maybe that's because I'm spoilt in my social circle in terms of all the boys [inaudible] it's generally a fact y'know go see the lads whatever and we hang out as if y'know [inaudible] so the social aspect for, um, me goes hand in hand so I'm not thinking we're lacking a place to go so. The youngsters I think it's more credible [inaudible]
- AC: Um yeah so in an ideal world what do you think would help the music scene around here...
- DT: Oh right, a practice space yeah, no that's a valid point. Easy accessible rehearsal space, 'cause we got plenty of um [inaudible] abandoned, not abandoned but unused [inaudible] all the buildings around y'know just have a tidy studio, um rehearsal space [inaudible] these places again down Ponty um definitely down um Treforest Industrial Estate, there's just a couple of [inaudible] and there's several grades of room which

you're probably [inaudible] rooms with nothing in, so you bring all the back line bring it down and then rooms then you got a drum kit set up you don't have to bugger about with that then a room with drum kit, bass amps and amps and how much you pay is [inaudible] is on a sliding scale depending on how much you [inaudible] um [inaudible] yeah I think something like that around here [inaudible] as you're well aware...

AC: Yeah it's surprising there's not something [inaudible] anyway, okay. Last question...

DT: Oh okay

AC: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DT: Oh?

AC: Can you think of any other stories or um little anecdotes?

DT: I'm trying to think

AC: Something that happened or didn't happen?

DT: Well we played um some things we wished we hadn't. It was an honour to be asked to do and it brought me on the verge of tears to be asked to do was um, we played Stuart's [Stuart Cable] funeral

AC: Oh yeah

DT: And that was um, that was an interesting [inaudible] it was a massive honour to be asked by Paul ah Stuart's brother and um, that was an odd one because I had just, I guess I had assumed they had the PA and assumed that because of all, who it was and why [inaudible] thought it would be all set up but what happened was that the band itself wasn't through a PA just the vocals so outside the um church was all you had was Dai Barrow I'm guessing you wouldn't have had the rest of the band but in the space in the church and it's a big hall so of course it's um it was quite echoey there, it just felt it um I would have preferred if they'd had a bit more [inaudible] but it was an honour to be asked um, I always remember because of my feelings and this is one of my biggest regrets in life was that um, because of [inaudible] odd feelings I had about the, the Phonics and [inaudible] is that I remember when Stuart left the band and came home, remember he was down The Rock, I think we'd just played with Voltage down The Rock and he came up after and he was like y'know [inaudible] 'cause we hung out y'know, I remember me and Jim getting Stuart in a right pickle y'know, 'cause it um [inaudible] and then um, The Rock gig he was all effervescent and he was telling me about stuff about the Phonics and the split and things like that, we were having a chat and um and at the end of it he was at a party and he asked us [inaudible] and I think me and Jim at the time, I can't vouch for Jim but I know I basically went [inaudible] as in I just went we'll do it again some time because I didn't, felt I didn't want to be a hanger on in a kind of all kind of y'know it was a case of just Stu y'know he's always gonna be there we'll get to hang out and I didn't, I didn't go and then of course is that um, [just notices his drummer from the band has just walked in and then mentioned other people who've come in] All the musicians coming in here [inaudible] so um, that was a um [inaudible]

AC: So you regret not going yes to Stuart then?

DT: I regret going and not hanging out with him and just getting to know more about the life from when we were all kids and then the dizzy heights his life would take, from there and I would have liked to know about that and kind of talked to him and we, not bury the hatchet 'cause [inaudible] not with him um, just kinda y'know instead of [inaudible] and also I was being a bit of a prick, he offered the friendship and I just [inaudible] so um, but um, yeah, so [inaudible] but um, I can't think of any other kind of stories that um that kind of spring to mind, I'm always breaking strings, always breaking strings...

AC: Any reason for that?

DT: I'm just heavy handed I think I'm just [inaudible]

AC: I'll stop the recording b'there, thanks very much

DT: You're welcome, sorry I talked your ears off

AC: No problem

Interview with David Robert-Holt, 17 05 2019, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 5.35 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

DRH – Dave Robert-Holt, Participant

AC: Hello

DRH: Hello

AC: How're you doing?

DRH: Alright aye, not bad.

AC: Right, just a couple of general questions to start with. Um, what music do you like?

DRH: Everything, these days, absolutely everything. Um, I think when you're younger you're sort of shoehorned into particular genres and you're into, into punk or y'know, you can't be into this, and if you're into metal you can't be into this. If, if you're into your music you can't be into this. These days it's everything. I mean I grew up, I grew up as a punk... I make acoustic music now [laughs], and... I go to dance sort of like with DJs y'know to concerts and things like that, so, everything, if it's good, if it's good I like it.

AC: Okay, and what music do you play?

DRH: These days... it is... primarily a sort of like a hybrid, primarily acoustic but with a bit more, sort of, a bit more rhythm behind it, and that's what I'm interested in these days, it's gone from sort of like being in punk bands which I was in when I was fourteen in punk bands and I'm thirty two now, so yeah, it was quite a few years of playing in punk bands and y'know all the scars and, that's how I lost the top of my teeth.

AC: How did you do that?

DRH: Punks in Southampton. That was somebody, somebody hit the microphone hit my teeth, so yeah [laughs].

AC: Nice [laughs].

DRH: Bits and pieces, but yeah. Like ah, yeah, acoustic, acoustic, rhythmic, like a bit more Americano-y, and yeah something a bit more chilled. I think that's living in Cwmaman though, I do [laughs].

AC: What do you mean by that?

DRH: It's quieter and rural, more rural so I find myself writing about hills and things and y'know, yeah.

AC: Do you find it has an effect on how you write and what your music sounds like?

DRH: Yes, I do. Yeah 100%. 100% yeah. That's why, that's why more punk bands stereotypically come from cities because it's industrial, bleak landscape and from industrial and bleak comes punk music. Yet you'll always find more rural stuff, that's where the acoustic balladery is coming from, I think personally anyway.

AC: Do you think that's a trait in Aberdare?

DRH: Yes... yes and no because I think we are all quite rural in general in Aberdare. Y'know we're sort of thirty miles away from the two major cities, give or take, um... and I think being out in the sticks y'know yeah you couldn't be further out from the sticks, ah y'know even though you live in your Penderyns and your sort of cluster towns. Yeah, I think does have a certain effect, but you've got much more of a mixing pot in Aberdare I think some people are into everything, like, like I said y'know I'm into all types of music. I think you get that a lot more in the smaller towns because... when there's only five drummers in the town [laughs] those five drummers are gonna be expected to play punk, metal, y'know sort of like Irish jig, y'know and everything so yeah.

AC: So would you say that the pool of resources is a lot smaller, I mean...?

DRH: Yeah, 100%, 100%, y'know, you got guitarists, when I was younger starting to play in bands, guitarists, everyone was a guitarist, bassists hmmm...[tilts his hand back and forth to indicate not bad] there was a couple of us, there was and...usually then guitarists were roped into being bass players 'cause they were the worst guitarist in the band, and then like I said, a couple of drummers, and the drummers, there still aren't that many of them. That's why you've got so many people like over the years, like ah Dylan Andrews who was in Clay Statues with me wasn't a drummer, he was a guitarist, but then he just learnt the drums because everybody needed a drummer, so like oh right! Cool! I can get in on this! [laughs].

AC: So he learnt drums specifically to have a role in the music scene here?

DRH: Well... no, 'cause he was a guitarist in punk bands, but then, he became a punk drummer then, because no punk band could get a drummer, so he became a drummer and that's y'know. He had a lot more work as a drummer than he would have, and I use the word work, not paid work ha! Obviously [laughs]. He got a lot more work as a drummer than as a guitarist and still has.

AC: So, how did you get involved in music-making? You said you were fourteen.

DRH: God alive, yes. So... I remember, I've always, always, I've grown up with music anyway. My parents, y'know my grandparents, everyone loved music, there was nobody who played music but everyone loved music. So I was influenced by a wide range y'know, my mother, my father was an old skinhead, my mother was an old skinhead as well and so there was reggae and there was a lot of 80s music when I was growing up, especially the tail end of the 80s and early 90s. Yeah, and yeah, I just remember always liking music and there was lessons in school for people who wanted to play bass, and they were during our history lessons and I wasn't a particular fan of the history teacher in school, so I took the bass lessons. Ah, that was when I was thirteen.

AC: Do you remember who the teacher was?

DRH: The history teacher?

AC: No, the bass teacher? [laughter]

DRH: No, Simon I think his name was and he was, and I remember he, it was the first time I heard Black Sabbath Mob Rules, 'cause he said you gotta listen to the bass in this song 'cause it sounds like he's playing through a house, and yeah, sort of, yeah, just I think um, I think I had about two months of bass lessons and then stopped then.

AC: Why did you stop?

DRH: 'Cause at that point you think urgh y'know [puts on a voice] I'm into punk music we, I'm better than this. And yeah and subsequently taught myself then over the years. Y'know, but yeah sort of, it was that sort of age, so I was fourteen, so you're talking about the kids who were the year above us in school were about fifteen and then the older kids, and there were gigs at the time and there were gigs happening in the Mount Pleasant in Trecynon... ah, the Black Lion, ah, I mean the tail end of the Railway Club gigs, as well as the Kings Head and Cwmaman Institute, and yeah, we just started going, y'know, that underage. We're sort of fourteen, fifteen y'know sort of

going up to Cwmaman y'know, getting pissed and walking back down the line and things like that. And it just, yeah, just some people stop but for some reason I didn't [laughs]. Y'know you're talking it's like, it's nearer enough to twenty years that I've been playing in bands and I'm only thirty-two [laughs].

AC: Um, okay, I'm going to ask you some questions about writing, rehearsals, live performance, promotion all the roles, activities musicians take on.

DRH: Yep,

AC: So tell me um just the range of different activities you're involved in in music.

DRH: Um, it's both with the band stuff. So, I mean, with Mahouts which is my current thing, it's mine, my little project. I do all the recordings, so I'm writing the songs, um, obviously writing the words to the songs then, recording the songs albeit very low-fi, on an old Tascam, playing every single instrument, y'know, everything.

AC: Doing that yourself, like a one-man project?

DRH: Yeah, that's all the Mahouts stuff. Yeah then obviously there's distribution, getting, getting the stuff out, making CDs you got to and then playing, ah sorting gigs, sorting Cwmaman music festival as well which is the big, organised thing. So yeah, just a bit of everything really. And there's always things you don't like, but yeah, it all comes under the same banner really... I think.

AC: Did the recording, you said you used like an old Tascam device. Was that a conscious decision to use those devices?

DRH: Yes. Yeah, conscious, because... ah... digital recordings strip the background noise off everything. So you digitally record a guitar, or through an interface or your vocals and it's just compressed to an inch of its life. Whereas I always found that a Tascam which is DP004 slightly digital in as you can... ah, bounce files out but the microphone on there I've always found it to be absolutely stunning to record through. I always just use a Tascam with no external microphones just the inbuilt ones on the Tascam, that's how I record everything.

AC: You play it straight into the device then?

DRH: Yeah, basically, and then the only thing I use a jack lead for is for recording bass, vocals are sound directed at the Tascam, drums are played in the Tascam in the corner of the room facing the other wall, yeah. It's just something I've always, and people always think I'm crazy using it, but then when you show people the end results, they think, bloody hell, wow, where did you record this? [Interruption from a passer-by] Ah you've gotta say I recorded it on that Tascam. What? You've used that little Tascam? To record all of this? Is it time consuming? Yes, incredibly time consuming but I wouldn't do it any other way. 'Cause it's the sound.

AC: It's the sound for you?

DRH: Yeah, and it's y'know when I show somebody a Mahouts song and then show them another one and they got a similar sound quality to them, because it's all this melting point, pot of white noise in the background and the various noises of things and yeah, it's not supposed, it's not supposed to be perfect is it?

AC: Do you think that's something to do with your punk roots maybe?

DRH: Yes, yeah I think it is definitely 100% 'cause it was all about minimalism with playing, with playing with any punk bands. Minimalism and doing it yourself. I think that's still left over even though I'm ballading somewhat up in the woods. Ah yeah there's something there which is, yeah, yeah there's something, it is like y'know it's fuck you I'm gonna do it myself [laughs] and it is. 'Cause it is and that's how it always has been.

AC: Have you got the option to do it another way or do you choose not to?

DRH: Yea, I've been offered studio time and things like that, but... I can spend as much time as I want... doing something, so y'know a song could take me, it can take six hours to record or it can be done over the course of a month and then listening to it and then hearing things and thinking, y'know, you've been listening to it for two weeks and you hear another little thing on top of, oh right I want to chuck that on. You don't get that option when you're paying for studio time, you're condensed to twelve hours, and you're paying twenty five quid an hour sometimes and you're looking, and thinking, right if I'm gonna arse about with this song anymore it's gonna cost me another fifty quid. Whereas everything costs me nothing.

AC: It allows you to be more creative then?

DRH: I think so yeah, and it has like in terms of the learning and developing on other instruments so yeah massively, massively.

AC: So, with all the activities you're involved in, who else is involved and sort of crucial for you continuing to make music.

DRH: My girlfriend [laughs] my girlfriend Jessica, because, yeah, she lets me get on with things and yeah, obviously the people who, the people who help [inaudible] behind the scenes really. So, you've got people like Alyn Perkins, who plays a bit around here and who is y'know very adept at telling me that's good or that's bad y'know and things like that. Just generally being an ear-piece and a sounding post sometimes. Um, the band members of Mahouts and then sort of onto people like Laura George who owns Redhouse music, ah the people who own the pubs in Cwmaman are quite integral in y'know sort of letting me practice there and y'know [inaudible].

AC: What pubs are they?

DRH: Ah the Globe and the Shepherds primarily.

AC: Does anyone else practice there or is it just you?

DRH: No, yeah, you got Fireroad who practice in the Sheps occasionally. Ben Casey, a few of the Irish bands practice in the Globe y'know, so yeah y'know but that helps out, and then obviously with the festival primarily it's Rob Jenkins who is the head honcho of the festival.

AC: Rob Jenkins?

DRH: Yeah, Rob Jenkins um... who is also in a band called Celtic Spirit, the sort of rootsy band. Um, I mean y'know he's god when it comes to anything y'know, it was just me and him last year, sorted the festival pretty much... and yeah.

AC: Is he key to sort of music events around here?

DRH: He's key, not's, I wouldn't say around here, but in terms of the festival, in terms of Cwmaman having a voice and having some sort of spirit going through it, yeah. He'd say he wasn't but most people would say he was.

AC: Um, so we've covered responsibilities and roles really, ah, ... how often do you play live in town?

DRH: Not as often as I used to, that's the best diplomatic answer. Simply because..... it's not that I don't enjoy playing live anymore... it's that... I get frustrated with the live thing because you can't, even though I'm not a perfectionist I know deep down that I am actually a perfectionist. A rough perfectionist, I do prefer a bit of roughness around the edges but, yeah, I mean, I don't find myself giggling as much but then, y'know we're older, y'know families and y'know houses and dogs and kids and things like this un yeah, you don't get the chance as much anymore. But I like it like that 'cause you're really looking forward rather than playing the same place three times every week. Y'know it might be a couple, once or twice a month. Really looking forward to it.

AC: Where would you play then?

DRH: Primarily it is Jacs these days yeah.

AC: Why's that then?

DRH: It's pretty much one of the only pubs in Aberdare that's got a really good sort of live music thing going on y'know um...y'know I think gone are the days where you'd have to take your own PA y'know we don't have to. 'Cause Jac's has got the entire set-up all there ready to go. It's easy, they're good to bands and bands are good to them.

AC: Is that the same for other pubs then? Do they have their own PA?

DRH: No, it's quite rare, it is, it is very rare one unless you're going to somewhere which is a music venue, it's great to see a pub has actually got a PA and if it is it's usually a pile of crap.

AC: So that puts you off playing there?

DRH: Oh yeah, y'know you turn up and they say they've got a PA and it's a disco PA with little speakers like that [indicates with hands that they were very small speakers] and as soon as you talk through them you'd [does an impression of a muffled sound while speaking to indicate the bad quality of the equipment and then laughs] I think great, trying to sing falsetto like [laughter].

AC: Um, so, how do you transport equipment, how do you get things from A to B?

DRH: Very determined people and helpful people. I don't drive, so, yeah, it's all, people in bands, with you. Family members, girlfriends... wives y'know it's everything like that there's never been too much of a problem.

AC: Is there any one person you rely on in particular?

DRH: No, I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say that y'know I mean y'know if we're playing with the full, with the full Mahouts band y'know there's always someone y'know especially with the Mahouts thing I just carry a guitar, an acoustic guitar, so I generally tend to

just hop on the bus or the train or whatever and I get there y'know. Gone are the days y'know sort of carrying a massive bass amp, well, they're not gone they're still here every now and again but, yeah, it's, other people, other people but no one in particular.

AC: Do you book the gigs yourself and organise...when you're in bands I'm talking as well as solo.

DRH: Yeah,

AC: When is ay in bands is it your responsibility to book the gigs and get the money sorted if there is any money?

DRH: Yeah, yeah... yeah, yeah, somewhat, but you will get venues get in touch with you as well and asking you to play, but nine times out of ten it's somebody y'know out of the band that's looking for gigs it's usually me. It does usually come down to the frontman.

AC: Who else are you in a band, who are the members of the bands you're in?

DRH: So, the Mahouts [interruption from a passer-by] the Mahouts ah, the Mahouts live line-up is myself, then you've got Chris Cartwright on guitar, you got Tim Jones on the bass, Dominic Castrey on the drums, Charlie Denning on accordion, keyboard, bits and pieces like that. Then you've got David Isaac at the moment now who's providing all the percussion stuff for us, and then...

AC: What was his name again sorry?

DRH: David Isaac, and he's um, he hasn't actually done a gig with us yet 'cause Carl Harvey was originally doing the sort of percussion roles, um, but he can't 'cause he's very busy, incredibly busy musician.

AC: He's a drummer.

DRH: That's exactly, one of five [laughs] and ah, yeah, so y'know he can't do it as much so yeah, and they're all doing singing and stuff as well you not necessarily stuck to guitar or bass y'know people will change and things like that.

AC: So they're playing what you've written?

DRH: Yeah, well yeah sort of yeah. I mean the live thing is always makes a difference, 'cause you don't want to be a dictator y'know, play that! Play this! Don't play it like that!

AC: Trent Reznor.

DRH: Cause yeah, exactly 'cause yeah Christ, I couldn't be y'know, and especially when you got someone like Chris Cartwright who's a much better guitarist than I y'know and people like that, yeah, you're gonna give him some sort of free reign to do what he wants but the general structures are there when they're taken to the boys and y'know so yeah.

AC: Do they develop it on stage then

DRH: It was yeah, it was... just through jamming really, we didn't even practice that much, 'cause it was nice and easy and you haven't got people fighting for noise and volume. Y'know it's all quite chilled and quiet so, you're playing with musicians and that's the difference between playing with people and playing with musicians. Musicians know that silence should be a part of it, so yeah.

AC: So, how serious do you take it? Music-making?

DRH: Seriously not serious, that I do take it seriously, 'cause it's something almost like that secondary part of yourself after so many years it's just always there, but...never wanted to become famous through it, 'cause I'm quite a , quite a, introverted person at the heart of everything and I don't like [laughs] I don't, I get incredibly sort of urgh when people say oh that's really good, that's awesome y'know my god, so talented urgh, oh that's horrible. What d'you say? Thanks [in a sarcastic voice] ooh! You sound like an arsehole then. But yeah sort of serious enough that ah to have some sort of ego but not serious enough to get really het up on the y'know like it has to, it has to be, sort of have to do this and I have to, I must play this and I gotta do that, I'm just happy making music y'know. If I don't gig if I'm just going out up the mountain and just paying to a couple of people if we sort out a little gig up the mountain or go to the Globe and playing, yeah, I like that these days.

AC: Do you do many gigs up the mountain?

DRH: Done one or two.

AC: I have heard of some so I'm not being sarcastic [laughs]

DRH: No, no yeah, no, no. Yeah, one or two. Occasionally sort little things out, have a jam.

AC: Whereabouts would that be then?

DRH: Up Shwgs.

AC: Shwgs?

DRH: Shwgs is the top of ah Cwmaman opposite Glyn Hafod club up the mountains, the reservoirs [inaudible] that's where Vegstock used to happen.

AC: Okay, right I know now

DRH: Laughs

AC: Is that a common place for people to put on gigs in warm weather?

DRH: Yeah, y'know it's not really gigs [inaudible] just take your guitar up y'know but then occasionally someone will take an amp y'know and you might have something else y'know, percussion. Yeah, it's fun.

AC: How often does that happen?

DRH: A couple of times through the summer months maybe, but then sometimes it doesn't happen.

AC: How do people know about it?

DRH: You'd know if you knew.

AC: Laughs, it's on a need to know basis?

DRH: Pretty much, yeah, you'd have a text one day, do you want to come up the mountain yeah? Cool. Awesome, and then you'd be up there until Sunday [laughs]

AC: Um, so what motivates you to perform live and to just make music?

DRH: Ooh I don't know? That's, yeah, it's like a higher power almost innit. It is, it is like you can't describe what it is.... but it's there all the time.... And like y'know you'd think of y'know I'll have a little melody in my head or I'll have a little word or y'know I'd write something down and there's always some sort of process happening behind the scenes. Y'know even when you're working sometimes I'll find myself scribbling like a little sort of line down or something somebody's said or you've heard something that's brilliant [20:54] So, yeah it's...

AC: Do you keep a notepad with you?

DRH: Yeah, I keep notepads, I keep um, like I've got like an app on the phone just like a notepad on, digital notepad thing, yeah...

AC: Do you keep audio notes?

DRH: Audio yeah, loads of audio. I've got about 60 audio files on my phone at the moment of various bits and pieces y'now.

AC: And where do you find these ideas tend to crop up? Where are you?

DRH: I always describe it as the Nick Cave quote. Have you, if you've never heard the Nick Cave quote, about his muse just search that out 'cause it's just brilliant, 'cause it'll just come, you can be anywhere, but if you sit down and think, right, I'm gonna write a song nothing happens but yet if you put it down and leave it alone for a couple of weeks you pick up the guitar en y'know sort of three or four things will just, bang, bang, bang, just come out and I always say they needed to be said, they were there to be written, you didn't write them, they came to you. It's quite spiritual and I'm not la de da or like that y'know...

AC: I think music is quite a spiritual thing perhaps?

DRH: I do think so but y'know it's a lot of.....y'know there's no such thing as original music anymore. There's a, y'know there's only so many chords, so there's only so many times you can play D, A, G differently [laughs] so, you might hear something and then you might pick up on melodies from a few different things. Like there was one I wrote, ahhhh the Mahouts, record store day thing and it was only after writing it, and the first line is ah, [sings] 'stood on the edge of a body of water' which is an almost line for line rip of Dennis Wilson's Pacific Ocean Blues which is [sings] 'We stood on the edge of a body of water' and y'know there's no other similarities between the song but that, I haven't listened to that song in years.

AC: Accidental plagiarism.

DRH: But it just sort of comes y'know and things come and you might hear something and you might think of it, I dunno, to understand that you've gotta understand how the

brain works and it's weird y'know you might pick something up y'know and yeah. Strange, you can't it's never the same twice, put it that way.

AC: How do you keep in touch with other people involved with your music and how often?

DRH: Um.....if, if it's going, if you're in the middle of the gigging... um.... Cycles and things like that then you might be talking every week and that's text and WhatsApp and Facebook, social media, it might be the devil but it's brilliant for things like this. Um, yeah...um, and then sort of in times like these where we're sort of out of cycle, dunno, we see each other but then sometimes we'll see each other and go for a pint and we will not mention the band thing once, 'cause it's not the first thing we're asking about it's the kids and partners and them y'know.

AC: Are they all friends?

DRH: Yeah.

AC: That's how you would describe your relationship with them?

DRH: I would and that's, I think going back to the original thing about like the Aberdare thing whereas I've never had to like put out adverts for band members 'cause you know people. Whereas like y'know you find in the cities there's people who'll put adverts out and they're not friends and that's a different working relationship then 'cause you gotta be slightly more diplomatic. I think with somebody you know you understand their facial expressions, you understand how, what they look like when they're playing, as strange as that sounds y'know you can look at somebody when you're playing in a band with them for x amount of time and you can talk without words. You can stand across the stage and you know by eye movements and hand movements and gestures what's gonna happen next.

AC: You're saying that being friends they don't have to be so diplomatic do you think it makes the music more honest?

DRH: Yeah, yeah I think so 'cause... Yes, I'd say yes because.....you're not trying to keep people on side. Does that make sense? So you're not trying to sort of keep other people happy that you can say oh I don't like that and you don't think you're gonna dent anyone's ego or sort of confidence and things 'cause you've known them for ages. Or I'm not sure about that, what about this? And then y'know... yeah.

AC: Do you think that makes a difference to the kind of music then that's produced in say a place like Aberdare compared to....Merthyr or Cardiff?

DRH: I'd say yes, because you gotta look at, you gotta look at bands like Cripplecreek, you gotta look at Cripplecreek for things like that, that just.... Where else do you find a band that sounds like Cripplecreek other than half way between the Band and the Rolling Stones 'cause that's where they are, and.... Y'know, you listen to um you'd swear they were American, but they're not and I think yeah that's got a lot to do with, it has got a lot to do with it. And the sort of closeness of people and the honesty then making music and a lot of people are on the same page around here y'know sort of people do like roughly the same music.

AC: So their musical tastes are kinda like ah an element of what brings people together then?

DRH: Yeah, I would say so, even though you have got the melting pot of...people into punk, people into this, people into that, and there are some people who are, that is all they like this is [inaudible] but you've got a lot of open mindedness around Aberdare and y'know you do get the odd Avant Garde thing happening and people just appreciate it 'cause they like, they like going out, they like having a drink, they like watching their friends y'know, yeah. And that culture still exists here, don't, I don't think it happens as much in bigger cities personally that culture of going out to see friends like, y'know go out and support your mates and then your mates return the favour and support you, I think yeah.

AC: Okay, um, how do you find the time to make music?

DRH: I don't [laughs] it's like, when I lived on my own I had all the time in the world and, but now... no there's not as much time, there isn't but we'll always find a way y'know there's always something half started or something like that y'know so, yeah it comes and I always put aside some sort of time and I live with guitars so y'know you'll usually find me in the garden especially now the weather is getting better that y'know I've sat outside just playing guitar. So there's always something happening it might not be a recording or with like a band in a practice room there's always ideas formulating and you do sort of find the time and then when you've got something you really, really, really like, yeah you find time.

AC: You just make time?

DRH: Yeah, exactly yeah. You're working full time y'know you got dogs, the dog needs walking, you got a new house which needs doing y'know you've got a missus who y'know you do like to talk to as well [laughs] it's nice y'know how's your day? Great okay. Yeah, there's always time and having, having somebody who that appreciates that side of it, if you're in a relationship which is half the battle 'cause if I say to Jess, oh babe I'm just gonna go upstairs and y'know sort some songs out, she's not like what about the dishes? What about the food? It's nothing like that. It's no, no play for five.

AC: It's good to have a considerate partner then?

DRH: Yeah, exactly yeah y'know and that's the thing all musicians are a little bit manic depressive and a little bit weird so yeah [laughs] so you gotta put up with them really haven't you. Like kids, kid gloves [inaudible] alright babe, yes babe, no babe [laughs]

AC: Um, so what of anything would you say limits what you do regarding your music-making?

DRH: [long pause] sometimes a lack of resource.

AC: Can you elaborate?

DRH: Yeah, I mean, when I say resources I mean... maybe I'm not talking about myself, maybe I'm talking about younger people, that, I've got a house of my own, equipment of my own, and a means to record music and playing. Whereas when I was starting playing music, you were reliant on somewhere having gear for you to practice. A gig that had a PA, a venue that was putting on gigs, things like that. Whereas now I've got a lot more, I find it a lot easier now, but, yeah, there's lack of resources I think it is, because Jac's do practices, there's no other places to practice around here unless you've got your own PA and your own gear, where, and if you haven't you've gotta go to the practice rooms which are Swansea, Cardiff y'know close to the city.

AC: Are there any in Merthyr?

DRH: Um, there was, um, but I'm not sure it's there anymore? Mountain Music was the name of the place, again on one of the industrial estates, we went there with Clay Statues a few years ago. Um, yeah, still there's nothing in your town and when you're a sixteen year old who doesn't drive, yeah you can get a bus to Jac's to practice, but you can't get a bus to Merthyr, or y'know [inaudible] your mother would be like, what're you doing? Y'know the money to practice these days, these places are fifteen pound an hour! Y'know if you're going, if you're going to, y'know forty-five quid is expensive for me! Y'know who has a full-time job and works y'know fuck if I've gotta pay forty-five quid to practice every other week it's ninety quid a month! I mean I'd find it hard to spend that amount of money. So, you're thinking a sixteen-year-old with no disposable income, you think nah, I truly think that's the reason we don't have any young bands.

AC: Why do you think that is the case that there isn't, given Aberdare has got quite a musical history both classical and popular.

DRH: It's dropped off the radar a bit I think, 'cause there's not a lot of young bands but I think the reason there's not a lot of young bands is because of that and I think the reason there's no practice spaces 'cause there's no young bands, it's an infinite loop [inaudible] yeah, when, when we were growing up... playing... there were at least twenty bands, at least twenty bands, younger.

AC: How many would you say there are now in Aberdare?

DRH: Young?

AC: Yeah.

DRH: Ten or less?

AC: Really?

DRH: Maybe five or less?

AC: What about bands generally?

DRH: Bands generally, healthy numbers, 'cause they're still, but then you look and you find it's all the older lot that are still playing. Y'know it's my age, maybe around that y'know, maybe say like late twenties up until the fifties they're all still playing. Not a lot of younger bands, I think, Mike Thomas and his generation are the last sort of generation where there were still quite a few bands after that it drops off.

AC: So, really are you saying y'know that the older generation, that '90s early noughties generation are sustaining the music industry here?

DRH: I'd say it's the bands, the fallout bands which came after the Phonics break of '95, '96 then it's those bands, it's those people that are still playing. Look at 'em, look at your Richard Jones, Richard Jones from Fireroad are still playing. The Creek boys, they've never stopped playing. They're also playing, Neil Galsworthy, ah there's Skacasm, Wayne Bending and people like this y'know. Craig Chapman, Wayne, alright Chapman's down in Brighton, Warren Baker who's having a second lease of life really with the music stuff. Um, Paul Cobby, who again is on his second

honeymoon now, playing with y'know sort of with his anarchist oi oi punk band ah Fatal Blow, y'know he gave up for years, now he's touring, he's going to Switzerland, he's going to Germany, he's been to Japan when he played with [inaudible], he's he's it's his second life, 'cause he had his first life. Aaron Lewis, all these people who are.... The wrong side of forty five [laughs] y'know what I mean, who are still playing and who are still, pushing boundaries probably more than they should be [laughs] y'know when people, when you get a bit older you think ah they're just going to stick to their old roots and they're gonna start playing The Fog on the Tyne or something like that y'know. But nah they're still pushing. I think maybe there's a level of intimidation then when you do go to a gig [inaudible] a clickiness there's a big click in Aberdare if you're in, you're in, if you're not...

AC: Just one clique? Or do you say there's a few?

DRH: There used to be a few clicks but I think since everyone's got older, they've just amalgamated their clicks into one super click, well all the muso lot and y'know that's Jess, y'know my father says the exact same thing, it's the muso lot.

AC: So you all know each other?

DRH: Yeah, everyone. But you know at the same time you could probably text somebody if you were really in a jam, text someone, there's at least thirty people on your phone you can just get in contact with to try and help you out.

AC: That's cool.

DRH: Yeah, so maybe it's not a bad thing after all, for my particular generation [laughs].

AC: Would you say um... I've forgotten my train of thought now.... that's it, what would you put in place then? Are we alright for time?

DRH: Yeah, it's fine.

AC: What would you put in place if you could to make this a more resourceful area for youngsters? What would you do? What would you suggest?

DRH: [long pause] ... primarily... more music in schools, more ability to learn music in schools, which I think there is anyway. More places for kids to play, more availability to practice, and a music shop, 'cause we haven't got a music shop in Aberdare, and when I was young, if I broke a bass string I would go down to Aberdare where there was two or three shops where I could buy bass strings, now, there isn't, you've gotta order them online. I think a music shop is always a good place, 'cause you'd always see adverts but then y'know you'd text them and call them and they'd be like oh yeah cool! Alright I know you oh yeah, yeah, I know you we gigged together. So, yeah I think, just yeah, more, just more help and y'know it is, like I said lack of resources earlier and more resources for people to play and more places to practice, places y'know, places for people to record and maybe get into music and find the space where they can make mistakes, 'cause you gotta make mistakes. Yeah, gotta make mistakes. You've gotta, y'know you've gotta be in a practice room, you gotta play too loud and you gotta have somebody say turn it down and y'know you've gotta be able to. There's not a lot of room for that now, personally, I think.

AC: Do you think that's funding or just, more of a broader... Government...

DRH: There was a lot more places to practice when the youth clubs and places like that were open. 'Cause you'd have the YMCA up in Hirwaun which had a little recording studio in it as well. Um, there were a few places in town, the Canolfan up in Cwmaman and Cwmaman hall, y'know all had facilities for bands to practice in.

AC: And that's been stripped now has it?

DRH: Yes, Communities First funding. Communities First funding was [makes a noise like cutting the throat of something to indicate funding was cut]

AC: The austerity measures?

DRH: Yeah, I think it was yeah 'cause eh the Communities First lost their funding to private area funding um...you'd have, you'd have to research that I think? But I'm pretty sure, I don't think Communities First exists as massive as it did where they were y'know, there was grants for youth clubs and things like that, they'd train you. The Canolfan in Cwmaman is in trouble at the moment and y'know that's the biggest joke really because on the side of the Canolfan is the legend 'Keep the Village Alive' which is, y'know alright it was the Phon, Phonics album but it was attributed to um... a gentleman from Cwmaman who used to say it all the time and [inaudible] it's quite a sad joke that one 'cause y'know, keep the village alive and there's just dilapidation occurring around it y'know.

AC: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DRH: No, no, no, I think, I think maybe there needs to be more um...in terms of actually helping younger generations to play and there needs to be a certain part coming from the older generations as well they need to involve these people in your gigs, 'cause they don't know do they. 'Cause when I, when I, when I was fifteen, sixteen if a bunch of forty five year olds were playing I'd be like that is nonsense why would I want to go out and watch my fucking father playing guitar y'know, 'cause that's what it is, it is, and, and I'm, I'm that age now where you're in-between but it is and that's how we started y'know and when the bands used to take us under their wings it was different but yeah, fuddy duddy's like [laughs] and I know kids think like this, because I, I was a kid and we used to think like that.

AC: We did unfortunately.

DRH: Yeah and it is very much fuck the world I know better than everybody else. Which is the right attitude to have but it's not conducive to y'know good relationships.

AC: Okay I'm going to stop the recording there.

Interview with Dylan Andrews, 25-01-2020, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 9:41 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

DA – Dylan Andrews, Participant

AC: Hiya, how're you doing?

DA: Good thanks yeah, yeah

AC: Thanks for meeting me

DA: No problem

AC: Um, so, the first question is what music do you like?

DA: To be honest it's one of those cliched things to say but I like a bit of everything, but realistically I think my background is, punk [AC: Yeah?] mostly it is yeah. Um I got into sort of like everyone my age started off Blink, Green Day and things like that, Nirvana, y'know the classic sort of like entry level bands and then from there I sort of discovered like The Pixies and when you sort of read back then into their, where they came from and their musical background and stuff discovering the bands that influenced them so I started really getting heavy into Minor Threat, ah Black Flag, The Descendants, so, and that's my y'know DC and hardcore was my jam for like the longest time [laughter] like for a long time all I wanted to listen to was anything by Discord Records that was like all I wanted to do. But to be honest I think like as things, time has gone on I think you all go to that place where you think you can't write that, it's crap I kinda like go [inaudible] I don't like that but secretly you love it [laughs]

AC: The Bee Gees

DA: [laughs] Yeah! Elton John is my I, for years that was my secret like [inaudible] Elton John like, we recorded um some place in Cardiff and they had the desk he recorded Yellow Brick Road and I was like, totally like, fangirl like oh my God! The boys were like why do you give a shit about that? [laughs]

AC: Elton John is amazing!

DA: I know, now, everyone's like yeah alright we all like Elton John...

AC: It's because we're all grown up [inaudible – laughter]

DA: Yeah, but at the, I'm a big fan of um, dance as well, industrial, punk, a little bit of everything really.

AC: So whatever you like you like?

DA: Yeah, yeah. I'm quite keen on finding new bands as well.

AC: How do you go about doing that then?

DA: Um, recommendations from friends, we got um a Spotify playlist me and my friends, we set up a WhatsApp group about three years ago because we were all like starting to get out of touch, all y'know married, kids and it's like going down that path we found we weren't seeing each other as often as we would have a couple of years previously, so we set up this WhatsApp group and it was, it was just to recommend songs, bands, albums, films, TV programmes, and just y'know so, and we, but we chat every single day on there and there's always recommendations coming through, there's about eight of us in the group, so, so there's a real varied music taste so I get a lot of stuff like that and Spotify [AC: Yeah, yeah] I think the y'know the release radar all the new stuff they sort of tailor to you, I think there's some great stuff coming through that.

AC: This WhatsApp group who else is in that? Is it band members you're with at the moment?

- DA: Ah yeah, it's, it's me Ryan Day and Mike Griffiths who were in Pete's Sake, Mike Evans who was in Pete's Sake as well, um, band wise I think that's it, for like musician wise there's a guy called Olly Thorn in the group as well, who was in a band years ago called Under the Influence and then they were called Jump Blind for a little bit, they were going back maybe twenty years ago now. Like he's in there, he's sort of living between Southampton and Dubai at the moment so he's back and fore.
- AC: That's a bit different isn't it?
- DA: Yeah, and then my brother is in the group and then just some other guys we went to school with and it sort of snowballed into this thing like we would recommend things to each other and now it's we go to a gig once a month together. We find tickets to a gig [AC: You have to...inaudible] we try and do once a month [AC: As much as you can?] but y'know it's difficult like one of the boys got like three kids and between the group there's probably about twelve kids, so it's like [laughs] so as and when we can, we will go away um, we'll do anything, we've gone to gigs y'know we'll organise gigs to go on in town and um next year we're going to Madrid for a festival, so like there's like a bit of everything, we try and do as much as we can.
- AC: So it's like um, not going out of your way but you're making a conscious effort to stay in touch with each other.
- DA: Oh yeah
- AC: Y'know um, I dunno sort of looking at the technology side of things and what would be done if we didn't have WhatsApp?
- DA: Yeah, I find it difficult to think back to a time where we weren't all so connected. I think when I think back to my first band it was, we were best friends living two streets away, if we wanted to play or whatever, I'd plug the guitar in and play in the garage and he'd more than likely hear it and come down y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, or you'd call each other on the landlines y'know but now it's so much easier, I found it so much easier to start and maintain and finish with bands through the advent of social media or, yeah I think it's just so much easier you know what everyone's thinking all the time y'know if somebody's not happy they can tell you y'know I think it's great it's just great, it's so open and accessible.
- AC: Okay, I might come back to that point, I'm going to have a mull over that 'cause it's an interesting point y'know what I mean [DA: Yeah] the connectivity of it, anyway, okay so what sort of music do you play at the moment?
- DA: Um, okay [laughs] good question. Um, I'm trying to think how many bands I'm in at the moment. So [AC: Is it that many?] yeah [AC: You're a drummer though aren't you?] I play everything [AC: Oh right, what else do you play?] yeah so I started, I started off playing guitar um and then moved to drums and then keyboard I'm not very good at that and little like synthesizer toys I was really into like at one point in circuit bending equipment, so I would buy little [inaudible] like kids keyboards from Rheola market and open them up and try and mess with the circuits so they made strange noises, I was into that for a little while um, and then I picked up a bass guitar and through the past, how long have I been playing now realistically, it's been like twenty years I played my first gig was twenty years ago, thirty five I am [AC: Alright, so you were in your teens when...] yeah I started my first band when I was fourteen and we played our first gig when we were fifteen and it was our drummer's brother's birthday party [laughter] in the bar of the Coliseum [AC: That's great] yeah and it's

sort of like I, I pretty much stayed with that ever since, I gigged roughly once a week up until y'know, now really, maybe in the last two years my daughter's was born and I've sort of taken my foot off the pedal a little bit but um at the time as was probably doing about 100, 120 gigs a year [AC: That's great] yeah, really busy but now I think my efforts fall elsewhere now with being married, my daughter [AC: Yeah, yeah, kids come into it] yeah.

AC: So what do you do for a living?

DA: I'm a lecturer I teach construction to kids with mostly like behavioural issues and stuff so it's like foundation construction courses so, naughty boys [AC: So you know Grant?] Grant yeah, he's in Nantgarw and I'm in Ystrad.

AC: Alright, right brilliant, cool.

DA: But...

AC: Um...

DA: What was the question sorry I went off...

AC: What music do you play?

DA: Play, um now I'm not playing much drums at the moment. I drum for High Voltage, that's few and far between maybe two or three gigs a year. Clay Statues I'm still drumming for but that's not like, we don't actively look for gigs, we don't practice um it's just if somebody's [inaudible] us we'll play so like last year we played two gigs, this year nothing on the horizon um so that's just as and when and I'm playing bass for Wager and En Garde.

AC: En Garde? Are they an Aberdare band?

DA: Ah, well yeah I suppose you could do 50/50 with that one 'cause me, Mike and Ryan are from Aberdare and then Tom and Geraint are from Maesteg. So but it's, so to answer your question I suppose it's like rock covers with High Voltage, um I don't know how you'd describe Clay Statues, I suppose that would just be like stripped back punk, no guitar it's just me and the bassist so [AC: Punk?] yeah a mash up [AC: Yeah, I do like it though, it's good screamy, shouty stuff] yeah, yah it's just [inaudible] um and then Wager is like ah I would call it pop punk but I think it's maybe a little bit more, it's not, when you say pop punk you think things like Blink and things like that it's not like that it's maybe more along the lines of um the new sort of wave of punk where you got like um The Menzingers, um, Against Me so it's that sort of like sing along, sort of upbeat punk and then En Garde is just pretty fucking heavy [laughter]

AC: Is it proper heavy stuff yeah?

DA: It's um, it's the heaviest punk band I've ever been in y'know it's like, it's a strange one but I love it, it's great so I'm playing bass for those two.

AC: I like the sound of that yeah

DA: Yeah, the album's up on Spotify so

AC: Well I've seen everyone else all the other bands but I haven't heard of En Garde so are they relatively new or...?

DA: They started I think probably about 2013 but I wasn't in them then, it was a bit of an offshoot 'cause the boys had just finished with Attack! Attack! [AC: Right] so Ryan and Mike had just finished with Attack! Attack! And oved on to something different um, and Tom and Geraint were old friends of ours from back in the day, they used to be in a band called The next Nine Years, going back twenty years ago now, same time as Pete's Sake [AC: Right, okay] um they joined, they started this band with the bassist from Kids in Glass Houses so it was a bit of a, bit of a super group like [AC: Melting pot] yeah bit of a mash up, they did a load of gigs I think at the time, I think they had a bit of industry sort of interest yeah and a bit of money put into them, I don't really think it went anywhere. Um, so they were looking for a bassist and Ryan and Mike are two of my best friends, so they said oh what are you doing now? Do you fancy having a knock with us and that was four years ago, so, but it's been like really few and far between, I think maybe in the past four years we've done like thirty gigs, so yeah, it's just...

AC: Is there any on the horizon?

DA: Yeah we're playing um actually, we just got back together 'cause we were on, I wouldn't call it a hiatus but I suppose [laughs] just chilling out not doing anything um [inaudible] yeah a gap of three years [laughter] we just got back together now um to do a memorial gig for a friend of the band who's ah was killed recently, um so, they've asked a couple of older bands to get back together to do it so it's, we got back, Dopamine [AC: Yeah, yeah] are back doing it [inaudible] are doing it as well, Aberdare bands and um we're playing in Jacs, but it hasn't been advertised 'cause it sold out in like a day so they didn't bother outing the poster out in the end, so...

AC: When is it?

DA: It is, I think it's Saturday the 8th of February so it's two weeks today, yeah...

AC: There's no way of getting in now I suppose?

DA: Ah let me see what I can do if you wanna come down.

AC: What day is that on?

DA: On a Saturday in Jacs

AC: Yeah that's easy, no [inaudible] yeah if you, I'll just come down to the door and pay y'know what I mean...

DA: Well it's, it was a free gig but I think they were taking donations for the lad's family [AC: Yeah, yeah] so um, we were like when are the tickets coming out 'cause we wanted to send it round to our friends, they told us oh yeah it sold out didn't even advertise it and [AC: That's amazing though, brilliant] yeah it'll be good, but I got um I might have one or two plus one's but we're moving house the week after so I don't see my wife coming [laughs] so if you wanna pop down I'll give you a shout

AC: Yeah let me know I'd love to have a listen, that would be brilliant

DA: Yeah, alright

AC: Um sorry went off a bit there on my own interests [laughter] So in a nutshell then your, what you play ranges from punk through to almost metal if you want, talking about hard rock [DA: Yeah] but it's in that sort of rock punk...

DA: Yeah [inaudible] done more of that as well [AC: Okay] in the past I've played for Cat Southall so that's like straight up pop [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, me and Neil Galsworthy started Spirit of Boogie together, so I was with them for five, six years so that's like y'know funk [inaudible] yeah so there was a lot like, I was trying to think back 'cause I was counting up last night, 'cause I was lying in bed like, how many bands have I been in? And I think I counted, eighteen, yeah so in the past like twenty years so [AC: That's incredible]

AC: How many bands do you think are like active in Aberdare at the moment? I mean...

DA: Oh, d'y'know I would say there's gotta be around the twenty to thirty mark if you see, maybe not as much as that mind you, I think that's overshooting it I dunno? It's difficult innit 'cause I'm, y'know do you count in tribute bands and things like that, 'cause they're like ten a penny aren't they [AC: Yeah, yeah] there's loads of them.

AC: I suppose [inaudible] haven't interviewed any cover bands, well I have actually!

DA: I suppose you do it by proxy don't you, y'know myself, Dave Threadwell, Jim, we've all done that [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: You have to do a bit of that anyway but y'know what I mean. So, you would say twenty at a push?

DA: I would say, yeah, I'd say about twenty, if you were covering, if you were covering um cover bands as well you could probably double that.

AC: So then original music then...

DA: Original music yeah, yeah, I think about twenty is about right. There's a lot of young bands coming through now like ah Shovelface, Angry Kidd and stuff and it's so nice to see it reminds us, whenever we put on gigs in Aberdare, we're always like really keen to ask like Shovelface to get involved because it just reminds us of us when we were that age [AC: Yeah, yeah, it's lovely to see isn't it] yeah it's great

AC: Yeah, I do like it. Um Angry Kidd, are they from Aberdare then?

DA: I think one of the guys was in Shovelface, I think they sort of split off...

AC: Musical differences?

DA: Yeah [laughter]

AC: Okay so tell me about your musical practices, I mean you can focus on one band or talk about a couple of bands [inaudible] but if you think about writing material, how do you normally go about writing?

DA: It is different for every band I've been in pretty much um one band when I first started it was very much sort of like in your bedroom come up with three chords and sing about next door's cat or something [laughs] something awful, um, but I think, I think the best stuff is, is collaborative I think, I think if you're in a band like I was in a band called Mook for a long time and it was not very collaborative within music writing,

Dean was just a really good songwriter and would just say here is the finished song and here's what I want you to play and it was his thing y'know. Um there wasn't much room for um for any sort of input from any other parties which suited me down to the ground at the time y'know it was my second band I didn't really know much about song writing so and I've never really classed myself as a songwriter um y'know more of a collaborator. I think that's been a theme for me, especially being a drummer y'know that's been a theme for me. My thing, me and Dave Holt in Clay Statues we always worked it, he would come in with a song, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, verse these are the lyrics, we'd play it and then I'd be like, let's move this to there, maybe just try doing this somewhere else, it would be more arrangement focused and then we'd work together on that um. Nowadays, again WhatsApp, brilliant, we got a WhatsApp group for Wager um, if any of the boys write songs, Mike and Ryan are the main songwriters, they'll write songs and record it with an acoustic guitar sitting at home send it through to the group. Mike the drummer can tap along at home and come up with little bits and pieces, I can pick the bass up and figure out some, and we send then versions back and fore to each other. I put a bass line on this what do you think? The boys I don't know about that, y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] maybe let's change this and we do a lot of song writing sometimes separately in our own houses [AC: Without seeing each other?] without seeing each other and then when we get together it's like let's knock it together and it'll change completely again y'know it's just [laughs] one of those things but I think that for me has always been the process that's sort of riding other people's coat tails and then [inaudible] trying something different with it [laughs]

AC: What do you prefer then? Which sort of, like you got Mook where everything was, this is what you do, almost like a Nine Inch Nails kind of scenario [DA: Yeah very much so] and y'know you said it suited you at the time but what, in retrospect what would you prefer?

DA: I like, I do like the creative process, I do like that aspect of it, I do also like being semi-hands off with it when someone is a much better song writer than me and is gonna come up with much better stuff than I ever would but happy to collaborate with that person after the song is done y'know maybe giving suggestions change a few things and I think me and Mike Griff um the drummer in Wager and En Garde um I think we are sort of like more arrangement focused still, so Mike and Ryan might come in with, 'cause there's two Mike's in the band so [AC: Right] Mike the singer and Mike the drummer, they'll come in with their separate songs and um we'll play them, me and Mike will say let's do this differently, let's change ah y'know this verse to a longer one and let's shorten this chorus and move this to here and we sort of put that...

AC: You two are more the arrangers and the other two are the writers so to speak?

DA: Yeah I think yeah it is a fully collaborative effort but I think it does fall down that, Mike more so than me y'know he's a got an ear for it y'know so I'm, I'm happy to sort of sit back contemplate it and okay then we'll record it in practice and go away and listen and say oh maybe we should go back to the way it was [AC: Yeah, yeah] so y'know like, opinion giver [laughs] I'd describe myself as chief opinion giver [laughter]

AC: I like that, it's cool! Um so rehearsing then what's, how do you go about rehearsing y'know has it always been the same, the same places or, give me a little background on...

DA: Um, it's changed I mean when I started it was in my parents garage, as most of us y'know would attest to a suppose. Um practice spaces were thin on the ground back

then I found, it was everyone was in their garage. So, when I joined Mook um, Dean and his mum lived next door to each other and she was living on her own, so the upstairs back bedroom was converted into a practice room and studio. So we'd go into Dean's house straight out through the back door round the back into his mother's bedroom upstairs [laughter] and there was just this studio set up in this bedroom in the house in Fernhill, it was totally bizarre and I just thought that's normal, I just y'know I was like I've gone from a garage to a bedroom yeah alright that's how it's done.

AC: Did you have any complaints of noise?

DA: Now and again yeah [inaudible] [laughter] young and [laughs] what are you gonna do! [laughs]

AC: And is Dean, let me get this straight he's the singer?

DA: Yes, yeah Dean's the singer and guitarist, yes, yeah bottle of wine yeah [AC: It's a while ago yeah] yeah that's it yeah.

AC: Okay, so what about the other bands like ah Wager now and where do you guys tend to practice?

DA: Ah we practice, we've got a little picky I our old age I suppose, um, we've tried a few places, there's um Green Rooms in Treforest, which is, how do I put this without sounding like I'm slagging them off 'cause [AC: Just say it as it is] it's not the best place to, their equipment is started to become run down, the rooms are not really well sort of padded, there's a lot of like feedback, the PA's are not really up to scratch for what you need so we were down there for a while um, a friend of ours was opening a studio, helping to run a studio in the railway arches in Cardiff [AC: Right] called The Arches, so we were down there, that was really good, we really enjoyed that um but Mike the singer lives in Swansea so for us it was half an hour down the road but for him it was fifty miles each way from Swansea to Cardiff [AC: Right] so we ended up finding this happy medium, this great place we found in Swansea called um, ah, Soundwave, I think it's called Soundwave um it's in Swansea on SA1 as you go down um Fabian Way you got that McDonald's and Starbucks [AC: Yeah, yeah] and it's just behind there.

AC: I think Grant's rehearsed with the Sabbath band there?

DA: Yeah, yeah

AC: He said it's alright

DA: Yeah 'cause they're a Swansea band aren't they

AC: Yeah, well all of them apart from Grant [laughs] [inaudible] So you'd rather go out of town, is there anything around here?

DA: There's not really anything around here, there was a fella called Ruben, I don't know if you know Ruben? [AC: No?] um he was on the scene for a little bit, I'm going back maybe eight, nine years ago now and he was like in Aberdare and he'd set up a space in, Rhigos Industrial Estate? Rhigos Industrial Estate up that way? It was like a one room practice studio and it had a live room so you could sort of, you could record there if you wanted and that was very good but it didn't last very long, I don't know why, I don't know if it was advertised or [AC: That's the first I've heard about it?]

yeah, it was quite short-lived. Ah, Clay Statues practiced there for a bit. Clay Statues as a rule generally don't practice, there's only two of us, I know my bits and he knows his bits why we fuck about [laughter] so, but um the other ones I practice weekly with um with Wager and now we got En Garde on the go, so it's like split alternative weeks, three of us are in the same bands so it's [AC: And it's all in Swansea?] all in Swansea yeah. Before that we were practicing in um Stompbox Studios in Pontyclun, Todd Campbell, Phil Campbell from Motorhead's son [AC: Oh yeah, yeah] So we um, we record with Todd um, so he's does all our stuff for us, he did the En Garde album, he's done both Wager EP's, so um, we used to practice down there, but now um, I think there was something, I'm not sure what the score was really but when Lemmy died I think [inaudible] equipment back and ah they hadn't [inaudible] so there's not that much room now so he's moved his studio downstairs so it's like when you go in there it's floor to ceiling with Motorhead's backline [AC: It's like a museum] totally different world, it's bizarre. Phil Campbell hobbling about in his pyjamas [laughs] in his little tracksuit [laughter] cracking.

AC: So you do all your recording with Todd then you don't go anywhere else?

DA: Yeah, pretty much um we did, we done all the Wager stuff there, the boys recorded the En Garde album that was just before I joined, um, that's all been done there. Um, we've done I think we done some En Garde stuff in Monnow Valley as well um or possibly Rockfield? I'm not quite sure which one it was? Um me and Dave did Clay Statues did most of our recordings in the Atrium in Cardiff [AC: Why there?] Um a good friend of ours who we've always referred to as the third Statue 'cause he's always recorded every single release he's done everything and he's, we find that when we record with him Gareth Burke his name is he's almost as much of the creative process as we are. He'll tell you that's shit or change that and he's got a good input into the band as well, the silent third member and he's always recorded us. He was a student in the Atrium and as part of his degree for music technology he had to record bands ah every so often, so we say we'll be that band, we go in and record, help him out and then we'd release it, so it was great, didn't cost us a penny [AC: Totally free?] yeah, yeah totally free so what we used to do was keep him in drinks and food for the weekend [AC: Yeah, yeah] and that was it.

AC: How many times did you have to use his services then?

DA: I think, let me think now we did, ah I think we did two ah full EP's there, recorded everything there and I think we did ah one or two things just did the drum tracks there and we recorded the bass and the vocals in his bedroom [AC: Okay] so, it's the drum tracks getting the sound on drums is the most difficult bit y'know nobody wants to be listening to somebody in drum world all weekend just hitting [laughs]

AC: Like that two hours later [laughter]

DA: We did our fare bit there and then the Shed, have you...?

AC: I have graced the Shed, I've had the privilege I should say of being in the Shed, it's fantastic...

DA: It is I love it up there, but when he left uni, he bought all his recording equipment and piled it all into the car, he'd drive down set it up in the Shed and he'd stay there for the weekend and just, he'd just record live from the Shed.

AC: Where would you stay if you were staying overnight in the Shed?

DA: Oh I lived around the corner [AC: Oh right] where we were living at the time so...

AC: [Inaudible] is it Stephen?

DA: Oh [inaudible] it would be a messy weekend [laughter] I think Burkey might have slept in the Shed twice, I dunno [inaudible] like that I'm going home [inaudible] [laughter]

AC: How did you know um, it's Gareth Burke you said yeah?

DA: Yes

AC: How did you get to know him?

DA: Um, he was school friends with Dave Holt, so it's all pretty much every band that I've ever been involved with has been with, I, I, I don't think I've ever been in a band, maybe once or twice have I ever joined a band with a stranger, it's always been people that I've known for years [inaudible] why don't we do something together or y'know they got a band, somebody leaves do you want to step in? y'know so, and the same with recording it's always been, we've never phoned some random fella up and said how much do you charge to record us [AC: Yeah, yeah] it's always been someone we know and we've been close to.

AC: What was the Todd connection again?

DA: Todd connection um, so, he was very friendly, he used to be in a band called Psycho Squad or Squad they changed their name to then [AC: Rings a bell] that was years ago um, and then they were in Straight Lines and I think before they were Straight Lines they were called Said Mike, so this is Pete's Sake, Mook kind of time um the boys. There seemed to be cliques back in the day um, I, we bothered with Pete's Sake a lot because me and Ryan are best friends from school and um Pete's Sake and Mook did a lot of gigs together and then there were bands like Festering Nun from Ponty, the Nukes, ah not the Nukes that was later ah Headshot Neil Galsworthy a couple of bands from Ponty and we all had this like five band clique wherever you'd go it would be Pete's Sake, Headshot, Mook and um a band called DSF all from Ponty. We'd all do stuff together and then there was this other lot then from Cardiff and they were slightly a different genre to us but they blended well with Pete's Sake they were more poppy so we were always like we're not playing with them, that's not fucking punk! [laughter] y'know but they made, they made really good connections and through that they met Todd and they've stayed friends with him up to now. When they, when Attack! Attack! Was kicking off ah I think Straight Lines toured with them. I think they went on tour with, Straight Lines toured with Motorhead there was a connection there 'cause obviously the boys dad, Phil Campbell there's always been this sort of like interweaving connection between all the bands, strange really you don't hear many bands in Aberdare that are formed by strangers.

AC: No, no you don't you did say you have been in a couple of bands with strangers [DA: Yeah] how did that pan out?

DA: I, do y'know it was okay, um weren't incredibly long-lived, I can't even remember how it came about I think I must have answered an ad on Facebook 'cause I was looking to join another band 'cause I didn't feel like I was doing enough and I joined this band from Cardiff um went out with them, they were looking for a singer for ages ah it was like a grunge band, went out with them, still friendly with them all now but musically I don't think it's really clicked that well I don't know it was just. We were looking for a

singer for ages, there was a girl um called Bec who was from Washington DC and she was about to lose her visa and she was about to be deported back and she had a son with a guy from Cardiff so we'd gone to this benefit gig to try and keep, I'd never met her before it was a friend of a friend sort of thing and I'd gone down with this new band I'd joined. We know this girl's about to be deported so we're gonna have a send-off for her and they raised enough money for her to get her visa [AC: Yeah, yeah] and she stayed and became the singer, so I was with that band for maybe eighteen months two years but it didn't end um well, it was quite, it was all a bit underhand, the singer err the guitarist had visions that this band was gonna go global and realistically it never was and it was one of these things instead of just phoning up and saying like oh we don't really think you're putting enough time into the band we're gonna look for somebody else, he said the band has split up everybody's left and then phoned everyone and told them a different story but it was really odd, it was a bit sly and we all fell out at the time. Now I see them semi-regularly so it's all good.

AC: You mentioned earlier that you were looking [inaudible] for a band 'cause you weren't doing enough [DA: Yeah] just tell me a bit about that. Other people have mentioned things like that about, they just try and keep hitting this aim but they never quite get there kind of thing...

DA: Yeah, I think for me it was I've never had um, I think when you, I say never had, I think when you buy your first guitar like [inaudible] I'm gonna be famous now get my mama and dad a new house, all sorted but that, I think that faded away for me really quickly like, I didn't, the, because of the bands I was listening to, got really heavily into Black Flag and Minor Threat, Fugazi, that DIY sort of y'know Ian Mckay's epic for music sort of became my own and I was like I don't wanna be famous for this I wanna do it because I love doing it. I don't want to charge X amount to see these don't want to do this y'know I was very much like keep it at a ground level and I think a lot of people have these ideas they're gonna go off and they're gonna make it and in some cases that happens and that's amazing and if, you wanna go with it that's like you go for it but for me I've never really had that so the driving focus for me has always been to keep busy and to be doing something that I enjoy which is why I was always in so many bands back in, like if I wasn't getting everything I needed from that band I would just have another band y'know so, alright I might not be playing much guitar, I'll drum for you and play guitar for you y'know it was just spreading myself so thin but then I think y'know over years I think looking back I think y'know relationships probably suffered from that 'cause I was spreading myself thin at one point I was in nine bands, I think that was my record so practicing two or three times a week and then gigging two, three times a week then so y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: And working at the same time then

DA: And working yeah, I was alright at the time I just started working in the college about eleven years ago me and Dave Holt were touring at the time so like two and half days here and two and a half days there, it was part time it was easy, we did a couple of tours we did it's like toured with The Damned and done some stuff with like SLF and Reef and um it suited me at the time and then when you kind of realised like y'know I'll just get a full-time job now [inaudible] I think partly for me was seeing it, I found myself out of work so I went to work for Attack! Attack! So on their first tour um with Funeral For A Friend and their first headline tour, I was their tour manager [AC: Okay] so driving the bus made sure they got everywhere on time, collect the payments, pay everybody y'know it was just like a nice experience so y'know we went up and down the country twice but, um, you were away a lot and, and I think from that I was in lots of bands at the same time and I was seeing these boys were

slogging their absolute guts out and still coming home on the weekends and working in a pub or y'know Neil had a T shirt printing business and he was coming home and knocking T shirts out and they'd go away. And even when they got bigger after I left with them and started working full-time in the college, the boys really hit it off y'know they were signed to um, a reasonably big label, they were doing South by Southwest in Texas y'know, touring Australia, America, Japan and all this and still coming home on the weekend and work in the pub and I was thinking like, alright that sort of confirms my [AC: Mad isn't it] yeah [AC: They shouldn't have to do that] no, not at all, y'know they had these big advances that will last them so long and they were picking upside jobs on the weekends y'know it's just, so I think for me seeing as well like, obviously being more focused towards the creative side of it and keeping it at a ground level, seeing the boys do really well and still having to come back I was like yeah, like I don't wanna have to give up work to go and struggle and come back [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know, essentially like, yeah, the boys had amazing experiences and it was like, it's shit really 'cause they should have been a lot bigger than they were y'know but um, I think yeah it's so difficult for bands to do it now isn't it. I think the only reason they made a decent bit of money off it is because Neil was printing off his own T shirts, 'cause he had the T shirt printing business, that's how they made all their money [AC: Yeah, yeah] they got paid, the first Funeral for a Friend tour that they did they had fifty pound per day, that's what they got paid per band [AC: Oh gosh really?] yes, so that was the pay, it was fifty quid and that, that, I took that, that was my payment and they got their money from T shirt sales and CDs. The record label told them here's a thousand CDs from us and um like you've gotta sell them at like ten pounds each. Nobody goes and buys a ten pound CD from an opening band y'know that you've never heard of, so what they did is, sneaky, sneaky, went to a CD printing company and said do another 2000 of these and they sold them for a fiver outside. So as soon as they come off stage, we'd grab a box out of the van, and we'd sell the CDs for a fiver. Neil had his own T shirt printing company, so we were outside with the T shirts on the floor y'know so like that, they made a lot of money that way but no money in tickets, same when we were on tour with The Damned, it was fifty pound a night, no hotel [AC: No hotel?] no, nothing, it was just fifty pound a night that's it. Yeah so it was me, Dave and we took a friend of ours James with us sort of like to roady and sell merch, there was three of us in a van for the best part of a month, fifty pound a night, that fifty pound in that shit hole van was just enough to get us to the next town and then we'd be picking up scraps after The Damned had gone on stage. We'd be like right [rubbing his hands] they've left a bit of cheese and some ham here look! [laughs] [inaudible]

AC: They're living like kings [laughter]

DA: And they'd have this hotel room and a tour bus [inaudible] so what we used to do, they'd rent a hotel for the day when they arrived at a new town they would just go to the hotel room, shower and come back to the venue and that's all they'd use the hotel for [AC: Right] so at the end of the night we would try our luck to see if they'd actually paid the night rate, so we'd pop into the Travelodge and say yeah, yeah we're with The Damned sort of like y'know can you, I think Chris Monk was the booking agent at the time and we'd say oh Chris Monk's room and they'd say oh yeah, yeah no worries here's some towels expecting us to just go and shower and we'd try and sleep for as long as we can. Some nights we'd get away with it, some nights no chance and I think it was one night, I can't remember, we were in Saltash or somewhere like that, near Cornwall [inaudible] I don't know where that it? Um, and we got turfed out of the hotel at like 3am [AC: Oh] they were like you should have showered and left by now, you've only paid for the day rate, we were flat out [laughs]

AC: That's hard going isn't it

DA: Yeah

AC: Really hard going [inaudible]

DA: Worth it though

AC: The experience is yeah, yeah

DA: Definitely

AC: So your perspective changed on that 'cause it's not sustainable I guess is it?

DA: Yeah, for me it wasn't definitely. I mean at the time I had a, a girlfriend, a dog and a house and it was just like, I can't, at one point we thought like maybe we'd pursue the Clay Statues thing but we seemed to be playing with like classic punk bands for some reason I don't know why we fell into that little niche. We were just picking up gigs with like um, we did The Damned tour, we did um, Stiff Little Fingers, UK Subs, um Tenpole Tudor and it was like, I don't know why, we were just falling in with these classic punk bands, that's not the sound that we've got [AC: No] not necessarily and we didn't exactly go down well amazingly every night, it really polarised audiences, a 50/50 split y'know.

AC: It's a different kind of music though like you said isn't it

DA: Yeah

AC: It's heavier than The Damned and all that kind of stuff...

DA: But some people were into it but then some really weren't y'know like the [inaudible] of The Damned loved it [inaudible] the singer I don't think he gave two shits like y'know he just didn't like it at all, not his cup of tea, so there was just like y'know straightaway he was [inaudible] and we've always found that. But we did find at one point [inaudible] thinking actually really good gigs maybe we could push this a little bit further and then it was a very quick realisation like, you're talking days y'know, why would we bother, like what are we going to be doing, we'd have to give up work to move back in with mam and dad to go and do more shows with the fucking Damned, like what's the point? [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: You'd weigh it up then I suppose

DA: My thing's always been like, play gigs, it doesn't matter if they're to ten people or 100 people, play the same gig whether it's to ten people or, and along the way you pick up a really good gig and all of a sudden you play for 5000 people well that's brilliant and then the next week you sort of go back and play for ten people [AC: Yeah] y'know so that's what it's been like and we pretty much run it the same now, so just pick up whatever we can and the next one comes along, happy days.

AC: A bonus [DA: Yeah] I suppose. Um, how often do you play live in Aberdare?

DA: Um I would say Wager play live maybe once every month or two, we don't actively pursue gigs so we put our name out there and then gigs come in, in drips and drabs y'know, it's not difficult for us, we practice weekly, um we don't want to be out every weekend 'cause we have got wives and kids and got other things on as well y'know. So we've just tried, we've sort of said, um me and my wife have a got a bit of an

unspoken rule that my limit is two gigs a month now [inaudible] yeah so it's like I know where I stand so I can say like I got a Wager gig this month now um, and High Voltage have just asked me to play a gig in March, so I was like right okay I've got two slots that I can fill up y'know [laughter] and every now and again something will come round and I'll just say look there's a couple more [inaudible] and she's absolutely fine with it y'know, I think it's just getting that, y'know, nobody wants to be out every weekend, I wouldn't want to be out every weekend now, there's so much time now y'know with her and my daughter and stuff so y'know it's just sort of like getting that balance isn't it, getting that balance but I think I would probably play now once or twice a month.

AC: Okay and that's in Aberdare then is it?

DA: Yeah, Aberdare surrounding areas so um, Aberdare, we try not to, Wager we try not to do repeat gigs so and that's the influence of the other boys 'cause they were in Attack! Attack! They got like, they're far more savvy about being taken advantage of, whereas I'm sort of like, yeah, I'll play Aberdare three weeks in a row yeah, no worries at all and they're like. So I started booking these gigs and they're saying why are we fucking playing Aberdare again, we only played there two weeks ago y'know, and I was oh I always done it like that and they were like no, don't and they were like play Aberdare once and then six months later do Aberdare again like y'know [AC: A strategy yeah?] yeah, it's more like not wanting to over saturate the one place I suppose, but different places to play are hard to come by now [inaudible] like years ago you could just go to a pub and say can I play for you for half an hour they'd give you fifty quid no problem. But nowadays you find covers bands in pubs and we're looking for venues so we'd rather be playing places like, Jacs is great in town, um Sin City or Bunkhouse in Swansea, um Full Moon, Clwb Ifor in Cardiff so more venue [inaudible]

AC: Dedicated spaces rather than...

DA: Yeah we didn't want to become one of those bands that just popped up in the White Lion to play for half an hour y'know. Whereas me and Dave when we're doing stuff for Clay Statues and if someone said do you want to play the White lion we'd say yeah, yeah, whatever. But like, it's horses for courses isn't it like we got a different outlook on that band than with other different bands so we try and pick up better gigs with Wager, we'd rather make, instead of being out three times a month playing crap gigs y'know and the feeling when you come that you played to five people b'there y'know I could've been in the house with the baby y'know, so I think we try and [inaudible] oh that's gonna be a shit gig, we'll just wait until the next one comes along, so we're a bit, we're a bit more selective [inaudible] maybe that's an age thing, maybe that's just [inaudible]

AC: Your responsibilities change and stuff like that [DA: Yeah] [inaudible] and it's nice and warm in the house isn't it

DA: That's it like, I can't carry, it's sensible I suppose 'cause how many times have I been to a gig where I'm sat there thinking this is shit like [inaudible] there's nobody here [laughter] even though you give the same y'know give it some beans whether there's two people there or seventy or whatever but it's like when you come back you're like that was just a late night unpaid practice [AC: Yeah, pretty much, yeah]

AC: Um, so how important is music-making for you, we've touched on your motivation [inaudible] but how important is it?

DA: I'd say now it's still an important, it's still an important part of my life now but I have got other focuses y'know, really dedicated to my family, I'm dedicated to work so y'know I enjoy work, I enjoy my job so it's kinda less of a priority, less of a thing for me, years ago it was the driving focus behind like everything I did, y'know it was, I can't go out with my family for this birthday 'cause I'm gigging like y'know it was far more like driven, now I'm still grateful I'm still able to do it and to be able to do it with boys I love and respect so much so it's really nice to get into a room like, I play with y'know boys who got so much experience as well and just have that y'know [AC: That connection] yeah [AC: That camaraderie if you want] yeah, when we started Wager it was called The Dad Band for the longest time 'cause we didn't have a name and it was just one of those things like, an excuse every week to meet up and we'll take y'know a couple of cans of beer and y'know a can each 'cause we're all driving, so only one [laughs] [AC: Responsible rock and roll] responsible rock and roll yeah, we have, we have um, we have a pouch of [inaudible] tobacco because we don't smoke anymore and we'll have one rely when we're practising and y'know it's just nice to go out and like and you're not like smashed off your tits [laughs] y'know it's just nice to go down and hang out. 'Cause like we'll play for an hour and then sit outside for half hour then and we'll have a can and have a fag and we'll chat and it's just, it's nice to be able to have that excuse like, meet up every week [AC: Yeah, yeah] and just be with each other y'know. 'Cause we used to live in each other's pockets y'know when we were younger, when we were in Pete's Sake and Mook [inaudible] it was basically, it was like sharing a house it was a lad that we lived with really um, Dai... we lived in his mother's house for all intense and purposes for three, four years

AC: Who's house was this?

DA: Dai Isaac, do you know Dai?

AC: I've heard the name yeah?

DA: Dreads he's got now, he was the bass player in Mook [AC: Oh I know] for a while yeah so, we were all friendly from school we all y'know loved hanging out with one another we all played in different bands but together so it was just one of those things like well come down here and [inaudible] or stay in until next Friday [AC: Yeah, yeah] so we all used to stay y'know, come downstairs sometimes and there'd be y'know ten people lying on the floor in sleeping bags everywhere. His mother was a saint, it was his mother's house she was still living there, yeah, she just really enjoyed having everyone over I think, it, it was brilliant. So I think going from that we already struggled, well I did I know I did, struggled from living with each other to all of a sudden you find a girlfriend and whatever and you move out all of a sudden, it's like I'm not seeing everybody every day anymore [AC: Yeah, yeah] I struggled with that, so having that excuse now to be like once a week we see each other so it's like old times again [AC: Yeah, yeah] that's great for me.

AC: Do you think without these sorts of connections and these meaningful relationships do you think music could be made amongst you lot if you didn't have [inaudible] towards each other?

DA: No, no, I don't I think, I think it would be by the numbers, I think it would be, y'know, it would just be, I don't know what it would be like 'cause I think y'know all our songs in Wager are about these sort of meaningful connections, not necessarily with each other but like we've wrote songs about our families, our parents um y'know our relationships, so, friendships um y'know all our songs are, they are very heart on sleeve I suppose and it is all about like growing up and loving this and loving this

person and y'know hanging out together, it's very like, I dunno, what would you, what would you class it like? Um the words' are not coming to my head now but like focused in relationships [AC: I, I see it as camaraderie] yeah [AC: A kind of group, not gang 'cause that's got connotations...] yeah, yeah, yeah [AC: Club house sort of thing?] yeah clubhouse it, it is a boys club y'know, well I don't mean boys as in only boys aloud but um [laughs] but y'know [AC: I know what you mean yeah] it is a [inaudible] gang mentality and I think if you didn't have those meaningful relationships I personally would struggle, I wouldn't like to go into a room now with someone that I didn't know and be like how does this person play y'know, what's his style, where's he coming from, I'd struggle with that. Three years ago I wouldn't have maybe, I think now I wouldn't really be interested in doing that y'know.

AC: So it's more about that personal link, that social connection rather than....

DA: Yeah, music, music still plays a big part in it and music is still the driving force behind some of the things I do and the decisions I make but realistically when you boil it down it's seeing the boys and seeing everybody and just being together

AC: And um what factors do you think make it difficult for yourself and younger people to make music in a semi-rural environment like Aberdare?

DA: Lack of venues, lack of practice places, lack of support I think is a big one, um,

AC: What do you mean by support then?

DA: I think years ago I think there used to be, I'm going back twenty years ago, you wouldn't have gone to a gig in the Shot and Shell without it being packed to the rafters y'know it was just so well y'know, the fact that the gigs were so badly organised but so well attended and now I find it's the complete opposite, I find they're so well organised everyone's got a poster, everyone's got a logo, it's pushed out on Facebook y'know nobody goes pasting posters around bus stops any more it's all Facebook, Instagram paid advertising and nobody turns up!

AC: Why do you think that is because we were talking about the social media thing earlier on and [inaudible] and it's kinda flipped y'know everyone's got a poster everyone knows about it the numbers [inaudible] it's not like it used to be socially [inaudible]

DA: I don't know, I don't know what it is really, I don't know whether it's just a case of our friends now the people who were [inaudible] to gigs twenty years ago might be like [inaudible] I'm not still gonna watch those boys twenty years later and I totally get that y'know um, I think there's a lack of um musical tastes have changed I think, I think it's far more sort of like ah if people go out to watch a band nowadays they wanna see Phonics they wanna hear Design for bloody Life y'know [AC: Sex on Fire, yeah, yeah] yeah, y'know I can't knock it completely 'cause I've played in bands that do that y'know but I think when people go out for a night drinking, they wanna sing along and I just think the attitude towards live music has changed I think it's gone more towards covers. But from, when I speak to like ah people a little older than me so y'know Jim, Neil Galsworthy, Dave Threadwell, I think that was sort of the case before they started and then it flipped to more original sort of stuff and I think we sort of caught the tail end of that, 'cause we were playing with um, I never played with Cripplecreek back in the day but um Brian and Mike might have from Pete's Sake with Cripplecreek but we used to play with ah Pilot Fish [AC: Okay] Neil Galsworthy's band I mean that, they were sort of just coming into the end of their run as we were starting y'know [AC: Yeah early 2000's] yeah early 2000's late, yeah late '99 early 2000's is when I started and um we used to go and watch bands like Cripplecreek,

Pilot Fish um, Reviva Gene? Thinking back I don't know whether they payed covers or not, it's just a name that sticks with me. One band that always sticks out to me was Crash 45?

AC: I might have heard that name? I'm not from Aberdare...

DA: Oh you're not are you? Where are you from then?

AC: Merthyr

DA: Oh!

AC: I lived in London for years though [laughter] [inaudible]

DA: You took the wrong road when you got to the heads of the valleys [laughter]

AC: The right road I think anyway [laughter] But yeah Crash 45 rings a bell

DA: I think they went, they turned into [inaudible] Heroes then [AC: Okay] Crash 45, [inaudible] heroes... But the guy, the big influence on me was um 'cause growing up I was into [inaudible] Blink, Green Day, I lived in, juts in Tudor Terrace up by the Gadlys there, and ah, and this guy, looking back on it I used to think of him as this big old ah y'know like hero like and he lived in the flats at the top of the street [AC: Okay, who's that?] His name was Andrew, I don't remember his second name, I don't even know if he's alive anymore, I think he fell quite bad into heroin, but I don't, I don't know where he is now? I've, I've asked about a couple of times y'know do people know where he is [AC: Yeah, yeah] but he was a real big focal point for me 'cause when I was like fifteen, it was like y'know, Blink, Green Day all the stuff you'd see on MTV, ah my Dad's friend gave me a Pixies album and that completely changed my life, completely and um then I remember bumping into this guy at the top of my street, this Andrew and he said um he saw a Pixies T shirt on me and said oh you like the Pixies do you? Have you heard [inaudible] I said no? So he said ah come in and you think nowadays I was fifteen and going into this blokes flat and y'know I think Jesus Christ [inaudible] would have had kittens now [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I used to go there quite often, I'd y'know I'd go up and he'd be smoking weed I just didn't click at all [inaudible] I think it was upstairs.

AC: There was a guy and a girl there and he had loads of CDs and tapes...

DA: That would have been it! Must have been 'cause he was with a girl...

AC: Reddish hair...

DA: That's it!

AC: Oh I went to a party in their house

DA: Oh there you go it might have been on the ground floor look.

AC: My memory might not be too good there? [laughs] I know who you're on about though

DA: He had the sort of Kurt Cobain thing going on [AC: Yeah, yeah] bleached shoulder length hair and she was like yeah super slim, red hair

AC: That's what I remember slim lady red hair

DA: Yeah I used to go back and fore there all the time and he'd give me albums, so take this with you and bring it back next week and I'll give you something else [inaudible] five black [inaudible] of the year, he give me some early NOFX albums which like, completely like blew me away, so I had loads of stuff and I really looked up to him. I used to go back and fore there all the time and I remember going up there one day and his girlfriend was outside crying, the girl with the red hair and the bed was on the street, she said I'm going now, I'm moving, never saw her again, they split up and he disappeared. I was always wondering like what happened to them, 'cause he gave my first band some gigs with Crash 45, White Lion, Black Lion y'know pub gigs [AC: Yeah, yeah] we were really like mesmerized by them and then he sort of turned up to a Mook gig in the Shot and Shell about ten years later asked me if I could score him some smack and he looked awful and I was like really concerned and that was the last time I ever saw him. [AC: Oh that's quite grim isn't it] yeah it is. It's when you look back there's quite a few things like that you think like at the time when you look back you're like it's quite heavy like.

AC: It was like an informal education of music really that he provided y'know

DA: Yeah, yeah definitely and looking back on it now it sort of really influenced my tastes now growing up y'know I didn't think it, y'know Frank Black Teenager of the Year I remember him giving me that album it's still one of my top five, top ten albums of all time like [AC: Yeah, yeah] so...

AC: And, um how do you find the time to make music?

DA: I don't know? [laughter] I'm not sure? We practice late [AC: What do you mean late now?] um, nine or ten till twelve. So, we all put kids to bed first, that's part of the deal with our wives y'know we don't want to be leaving them in the lurch, it's alright for me I've got one kid and my daughter is, she's great, sleeps easy goes to bed really well, but like Ryan's got three kids, twins and a, a little girl that's a bit older so like, it's always, put the kids to bed then go to practice. So, we practice in Swansea normally about nine till eleven we don't leave Aberdare until eight so...

AC: Have you got work the next day then?

DA: Yeah I work the next day yeah.

AC: It's not on a Friday night or something, I suppose you could have a gig...

DA: Yeah we try not to do Friday nights 'cause like if I'm gonna do something with the wife it's generally gonna be when we can get a babysitter which is every Friday night [AC: Yeah, yeah] so it's um, it's, I wouldn't call it a struggle I love doing it but on the way home from practice every week we're like fuck it's late isn't it [laughs] [inaudible] yeah but it is more difficult now definitely y'know we [inaudible] and I think these WhatsApp groups help a lot I think because [inaudible] y'know sending song ideas over y'know not dwelling too much in practice standing around going what shall we do now? [AC: Yeah, yeah] we've always got something on the back burner like and if something's not working, it's always like right okay it's not, let's not waste two hours pursuing this idea let's move on to this different song, work on that during the week and come back to it next time [AC: Yeah, yeah] so it's constantly moving.

AC: It's more efficient I suppose than having [DA: Definitely] technology side of it

DA: And knowing it is a struggle to make time so knowing we are on a time budget so it's like well let's not waste two hours here now going over the same riff thinking this is crap, chuck it in the bin and move on.

AC: And final question, you'll be glad to know [laughter] is there anything else you'd like to add? Anything you can think of incidences or...

DA: Oh Christ Almighty [laughs]

AC: Maybe you feel different about something or [inaudible] anything like that?

DA: Um, ah loads of things I suppose I mean, I think growing up, I think I feel lucky to have grown up in Aberdare around so many good musicians, great songwriters I mean listen to albums by y'know Cripplecreek, Headshot, Pilot Fish y'know all these bands you just think they are life changing experiences going to watch bands like that at a young age, locally, changes, changes your life y'know so I feel lucky to have grown up around so many talented and nice people, none of them are arseholes like I mean how often can you say that y'know you go and watch this band and they've blown you away and also lovely [AC: Yeah, yeah] like you don't get that often do you y'know.

AC: Do you think that's like a y'know a valleys thing or [inaudible] depends?

DA: Do y'know I think, I think the ego can get to some people sometimes and y'know I have met local bands who are arseholes [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know, for no reason but then I've also met some really big bands that are so down to earth, absolutely lovely, I think one of the things that really sticks out in my mind was um, it's sounds like I'm name dropping [laughs] I was sitting in the Lwyncellyn after work one night and my phone rang and he said is this Dave? In like a west country accent I was like yeah, it's Gary from Reef, and I said oh fuck off yeah and I put the phone down [AC: Did you?] I was like one of the boys winding me up surely to god, 'cause that morning he'd been on soccer? a.m. and mentioned the Clay Statues on the telly so it was totally bizarre, so I'd found them on Myspace there's a band from the Welsh valleys, they asked him what music he liked, and we were like what?! That's so bizarre like he just stumbled across us! So I thought it was one of the guys winding me up, it was Gary from Reef. He phoned back two minutes later, this really is Gary from Reef [laughter] I was like alright Gar! Y'know and he was lovely and he said um basically Reef were split up at the time, this is going back a bit to 2009 I wanna say, 2010 but they were just getting back together. He said we're doing this UK tour he said we're doing five dates and the five of us are picking a support band for each night and I'm wondering whether you'd like to be my pick. I said yeah alright okay, he said tell you what he said why don't you come down and meet me tomorrow night in Yeovil I'm playing an acoustic gig. If you drive down, he said we'll have a couple of beers and have a chat, and it was just another, just like, it's him from Reef I used to love Reef [laughter] we drove down to Yeovil and there he was like so it was like meeting up with one of the boys y'know have a couple of beers with him and then we ended up supporting them in Nottingham Rock City [AC: Alright nice venue] yeah cracking, really nice place, but then like y'know I think it's all down to the individual I think with things like that 'cause there are people around here that just y'know should have been as big as Reef y'know or bigger y'know Jim, Charlie [AC: Yeah, yeah] Paul they should have been much bigger and are absolutely lovely and then y'know you got someone who is really massive and is also lovely and then you look at other people locally and then I'm not going to mention any names that you talk to and you think you're a prick [laughter] where's this ego coming from?

AC: What sort of things do they do to make you think they're a prick?

DA: I y'know I think it's, I think there's this sort of like um, one of the things that's always would me up is ah we need to [help live?] y'know we're bringing x amount of people so our band should headline, I can't imagine ever saying that to like anybody saying we need to go on last, fucking hell like [laughter] so there's something like that or ah, how much we're getting paid is another one that sort of grinds me a little bit.

AC: Does it just seem a bit distasteful to you?

DA: Yeah, I just don't know what it is maybe going back to that sort of like, punk, background where I sort of like so I was fortunate in a way to really cut my teeth on Fugazi, Minor Threat when it was do everything as cheap as you can, make your own T shirts, make your own CDs, sell them for as cheap as you can, don't charge people for this and then to see them people like charging like x amount for gigs and it's like what the fuck you're playing at? You're at Jacs like but, like why are you charging that much y'know, I dunno [laughter] It makes me cringe a little bit I dunno what it is I just don't um get it.

AC: I think you're right it's that punk ethic y'know it's [DA: Yeah] [inaudible] started at a young age, it's [inaudible] you then really [DA: Yeah]

DA: We played a gig recently um, and the ticket price had been set by the venue and it was ten pound to get in and I was like, who's gonna pay ten pound? We had a [inaudible] of friends of the group said oh we're gonna come down and see you and we all said don't! Don't come down, we don't want you paying ten pound to come and see us, you can see us next week for fuck all.

AC: Where was this?

DA: Ah Jacs.

AC: Ten pound they wanted in Jacs?

DA: Yeah it was us and Henry's Funeral Shoe, Wager and Henry's Funeral Shoe just before Christmas and I think they charged that because I think it might've been Black Friday, or the day after Black Friday so you can see where they're coming from, it wasn't trying to rip people off but I was, we were sitting there and we said to the guy on the door, this is like y'know nobody's gonna come in, like if you pay, nobody's gonna pay ten pound to come in to see us y'know [inaudible] there was a few people there that surprised me and I was like I couldn't help looking out onstage and thinking they're all fucking mugs [laughs] why have you paid ten pound to come and watch this like? [laughter] Yeah I dunno for me it's like, keep it low, keep the price low, keep it cheap, all the music we've always given away, the En Garde albums we had printed out and they're free. Um, with Wager we didn't put anything on um, anything for sale, never had CDs made it's just gone on Spotify and it was just like if you want it here it is. Ah Clay Statues was the same, we used to give our stuff away at gigs or for a pound just to cover our costs, as long as, the thing for us is right we got Wager T shirts now, it's just been one of those things, right it cost us 150 quid to get however many T shirts made y'know what do we need to sell them at to be able to get another batch done [AC: Right] so it's never like you see bands playing and they're charging fifteen pound for T shirts and it's like I'd struggle with that like I'm gonna buy a two pound T shirt from Tesco's tomorrow.

AC: I took my gig to a concert not so long ago and it cost twenty five quid for a T shirt

DA: It's nuts! Isn't it [AC: Yeah, yeah] I remember going to watch Nine Inch Nails in ah I've seen them about nine times now they're one of my favourites like [AC: Absolutely love them] and they were like charging like fifty quid for hoodies, I thought there's not a chance like there's like no way I'm gonna pay fifty pound for a hoodie, I'd struggle to pay twenty quid for a hoodie I'd be honest with you.

AC: Yeah absolutely, I love Nine Inch Nails absolutely [inaudible]

DA: I remember they went on the With Teeth tour, that was like 2005? I'd driven up to watch them in Brixton Academy [AC: I was there!] was you there yeah! [AC: I was with Lynsey Harris, do you know Lynsey Harris?] I know Lynsey's name [AC: Paul Harris's sister he used to run the Conwy] ah right okay [AC: This guy came over and slapped two backstage passes at us 'cause we were two girls on our own went back stage had my photo with Geordie White and a few of the others] No way! [AC: [inaudible] way too old they weren't interested talking to us] so the people who put the back stage passes on you then, Welsh boys? [AC: Oh I don't know they were just slapping them in, here you are have that] 'cause we, on the way back we were driving through Staines 'cause the M4, the entry was closed we had to drive through Staines right [AC: Yeah, yeah] so we're at these traffic lights I was driving a big blue van at the time right, it was like an old sunshine bus with the tail [inaudible] on the back like, so there's a couple of us in that driving back, pull up next to this van, a guy knocks the window, winds the window down, alright boys, I was like yeah, he was um he said I seen your booty in the back he said with the Nine Inch Nails T shirt on, Welsh fella from Swansea, he said we just done all the security he said it's my company he said and we've just done all the security for it and they were from Swansea, that's why I wondered whether you knew they were Welsh guys [AC: I didn't hear them speak or anything see so, we were standing in the auditorium just whacking] just getting girls to go back stage [laughs]

AC: Me and Lynsey were way to old we were only in our late twenties y'know they done had the photo and everything like that but then there was literally they looked about fifteen

DA: Is it really? No way?

AC: I mean Trent Reznor wasn't there, he wouldn't have...

DA: You'd like to think not wouldn't you [AC: Yeah] but they leaned out of the window and they give us, they said we've just taken a load of their merch and back stage passes so they gave us through the window, like we had five or six T shirts a couple of hoodies, like we had these back stage passes that I had on my bedroom door for ages, they were like orange, like yellow warning signs, they were like triangles [AC: Oh it was a green kinda thing I had?] oh was it really yeah? [AC: I think it might've back] like all access [AC: after show party thing] right, [laughter]

AC: Yeah, nothing happening, it was dead up there [inaudible] we didn't even have a drink, just wanted my photo taken with everyone [laughter] I was the only one waiting by the back door with the security guard [laughter] the next guy and snap [inaudible]

DA: That's the tour they had Josh Freese drumming for them isn't it?

AC: Was it Josh Freese?

DA: 'Cause Josh Freese played on With Teeth, Dave Grohl did some stuff on With Teeth as well and then Josh Freese toured with them on that and they had, 'cause it was the first tour since The Fragile wasn't it? [AC: Yeah] I think Josh Freese done two tours with them [inaudible] 'Cause we'd gone to see, me and Mike the drummer from Wager [inaudible] we'd gone to watch The Vandals in TJ's [AC: Yes, I was there!] you was there as well! [laughter] Josh Freese was The Vandals drummer [AC: I grabbed him outside for a photo] well funnily enough he's like 'cause me and Mike we're like, Mike's an amazing drummer, I've always played drums, so I like Josh Freese has always been like ultimate hero status right. So we were walking through Newport and there's Josh Freese and we went over to him and like he was just too cool for school, just smoking sitting in the front of the tour bus, there he was and he wound the window down to speak to us and we were chatting to him through the window, oh hiya alright y'know proper like fan girls and we said um Mike's a big fan of Perfect Circle [AC: Yeah] and he said to him are you planning to do anything more with Perfect Circle? He said no I've just joined Nine Inch Nails, so that was and it was about two years later they started touring that line up, so we were like he's touring with Nine Inch Nails! You what? Christ! Class.

AC: He's an awesome drummer

DA: Oh he's amazing, that gig, was that the one....

AC: Is he the one who doesn't like flying?

DA: Travis Barker that is

AC: Oh is it?

DA: He travels everywhere by boat

AC: Right I knew there was one drummer round about that time

DA: Yeah Travis Barker

AC: Ah right

DA: 'Cause he gets cruises to everywhere [laughter] he goes on a cruise liner with his family like [inaudible] Bingo, sat there [laughter] [inaudible] [laughter]

AC: Cool, is there anything else you'd like to add, sorry we went off piste a bit there then.

DA: Ah no not really I've been lucky to have grown up in Aberdare with so many great people like and it's just fab and I think even now, when you look at the new bands coming through, Shovelface and things like that and you look at them and think yeah it's gonna be fine innit

AC: Yeah, keep sustaining it like?

DA: Yeah, everything's gonna be cool with the music scene round here, you got people coming up now they're still listening to the same bands that we were listening to then, they're still rocking the same Ride the Lightning T shirts that we all had y'know I think it's just great isn't it, it's so good to see 'cause you, it's easy to um, as an older member of the sort of music scene now it's really easy to look at the younger kids and write them off [AC: Yeah] oh like I'm not listening to that like it's y'know they're gonna be shit they're [inaudible] Fallout Boy and all this but I think y'know when you

actually dig into it they love it y'know like Joe from ah Shovelface is like a massive fan of Idols, they're all like big fans of like Metallica and the Pixies and I just think like, yeah, sound it's all going the same way like, good for them like, it's class.

AC: I'm going to stop the recording there.

DA: Yes, no problem at all.

Interview with Gerry Dufrain [G] | Cameron James [C] Bradley Brannock [B] 19-02-2020 @ 12:01 pm in the Shed

*Cerig (nephew of G) and Huw (friends/family with the band) present in the background

AC: Hello guys

C/B/G: Hello, hiya, alright

AC: How're you doing? Thank you for meeting me.

G/C/B: That's okay

G: We've only just got together really it nearly didn't happen [laughs] yeah gastro intestinal bleeding [talking about Cam] [inaudible]

AC: Remember I've gotta write this [laughter] [inaudible]

G: You don't have to write Anne just don't ask us any questions right [laughter] [inaudible] sorry...

AC: What music do you like?

B: What music?

AC: Yeah

B: Heavy metal [laughter]

G: Brad wouldn't be in the band unless he knew it was a heavy metal band [laughter] Bad News [inaudible] it is quite eclectic.

B: Do you mean what type of stuff or anything we like or what? [AC: Yeah] well we're connected over a Firehose record really [G: inaudible] connected us originally] so it's the bassist and drummer from Minute Men [inaudible] 80s SST from America who were absolutely amazing...

G: Um, Cameron stealed me off someone from another band [B: I lent a record to our friend Johnny] he lent the record to Cam [C] and Cameron played that to me and got me stoned and then played me his riffs and stole me and Brad wasn't in the band at the time [B: No] he's connected to that obviously [inaudible] musically it's eclectic tastes isn't it for everything really.

B: Yeah like a lot of

C: That 80s SST [lists off a few bands] Minute Men [inaudible] and like metal [inaudible]

B: Slayer

G: Than discovered Jane's Addiction [inaudible]

HUW: There's only one music and that's punk rock [inaudible]

G: What is punk?

AC: Yeah

G: We were having this discussion earlier actually as to what punk is. Is it a genre it isn't is it [C: Not now] [B: It's overrated] well punk isn't really a genre it's a feeling more than anything [inaudible] attitude [inaudible] attitude [inaudible]

B: Ah take 5, Timeout the album is called actually

G: Timeout, yeah that was a big influence on me. My father being, my father's a jazz drummer [inaudible] ah especially with Brubeck he used to come up to me and say what time's this in? I dunno? I can play it and that kind of transfers now 'cause we play lots of different time signatures don't we and I never know the names of the different time signatures.

B: We got a song that's directly inspired by Brubeck [G: Yeah]

AC: And what's that called then?

B: That's called 5 point 5

AC: And why is it inspired?

[Inaudible]

G: Wanted it in 5 4 really [inaudible] I always wanted to play in 5 4 'cause of Take Five and there's a drum solo in Take Five in 5 4 which is difficult 5 4 is deceptively hard to play in [AC: Yeah, yeah] so he [B] wrote it for me really.

B: Yeah, it's instrumental so it's like verse chorus don't mean anything really but there's one bit that is kind of towards that I can't think of the right word... homage

G: Homage [inaudible] our take on a groovy 5 like [AC: Yeah, yeah] 'cause like Brubeck opened up 5 4 nobody would really, especially in jazz nobody would really [inaudible] use different types of [inaudible] he uses swing and he'd been to Turkey that where he wrote Blue [inaudible] which is in 9 8 [inaudible] you've been to Turkey yeah and he came back thinking oh I wanna do something like that and 5 4 was a time signature that nobody really used it being a difficult time signature [AC: Yeah, yeah] and he made it groovy and the reason I like it is that Joe Morello is one of my favourite drummers, I named my son after him but I mean to make a five groovy is difficult, I mean you found it when you was looking for um, sampled beats in a groovy five style it's basically a Morello 5 [B: Yeah] 'cause it's the only way to groove a five really. You got Brubeck [sings a bit of it] opens it up like so that's the kind of homage it's got that kind of a feel to it but it's completely different to [inaudible]

C: Gong

G: Yeah Gong, we all came from different musical places originally but [5:34] there's a commonality to it all [inaudible] y'know I came from metal y'know but then got into the more sort of alternative stuff and then. You turned me on, I'm pointing at B [AC: B] [laughter] you turned me onto all this, the skate stuff the SST [inaudible] and playing with him completely changed my drumming [inaudible] but to be honest I think I was more influenced by D Boon who didn't play drums y'know I think he was more of an influence on me rather than the drummer [AC: Alright] 'cause of the way he wrote songs and [inaudible] whole band really but his y'know attitude to it. Yeah the way he wrote for guitar was very percussive [inaudible] yeah very sort of angular and [makes the sounds he means like chopping chords] stabbing like y'know. In the early days literally the Minute Men [inaudible] like 50 seconds, 80 seconds y'know it was bang! Have that onto the next one and that had a big influence on me [inaudible] these long drawn out songs and it was just like [shouts loudly and fast] have that you fucker [laughter] y'know. I though oh I like that.

AC: So how would you describe the music you play?

B: Cthulhu math rock jazz

G: Cthulhu math rock jazz okay, yeah

HUW: Cool!

- B: If I'm talking about us to people I say heavy psychedelic rock, I think that kinda covers it [inaudible] going on about this and that all the time [inaudible]
- C: Years ago before Brad got in with TUN, me and Gerry used to hang out loads and we wanted a band where we could just get wrecked and not really care about what you're playing y'know. That's what it came from I think, that's what we did originally [G: Yeah] [AC: Like freeform almost?] yeah we just wanted like loads of feedback and Gerry does a drum solo and being wrecked [laughter] [G: Yeah, wrecked] yeah instead of having to think oh y'know you gotta play this and that, it isn't quite like that now but that's where it came from.
- G: And that was, that was over 10 years I think? We came up with, that concept [laughs] shall we call...
- C: TUN is heavy [G: Yeah] but T O N people will say that's ton [inaudible]
- G: It can't be said any other way than TUN, but yeah, that is what we kinda did. Years later Brad started playing bass again, Behaviour started playing bass again [AC: B] ah B [laughter] hi B! [B: Hey! Hi G] he wanted to jam, it was kinda perfect we'd never played [inaudible] but we kinda collaborated [B: Yeah] well we were Pobl Yr Pants weren't we [inaudible] and Cam had some lyrics [inaudible] and the legendary Benn kidney drama [inaudible] Nigel Benn it was the headline Benn kidney drama, well that was the name of our EP straight away [laughter] but um, yeah that's kind of what we did for 5 years really wasn't it. 'Cause Brad, B living in Brighton um we don't get together very often, twice a year if we were lucky really for 5 years but we'd just get fucked wouldn't we [C: Yeah to start off yeah]
- B: In keeping [inaudible] the first jam we had um was here in the Shed and I just turned up, brought a bag of mushrooms [inaudible] [G: I thought one of us should be grounded] we took a shit load of mushrooms and went out into outer space but it just worked [inaudible] like [inaudible]
- G: We still pick from that
- B: Yeah sure, there's a lot of feedback and stuff as well
- G: But some riffs came out of it
- AC: How would you describe your writing processes? [laughs] [10:01]
- G: Now, we've kinda changed, we started like I say, we started to pick ideas out of that original jam and you had a couple of riffs [C: Yeah] pointing at C [laughs] um, that we [inaudible] with, themes more than anything we came back to, we'd improvise and then oh listen to [inaudible] it could go completely different places and then, I gave up drinking and that kinda did structure us a bit didn't it [B: Yeah] you guys were cool and didn't bring beer to rehearsals
- B: We [inaudible] tape it and go over it
- G: Sometimes
- B: Sometimes
- G: Sometimes [inaudible]

- B: Slightly erratic
- G: A few jams went missing [inaudible]
- B: The other thing that's massive for us was um, GarageBand 'cause like me and Cam like he could say oh I done this riff he can send it over and I can play around with it and get a rough idea together and then we'd send it on WhatsApp for Gerry to hear it and say oh yeah, yeah and then we just get together and mess around with it. So, but in terms of structuring and stuff, I mean that changed things for us, 'cause like how, we met like once, twice a year for 4 or 5 years, how the fuck are you going to get any structure down with that. So we did a lot of the [C: GarageBand] GarageBand stuff, just getting an outline of stuff and then we come here and knock it out, but yeah that's a big thing.
- AC: So is it um, is it fair to say that wherever you were you would only do that music with each other [B: Yeah] [G: Yeah] 'cause you went away to Brighton, another band might've just got another bass player in do y'know what I mean? [inaudible]
- G: Well y'know I mean [inaudible]
- C: I think it's because we've been butties for years and years as well isn't it [inaudible]
- B: Going back to the Ven diagram shit we were talking about, we're into the same although it's different stuff we're into the same, like there's enough [inaudible] we're into, that's the same and we kinda like the way it sounds I dunno? [inaudible]
- G: But it's the friendship more than anything that keeps it going, it hasn't really just been a band for us it's been [inaudible] catharsis [inaudible] if you're going through some shit TUN [inaudible]
- C: It's taken its own entity now hasn't it, the TUN thing like, bigger than the sum of its parts
- G: We were talking about punk earlier now TUN feels more like oh that's TUN as fuck, y'know, you are TUN as fuck y'know what I mean [AC: Yeah] TUN WUN like. But y'know like our mate H I've said to him, I aid you are TUN as fuck! [laughter] 'cause he is isn't he, he's got the essence of TUN about him y'know what I mean [inaudible] like I say it's become an entity of its own, it's TUN like, y'know but yeah, I mean it couldn't exist without one of us [B: No] if one of us, we couldn't replace like [AC: Okay] we could add to but this is the core like [C: We could add to it yeah] It's a bit like Zeppelin when Bonham went you like oh they can't [AC: Yeah, yeah] I think it would have been the same if any one of them had gone, nah, 'cause it was them like. This whole idea of bands [inaudible] change, are you really a band then? 'Cause I mean like the Minute Men, D Boon died they didn't carry on with the Minute Men.
- B: Don't talk about any of us dying Gerry please [laughter] [inaudible]
- AC: You spoke about writing so do you rehearse only here then the Shed?
- G/C/B: Yeah
- AC: And how often would you say you rehearse here now recently y'know that last year I'd say.

- C: We've gigged more than jammed yeah
- G: Like I said we got, we formed a set which we'd never thought we'd have a set [laughs] we sort of played with the idea of going live but improvising but when we got structure we realised hang on we got some tunes here and we had 5 I think and we were like we could actually gig this so I said oh I'd better put us on Facebook now then, hahaha put us on Facebook and within 24 hours do you want a gig in February ha-ha oh shit! This was like January [15:00] [laughs] and y'know we had literally just got the set together like.
- C: I don't think we got together to gig and stuff did we? We just did it for a laugh like.
- G: Yeah, actually we never thought we were gonna gig it, until [C: Oh actually this is ah] 70 Odd weren't it we got 70 Odd together and that was like fucking hell, the sound there and so we started taking other themes and think or we can extrapolate it on that if we wanted to, and then that became like I say, oh, it's a set [laughs] we got like 25 minutes b'there [B: Yeah] but then it was like within a month we had to gig.
- B: Oh yeah for sure between 2014 and then end of 2018 it was once maybe twice a year [inaudible]
- G: I think the gig was, wasn't it the twelfth time we'd played together? [B: Something like that] [inaudible] 12th time we played together really...
- B: So then last year we like, also um, just ah I had some time from um being towards the end of my degree um so I was able to come a lot more and yeah [inaudible]
- G: Last year, wasn't really, we didn't jam much, it was more getting together when Jamie got back from Brighton, Brad come back from Brighton, sorry I'm confusing [inaudible] [laughter] it's really hard to do [inaudible] what was I saying? [laughter]
- B: So like yeah once or twice a year [G: Oh yeah...] it was getting like fucking [inaudible] mostly gigs
- G: We kinda got together just to go through the set 'cause obviously we haven't played together for months, then there was a gig and he'd go back to Brighton and then we'd have another gig so we didn't get much writing done but we did, started towards the end of the year, but um, so yeah last year has been mental really, it just went from us just getting together just to get together, a lot of the jam sessions is us talking bollocks really [C: Yeah] [laughter]
- B: All of them [laughter]
- G: 30% music and 70% bollocks [laughter]
- C: Guru we did that last year
- G: Guru yeah [C: Yeah] 'cause we wrote that as we went through the year, didn't we and that developed. That's another thing our songs developed as we played more live [AC: Okay] 'cause the original set from the first gig the songs there are completely different to how they are now really, accents...
- C: I think you pick up on the nuances and stuff [inaudible]
- AC: What sort of things? What changed in your guitar parts?

- C: Um, it's usually like um, muting certain bits and silly things like that [G: Happy accidents] on certain other bits yeah...
- G: We can pinpoint where, y'know your little feedback bit in Hands? [C: Yeah] in She has Normal Hands, in the 2nd part normally there was no feedback but one gig in Jacs and you can see the moment it's on YouTube you lean to do something and it goes wahh and I remember as, 'cause I don't open my eyes, so I heard that and I thought fuck that's good! [inaudible] and I thought he did it on purpose yeah...
- B: We turn up at the next jam both is us said you should keep that in [inaudible]
- G: And the beginning of Normal Hands came from a mistake as well, the whole cow bell thing, that's so a lot of that, like Guru again, that developed with playing it live and [C: That's it yeah, just that, I love the effect of that swell y'know [makes sound like a swell] it's just basically a noise like.
- G: Brad had a bass line which was in swing but a deceptive swing and it as like quite heavy swing and it was solid so that gave you then room to use the wahhhh and you did fucking use the [inaudible] and we thought right and I used to be really sloppy when I was drinking and ah I'm not now so it's nice to be able to lockdown with behaviour b'there while Cam can [inaudible] [laughter] Cam can just go fucking nuts [inaudible]
- AC: Right recordings you were saying earlier about recording rehearsals are there any other recordings? And how did you go about it? Who was involved?
- B: Originally it was my iPad with um an iRig and then I'd plug a microphone into that, that went in and I recorded on like um [inaudible] app on there but yeah that was a bit patchy [inaudible] get wrecked and like [20:00] and go yeah it's definitely recording [C: And it wouldn't record like] [inaudible] [C: That's a great jam did you record it? No] mic and then it would just drop off half way through and shit like that, so we have to police Behaviour's behaviour [inaudible] [laughter]
- C: I had a crack at it didn't I
- G: Yeah [inaudible] we got in touch with our friend Nathan Renney then, who is, what does he actually do? [B: He lectures in Bristol uni doesn't he?] but what's the, it's all to do with [B: Musicology] yeah [inaudible]
- AC: Musicology?
- B: I just made that up [laughter]
- G: [inaudible] electronics anyway [inaudible] he [B: I'd say convincingly as well] yeah, he studied producing, production [inaudible] he knows how to build electrical components [AC: Yeah, yeah] he's got this tiny little 8 track, it's literally that big, what am I describing? Less than a shoe box, with 8 inputs and he came here, he came to the Shed.
- B: Mic'd Gerry drum sup and a couple of [inaudible] for our...
- G: Not many, not many, a couple of overheads I think and um then hi hat, one over the toms, one snare and that was it really. One overhead I think on the cymbals, he got a lovely sound on the kit.

AC: Was that the official recordings you did?

G/C/B: Yeah

G: Yeah, those ones, y'know it's an 8 track and he did it for nothing just 'cause [inaudible] I've known Nathan for years, since he was a nipper like. Didn't know he was a drummer [inaudible] good as well.

B: And he plays bass

G: Yeah bass is his primary instrument

B: And he makes music out of plants

C: Apparently? I'm sure he said something like that?

G: Yeah, he does strange stuff yeah [inaudible] you should meet Nathan [AC: Yeah, yeah] He's really interesting Nathan [laughter] yeah and it was great we just did it in an afternoon. Um, we can't use one of them.

B: Yeah we fucked up one of them like [inaudible]

G: First take and we all thought that's fucking great way hay! Go onto the next one! And we didn't hear for ages did we 'cause he was mixing it for ages [AC: Yeah, yeah] and he sent a few but he had to work on Portal and Chipfleg for a while 'cause obviously there's lots to it, so it was hard y'know ups and downs the production on it but um, and then he sent it to us and we listened to it and went oh fuck! There's 3 major errors and I'm like, I mean blatant aren't they [B: Yeah] there's one drum error that no one is hearing, no one ever [laughs] I don't even want to hear it again it's horrible [inaudible]

B: I think I start playing in a wrong bit [G: Production on it is great]

C: Yeah, my timing on [inaudible]

G: It sounds amazing, but we fuck up [laughs] [inaudible]

B: Out of the 5 songs [inaudible] out of the 5 recorded 4 of them are on our Bandcamp and then um 3 of them I made videos for on YouTube [AC: Yeah, yeah, you did the videos did you?] yeah, yeah [C: Yeah, fair play] I just stole other people's footage from YouTube and then um plastered it with a load of effects from some free software I got on a Mac and then ah some of it I synced it up to the music, sync clips like you know you got in um 5 point 5 the middle bit is a chop up of fly Garrick mushrooms and Joe Morello's drum solo from Take Five and um they like chop back and fore thing.

C: It didn't take you long did it? [inaudible]

B: The first one [inaudible] It took like a night [inaudible]

G: They [mushrooms] open just as it goes wah, wah, wah, did it really well man [inaudible] how do you make a video about old people fucking without being [B: Yeah] back on YouTube [laughs] [B: Oh no lots of Henry Miller in there] Henry Miller, just Henry Miller not old people.

C: [inaudible] 70 Odd I'm thinking about my [inaudible] levels now [G/B: Yeah] blood transfusions [inaudible] [B: That's what it's about] [laughter]

G: You had it 80 Odd didn't you? [inaudible]

C: 70 odd, 80 odd and then I'd have to have a blood transfusion.

G: Is it so 70 Odd is transfusion then

AC: I thought it was about blood transfusion [inaudible and laughter]

G/B: Yeah! [inaudible]

G: We've never actually known what 70 Odd means really

B: Don't say that it's being taped!

G: That's alright mun [inaudible] [laughter] [inaudible] 'cause I was gonna sing on it see or get someone, gonna get someone to [25:00] get someone to do vocals on it and we tried a few people, we didn't try them out, people were suggested [B: We thought about it] and we sussed them out and we thought no, so I [inaudible] and I was gonna sing on it and thought, no [laughs] we'll keep it instrumental.

B: Apparently unless you're gonna be able to do it, to play it live, [C: I wouldn't be able to think...] exactly, so we just wanted to have the version like how [C: Like different versions, there's 50 Odd, 60 Odd [laughs] 70 Odd yeah]

G: But it fitted with old people fucking [inaudible]

C: Trying to pick something clever like.

AC: Okay, so um [G: Chipfleg [laughs]] are there any responsibilities or roles you all have?

B: Responsibilities [laughs] I definitely don't have [inaudible] Gerry's the responsible adult here [AC: Yeah?] [G: Leave it out] ah like [G: A band who relies on their drummer, fucking hell no wonder it's so bad [laughter]

C: I mean Brad's got a car [inaudible]

G: Brad's, B's got a car

B: We've had like, so, like we said earlier like um, a lot of the time me and Cam coming up with things just on like GarageBand back and fore um, and then if you [G: The ying and yang analogy with me] yeah [G: 'Cause] um [inaudible] and we take it to the Shed and all that, from us jamming here to doing anything whatsoever um Gerry ah G has been the driving force with that like social media, um, getting us gigs um [C: Pumping us up giving us confidence] that's the whole thing like y'know the way Gerry, ah G told it earlier [G: Dead inside see] [laughter] it sounded a bit more organic than it was, like basically towards the end of 2018 Gerry's like we're fucking gigging get your shit together [laughter] he was probably too polite to say that but without that we'd still be doing whatever, completely the driving force behind it.

- C: Whenever I've been a bit oh it sounds a bit shit and my guitar b'there and [inaudible] nah it's bollocks man it's brilliant y'know [G: I will tell him off, they're both] [inaudible]
- G: I beat myself up about it sometimes but I mean, I can't do that I gotta make you two [inaudible] I think the last year gigging, especially you, 'cause you can see when you started, first started gigging you were kinda like I'm just gonna play, just let me playing [inaudible] yeah but you could see as the gigs progressed you could see your shoulders going and then like you could see your face going Oh! It was like you were fucking the guitar, yes that's what I want! Come on, more of that [laughs] 'cause I've always been a show off y'know to be honest the show off part of my drumming is probably more effective than my actual drumming [inaudible] but sorted myself out and, but yeah I've always, I believe in it y'know what I mean I believe in them two and in us 'cause we're so, we're so close and like I say for years we weren't ready [inaudible] it would have been silly y'know we would have gone on stage [C: We got away with it as well!] [laughter] I think people would have gone fucking hell y'know what I mean, because we were good at improvising y'know we did some good stuff [C: Improvising] nah we don't do a lot of improvising anymore, but I mean we go for like literally 40 minutes sometimes [inaudible] [B: Gerry our manager] [inaudible] well, in a sense like [inaudible] [B: He's done everything man] but I like doing it.
- AC: How do you guys manage when you're not here...
- B: Yeah, I don't think they exist when I'm not around [laughter]
- G: No, not really, we just disappear
- B: Y'know like if a tree falls in the forest [inaudible] if there's no one there did it make a noise. It's like when I can't see them, I'm not really sure that they actually exist [laughter] I mean I can see photos of them but it's like [laughter] they could be doctored they could be manufactured.
- C: Every time I see him, I thank him for bringing me into existence in this moment [laughter]
- B: And really, I think it would be difficult for you to dissuade me from that position [laughter] I don't know what biological proof you can give me [laughter] [30:00]
- C: I think we have just tried to jam the two of us up here [G: Yeah, we have] it's not the same really.
- G: We do jam separately yeah [laughter] [inaudible]
- B: That's exactly the type of thing people who don't exist would say [laughter] just be aware right [laughter] you gotta know what you're dealing with, the type of, type of lies they'll spin [laughter]
- C: Yeah so, we don't exist basically [laughter]
- G: But we don't need transport [laughter] [inaudible] 'cause we don't exist and therefore there's no way in the world we could do anything y'know [laughter] [inaudible] we don't much really do we, we don't get the chance really [C: No] [inaudible] Jobs, um, keep talking while, while Anne recovers [inaudible] yeah we have done it haven't we [B: Yeah] we are separate entities then nuh, tuh and too, unt you're Unt on garage band aren't you [speaking to C] [inaudible] me and Jamie are, are Nu [inaudible] and

laughing] we discovered from this that me and T [inaudible and laughing] you're calling us B, G and C now and we've [inaudible and laughing]

C: 5 point 5 as well

G: Yeah that's where 5 point 5 comes from 'cause it's Ian Phillip Headford Ph [inaudible]

C: I'm kinda neutral

G: You are [inaudible] it's acidic actually yeah [inaudible] we were living on that misconception for years and said it to people live as well [inaudible and laughter]

AC: Um, okay [G: Sorry] [laughter] [inaudible] how important is making music to you I mean generally not just TUN but...

G: Vital I would say

C: Massive part of my life I think yeah

G: Yeah and creating it as well. I started off playing covers and I don't like playing covers I don't like playing other people's stuff really unless you're gonna do a completely different bent on it [inaudible] been like this Since You've Been Gone [laughs] we used to do a cover right, every jam, well nearly every jam [C: Yeah] we did Wheels of Steel Saxon [laughter] it never sounds anything like it [laughter] [inaudible]

B: There's like a kernel of [inaudible]

G: We did Since You've Been Gone only the [inaudible] it weren't even the full riff it went [sings opening riff] y'know that one [AC: Yeah, yeah] I don't think it even went that far did I think you went [sings a bit more, first 2 chords] and then it just changed [laughter] completely after that so we called it [inaudible] it hasn't been like this since you've been gone [inaudible] [laughter] So, yeah it's vitally important for us to create I don't like y'know I mean if you do a completely different spin on a cover then fair enough but just going out straight and doing covers [inaudible] a tribute band [inaudible] [B: So between] yeah creative is...

B: I moved away from Wales in '96 and like Gerry said, like G was in a band with [AC: U, T] U um [laughter] [inaudible] shall we ditch that so anyway I moved away from un Wales in 1996 and I, in that time I used to fuck around with things like electronic music recording and things like that and so like ambient sounding guitar and even though I hadn't played in a band with anybody in a long time it's just part of it yeah [35:00] [inaudible] yeah Blim yeah and the solo stuff like [inaudible]

G: I've been a drum slut haven't I [laughter] openly but y'know Cameron has always been my musical wife, and Brad now. Oh what are? Civil partnership isn't it [inaudible] but I have, been a drum, the thing is I moved to Bath and I played with some bands in Bath and I always played in lots of bands anyway, I was always a slut there weren't many drummers around back then back in the day, there's a few now, but again now Aberdare's only using the same 3 drummers on rotation [inaudible] aint they, um, everyone wants to play guitar. I played in an orchestra briefly which was an interesting experience but I think, I played for um, it was a uni orchestra it was for ah The Whizz, the ah funk version of the Wizard of Oz [AC: Alright] the original Broadway version [AC: Yeah, yeah] I remember him handing me the music and [laughs] I just handed it straight back, he was like you don't read at all? I said

nope hahahahaha [laughter] did it though and I was drunk but um I think that's helped me in terms of, I can switch to any style y'know 'cause I've played so many styles and with the way we write I've gotta be able to switch 'cause we're never in the same oeuvre are we [laughs] really, you can tell it's TUN y'know but y'know. I mean we go from like acid jazz kinda thing, next thing 5 point 5 to I mean Guru is just pure stoner isn't it and then Chipfleg is like fuck knows [laughs] Shellac meets Gorky's Psychotic Monkey practically according to Neil Galsworthy. But ah, what did he say now? It sounded like Steve Albini out on the piss with Gorky's Psychotic Monkey after they'd been in Mr. Benn's dress up room [laughter] [inaudible] that's a pretty good review [laughs] but um, where were we? [AC: So what music means to you] oh yeah, I mean yeah it's always been vital for us isn't it, and like I say cathartic for us as well especially with TUN because we're so close and there has been shit going on in our lives like it is in everyone's lives TUN has been instrumental in pulling us back from the brink at times y'know. I remember one jam when me and Vicky had separated the first time, I had a bandage on my head from where I'd crashed into the fucking chest of drawers there's a video of me going, flapping about [laughs] with a fucking bandage that got me through y'know what I mean. You bought me a china cymbal [B: That's right] [inaudible]

B: If I was in charge personally of what drumkit Gerry would play...

G: Neil Peart would look at it and say nah I can't play that it's just too much [laughter] what the fuck! who put that together like [inaudible]

C: I get lost in it, it's like a spiritual thing like [inaudible] trance sort of stuff y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] just get transported somewhere else where you just don't think about nothing, you're just existing.

G: Especially in the improvising days, we just went didn't we y'know [inaudible] back to the very essence of TUN when we spoke about feedback and drum solo it was very much that essence wasn't it [inaudible]

C: I used to be well into magic and the Occult, proper heavy into it and it kinda came through in the music I think kind of.

G: Especially in that in Guru, when you got that swell thing...

C: [inaudible] power and it's gotta be checked sometimes

AC: How do you find the time to make music then? You're all working or studying and things like that, how do you manage to fit it in?

C: I just work and if I'm in the house I just pick my guitar up. If I'm lucky I'll go upstairs and mess about on my pedals like [inaudible]

G: Difficult for me 'cause I'm a drummer and I'm in an upstairs flat [laughter]

C: It goes in waves, sometimes I won't play it for a while, then I'll play it constantly and it's like...

G: Yeah it does, it affects your mood doesn't it music and it can change your mood, it can uplift you, and I think the one, I was thinking about this recently 'cause we've both been through heartbreak [40:01] musicians are the only people where heartbreak is actually good for you, 'cause you get stuff out, y'know artists in general really y'know it can be used but in real life it's like you haven't got that outlet and it's

like fucking hell I'm just heartbroken now, bollocks [laughs] [AC: Yeah, yeah] a musician will go I'll write a song about that! It's a major part of, I've got another band it's not the same as TUN but y'know it's an outlet and I enjoy it but it's not TUN because it's not us 3 [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know what I mean it's a different feeling with us 3.

AC: Do you want to add anything?

B: They definitely don't exist when I'm not around [laughter]

G: Anne gave me a lift from Cardiff once right [laughter] [inaudible] what Cardiff doesn't exist when you're in Brighton now does it? [laughter] there's like, basically, I think it's like [inaudible] as far as I could see [G: Do you think the world is created for you?]

AC: What was I? What? [laughter] [inaudible]

B: I'm just saying it's not around when I'm not there [laughter] [inaudible]

AC: What factors do you think make it difficult for people generally to make music somewhere like Aberdare, semi-rural y'know not in the city?

B: Okay I've got an opinion on this [inaudible] I think people should just like chill the fuck out, like a lot, we've played with a couple of bands and most of them are fucking awesome, but I just think they're too worried about stuff they should do just what they want to do like.

AC: What sort of stuff are they worried about?

B: Um, sounding like a certain thing or I don't know like, a couple of people come up at the gigs, after gigs like oh you're, I really like [inaudible] or whatever and I dunno it's just like, I think. Yeah, I don't really know how to put it, I just think people should do more of what they want to do rather than having it in their mind that right I want to be this type of thing and this is what we're gonna do here, this is [inaudible] I think the big thing is like um, like, imagining the outcome rather than the process. So like I wanna be, I wanna have a record or I wanna do a video or I wanna be this or that, rather [inaudible] arises out of you having fun, I just think like if you're having fun playing you should [inaudible] and probably should take more drugs.

G: I agree with that, I can't remember the question [laughter]

B: So, oh, short version what is the obstacles for people making music...

AC: The point you made about processes being just as important as the outcome [B: Yeah, yeah]

G: I forgot what he was saying, and I thought is he actually answering the question?

AC: Not necessarily [laughter] but [inaudible] perspective is a TUN thing and Aberdare thing...

B: Okay, opposite to the thing I was just talking about, I think that's fuelled a lot by um that stuff on TV like um pop factory? [inaudible] what's it called?

AC: X Factor

- B: X Factory [laughter] [inaudible] social media where we actively construct an avatar and we want it to be this thing and it's like you gotta picture in your mind the end product and often without any substance it's like [inaudible]
- G: For fame itself [B: Yeah, absolutely] rather than the actual process of it y'know that enjoyment. I mean for us if we weren't gigging we'd still be coming here and y'know we wouldn't be getting fucked out of our heads any more but we'd still be jamming and still be creating music even if nobody ever listens to it.
- B: I don't think it's necessarily a TUN thing [inaudible] there's other, of course there's other bands approaching [G: You were saying that people come up to us and say [inaudible] but they don't do it themselves] [inaudible] we'd like to do that, well do it then innit yeah. Like going back to Salmon Orbit right we were the first band in Aberdare to start doing our own stuff exclusively our own stuff right 'cause we didn't give a fuck y'know, back then we were doing instrumentals with big John [inaudible] I went nuts, you [C] went nuts and big John just kept it steady y'know and other musicians would come up to us and go [inaudible] [45:21] you're doing your own stuff like only musicians came to watch us really apart from a few people but then people started going like well if they can do it and they're doing 20 minute instrumentals of their own, we can do it, y'know, Kelly in particular, he thought fuck I can do that [inaudible] and it started from there everybody in Aberdare thought I can do that [AC: Yeah, yeah] and you see it no, people are coming up to us and going oh y'know and musicians enjoyed watching us 'cause it's like y'know and again you should do it, but it's not their bent, it's not their style but yeah I totally agree with [inaudible] I think practice space is limited, this place, the Shed is a God send [AC: Yeah, yeah] this has spawned so many bands again [inaudible] 'cause there aren't places to jam really I mean I dunno I think there's few, not in Aberdare but there's a few places you can pay [B: Gerry, what do you think like bands for a start that play here, do you think they're more likely to do the fuck they want? 'Cause this is the fucking crucible of doing what the fuck you want] yeah most of the bands that are doing more of a, something a bit different jam up here don't they, there's so many bands that have been spawned from here over the years.
- AC: Do you think it's an Aberdare thing specifically, like there's a different vibe in each valley?
- [inaudible]
- G: I don't know? The Rhondda's different isn't it. They do seem, yeah the Rhondda [inaudible] they send over a lot of alternative rock [inaudible] no, in terms of what you're saying around here, I mean I don't know much about the Rhondda scene but it seems to be whenever [inaudible] from the Rhondda they're that alternative rock very much down the line alternative rock y'know, nothing, no deviating in any way [inaudible]
- C: In the Rhondda though I've only ever seen cover bands and [inaudible]
- G: There's a lot more cover bands in the Rhondda than there are original bands. That's a definite difference I've noticed that. Merthyr um, Merthyr's there's a lot of original bands in Merthyr [inaudible] there's one band, do you know the Epauettes? [AC: Yeah] they're a Shed band um, they're from Merthyr. Psychic Spies met them when we were back in the early 2000's, we used to play with them if we played Merthyr and brought them over here when we played the Shot and Shell and that. They're a good bunch of boys, they're still playing apparently, they're a kind of a Shed band. So, ah Merthyr again I don't think there's much of a cover scene in Merthyr it's mainly sort of

[B: Yeah] [inaudible] Aberdare seems to be going back to covers [inaudible] as good as Jacs is now for bands and they are still pushing original nights it does seem to be predominantly the tribute act nights that are selling out, rather than the original band nights. It was like for a while, original music was at the forefront again [inaudible] and now it seems to be.

AC: What do you think changed? Why do think originals dipped in favour then if you like?

G: Can I be brutally honest [inaudible] I don't think he'll read this? Ah Barry taking back over Jacs. [AC: Barry? Who's Barry?] Barry Oke, I won't mention his surname [inaudible] B [laughs] He doesn't own it ah, the owner [laughter] he's a builder he is, he owns a building firm ah millionaire but [Barry runs it?] Barry kind of run it for a while, then 'cause Gavin run it originally, great Gavin was but [inaudible] took over when Gavin came back and Gavin was all for original music and getting local bands in whatever and it was great. He was getting big tribute bands in, he's the one who got big bands like Electric 6 and Space, Gavin did all that and Mike , Mike has kinda dropped out now and Barry's back and Barry's all for well he calls himself Barry Oke for Christ's sake, so y'know what you're gonna get y'know. So now I think it's going back to what 'cause they um, to be fair they realised that's where the money is [C: Yeah, I think if you're in a cover band, a good cover band you make money] good God aye [C: We haven't made any money] we did get paid a couple of times [inaudible]

AC: There were more pubs around Aberdare [G: Yeah, I mean the [50:00] the White Lion they still have like the like artists and a guitarist and a y'know and they do have bands there, cover bands, but yeah the, since Jacs a good thing and a bad thing really it's like that's the only place to play now and we played the Sheps but that was Cwmfest] Yeah, yeah [G: but I think mainly now if you want to play, play Jacs which is good 'cause it's a great venue but back in the day there were loads of places y'know the King's head, the National, the Carps [laughs] fucking hell the gigs in the Carps [laughs] fucking hell you'd have Toffers at the back can you see my cock! No Toffers we've seen it every night for the last [inaudible] and loads of places and they were quite a few places where you could practice as well y'know. The Boot, ah Ambulance hall, Canolfan the centre but that had terrible acoustics, we jammed there once and went oh Christ no! [laughs]

AC: What's happened to these places then why are they not...

G: I don't think [inaudible] like back in the day I just think it was [inaudible] bands would ask if they could jam there, there was a place in Cwmbach as well that was an old um Ambulance hall [inaudible]

B: What about TJ's over in Merthyr 'cause there was a website around that as well Dragon Ninja so there was like a whole sort of community [AC: [inaudible] DM's or something it was called?] TJ's is in Newport [inaudible] or whatever but that was like a big thing and like music, like an alternative music scene around that but I don't know what happened that closed and the website went away but that was like a yeah, a forum where bands and people went there a lot [AC: I remember going there myself] yeah, so there was like a big, I think from the outside it looked like there was a bigger scene going on in Merthyr [inaudible] it must be around what you're saying the venues pop up and allow like a platform for people to do different stuff and then other people want to do more of it I guess, I don't know.

- AC: Okay, I suppose I should wait for Gerry to get back, will he be long? [toilet break] no [laughs] crucial question this one, the last one, is there anything, you would like to add?
- G: [laughs] the trepidation [inaudible] I was going to stay on that point actually that um, I don't know if he'll mind me saying this but I was talking to MT Mike Thomas, 'cause he was booking the bands [inaudible] and um, I asked him just before Christmas about the gigs in the future and he said to be honest I've had a guts full I'm dropping out like. So I asked why and one of the reasons for him was quite personal I mean he has been good to the bands around here, he's got them good gigs and **support** slots with the big bands who come in and he said when Headnoise launched their album about 15 people turned up right, none of the bands that he'd helped out bothered to turn up right, which I think is shitty y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] 'cause he has helped out in Aberdare. When Barry was doing it, it was going shit and then Mike took over started getting us gigs and he was helping out loads of bands, they didn't nobody reciprocated in any way y'know what I mean, so on that, I feel for him on that but he also said what I said it's going back to covers he said, nobody wants to hear really different music. You got your bands around here that do the blues rock kinda thing which everyone will always love 'cause it's Aberdare [inaudible] and Aberdare does blues rock well y'know it does do it well y'know there's brilliant musicians in Aberdare but um he just got disillusioned with it, nobody wants to hear, it could have been Headnoise are difficult to forget aren't they [B: Yeah] they're doing their electro pop thing [AC: Yeah, yeah] and y'know Aberdare just don't get it, y'know when they go elsewhere they go down great like [inaudible] Bradford on Avon which is a place you wouldn't think, Bradford on Avon, Bristol, Bath, and there's a pub there, I saw it when I went to visit a friend, they go down great there and they have loads of alternative bands and there's bands who they can play with 'cause they're similar like we found with Mustard Allegro [AC: Yeah, yeah] now before Christmas 'cause they're fucking great like, we've kept in touch with them, I mean we don't see bands who are doing [55:00] instrumentals and being funny 'cause y'know there was humour involved in y'know what I mean [B: And showmanship] showmanship they were putting on a show [B: Loved them] and we've kept in touch with them and gonna get gigs with them up there y'know and they're gonna come down here obviously but it's better for us to get up there because how long [inaudible]
- B: 2019 was like that was a year for us and it's not gonna happen like that, Jacs [G: No, I'm not saying that] we were just talking about [G: I don't think it's the same with music] we talk about like phases of ah, of um, music in bigger oh there's RM's, RM's it just came to me. RM's in Merthyr there was a big scene for a while and like here with Jacs the last couple of years [G: Yeah] Mike doing it and then um, that's gonna, that's gone so you see like a lull happening for a while [G: Possibly I dunno but then, I mean they are still promoting the um original nights and they're looking for original bands but they're actually um, but they're actually saying on, on there, we're looking for bands for original nights rather than asking local bands [AC: Yeah, yeah] I don't think Barry has got that connection but I think for us, obviously I'd like to do Aberdare we need to branch out because I think our sound will be appreciated someplace else, better.
- AC: This Barry has he not got a very good relationship with the bands then?
- G: No, not really, I mean he comes from karaoke y'know that's his thing like so and he knows all the good cover bands and y'know, they're his mates so y'know and it's money for him and the boss it's money and that kind of entertainment y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] whereas with Gavin it was all of it just that, we're all let's have a proper venue where local bands can play and we'll get big bands in, whereas now let's just

get a fucking tribute artist in [AC: Yeah, yeah] I mean they do have good tribute acts in there don't get me wrong, the Zeppelin one was supposed to be brilliant, the Floyd one was supposed to be brilliant so y'know and y'know you can't see a lot of these bands anymore so I can see why people want to go away and see them, it's not great for local bands, there we are, other than that y'know.

AC: Anything to add?

B: No cheers Anne

G: You were lovely

AC: Thank you guys! [laughter] I'll just stop that.

Interview with Harry Dewey, 02-02-2020, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 12:12 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

HD – Harry Dewey, Participant

AC: Hi Harry how're you doing?

HD: I'm good thank you.

AC: Thanks for meeting me.

HD: No Worries

AC: Um, so I'm gonna ask you about your music-making [HD: Yeah] what you do, who you do it with all that kind of stuff, but I've got a couple of general questions first to ask you. So what sort of music do you like?

HD: Do I like? [AC: Yeah] oh, um, quite wide ranging I suppose really um, anything from um rock, alternative rock, some err hip hop err stuff like that, um, yeah anything that's good really, I'm not biased in the sense that a particular genre and I only listen to that, I pretty much listen, mainly rock I guess but um, yeah a bit of everything.

AC: What is it about hip hop then, 'cause that's quite different to rock I suppose...

HD: Yeah, I suppose it's the rhythmic aspects and some like um like [inaudible] is like quite technical in some aspects and the way it fuses different genres and um sort of err, the melodic sort of err delivery and stuff as well, different to rock as well, quite interesting. Yeah, no I just like it and the vibe, like everything's cool [inaudible] and sort of classic stuff as well, classic hip hop and Dre and [inaudible] like and ah yeah it's a good vibe like.

AC: So you just like what you like

HD: Yeah, yeah [inaudible] yeah, the classical stuff not that I'm massive into it but y'know but I'll happily listen and enjoy some stuff.

AC: Classical music you mean as well?

HD: Yeah, yeah, not like [inaudible] the Planets in the school like and y'know I used to love that like kicking into Mars like [AC: Yeah] stomping around the room or whatever [AC: Fantastic] yeah whatever, it's not something I've got loads of records, I've got The Planets yeah just whatever really.

AC: Okay, so what music do you play in the band then?

HD: Um, I, I just sing live in the band um, but I also play guitar and write um some, some of the music um [inaudible] sometimes it's like fully formed stuff but then maybe it's just riffs or ideas but um primarily singing and lyric writing then I suppose.

AC: So how would you describe the music that you all make together?

HD: [Laughs] well, um, I think it's not something that we ah purposely set out oh we're gonna be different or whatever but it's people's general consensus that we're probably on the alternative side or some of it, um, it's alternative rock I guess as a broad ah descriptor or whatever but ah, but yeah there's elements of folk, erm, heavy rock, stoner rock I guess there's a bit of everything in y'know. Ah sort of drumming wise, a bit of sort of drum and bass in some of the bits or whatever y'know it's just like, yeah just try loads of things and y'know, try, try something, to keep it sort of fresh and new and exciting really for us. Y'know obviously for people the main goa is that we enjoy doing what we do sort of thing y'know what I mean.

AC: What's the set-up of the band then y'know the [inaudible]

HD: Yeah, yeah, it's ah, well it's sort of changed lately, we used to be drummer, bass, two guitarists and singer and, and that's still the case. Um, five years ago now um there was a little sort of line-up change and ah we had a new guitarist and drummer um, but, ah new bassist and sorry and drummer but he's also shit hot at guitar so there are um three guitarists now so they actually swap different songs, with one going on the bass so and it's really changed the way we've approached stuff, y'know opened the sound up as well I guess 'cause you get, and he's a songwriter and lyricist contributed to the lyrics as well so it's um, yeah so it's um, it's interesting live [laughs] swapping over, we're still sort of working that out I think [inaudible] so that's the sort of standard set-up sort of...

AC: What was the reason for the change in line-up?

HD: Um, the drummer went to the army, joined the army um so he left. Um, with Luke I suppose it's a little more sensitive err sort of subject, yeah [AC: What, sort of personal subject?] Ah not that we fell out um I think he was having trouble with um sort of drink ah and sort of in the band then it was at a time where we were trying to push a bit more and trying and I guess it was sort of hard working that through and it was sort of falling apart in a sense and then it was, it was a tough decision for me, one of the worse things I've ever had to say, done in some respects [AC: You guys had to...] so we made the decision y'know as Ashley was leaving and we asked him to leave at the same time [AC: How did he take it?] Not good, ah, um, he'd just come sort of through that, we'd um helped him with that, um, but yeah it was um, yeah but probably only now, but it's still an elephant in the room even now I would say. Y'know we're back friends [AC: You're alright friends?] Yeah, [inaudible] the groom's brother's wedding the other day and stuff y'know we are friends yeah but um it's sort of an under, we've sort of made up recently, well last year or so and had a bit of a heart to heart as regards to the situation but. Yeah, it's weird in a way because being away from the band lifestyle shall we say um sort of, he sort of found his now wife and just had a kid now and sort of assisted him, not that, by proxy then, y'know um, it sort of [AC: Getting him out of that environment was probably the best thing for him?] yeah in some ways yeah. So yeah um, yeah it's weird how things turn out isn't it, but yeah, there was some yeah. I'm still, as you can probably tell it's, it's quite a hard thing yeah and you wonder whether it was the right decision or not [inaudible]

AC: I think for him it sounds like a good thing...

HD: Yeah it does, yeah um I suppose it's easy considering the outcome, with hindsight I guess it was but y'know at the time it was err, we had a great time together, yeah.

AC: That kind of highlights how serious you're taking the whole music thing then really because...

HD: Yeah I suppose y'know, we do take it y'know are a kind of serious band in the sense y'know we really care about the music, where, where we couldn't be less serious people y'know, y'know we're not, take ourselves seriously but we, we do take the music seriously and there is, y'know it's important to us, to um yeah, it's something we're proud of and have put a lot of hard work into creating really so like y'know it's um, and yeah we're not, at that time I think a couple of things had happened and y'know you think oh well maybe we should try a bit harder, um, to see what would happen, um, we never gave it a [inaudible] a try was basically from not doing nothing to doing a little bit more [laughter] y'know, if y'know what I mean but yeah it's like now there's the whole thing of time to do things now it's so hard to find time to y'know we don't play every weekend now some of the band has kids and yeah it's just harder to do it um.

AC: What about rehearsing together, how often do you do that?

HD: Um, we try and do it weekly err and sometimes it's good sometimes it's, we achieve it and sometimes we don't. Like last, we recorded a new album the end of November 2018, so, but then in the following year we released it and it's been successful over it whatever but probably the amount of practices we had last year, getting two gigs and probably practicing 10 times, so we haven't, so we haven't really played live yet for various reasons. Like one of our, the guitarist who joined um but he had tinnitus [AC: Painful] yeah so he wasn't but he wasn't sure what caused it. Whether it was sound or he got thyroid issues and that can be a side-effect of that and as it turns out is that it wasn't sound related so he's back playing now, um with ear, y'know he's worn ear protection but um yeah so he didn't know if he was coming back to his [inaudible] or, and we played a couple of gigs at the end with my brother-in-law's replacement but uh yeah it's good to have him back. We got a few gigs booked and ah...

AC: How many have you got booked up so far?

HD: Um, I think only three, I think um we're playing um supporting a couple of bands down in Clwb lfor Bach, um in April I think um, playing with Henry's Funeral Shoe and I think he was a founding member of Thin Lizzy, Eric Bell? I think he wrote Whiskey in a Jar and everything. He's playing ah in Abergavenny we're supporting him and then we're, I think [inaudible] we playing a festival in Scotland, in June or July in the summer.

AC: How did you get these gigs then?

HD: Um [inaudible] we just played there and one of the promoters just asked us to play, they had no opening slot or whatever the um, the [inaudible] Abergavenny [inaudible] was there as well sort of around that time when ah when the line-up change happened [inaudible] we met a guy who [reviewed?] our second album, no first album I think it was and um, well he's one of my best friends now and we've sort of, he, he's really passionate about the band and um really tried to push it in the sense of getting it out to people and that [AC: Who's this?] Jamie Richards his name is [AC: Where's he from then?] He's from um Abergavenny, he [AC: Alright...] But um, he's, he's sort of set up a label, ah promotional company Pity My Brain ah and um, yeah like he's putting gigs on, I think he's done a couple in Jacs, quite a few in Cardiff and yeah he's ah a label, like he's booked quite a few bands and we've ended up in the support slots he's been good at, really ah the sort of as he's developed and got more connections it's sort of enabled us to get better gigs as well as a result really and um...

AC: So he's a big part of you getting...

HD: Yeah definitely [inaudible] yeah exactly like ah with classic rock bands you gotta sort of ah broach that relationship and um they've been big supporters of us and yeah he has sort of, he created the sort of ah label and promotions company really as a vehicle to promote us, to get us better gigs so really he was booking bands for us to support them really, it's a sort of ah [AC: Resources...] [inaudible] yeah oh yeah it was a totally by chance thing, um, he reviewed it and I think we started talking and I met him at Soundgarden in Hyde Park and um [AC: When was that?] 2013 I think it was, um, and then from there like we'd meet up regularly and we'd go to festivals, we, we're good friends now like and um, yeah it's um...

AC: So what happened when you met? Was that the first time he saw you playing was it?

HD: It was the album, he heard the debut album um and just loved it and think yeah, he sort of he'd become disenfranchised a bit with rock I think um, and just um, I think it's sort of ah, like a two way thing at the minute sort of a lot of um, ah what is it sort of like a more tribute recreation aspect of rock music whereas a lot of bands are doing what's been done and [inaudible] there's another camp trying to push it on, trying to take that as inspiration and go somewhere else and I think he sort of got tied to that side and [inaudible] and um, especially like his, the Grunge scene that was his, his, realise it and when he heard that album I thought he saw a lot of things in that in respect of something new and y'know he could recognise it as [inaudible] and sort of thought oh well there must be other bands and he's put on the Flames and Shoe, he's a big supporter of them and, yeah that's like we were talking about earlier like the local music scene, how organic it is and original really in that sense on a smaller scale like [AC: Yeah, yeah] it has that sort of um...

AC: That's interesting that he heard you, your band or music invigorated his interest again in music so that's the kind of the spark I suppose for him to do this yeah?

HD: Yeah it was he was reviewing, he was working for ah like web design Uber Rock and um, he was reviewing them and he was getting sent a lot of stuff and he was like um [inaudible] or whatever and then, not that I'm [inaudible] our music but it just [inaudible] [AC: Don't be modest] [laughter] no I am I'm modest [inaudible] but um, but yeah that's how it came to fruition really is that ah yeah...

AC: That's really cool, I'm going to ask you a little bit about what you actually do, not you personally but you as a collective in the band. Um, so when you sit down to, do you sit down to write material, how does that process happen?

HD: Um, it happens in different ways really um it may be me or Chris [surname?] um would write a song um, either fully maybe or partially, y'know the main bits or whatever and then come to the band, people choose what instruments they're gonna, by chance most of it, whoever's on what, whatever and then y'know get the core of the song will be there and then it'll be embellished then, embellished parts or sometimes it'll change completely y'know you have an idea then, like especially probably I do a lot of my writing on acoustic guitar, so it tends to be although it may be [inaudible] or whatever ah y'know the demo maybe a lot more low key than it actually what it comes to um, that happens. Or we get in a room, have a few beers or whatever and we see what happens and y'know, I dunno if the Shed has come up in the?

AC: I've been there, amazing place.

HD: So, so it's like a hub of a lot of bands so [AC: It's like a time capsule isn't it?] Oh it's epic, y'know you get up there, Simon is awesome. You just go up there, it frees you of the outside world really and you're just in there and um what happens, happens and um...

AC: I'm assuming the band's name is after that yeah?

HD: It is yeah, well we were sort of, Nicky was in Psychic Spies, um and then, they were, they were the only band practising there then I think at that time and then that came to an end then. Then nick [inaudible] I hadn't even heard of the place like, I didn't even know anyone in the band, I didn't know Nicky or anything and then um...

AC: How did you and Nicky meet then?

HD: He, I was singing in my father's band um, The Bullshit Band and um yeah we were playing, I think it was the football club in Hirwaun, it's not there anymore there's just [inaudible] yeah and um the Spies had come to an end and like Nick was still young then, well younger, and yeah he was looking to start a new band and I think his dad maybe, come to [inaudible] and said he'd seen us or whatever, maybe get in touch with me and then we met up and then went up the Shed and the rest is history really like [inaudible] Christian was a friend of Nick, the guy who taught Nick guitar, Christian's his nephew [inaudible] Chris [surname?] Do you know ah Chrissy [inaudible] he's just a yeah, he just teaches guitar not a professional really, yeah, I don't want to undersell his guitar playing ability but he doesn't do it sort of professionally and um yeah, he said oh Chris is up for, like he was seventeen at the time and like I was a bit older I was twenty four then so um and yeah um, we all went up the Shed and it all happened organically. Ah Ashley, we didn't know him that came from, I dunno someone knew someone and, lie none of us knew each other [AC: That's unusual though for around here 'cause most people have been saying, oh got my mates in and] yeah it was it was totally organic and y'know having the Shed then as a play [inaudible] for that y'know you, we got together and we get to know each other and [inaudible] I'd never been in a band before, I'd never sung, I'd never written a song before like so [AC: Oh wow so this was all quite new then?] yeah, yeah I, like music wasn't not that ah like my dad used to listen to the best rock album in the world or whatever in the car like you're driving about [inaudible] but it never, like music wasn't a big part of my life. Um, he [dad] tried to teach me guitar like Wonderwall or whatever I wasn't really interested at that time um, but then when I went to Uni then PAC: What did you do in Uni?] Um, I'm a well I did the sciences like ah a geologist then [AC: Are you doing that now?] yeah, yeah, so, for fourteen years [inaudible]

AC: That's really interesting isn't it?

HD: Yeah it is y'know it's good. Everyone's always surprised...

AC: So where do you work?

HD: Taff's Well the company's based and then [inaudible] it was sort of around that time ah finished Uni, didn't really want to work so I was on the dole for a while, hobbling and doing bits and stuff, and, and the band sort of come together and then I think [inaudible] a year then and they said right you gotta go back to work now, so you go back to one of these courses, you all sit down and say whatever and put up CVs and whatever and I sent a job application to ESP and had an interview got the job and I've been there ever since. It's the only job I've ever had like.

AC: That's really cool and its' doing what you want to do as well?

HD: Yeah, yeah exactly, and um, and to be fair they've enabled a lot of my musical stuff as well they contribute towards that, like sponsored some of the album recording and stuff like that...

AC: So how did all that come about, did they offer sponsorship or?

HD: Yeah, so um Giles who's one of the directors plays music and he's had the dreams of playing in a band or whatever and it never sort of happened and um, ah, yeah, said we were recording the album and all that and whatever and um, he offered to sponsor half of the um costs really for the recording like and um [AC: That's really cool] oh yeah it's brilliant, y'know and um, yeah I'm sure if anything did ever happen

or that time, I needed time to do it I'm sure they would allow me to. And I sort of introduced Giles then to Jamie, the Pity My Brain guy and they've sort of come together as a promotions company now as well, so they work together regularly now [inaudible] and yeah.

AC: So it's almost like the band has spawned this big family thing...

HD: Oh it's, it's awesome, like um. Like I didn't know Nick or Simon and the various Christian's family and that and ah yeah we all know each other, y'know we go away together and we've like Nathan was my brother-in-law, he's done the videos and stuff and um I've got a friend then who's got involved with the artwork and [inaudible] fair play to him it's amazing, but yeah we got a sort of network of people that sort of bounce around with it and we probably the laziest ones sat in the middle [AC: It's usually the band [laughs] yeah [laughter] but um yeah [inaudible] it's a great, hobby...

AC: Do they do it for free, the artwork and things? Do they offer...

HD: Um, so they would, yeah, y'know this time, really, he sort of really gave his life to coming up with it, it's so inspirational to see him doing it like. I'd seen the Josh Homme and Iggy Pop um Post Pop Depression they did the album together and they said there was a documentary about it and on that it was like sending lyrics or whatever to get so, he, he's not an artist by trade or [inaudible] so I gave him the lyrics and the music and said y'know you, you go wild do, y'know whatever it comes to it and it just sort of, what he's come up with is encapsulated the whole thing and it's amazing.

AC: There was no direction off you guys whatsoever other than just listen to this and...

HD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah it's um, once he'd sort of come up with the idea, thinking about what about this [inaudible] but yeah the most of it, 99% of it is his. Yeah [inaudible] jaws on the floor when I saw it, I couldn't believe it, it was ah, yeah it's sort of elevated this whole album thing that we've done, it was really personal for us ah like a lot of the songs on there, ah from me and Chris and then it's sort of that on top then, really made it something, special.

AC: What's, what's the theme in, y'know what's it, it's not like a concept throughout?

HD: No I suppose there's a concept in some respects not intentionally um, like the um, my parents had sort of split up um after a long time ah so there was stuff going on with that, um he'd [another band member] been going through quite a rough time, he'd actually split up with my sister, another long-term relationship but, but in other things like his parents, his mam suffers with dementia [AC: Right] so there's a lot of different, you'll hear in the lyrical content it's really personal and that sort of, all those aspects sort of gone into it and um yeah...

AC: You're baring your soul...

HD: Yeah, yeah it's personal [inaudible] more so than anything we've ever done before y'know we've always tried to write and stuff and be it real then y'know for it to be not just a rock n roll that sort of ah, but this more than anything I've ever done yeah, it's really um, but as a result y'know it's really made it something more then, it's given that ah and yeah it's been awesome playing that it's been cathartic and um, and that was the gutting thing last year really that we didn't get to play more sort of, so that's the intention now but yeah, y'know there's songs on there, like one of them saying

about the writing thing is like some of them were written, me and Chris were writing based around those themes but then there was one of the songs that, like Nicky came and wrote a load of lyrics one night. Nicky came around the house and got pissed [laughs] and then we're just jamming with the guitar and we, I sung the lyrics to the song and happened to record it on the phone and it never changed y'know this stuff, stuff like really just pops out of the sky and that's awesome like...

AC: So, you said that didn't change but in your own and you said then other songs sometimes change so...

HD: Yeah

AC: What did change in other songs significantly, can you think of any examples...

HD: Um, yeah so um, trying to think what songs are on there um [mumbling while thinking] well that one was nice that was just an acoustic um guitar, um tuned down to C or something but it was juts chords strumming but if anything that's turned out to be one of the heaviest songs on the album it's really [inaudible] by and yeah but it's drop C like yeah, there's like um so by nature putting that electric is gonna sound bigger but y'know from the basis of the song, err, ah it's tenfold and then, um there's like a big jam ending on it and um yeah it's great, the wife came in and she played um cornet like ah, y'know like this last post sort of before the [inaudible] kicked off and yeah it was awesome it was.

AC: Does she play for a living or...

HD: Ah she's in a brass band like ah yeah [AC: Llwydcoed is it?] she used to play for Llwydcoed but she's playing for Tredegar now. Yeah, so um, yeah, yeah but yeah so like Neil Young is a big inspiration, he's my hero lie so um, so a lot of the songs I tend to write, not that it's a rip on Neil Young but it's been more that sort of personally quiet, sort of that folk, not always but and then they tend to get beefed up really. But then there's like Phantom Pains which was like the opening song on this album, we, um, we took forever to do it like , it was one of the first songs we were working on when the new line up come together y'know and it just [note to self – 'teething pains'] you get a feeling it's just not right y'know sort of...

AC: What was happening...?

HD: Yeah so we were jamming like there was one, one bit which was um big sort of like a three chord spacey bit intro and y'know we were really happy with that and then there was a central riff but the chorus wasn't sitting with the rest of the song it was just and the riff was, but we sort of cobbled, not cobbled together but we thought we had it together and then played it live and it was just like it didn't have whatever it, I dunno what it is [AC: Just didn't feel right?] didn't feel right yeah, like when you finish a song you go right that's done, I don't know how you know but it, it could be anything but ah, but I don't know this so it comes to a point where you go right happy, happy with that now. But u, yeah we did and dropped it for yonks we probably didn't play it for a year and the we started revisiting it, listening to it a bit and sort of cut up the first bit so it's a bit more staccato with cuts and stops and it really made it simpler if anything in the end and sort of took one part of the chorus like an extra riff that we had and just kept to the same and it just was 10 times the song as a result then [inaudible] oh yeah it's probably been the most popular song on the album, it opens the album and yeah I'm really proud of it, it's probably like ah leap forward for the band and sonics and yeah y'know it's weird and um but yeah sometimes like some songs you do finish straight away and then others they take a while and [AC:

Sometimes it's good just to leave some things and come back to it] yeah definitely are, definitely 'cause if you force it sometimes it just doesn't get where it needs to be um.

AC: Do you think if you had pressures on you to get things done then it might force things and effect the music do...

HD: I think well part of it is definitely we've got no external pressures other than ourselves really, um it allows us to sort of potter [laughs] I suppose [inaudible] yeah exactly y'know um. It comes in it's good to have, like we haven't done an album in 4 years and so we basically just booked studio time, we probably didn't have some of the songs finished ready but it did force us to do it y'know and um. I think as a band you need, sometimes there's no gigs or nothing it's easy just to languish and not practice or y'know not do anything it gives you a kick up the arse you need sometimes to ah [AC: I suppose [inaudible] try and book gigs it's a kind of goal isn't it, something to aim for] well you gotta do it you don't want to play like an arse you wanna be as good as you can be like so yeah it forces you to do it then really, um and um, yeah we definitely need that, it's easy to lose time in The Shed [laughs]

AC: That's a great place The Shed

HD: It's [inaudible] the sound like the Flames and y'know ah, have you ever heard Tun? [inaudible]

AC: I'm their number one fan by the way [laughs]

HD: Ah they're brilliant, I heard their album is class isn't it?

AC: Um well

HD: Have you heard it?

AC: Well the recordings yeah Gerry sends them over

HD: Oh yeah Tun yeah. Well [inaudible] step brother he did that for them

AC: Right I didn't know who they were sending it out to, he'd send [inaudible] have a listen and this is on WhatsApp [HD: Oh WhatsApp yeah] [inaudible] your brother-in-law is it?

HD: He's married to my sister yeah so that's brother-in-law? Yeah

AC: Yeah [laughter]

HD: Step-brother, um yeah so, he did that for them up The Shed

AC: So that connects you guys and Tun then, and The Shed

HD: Yeah, and my sister sang for Salmon Orbit with Gerry and then ah back around ah when Dai and Charlie did the Tomorrows Gonna Be Alright time she was singing for them then. Then Gerry used to play with Nicky in Psychic Spies, so yeah it's all something ah

AC: It's quite incestuous isn't it!

HD: [laughter] yeah it is [laughter] But yeah ah Gerry he's great, Ian's great as well. I don't know the other guy in Tun, ah [AC: Bradley Brannock that is] yeah, I don't know him, but I know Ian and ah Gene.

AC: He lives in Brighton and comes back and fore

HD: Alright yeah

AC: But um [inaudible] Tun

HD: Oh it's psych as hell isn't it [AC: Yeah, yeah] Me and ah, 'cause I got to listen to the recordings with Nathan 'cause we were up there and it was like it's class like.

AC: Chipfleg and Portal are my favourites [laughter] I must [inaudible] I know the song names [laughter]

HD: That said they're so elaborate you could be [inaudible] I remember when he was telling me some of them, I was like that, cracking up

AC: What's that other one um? Oh there's a few I can't remember maybe I shouldn't say [laughter]

HD: The artwork was class as well, it was really good like yeah

AC: Have you seen the videos as well?

HD: Yeah

AC: That Normal Hands one

HD: Nah they're great Gerry's one hell of a drummer, he's a hell of a guy like y'know

AC: Um so as well as the band have you or band members been involved either as a whole or individually in any other collaborations around here?

HD: Um... nick was in the Spies y'know beforehand but no not really um

AC: Y'know did you do a special gig or...

HD: Oh, we did I think we contributed towards the y'know they did the all big one song? Everyone was playing in Aberdare [AC: Yeah] Chapman did that [AC: Tell me about that] I think it was just 'cause they came up The Shed one night and we were there [inaudible] and they'd um yeah they juts asked the boys to jam along they had a chord structure and whatever and they just ah funnily enough I've got a photo of Nick, he recorded his bit on top of a car, in The Shed, I think Luke was in a speedboat and which was up Stephen's for some unknown reason [laughter] and ah yeah we did that and yeah beyond that really [inaudible] other than providing the ah those aspects of it and then they stuck it all together then. [AC: Who was it Charlie and?] Chapman, I don't know, I don't know who else was involved really um [AC: And they were just grabbing you spontaneously] yeah [inaudible] nearly everyone I think, 'cause I remember Dai's an ice cream man [inaudible] or something and [AC: Vaguely remember yeah] Best thing I remember of the video, and we did the Tomorrows Gonna Be Alright, we did that with um Dai and that, we were involved in that and I think that really sort of um, resoldered[?] the scene and sort of brought, brought everyone together when they did that [AC: Didn't they do a special viewing of

it?] yeah we did a concert ah 2011 maybe, was it, around that time I think. Um and they did a concert day then and all the bands in the film played, well most of them or whatever [AC: Where was that then?] it was in Cwm Hall, the institute, yeah so they had that and yeah, it's um. Yeah so I think it sort of brought people like ah like I didn't know a lot of you like when the Shot and Shell's stuff was happening and then, I think that was a big part of the local scene, sort of I, I never went there, y'know I was in Uni and stuff so I didn't really know a lot of the big players um y'now Dai and that I hadn't met them and Gerry and all those sort of guys, as part of that process then got to know some of those bands

AC: So that was a good connecting exercise basically?

HD: It was really I think like Creek, Cripplecreek and Jim and the boys in ah y'know Jim's ethic y'know and he played like on our second album and it was just [AC: Oh did he?] yeah, he played piano on that like, we had a few like jams, we had the song when we went up there and yeah he's got his little room [AC: It's a great set-up] ah yeah great for me I was just sitting there watching [inaudible] this is gold like I could happily do this all the time like um.

AC: How did you get about to asking him to do that for you?

HD: Um, we just sort of got friendly through various ah [inaudible] and um just knew that he played piano and um asked him really just said y'know would he like to and just y'know would he be interested in doing it and yeah I think he enjoyed it something new for him. Yeah it was wicked great.

AC: Cool, can you think of any other things?

HD: I'm trying to think now um [AC: They're good examples y'know] yeah um, [AC: Any involvement in setting up or the operations in Cwmfest or anything?] Ah not us personally like but what we did start doing well like on my parents farm but it sort of went to Hirwaun then, we had the sort of Farmageddon's up there, so that was up my, my parent's farm and that was amazing. I don't know if you ever ended up going to one?

AC: I didn't go, I couldn't go 'cause I was working when it was on but I do remember it.

HD: Yeah, and that was awesome [inaudible] singing with my father's covers band and um. Oh the last one must have been about ah 1000 people there and there was like about twelve bands um and it was a great day but it sort of um it got too big really for having it as an informal set-up really and ah there was a bit of an incident with one of the animals and someone had kicked a lamb [AC: I heard about that yeah] and um so put a nail on a nail in the head of it and um it sort of went to Hirwaun Rugby club and everybody then saying it was not the same [AC: Not the same] no, it was awesome, like the last one we're up there it's like tents all over the fields and bands are on and it was a wicked vibe y'know what I mean, it was really cool but um [AC: That's all your parents' doing is it?] yeah, yeah, yeah we just like the Bullshit band had 'cause they were sort of going jamming like my old man and a couple of his friends really and they'd have sort of informal bashes up the farm and um inviting people up from the Lamb in Penderyn, they'd bring them up in the horsebox or whatever and ah [AC: That's great!] y'know they just played they couldn't [inaudible] they could only play Smoke on the Water badly [laughter] really and they'd just do that [inaudible] after a couple of hours someone gets steaming and just playing guitar y'know [AC: Sounds like a good night!] yeah [inaudible] component of the crowd is the sheep I think [laughter] but then it sort of grew and I joined then and it became

more of a thing with the band then 'cause they'd never had a singer really so started doing gigs with them then and that gathered a following so the whole thing started getting bigger and bigger and then we started as The Gubbins originally same band and ended up becoming, so in the end then it was like Henry's Funeral Shoe, Heavy Flames were playing um ah the Clay Statues y'know all the music, the scene well were playing up there then. And on the last one then High Voltage played [inaudible] [Cripplecreek?] um I don't know Broken Vinyl Club played there [AC: I can't remember] [inaudible] The nukes played with Neil Galsworthy and they were epic and um The Warhogs and stuff and but yeah it just grew and grew and it was really cool like it was like an old school 60s festival vibe there, yeah it's a shame that, it, it got to point where it got so big to manage then essentially there wasn't the facilities there to deal with that many people.

AC: Who were the extra people how far away were they coming from then?

HD: Well I think they were coming from everywhere really. Like I was working on site in Blackwood or something and some guy was on site saying oh I'm off to this thing and I was like oh yeah where's that then? He was like oh it's a farm in the middle of nowhere [AC: It's my house!] [laughter] yeah. But I think the trouble was there were a lot of people who were coming up there for a party and not for the music like [inaudible] had heard of it and they were just going up there, more than happy for people to do what they want but I think people were going up there just to, just to get blasted ah and um as a result then it was everyone was blasted up there and they were there and sort of caused issues there and they were like pissing around the house and what not and [AC: You don't want that do you] no, exactly and that's what I mean it become yeah [AC: It's a real shame that is isn't it] it is I suppose like beyond that it, it would have had to have facilities and tickets and whatever so y'know it's only so big it can get for it and it was a shame 'cause it was, ah one of my mates, one of my best mates he done like an Elvis impersonation and like he came in on like a scrambler with a guy dressed in a mankini [laughter] and he came in and the place erupted it was class it, the Bullshit band we done one where we were coming in in spandex pants and in on trucks and motorcycles and ah yeah it is, it is awesome like it is ah [AC: Have you got any photos of this?] yeah, yeah I got some [AC: If you find them can you send them over to me?] yeah [AC: I might include them, photos and things] yeah, yeah no there is photos I think there's even videos of the entry they're on the bike and things like that yeah, I'll try and find them. But yeah it's like yeah but [inaudible] just him 'cause he was like um did you ever hear of the Chip Pan Fire Squad? I don't know it sounds ridiculous but [AC: Rings a bell?] they were doing like, a couple of boys from [inaudible] like Metters in our band he was there, Boggis, Jonathan Boggis um a couple of the boys and they were crazy they were mad, like all the songs were like a comedy punk sort of band [AC: Okay, yeah] and mostly about animals on drugs and songs [inaudible] to great effect um but um yeah but like, he was , they were epic like absolutely bonkers. They had [inaudible] like um, they did their set the first ever gig they done they did one song and at the end of the song they sort of did, they had shampoo bottles and basically sort of ejaculated on the singer on stage at the start of the set there wasn't even a crescendo [inaudible] just like my God where's this gonna go from here like and um...

AC: Did they peak too early or was it alright?

HD: [Laughter] [inaudible] no, they did well like [inaudible] good prowess and [laughter] but um but yeah that's the kinda stuff you can't it's so organic and the Shed definitely is a fruit of that environment um

AC: Were a lot of those bands that played the festival Shed members if you like?

HD: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah but he the Elvis impersonator he's been, we started doing, there was this rally up in Welshpool and he was playing up there and um and his entrances became more elaborate every year like and one he had a [inaudible] handler a settee and he was lying on there and there was two little pope's on motorbikes coming in and there was a giant fire in a JCB bucket as he was coming in, anyway it was insane it was I couldn't believe it like.

AC: This wasn't Geraint Benney was it?

HD: No, and that's the thing and the last Farmageddon it become a thing between them to [the two Elvis'] and he burnt a picture of Geraint Benney on stage like and it was like ah it was brilliant it was [AC: Rival Elvis'] it was like rival Elvis' like it would be a good film, a good comedy like y'know but yeah.

AC: So are there any responsibilities and roles adopted by band members do you have specific roles like booking gigs?

HD: [Laughs] um, as much as I hate to say it it's all left to me really [AC: Oh really] yeah I suffer under the weight of that burden [AC: Why's that then why's it just.. inaudible] yeah, part of it is my fault I suppose y'know trying to ah, 'cause I think, we wouldn't have, left to, the boys are just happy to play in the Shed really and we meet there and go up there every week and play and then sort of when I was like oh y'know we could do this forever or try and y'know record an album [inaudible] so why not y'know what I mean, so we did that and then, yeah it's not like pushing to be famous or nothing like that it's like y'know you're putting the time in to something I care about like so why not share you want to share that and give it the attention it deserves, trying to, yeah so most of that is me really trying to, I'd love to get help y'know but it's ah, [inaudible] trusting of anyone else as well like so um but yeah it's yeah it's probably held us back at the same time. Y'know as I was saying it probably is like what we found it's so expensive, you can pay people to do these various things and we have paid, we did around that time we payed someone to plug our single and it was like a grand and sort of nothing, no near enough I think it was eight hundred quid and nothing came of it and really sort of stung us and oh [inaudible]

AC: What platform was that on then? Was it social media or?

HD: No it was essentially, um I won't name names because [inaudible] but it, the way the industry works is essentially it, you can scabble to get some attention to play your music or whatever and y'know part of it is probably we've never been like a single, radio friendly band in respects as well but. So these people um you pay them, they have an intimate relationship with the various radio shows um and they go then and take that single and they have playbacks in a room and they'll have a meeting and say right we got duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, and then if they like it they play it and if they don't they won't um [AC: So you just got to pay this money on the hope] on just a whim yeah in that [AC: Oh that's tough isn't it?] it and yeah it's unfortunately that's how um there are people y'know like the Pretty Vicious thing but I think there was money behind that as well and it's really hard the way it is today y'know with social, there's so many bands [inaudible] the same thing um yeah and there's a lot of people taking advantage of that sort of but in some respects you struggle by not doing it as well so [AC: It's a really tough one isn't it] it is yeah and we can't really afford, at that time and yeah we were like well y'know you'd regret it for not trying and it was [inaudible] things were happening oh well y'know and whilst the social media is good it's you get drown out a lot by others as well so radio is still essentially how to get max y'know ah listening of something.

AC: Where was you hoping to get this played was this nationally or?

HD: Yeah we sort of go to Radio 1, Planet Rock all the major stations ah in the UK so...

AC: Is the idea you just keep giving this money and they keep plugging [HD: Yeah, yeah]

HD: Well you're relying on them, whether they're totally and that's the thing what we had with Jamie is that is that you've got someone who loves your music, I dunno he'll do anything for it, but you're paying this individual who may not even give a shit and might think it's shit [laughs] you don't know and you're relying on them and behind closed doors who knows y'know how much effort they're putting in to doing that [AC: It's a gamble] But then at the same time you're one of 1000s and 1000s trying the same thing. But yeah some bands have had modest success based on um [inaudible] the rugby's on isn't it [inaudible] but yeah so yeah, yeah you can become get a level of success by paying for it, bands have ah [AC: But it's whether you've got that money behind you isn't it] yeah, and at the end of the day if you're just a vapid box y'know there's no substance underneath it y'know there's only so far you can go with that, people still not gonna like you, you get put down the front top shelf they get to see you but if you're not um people still like you, there's a scene [inaudible] to that.

AC: I'm gonna wrap this up sorry [it was getting noisy]

HD: Yeah no worries

AC: Um what motivates you to continue making music?

HD: Just the love of doing it, it's the not knowing, um y'know it's the same with this album you, we did the last one we never ever imagined that we would, this would be our music [inaudible] what's around the corner

AC: [inaudible] the development of your own style and

HD: Yeah and the love of and it's a way of communicating your feelings and understanding your feelings and stuff as well, y'know personally and, and being in a room with the boys and we're all best mates and can't imagine a time y'know you'd like to think you're seventy [inaudible] in The Shed [inaudible] there's no, that's the foremost thing with the band whatever else y'know we get from it [inaudible] just love doing that yeah love doing it and um yeah one of the best feelings you can get, well yeah moderately [inaudible] yeah it's like being married to five people as well, well four people as well but ah

AC: Yes, I've heard that a lot like a five way marriage

HD: Oh yeah sometimes you wanna kill them like but yeah, yeah that's the thing and I think that's one of the things, we've always [inaudible] as friends y'know what I mean and I think that's why we've been thirteen years together y'know what I mean, that's a long time for a band like and ah but we're still happy.

AC: You're all good with each other

HD: Good friends and just imagined it would continue on like yeah

AC: Okay, and what factors make it difficult do you think to make music in an environment like Aberdare outside the city, semi-rural [inaudible] y'know

- HD: Um, we're lucky I guess The Shed, like we don't have to pay for a practice room um so well we do pay Stephen but we've got a practice room that we can go to, I don't know whether that is, I dunno I guess there are, are there any recording facilities in the area? I don't know, I think some people practice in Jacs don't they and stuff and y'know that's been massive locally I think it's given a [inaudible] in the local scene and been really positive and all that, um, I guess I don't know, finding people, getting around it's um [AC: Travelling?] Yeah I suppose travelling is, as you get more successful I guess it's ah I dunno, it shouldn't hold it from the musical sense, there should be no reason why it um if anything it's I suppose a more fruitful environment and all the hardships that come with it sometimes in this area.
- AC: Do you think, there's a lot of academic papers out there saying semi-rural places lack this, lack that y'know because they're not in a city I'm kind of just trying to see if that's actually the case [HD: Yeah] is it a lack of resources? If there is does that hold you back?
- HD: I think there's definitely um what we've found anyway is there's a bias from um sort of um in a support sense from Wales, um Welsh media y'know people in, who are in those positions choosing whether or not to play choosing which bands have funding etcetera, they definitely tend to be more Cardiff based, I would say city based [inaudible] that tend to get that um...
- AC: Why do you think that is then?
- HD: I dunno, [inaudible] It's something we've [inaudible] maybe that's just because of the genre of music our band is but you tend to find this sort of a that clique it seemed to, self-perpetuating, scene, I dunno, I don't know why, maybe, I dunno, gotta scream a lot louder to get that attention possibly from ah these environment but I dunno I just um, I dunno [inaudible]
- AC: I have heard some people saying oh I don't want to go up to Aberdare, it's a bit scary and all that y'know...
- HD: Yeah, I guess that's probably y'know like from a transport, ah y'know like Jamie had a festival in Ebbw Vale and he was booking [inaudible] bands y'know who were touring [inaudible] y'know touring bands it was just getting people to come there y'know and probably infrastructure, sort of travelling although [inaudible] but um, I think it's a bit more of a jaunt into the unknown for people probably...
- AC: It is quite limiting the transport [inaudible]
- HD: Yeah, and like Aberdare is not so bad I guess but I'd say Ebbw Vale is a bit of a trek and that and a lot of the gigs like that are still in Cardiff like. The Coliseum could be a lot more really good sort of classic [inaudible] be really y'know sort of special venue for artists of that size [inaudible] but ah I know they do have bands there but um [AC: Do you think they could have them there?] I would say so yeah.
- AC: Crass played there y'know that was an iconic gig you'd think they'd go on [HD: Yeah] that and keep [HD: Yeah] booking [HD: Yeah, yeah [inaudible]]
- HD: Yeah, but um, even Cardiff, Wales y'know doesn't see all the tours, it's often Bristol, a gig in Bristol, I don't think it's financially viable in a lot of senses to have one in Cardiff as well [inaudible] but there are gigs, they do seem to happen y'know the Pixies were here [inaudible] yeah it's um, yeah I'm not sure really.

AC: So I suppose going from what you said maybe rehearsal space is a limitation but [HD: Yeah] again by what you said you kind of...

HD: Yeah but not for us like I can only speak from a personal experience for me it hasn't been for us y'know there hasn't um yeah maybe just um, getting out there I guess and I suppose that's with the financial backing, where's the money and especially when you're younger [inaudible] more and more important I think to somewhere just to get your music out there, but um...

AC: And how do you find the time to make music? We did touch on this earlier [laughter]

HD: Um, we got a set day once a week that's the practice done [inaudible] we try and do it, so it is a regular thing and then it becomes part of your routine, although it is a hobby it is enjoyable, it makes it happen more often than not, like I think once you've worked it's easy to come home and go oh I don't feel like it or I'm tired or whatever but once you're up there all that fades away then. It's, a, it is hard um especially as you get older your lives develop and from a gigging perspective as well, it's, we definitely play a lot less gigs y'know as a result.

AC: Have people got children

HD: Yeah [inaudible] got two children, that's tricky with babysitters and [inaudible] to do it. Shaun works in the school so he can't have days off in the week so. So like um we do get offers like now and again to play London say in the week, but you gotta get down there play the gig and really you gotta stay, at least try [inaudible] and then you gotta travel back two in the morning or whatever and get back and then go to work the next day, so more often than not that doesn't happen then as a result so yeah it's tough from that side you gotta like [inaudible] there's a balance between, like some bands will slog their guts out and for play everywhere and anywhere and for some um for no real benefit [inaudible] but then at the same time you gotta get out [inaudible] and introduce yourself to a wider [AC: Outside of Aberdare and further you mean yeah?] well y'know just naming areas and but um it takes a lot of time and effort to do y'know you gotta, you gotta really want it y'know um and I suppose, not that we, but it does make me [inaudible] a bit as you get older as well [AC: I think so] yeah.

AC: It's different responses as you get older [inaudible]

HD: So yeah, exactly y'know you get [inaudible] on the weekends all weekends y'know [inaudible] you can't do that anymore y'know what I mean it's um but yeah you gotta be more selective I think as you get older, what you do and what you don't do and um, and, and you want it to be beneficial for the band as well, playing to no one somewhere for nothing is not conducive for anyone really.

AC: You want to feel good about the gig...

HD: So you wanna pay gigs that make you feel good about the band, make you wanna do it not think oh what was the point, y'know what I mean um and that [inaudible] [laughs]

AC: One man and his dog yeah

HD: Exactly and um, it's hard, it's um yeah it's, and that's the good thing with Jacs regular support there for bands and that and it seems to me it's there sort of [inaudible] the tribute band scene which is really popular now...

AC: Covers and tributes seem to be swamping the scene

HD: That, that's the trouble I think, you can understand the mindset I'd rather pay to see something I know as opposed to someone I don't know and you can if you don't go out regularly, but as a result original music scene has definitely suffered in that sense like...

AC: Is that a recent thing do you think?

HD: Um...

AC: The last few years or so?

HD: I wouldn't say, well it's definitely like when I was in Uni but I suppose maybe it's just the time [inaudible] y'know 70s, 80s is like y'know, that's, it doesn't seem, y'know they're, filling that void of music that bands have [inaudible] so I guess it's juts people who are cashing in on that um [AC: Nostalgia] that nostalgic thing yeah, yeah and um yeah it's a big industry y'know there's like Led Zeppelin bands having a grand a night y'know touring the country.

AC: My other half's in a Sabbath tribute band and they 250 for the odd gig every yeah y'know they're not cashing in on it at all [laughs]

HD: No, yeah, but um like, that's the thing like I've been to Sabbath tribute bands and y'know I love Sabbath, so understand that y'know...

AC: Oh what I'm saying is they're not jumping on the band wagon they're there...

HD: Just to enjoy yeah, it is, it is it's massive. There's bands at the Tramshed and there and stuff y'know that's a 1000 [inaudible] it's a tribute act so y'know [AC: It's mad isn't it] yeah. The biggest ne I suppose is the Pink Floyd one play arenas and like yeah Australian Pink Floyd [AC: Yeah] they could do the Motorpoint.

AC: Floyd's a slightly different thing [inaudible] [laughter]

HD: It's mad like so, but yeah that's a big market and we're competing with that y'know on a local level definitely and if you're on a Friday and say Sabbath are for instance on a Saturday, people are probably going to go to the Sabbath rather than the original night on the Friday I guess.

AC: Do you think that'll change at all? Y'know there seems to be bell curves in scenes anyway.

HD: Yeah, well who knows, it's um, I dunno I suppose the ideal scenario if you imagine people are turning up to a venue regularly regardless who's playing there, I can't do that myself so, so I can't y'know say y'know to people who are not doing that when I can't even fulfil that myself so, y'know that's the dream [inaudible] a cool bar that everyone's going to, the bands play them and that, yeah [inaudible] and I guess Jacs is fulfilling that in some respect but um it's getting people there I guess and um it's surprising how many people you meet that are totally unaware of it at the same time

[AC: Really?] well yeah well I've met people and said there's bands here, bands here? yeah

AC: Again I think everyone knows about it [inaudible]

HD: Yeah, yeah I suppose yeah, and I think it's a financial element as well, it's a lot about the demographic of the people that come out and watch bands they're older so there's, they're gonna wanna watch y'know Sabbath, Zeppelin's and whatever, they were the bands that make them go out and it's the same, that's why those bands are touring now, 'cause people are willing to pay 100 pound to see them [inaudible] I did pay ninety pound to see the Stones 'cause I'd never seen them and um [AC: That's fair enough] and ah I thought oh I gotta see them like...

AC: That's fair enough, that's iconic [HD: Yeah]

HD: But everything's gone [inaudible] in my view right if you wanna see it the money's, if you wanna, 'cause they'll be dead in time y'know

AC: That's kind of my philosophy in watching gigs, I seen Megadeth a couple of weeks ago. I gotta go Dave Mustaine's throat cancer and all that [HD: Yeah] [inaudible]

HD: And they're not going to tour again are they?

AC: No [inaudible] last time I saw them I was like fourteen [HD: Yeah] so absolutely nostalgia

HD: Yeah, but last summer I went to watch Neil Young three times over four days it's like ah it was awesome I went with the Elvis tribute guy, we went to Antwerp, Amsterdam and London like but it was like well, but he's still playing, it's nostalgic from a sense but he can still sing, he can still do it like y'know what I mean, it's still current in that sort of sense [AC: You really like him don't you!] oh I do, I do, don't get me started [inaudible and laughter]

AC: And the last question is, is there anything else you'd like to add?

HD: I'd like to add? [AC: Add yeah] ah no, not that I can think of, no, unless there's anything you wanna know but...

AC: I'll stop it by there for a sec, that was brilliant thank you!

Interview with Ieuan Griffiths, 10-01-2020, Aberdare Museum @ 12:08 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

IG Ieuan Griffiths, Participant

AC: Hello Ieuan

IG: Hello

AC: Okay, thank you for meeting me

IG: You're welcome

AC: A few general questions to start. Um, can you tell me about the music you like.

IG: Um, I'm mainly into rock but um my tastes are quite eclectic my biggest influence is ah a musician called Frank Zappa and basically he comes from a jazz background I suppose but I also sing in a male voice choir so [laughter]

AC: I mean is it heavy metal or...

IG: I, I, I've been to see all sorts of bands, I've seen thrash metal bands, I've seen orchestras, I've seen musicals, I've seen everything.

AC: So a wide pallet?

IG: Yeah, yeah, yeah

AC: So what sort of music do you play?

IG: Um, our music has been called uncategorizable [laughs] by several people

AC: Do you want to expand on that?

IG: The last band we were likened to was Jane's Addiction and they are, they were quite sort of off the wall I suppose

AC: Not straight forward I suppose

IG: No, no, no,

AC: So what sort of things are in your music that set it apart?

IG: Um, because when we had, we had a twenty year hiatus because of various issues. I had a, I had a health issue, um I had twenty years of just doing nothing 'cause of a disability and cancer treatment and two of our band members passed away, so we didn't do anything and the music we were doing prior to that was um, the lyrics are very, very bizarre and comes from quite a dark place y'know

AC: Can you give me an idea of what you're talking about

IG: Um, when we were writing originally um one of the songs, we still play it it's called Mr. Not to go to bed together to read?? It's about a Belgian serial killer um...

AC: What was the impetus for writing that?

IG: I don't know it just I'm we used to rehearse on Tuesday night in the Globe in Cwmaman and we just sat and we were just talking and I just had a pen in my hand and it'd just been on the six o'clock news or whatever and I just thought yeah that'll make a good song [laughter] so I just started jotting things down about the way he'd, he'd lured his victims into his cellar y'know [laughter] and it just came, we came up with this, it almost became like a jokey song about this serial killer and it kinda stuck [laughing]

AC: So, tell me a little about your musical practices you're involved in now, so you mentioned about writing lyrics then, how do you go about writing songs?

IG: Um, it's, it's always been the same I wait for something um to come along and I think yep I'm gonna write something about that. The last couple of songs I've written are lyrics about, ah here's one [laughs] a bus journey from Bridgend where the bus stunk [laughs]

AC: And you put a whole song together...

IG: Yeah, smells of onions it's called [laughter]

AC: And how did you go about writing it I mean did you write the whole thing and then present it to the band or...

IG: No, no, we, the boys, we, um, we used a WhatsApp um application on the phone to send each other little bits and bobs especially the guitar player will send a little bit that he's written and say can you write anything around this? And it's good then 'cause we can sort of send it back and forth each other and say yeah, I've got lyrics for that and um, because of the nature of Gerry's job and Luke's, Luke having a youngster um, we can get together than when we meet up next and say yeah I've worked out this bit and I've written these lyrics [inaudible] we got together and then put it together.

AC: So, you don't necessarily have to be in the same room then

IG: No, um, with TUN y'know Gerry's band they are, they are at different ends of the country they are [AC: Yeah] 'cause Brad lives in Brighton and that's what they use they use WhatsApp to send each other sound files.

AC: So how often do you get together? I mean physically together.

IG: Physically, to rehearse, every month? Y'know we...

AC: Once a month roughly is it?

IG: Roughly once a month but I don't think I've seen them since well before Christmas [inaudible]

AC: And where would you do that then?

IG: In the Shed in Penderyn. The Shed is a legendary place in...

AC: It's a time capsule isn't it

IG: [Inaudible] Cynon valley musical y'know everybody knows about the Shed

AC: Is that the link, is Gene the link there 'cause he's

IG: Well everybody...

AC: You're all up there

IG: Everybody knows about the Shed, it, it's like Cynon valley music legend [laughs]

AC: Have they ever had gigs in the Shed?

IG: We were hoping to put Shedfest on for my 50th birthday [laughs]

AC: Um, so what about err rehearsing the Shed, is there anywhere else around town or around Aberdare where you could use to rehearse?

IG: Um, we used to, when we first started back we rehearsed in Jacs once or twice

AC: Upstairs?

IG: No downstairs

AC: Alright, okay

IG: And the mixing desk was insanely complicated

AC: So did you have to pay for that then or was it...?

IG: No, no, um because Gavin had it back then just let us use it as good grace

AC: Just mates helping out?

IG: Yeah that kind of thing

AC: So what's changed now, why isn't there...

IG: Um, I think it's just different owners

AC: Do you know the owners at all?

IG: Not really

AC: Are they from around here?

IG: I don't think he is I think he's from Ponty

AC: You don't know his name do you?

IG: I think it might be Ian? I know the manager is Barry

AC: Right, okay, okay. Um what about recording and things have you done any recordings?

IG: In 1997 we done a ten track demo...well...it's still in existence [laughing]

AC: I don't like how you're saying that? Is it a threat? [laughing]

IG: No, it's um a very odd piece of work [laughing] let's just say that.

AC: How did that come about?

IG: We, we, worked with a chap called Greg Haver who had done the Stereophonics demo which they used to take up to Richard Branson. So we paid to go down to the

Big Noise Studio in Cardiff and we thought we'd use, we'd do a demo of our own and we came out with this thing called The Society's Child demo.

AC: There were ten tracks?

IG: No there were three on the demo

AC: Alright

IG: And um a chap called Martin in the Globe, he used to play err put it on his jukebox for us

AC: Okay

IG: And it became quite popular apparently

AC: So are those songs still...

IG: I'm not sure?

AC: Y'know played openly...

IG: I'm not sure? No idea, no idea?

AC: Would you I don't know, develop them?

IG: I've still got them

AC: What about live performances now would you do that?

IG: Well, the thing is because at the time the guitar player we had was um Paul's younger brother and he was an absolutely phenomenal guitar player, but unfortunately, he died.

AC: Who was that?

IG: Gary Underdown

AC: And how long ago was that?

IG: He died oh god we're talking about eight or nine years ago

AC: That put the scuppers on everything?

IG: Yeah, he was so talented

AC: Okay, so you're playing with his brother now aren't you?

IG: Yeah, his brother he was the rhythm guitar player back in that band. He did all the song writing back in the old band anyway, just Gary was the cream on, the icing on the cake.

AC: So, so that collaboration now um Sunshine Maniac, now I know you all know each other but can you give me I don't know a story or anecdote about how that came about?

IG: Well, the original meeting I suppose between Gerry and I happened a long old time ago. Gerry was in a band called Silent Runner which consisted of um Kelly Jones of the Stereophonics, Charlie Denning [inaudible] um, Paul Rosser, and Keiron Llewellyn, do you know Keiron?

AC: I've heard the name?

IG: Um, who else was in...there were two others, those are the people you, um Paul Rosser, Keiron, Gerry, Kelly, I think they were sort of the, it was Kelly's band [AC: Okay] but Gene was the drummer, but we, we were doing the same circuit, I was in a band called the Wildflowers at the time, they were, they were our school bands if you like, our college bands. There was a Battle of the bands in the old sports centre and the Wild Flowers won.

AC: What year was that then?

IG: That was, that would have been about 1991, 1992 or something around...and the upshot was we had a recording session in the old HTV studios down in um Cardiff and I can remember from that moment on thinking, y'know we all thought that Gerry was the dog's as a drummer

AC: Feel free to swear [laughing]

IG: [Inaudible] Carl Harvey was our drummer in the Wildflowers. As good as Carl is and was Gerry was [AC: Phenomenal] oh on a different planet, but ah so, it was always I want to be in the same band as him and when everything broke down I myself and the Wildflowers' bass player and guitarist formed a Led Zeppeliny type tribute band with Gerry, we played a couple of gigs but it didn't go anywhere 'cause Gerry used to get on the bass player's nerves [laughs] 'cause he would wind him up playing faster and faster stuff [laughs]

AC: Who's the other guy? You said bass and guitar.

IG: Yes that's Julian Nicholas he lives in Cardiff now no one's heard or seen, he used to be in Cripplecreek for, he was in Cripplecreek for a while. I don't think anyone has seen or heard from him in the best part of fifteen years.

AC: Who's the guitarist then?

IG: He was the guitarist...

AC: Oh sorry the bass player.

IG: Oh, the bass player was um Mark

AC: Okay, I've heard the name yeah.

IG: Very good bass player but um, not right in the head [laughs]

AC: It helps [inaudible] [laughing]

IG: He also, he started when we started Sunshine Maniac, we were called Lounge Act and he was our bass player and it's like um, because of the typical bass player thing of being unreliable he didn't, he didn't last that long. We replaced him with a guy

called um John Williams but unfortunately John was a very troubled soul, he committed suicide John did, lovely guy but...

AC: So, you were saying you and Gerry were talking about this for a long while, so how did it actually...

IG: Well, when we got together well when um, we went to, I went to Gary's funeral and I hadn't seen Paul in the best part of ten years and it was like seeing your long lost brother so we started talking about it all over again, it was just like, we ought to do something and when we started talking about it then, the first name that clocked, it was like who can we get to play drums? Gerry. So, we approached Gerry and through Gerry then, I didn't know who Luke was to be honest and Gene said I know a bass player. First of all I had Benny, my cousin Benny y'know the saxophonist [AC: Alright] um, he had played bass with us for a while um, but he started going off on his travels around the world or whatever he was doing. So again in a traditional bass player fashion he was unreliable, we had to get somebody in who was more reliable. So, um, Gerry knew Luke Cook, I never heard of him, he came up and it just clicked.

AC: It was just [IG: Yeah] personalities, everything?

IG: Yeah everything clicked, everything clicked yeah.

AC: Where was that first rehearsal then where...

IG: Up in the Shed

AC: Alright yeah. How long was [inaudible] and how long were you doing it for?

IG: Um...

AC: Did you have songs already...

IG: We had songs almost ready to go, yeah we had a set that we, we played in the, the Cwmfest in 2018 I think? Initially we had, I'd say about, about half an hour of stuff that was ready to go, maybe forty minutes? Um, so we said to Luke this is what we were doing and he was able to pick it up very quickly so he just slotted in straight, straight away and since then he's been adding y'know he's been saying what if we do this, this way or y'know

AC: So how do you guys go about y'know rehearsing and y'know, what roles have been taken on who's saying what?

IG: Well, Paul like I said, Paul usually comes up with a riff um, and then he, everybody will do their bit. I like, I liked [inaudible] what I sing to be something that I've written y'know 'cause I like everything to be quite personal to myself. Um, Luke is good with putting back bones in and like I said Gerry, Gerry will only play y'know with what he's comfortable playing [laughing]

AC: Gerry

IG: Yeah I know

AC: He's on his own isn't he [laughter] If you didn't have Gerry would it be difficult...

IG: It would be difficult, it, it's, the thing is with the type of songs we play now it would be impossible because we've reached a level, I don't mean to sound sort of y'know boastful or anything we've reached like a technical level now where we couldn't do without him really.

AC: You're all tuned in to each other? How long have you been practicing and rehearsing in this new sort of...

IG: Oh a couple of years now

AC: Is it?

IG: When we can get together

AC: And you haven't done any recording yet as in...

IG: No,

AC: No official recordings or anything like that? [IG: No] where would you go if you were going to do that?

IG: Well Jon King has made an offer, he made an offer for us to go up and record I dunno did you hear the song Day star I think it's the most simple song we do [AC: I must have?] it's a very straight forward Blues song and, and it seems to be the most popular one, which to me is bizarre, 'cause it took about five minutes to write [laughs]

AC: And where did you record that then?

IG: 'Cause Bradley Brannock offered to go up, offered us, he made the offer to us to go up to Brighton.

AC: That's Brad the bassist of TUN isn't it?

IG: Bradley Brannock yeah

AC: Okay, I know him as Behaviour, sorry [laughter] So he does recording then?

IG: I think so yeah, I think that's where TUN go to do their stuff

AC: Okay, so how do you know, I know you know him through Gerry but how do you all get to know each other?

IG: Oh, Brad is, Brad is somebody who's always been there. 'Cause Gerry was in a band called Salmon Orbit and when, when they were around you went to see them 'cause it was an event not a gig [laughs]

AC: Can you expand on that?

IG: Well it was just bonkers [laughs] it was like you didn't know what was going to happen.

AC: What sort of things would they be doing?

IG: It was, um, I can remember, I mentioned the Led Zeppelin band, the cover band we did. I mean there was a semi-legendary pub in the middle of Aberdare called the

Carpenters Arms. Um, that when we played it, I can remember halfway through the concert or halfway through our set somebody was getting carried out of there naked [laughter] for boasting about the fact they had a tattoo on his penis [laughter]

AC: The music brought that out?

IG: Oh yeah it did, it drew people out, and I mentioned the, the Battle of the Bands in the Ynys, but the type of bands [inaudible] I can remember there was one called World Curfew [AC: World Curfew?] yeah and they were a punk band and the judges thought they must have gone to some [laughs] goodness knows where they thought they were 'cause I know one of them worked for a radio station...

AC: What was the [inaudible]

IG: World Curfew took, took all his clothes off [laughing] the singer had a Mohican a green Mohican, Churchey that was the singer's name and the bass player was called Toffers I believe...

AC: Are they from Aberdare as well?

IG: Yeah, they'll all from Aberdare, locals, all local characters we all knew them. But it was hilarious. It was almost trying to out drink each other before we went onstage. I can remember having thunder, a bottle of Thunderbird before going onstage [AC: Oh dear] yeah I know. I know see if I can drink this bottle of gut rot now before I go and sing a set.

AC: Did it pan out alright?

IG: Yeah, that was the ironic thing.

AC: If you didn't do that would it still have panned out okay or?

IG: Err probably not [laughing] I would have still had all my inhibitions intact [laughter]

AC: Um, so thinking about um, Sunshine Maniac [IG: Yep] now in the present day what sort of roles and responsibilities do you all take on if you do at all?

IG: Um, because of my disabilities now I tend to, back, back in the old days I was in charge of the PA system, I could drive and what have you and the PA system to like concerts and I'd be able to put together but because of my current situation I'm reliant on Paul to do X, Y and Z.

AC: Do they distribute the other jobs between them?

IG: Yeah, yeah. It's pretty good. Fortunately in this day and age because technology has moved on so much and ah it's quite amazing really, y'know I got this thing called a VFX [AC: A VFX?] It's a vocal effects pedal [AC: Okay] you never had a vocal effects pedal you had to be able to sing [laughter]

AC: Is that just for recording or can you use it live?

IG: No you can use [inaudible] live. I've used it live the last couple of times we played.

AC: What, what do you use it for then?

IG: Well I just, I just use it as a reverb pedal [AC: Okay] but some singers use it to correct the pitch of their voice [AC: It can auto-correct?] it can auto-correct yeah

AC: So you could use it for recording as well...

IG: Oh yeah, yeah

AC: And is that quite a new tool...

IG: Oh yeah I bought it just after, the middle of last year I think? but I, I've, it's one of those things with me it sits in a box and I take it up to Paul and eventually he'll get around to saying yeah we can do X, Y and Z. With me it comes out when my daughters come around and Daddy can we have the robot voice on!? [Laughter] so they can play with it [laughter].

AC: So it's being used for other things as well?

IG: Yeah.

AC: That's cool. Um, err, so, we kinda touched on this a bit but thinking about the resources in Aberdare [inaudible] physical [inaudible] anything?

IG: Um,

AC: What sort of stuff do you draw on to be able to make the music you do?

IG: It's, unfortunately I don't think it's as good as it used to be, I know we've got, now we have a designated music venue [AC: Yeah] y'know back 20 odd years we had pubs that put bands on y'know, all over the place, we had about six or seven of them, not just the one venue [AC: Yeah]

AC: What's the pub circuit like now for playing?

IG: Well, there's Jacs and that's it.

AC: Is it, y'know apart from Cwmfest I...

IG: Apart from Cwmfest that's once a year. The good thing is in neighbouring, relatively close, the valleys like Ebbw Vale you got like the Steel house Arch which is a very supportive group of people and once a year they put the Steel house festival on which is a gigantic, relatively big thing y'know you got twenty thousand people going over there for a, a three day festival

AC: For a small place like Ebbw Vale...

IG: Yeah, yeah which would not have been happening...

AC: How do they manage to put that on though?

IG: Well they have quite a lot of sponsorship, y'know they got sponsorship from about 5 or 6 different companies and um, because of [inaudible] it's, its eleventh year this year, because of word of mouth and y'know people have been going there over the years it, it's just built up a reputation, this year it's looking even better, last year was fantastic. I mean thinking of seeing a band like Living Colour playing in Ebbw Vale

would have been out of my remit y'know but I was, up a mountain last year with Rory Glover from Living Colour last year, that was so surreal.

AC: I mean could that be replicated in different valleys?

IG: I would love to see it, I would love to see it.

AC: What do you think is needed for that to be I don't know like you got Merthyr Rising I suppose?

IG: Yeah Merthyr Rising is um, Merthyr Rising is kind of taking off but you get people in Merthyr who are quite anti-Merthyr Rising 'cause what, with Merthyr Rising you've got the political aspect right with Ebbw Vale, with the Steel House Festival it's just music.

AC: Do you think that's a wrong move to fuse the two?

IG: Yep, it always has been, music should just be about music

AC: Why do you think Merthyr have done that then?

IG: I've no idea because it's got some sort of, because Merthyr Rising is all about the um, it, it's trying to tie in a piece of history about Merthyr and the red flag being flown in Merthyr and the Dic Penderyn and um [inaudible] Richards and the whole history of the Merthyr Rebellion, they've tried to tie the two together and put music in there, which doesn't really, to me doesn't work...

AC: Do you think that's why Cwmfest has carried on because it's just simply been music?

IG: Yeah, yeah, yeah

AC: Do you have much involvement in Cwmfest at all?

IG: I, as an organiser do you mean?

AC: Yeah.

IG: No none whatsoever [AC: Just a performer?] just performing yeah. I find the Cwmfest committee very, very, insular.

AC: Who are they?

IG: That's what I mean [inaudible] well I only know that Dave Holt was involved last year

AC: Yes, that's all I know yeah.

IG: When the people from Cwmaman were doing it I had no idea?

AC: That's odd, is it a Cwmaman kinda thing?

IG: Yeah. It used to be just Cwmaman

AC: Y'know the people involved running I mean, is it still just people from Cwmaman or?

IG: Well no I think last year was Dave, Dave Holt [inaudible] how he got any involvement with it I have no idea? But thank goodness he did, we got on the bill.

AC: Yeah, it was a good festival y'know what I mean, I enjoyed it. Um so how often do you play live in Aberdare?

IG: Well, we only ever, well in this current incarnation of Sunshine Maniac we've played twice and, but the old Sunshine Maniac would be playing in Aberdare y'know two or three times a week.

AC: Do you think that has something to do with the decline in places to play?

IG: Definitely, but in the Wild Flowers we would be, it wouldn't just be Aberdare we would be out everywhere.

AC: Okay, how far would you go?

IG: With Sunshine Maniac we've been all over the place, we've been to London, Bridport [laughs] very peculiar places y'know

AC: Um, what do you think can attribute, or what are one of the factors maybe that there's less places to play I mean we got Jacs which is kinda like a...

IG: I'm not sure I think just generally there's less pubs

AC: Less pubs?

IG: Less pubs. I mean when we were in the Wild Flowers um, there were, there was um, the Railway Club, Abercwmboi Rugby Club, the old Abercwmboi Rugby Club used to put bands on and everybody used to play there on the weekends y'know.

AC: Were there more bands in the area or is there more now?

IG: Um, there are more bands but quantity does not mean better quality [AC: No?] No

AC: [Inaudible] is there a [inaudible] or is it on the rise?

IG: I think there has been a significant dip [AC: What do you think...] in the quality of bands

AC: 'Cause there's been plenty of bands but [inaudible] are they [inaudible] all in the same networks? Or do they tend to be quite here there and everywhere?

IG: I think the bands around here know each other but they used to know each other as well, there was more of a competitive, back, back in the day there was more of a [inaudible] and it used to tighten everybody up as well [inaudible]

AC: A little bit of competition between each other, what was the aim to get more famous than the other band yeah? What do you think's changed with that then?

IG: No idea? No idea?

AC: Um, how important is making music for you?

IG: Music is probably the most important thing in my life apart from my family.

AC: What do you get out of it? What motivates you?

IG: I'm passionate about it, always have been, whenever I do it, however I do it whether it's with the band or the choir.

AC: What would it be like without music?

IG: Oh just black and white

AC: What are the aspects that attract you? Is it the people? Is it the music itself or?

IG: It's the music itself. Music is the only thing that can draw emotions

AC: You find it a bit therapeutic?

IG: Oh yeah, yeah. Well I find it, I find it can either send me to the worst places or the best places

AC: So it can kinda go either way

IG: Yeah, yeah

AC: I suppose depending on the music

IG: It can remind me of something I don't want to be reminded of or it can remind me of something I don't know makes me so happy

AC: What factors do you think in Aberdare, y'know a semi-rural village so we're not in a city or anything, what factors do you think make it difficult for people in this environment like Aberdare to make music?

IG: Well, there's always the aspect of having to go, y'know, right I've broken a string I've got to go all the way to Cardiff [laughs] I got to go to Cranes in Cardiff to buy a plectrum [laughter]

AC: So the internet's a good thing then?

IG: Oh fantastic! The internet has become a real God send [someone just stopped to talk to IG]

AC: Um, so just last couple of things can you just give me um, just a little insight, imagine I don't know you, are you [inaudible] to meet the people you're working with musically now, and what keeps you together what is it about the interaction?

IG: They saw me playing in the Wild Flowers, um and Gary and Paul said That's our singer.

AC: And did they know you prior to that?

IG: No

AC: Alright so they didn't even know you?

IG: No they said that's our singer, we want him.

AC: And what was it about your performance that attracted them?

IG: [Laughter]

AC: How would you describe your relationships with these people now?

IG: I mean, we're like brothers y'know

AC: Yeah, like extended family? [IG: Yeah] Can you see yourself doing any musical collaborations with people you didn't know? Or would you keep it to y'know...

IG: Y'know I work and I sing with the choir [inaudible] I just love singing, as long as I'm making music I'll sing with anybody.

AC: Okay, and finally, is there anything else you'd like to add?

IG: No, not really?

AC: Brilliant, right I'll stop that there. That's awesome, thank you my love.

Interview with Jim Brenner, 07-01-2020, Jim Brenner's studio, Aberdare @ 12.33 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

JB – Jim Brenner, Participant

AC: Hiya Jim

JB: Hiya Anne how are you?

AC: I'm alright thank you. Um, okay so, so general questions first to start err just tell me a little about the music you're into at the moment?

JB: What I'm doing myself at the moment is it?

AC: Um, what you're listening to...

JB: Oh listening to, um, I guess I listen to a lot of stuff I've always listened to y'know bands like ah I don't know, Little Feat, Black Crowes, down the gym I'm listening to all sorts of stuff, Metallica, Iron Maiden, Ryan Adams right across the board [laughs]

AC: Okay. Any variations of that then or...

JB: Um, I listen to a lot of classical music in the car, when I'm driving, I tend to listen to that, pretty much all the time when I'm in the car [AC: Okay] and I dip in and out of jazz y'know here and there. I don't get an awful lot of time to sit and listen much these days but when I do y'know I ah try and mix it up a bit.

AC: Then let's look at the music you're playing at the moment. So, um how would you describe the music that you're writing and performing at the moment.

JB: It's always acoustic based at the moment um, a lot of finger picky type stuff y'know um I ah I haven't written loads in recent times, but it's mostly sort of just acoustic picky kinda stuff y'know. Um, I pulled some songs out which I'd written a while back for the band which has got more of a band sound we've gigged them once or twice ah recently so, um, yeah it's, it's just a kind of it always starts with an acoustic guitar anyway and y'know when I record them I build up on them a little bit more, but it's mostly acoustic based stuff y'know.

AC: Why do you think it's based around acoustic guitar then?

JB: I think that's the sound that always pricks my ear I think y'know it, it's that ah y'know I always feel like y'know if a song's good with an acoustic guitar then y'know you got a good song kind of thing y'know, I find that ah I don't know I kinda lean more towards that sound I think, I just love that sound.

AC: Where do you think the roots of that sound or the influences, where did that come from?

JB: I think y'know I like listening to a lot of old folk stuff um, and ah y'know the singer songwriter stuff, country music, I listen to a lot of country music y'know and the acoustic is, I don't know it always feels like that's the bedrock of a good sound for me y'know even like artists like Tom Petty who I love and, and there's always an acoustic guitar strumming along in the background y'know. Um, and all the other stuff y'know pretties it up I guess arrangement wise but it's just that sound and y'know I guess acoustic blues and things like that as well is very ah y'know old traditional stuff isn't it y'know folk blues it's all from the source I suppose y'know.

AC: Because you're mainly guitarist but you do play piano as well [JB: Yeah] it's interesting that you go to the guitar rather than the piano y'know [JB: Yeah, yeah] have you done that recently on the piano or is it...

JB: Do y'know what I have a couple of times recently I, I went for a long, long spell and I didn't touch the piano really. Um, but there's a guy I teach John and I've done some sessions for him and I was working on some session work for him ah before Christmas, so y'know he tends to want me to go at the piano a lot, so I found myself on there again. Also made me realise how little I play it and how rusty I am [laughs] I can wing it to a certain point y'know [laughing] but ah y'know the piano is far more of a kind of for me now, a writing tool or a recording tool rather than considering myself a pianoplayer as such any more y'know [AC: Okay] yeah.

AC: And um, tell me a little about your musical practices um right now in the present time ah sort of how you go about writing are you on your own are you with a group y'know what are all the processes involved in your writing?

JB: To be honest with you I write completely on my own. I mean over the years it, it, it, that kind of developed when I was kind of writing and realising what I was writing wasn't for the band, which then kind of became more of a thing for me um, and has continued to do so really, so I write completely on my own really. But y'know ideas spring from messing about most of the time just sitting there messing about y'know stuff just jumps out. I always try and learn new tunes as well by I don't know people like Richard Thompson, Steve Howe or and all of these things y'know you'll find ideas in everything you learn won't you, so I find that an important part of y'know song writing is learning new tunes so you get inspired by the new things that are under your fingers y'know.

AC: Okay. Um so what about rehearsing the stuff you're writing at the moment? So how do you go about doing that?

JB: [laughs] It's me in my room on my own [laughter] sitting there y'know kinda just singing along to myself y'know [laughs] yeah, y'know with bands and stuff obviously y'know it's a group affair so you y'know you I don't do a lot of rehearsing with the band currently, I think that will step up a bit more this year but band work has kinda not been in the forefront I guess over the last few years I suppose?

AC: Why is that?

JB: Um, well just because more, mainly, the band Cripplecreek which is the main band um, we were playing very sporadically when Harvey came back from living in Australia, we picked it back up but not as a full time thing um, gigging here and there, rehearsing here and there. Carl lives in Stafford logistically difficult; he's got a lot on his plate up there. So, it's y'know me with two kids and y'know real-life gets in the way so it, it, limits what you can do. But I think this year we're all intent on trying to pick that up a bit more. But aside from that the 4 Brothers thing I do with Paul, that's just the two of us in my room there, which is handy as hell y'know, so we kind of, although we haven't done it in months which is why I do it on my own um, we just go in there and I play acoustic and we both sing y'know.

AC: Are you the sole writer then? Does Paul contribute to that?

JB: Paul's contributed I think two or three songs over the years but everything else is mine well y'know my writing I suppose like y'know Paul puts his harmony on top [AC: So, he's contributing to the finished product then] yeah.

AC: Complimenting what you're doing and [JB: Yeah that's right, exactly] Does he play bass?

JB: Um, we did make a little band out of it once he played bass in that as well, but y'know we've just been doing it the two of us and one guitar for a while we haven't recorded anything for a long time. But I've recorded stuff myself but um, yeah y'know I find myself y'know doing that more and more these days y'know because Paul hasn't able to find the time to do it then and... I'm pretty self-sufficient y'know.

AC: So you got all you need right here basically?

JB: Yeah pretty much [AC: Record and...] yeah y'know I got a guy who mixes my stuff as well down in Cardiff [AC: Is that Meirion?] No that's ah Matt Evans he's um he's the lead singer and writer for the band The Keys [AC: Okay] great band, fantastic, you want to look them up they're awesome um so he did me and Paul's album [AC: Okay] and he's been doing my stuff ever since y'know so I just finished some tracks with him, now in fact just before Christmas.

AC: How did you get to know him? How did you get to find out about him?

JB: Um, my old band the Broken Vinyl Club we used to play in Cardiff a lot err um and The Keys used to play in Cardiff a lot and we were fans of them anyway, got to know them through playing and there was a little label we were all signed to down there called See Monkey, Do Monkey, [AC: Okay] um there was Broken Vinyl Club, I think Keys were on it for a bit and another band called Houdini Dax, um and the drummer from Houdini Dax and who plays in the Keys as well is a bit of ah, sort of he's having a lot of success at the moment with Boyazooga? So um again y'know, lots of, melting pot again of people, so I got to know Matt through that and I loved the sound he's got on the Keys album 'cause he did all the production for it, done the mixing, so I asked him to do, would he have a go at the album and he did y'know. Um, so he's a great guy to have there, 'cause he knows what to do [laughs]

AC: That's cool, that's really good and he's got his own place down in Cardiff?

JB: He just does it from his house y'know the mixing, he just does the mixing he does, I do the recording up here [AC: Do you have to go down in person or do you...] Nah, we do it over email. He'll send me a mix I'll give him some feedback he'll go away and do something then send me another mix until we get it right y'know and then it's done.

AC: You don't have to ever necessarily meet him you can just pay him by I suppose bank transfer.

JB: That's exactly what we do, yeah. I only ever bump into him occasionally in Cardiff through ah through a gig or something like that, but um, y'know I speak to him on the phone, but it's all done [laughs] on a computer now so yeah, I don't even have to see him, no.

AC: So, how would you describe everything you do? How would you describe all, all the little facets of what you do?

JB: I don't know? I think it's just a nice blend of y'know a nice mix I think. Y'know ahh the intention was always to try and be a, a rounded musician y'know as best as I could really, rather than just being a guitarist or a piano player or something. I wanted to learn about all the other stuff as well. So between teaching which always keeps you, as you know, y'know keeps you, keeps you sort of there, with your certain level of playing and knowledge um, so you gotta be sharp y'know as best you can. Then there's the writing and the gigging and the recording which takes care of the creative

side of things. There's the session work then which is kind of an element of two, of the two things y'know um, which again stretches me again a different way y'know, so I would say it's a bit of a melting pot really of, of everything y'know.

AC: Okay. So, we've sort of touched on this y'know if you want to develop this at all, are there any responsibilities and roles adopted, so you could talk about your solo, well your 4 Brothers stuff and Cripplecreek y'know who books gigs, who does finances and promotions, what's your role in all of that y'know?

JB: I mean with the 4 Brothers thing I mean y'know I, I always took care of the booking of the gigs, um booking the recording studio, doing the arrangements y'know um, on the songs. The musical arrangements were left more for me I think, the vocal arrangements were me and Paul y'know, um, getting the artwork done so that we had a product y'know, so I always took that role. In Cripplecreek y'know we, we y'know Harvey would do the majority of, of things over the years but then I got a certain role in writing and I'd book gigs for the band and y'know and again the band has been fairly inactive on that level for a while anyway so there hasn't been an awful lot to do there. Um, and on my own personal, the stuff I do on my own, I just do it for my own, I don't even put it out on social media or anything. I put it on vinyl so I sit here like an old man and listen to it on a vinyl player just for my own pleasure [laughing] yeah, yeah and that's literally it. Yeah, I'm not bothered about ah, about the self-promotion thing y'know.

AC: That's interesting, has that changed? [JB: Oh massively] y'know what was kinda like y'know did it gradually change or did something [inaudible] I've had enough of that.

JB: It, it did kind of, there was that ah straw that broke the camel's back moment for me. I think all my musical life I always kind of, not first and foremost um but I always hoped y'know I always pushed things, push, push, push, push, multiple bands, lots of push, trying to push certain ones in directions and selling, getting yourself out there which y'know wasn't totally without its merits y'know we got signed to y'know the Acid Jazz label with the Vinyl Club, we did loads of good stuff with them and with Cripplecreek over the years y'know, it, it works. Um, but I think I got to a point y'know after the year with Ragsy and y'know it, it, it's a difficult thing sometimes to keep plugging away at and hammering away at, a lot of travelling, a lot of time out, a lot of hard work, a lot of hours spent y'know working towards something um and I stopped enjoying that side of it in all honesty and it made me wanna stop which I did do for a while, I didn't stop completely I just stopped the gigging and the y'know the collaborating and stuff like that. Um, and then when I wanted to do it again I wanted to do it more just for fun, and, and for enjoyment rather than with any intent y'know.

AC: So would you say it's fair to say y'know you're um motivations for becoming involved again were different [JB: Yeah, definitely] How would you describe them pre-change and then how would you describe them afterwards, your motivations?

JB: I think there was always a part of me which was never satisfied before because I was never maybe getting where I wanted to go and even though I said earlier that wasn't the driving force for me making music that was always in my thoughts and in my brain, and, I think that made it, over the years more frustrating than enjoyable and then I think the frustration got to me y'know and then I thought well, this isn't what it's all about, I always said if I wasn't going to enjoy it anymore I'd stop doing it and I did for a bit but y'know I think the most important thing is now is that when I go and do something I haven't got that in my head anymore and I'm just enjoying it for what it is and enjoying the moment when it's happening y'know.

- AC: I suppose it would be fair to say that's an age thing as well...
- JB: Definitely, you've got to go through stuff haven't you to come out the other end and to find out what that's like in order to make the decision to change it y'know and it's all about change and evolving isn't it, y'know you can't keep doing the same thing especially if it's making you miserable [AC: Yeah] or unhappy or you're not getting out of it what you should be, well, I've learnt from that, let's, let's do it differently y'know.
- AC: What sort of err y'know what was you aiming at, what was your standard, what was your benchmark?
- JB: I don't know I think it was just the bar was always raised higher than where I was [AC: It was constantly being pushed...] productive anxiety yeah, yeah and I think, I think for me it wasn't about becoming rich and famous, it certainly wasn't that I know that I can say that hand on heart. For me it was getting to a professional level where you're playing and you've got an audience, you're making records and selling your records to those people. I know it's the old golden age of music kind of dream but that was my era that's what I grew up with y'know and um, y'know the posters on my wall when I was a kid [inaudible] I used to emulate guitar with before I had a guitar, it was all about that y'know it was about that y'know desire to be up on that stage playing that music and people coming to see you because they like your music y'know.
- AC: Being recognised for skills...
- JB: I suppose yeah. I suppose like in any job people chase promotion in order to y'know keep moving forward or moving up if you want, it's just like that really y'know I think a lot of people, I don't know, think there's something wrong with that y'know or, or the, y'know you just wanna be famous [AC: Selling out or something] and it's not about that, it's just about getting on with y'know your progression, that's what I felt anyway.
- AC: Do you think um, perhaps some of the, and when I say relationships, I just mean interactions and things like that, do you think that ah certain interactions you had left you dissatisfied with it?
- JB: Interactions what, musically with people you mean?
- AC: Yeah, how you were going about your music-making was leaving you a little bit unsatisfied I don't know?
- JB: I don't... I mean the thing is I think whenever you're in a band you're basically in a relationship y'know you can't all be on the same page all of the time, um different people have different desires, different people see things differently and you learn I think over the many years of being in bands and different bands with different characters that y'know there's a core dynamic which keeps you together but around that core dynamic y'know it can become fraught y'know you can have disagreements it can ruin the music because people are dissatisfied and not happy and when you're not happy and you're trying to write and you're trying to play it's not the same y'know it feels like there's a, there's a, I don't know something mute in it y'know.
- AC: Have you got any examples of the dynamic not being as good as it could be? Y'know you don't have to mention names or anything...
- JB: Yeah I think y'know [AC: incidences] I certainly think by the end of one of the bands y'know, and again because of the situation we, we found ourselves in at the time

being signed to the label and y'know all the other stuff that goes on around it y'know you're also listening to a lot of bullshit, a lot of undelivered promises, um, a lot of hot air y'know, and that becomes another element that adds dissatisfaction in and then certain people would be more dissatisfied than others and then wanna stop doing it, and then when that happens you've got y'know problems in the band so the balance starts to shift and move and y'know it can end what potentially started out as real good thing y'know.

AC: Do you find that y'know these experiences then change the way you go about maybe ah interacting with other musicians or re-interacting with musicians you have in the past?

JB: Yeah, definitely yeah...

AC: Or people who in venues y'know. Can you give me some examples of something that might've changed and it could be really subtle and something that is an everyday thing [JB: Yeah] something that you changed as a consequence of that being not good y'know.

JB: Definitely, I think you're more guarded, y'know and when you're younger and, and not, you haven't had so much experience of different situations over the years, different bands or whatever it is, different collaborations. You kinder throw yourself in 'cause you're younger and hungry and, and you're full of beans and you just wanna play and just do whatever it is you can do 'cause you're doing it y'know. Um, I think y'know [inaudible] years later and again like you said earlier there is an age element to this as well because y'know because of the longevity of it, I think that, well I certainly became more guarded I didn't want to collaborate anymore 'cause I felt that you're entering into potentially another situation that won't really, I don't know, bear fruit maybe? I don't know, I don't know I think I just, personally became um quite sort of solitary I suppose in a way. I'd had a guts full of being in bands, I didn't want to be in a band anymore 'cause I was fed up with it. I'd had enough of travelling and being away a lot and y'know multiple gigs all over the place all of the time, writing in-between y'know, I'd had enough of all of that, I just wanted to do it on a different level y'know um, so I think a combination of all of the experiences eventually made me just want to do it on my own for a bit. I feel different now, I feel like I wanna collaborate more again now. I feel like I wanna step out of that again now because it's been a number of years that I've been feeling that way y'know. Um, so it'll change again, it always does, it never stays the same but again y'know I think I've learnt from that now and I'll put it into a new perspective y'know, yeah.

AC: Um, how do you stay in touch with people you rely on like your man in Cardiff and...

JB: Oh it's by text usually I um, y'know I got a couple of tracks do you fancy having a go.

AC: And there's no um, it's business rather than social or?

JB: Yeah, I mean I don't socialise with Matt, um, y'know whenever I see him we'll have a good chat and y'know, y'know I like to consider him a mate y'know um 'cause I've known him for a long time now. We've done a lot even though we don't see each other we're making music together y'know [AC: Yeah] Um, and what he does is completely change and elevate the tracks which to me it's all in the mix so it's all important y'know. Um, so he's as much an important element of that as anyone y'know. Um, other guys y'know they're my friends anyway so we socialise and y'know that's mainly it really.

AC: And, do you think, I suppose it's pretty obvious but just for the record, is it because they're friends you're in a band with them y'know rather than putting an ad out and meeting a stranger [JB: Yeah] Would you ever consider that?

JB: No

AC: Why's that? Is it...

JB: I've never needed to.

AC: Okay, so the availability is already here....

JB: Yeah, yeah, I think musical um, relationships have always started, for me from a place and a time and people who were in that place and time at the same time, y'know they kind of a lot of the time they just seem to happen, y'know there's not really been any planning and sitting down with certain people and going right let's do something together and you end up in the pub with them and they go I got a couple of tracks do you fancy having a play? Or something, y'know. Apart from Ragsy who came to me directly to ask me to work with him but that was a different thing that was just business.

AC: How did you feel about that when he asked you?

JB: I was very reluctant.

AC: What were the, what were the reasons y'know was it because you didn't know him that well?

JB: No, I knew him extremely well, very well.

AC: Is that the reason why? [laughter]

JB: Possibly [laughter] no, it was because at the time he'd recently been on the voice and I don't have any time for those [AC: Okay] shows.

AC: So, was it more of a case that he was going down a path that you really didn't wanna, that commercial sort of side of things?

JB: Yeah, very much so.

AC: How would you describe where your heart lies?

JB: Not there [laughter] that's the best way to answer that. I think it, it's yeah y'know it's not in an entertainment and I mean entertainment in neon lights and bulbs all around it, right. That's not where I am, I'm more in a band y'know that old kind of y'know rock n roll kind of [laughs] y'know old school kind of head I suppose where y'know it's not about that for me, y'know. I can see how it creates opportunities for people to do things y'know on a different level and I'm not knocking them for doing it, it's just not ever something that I've wanted to be associated with y'know.

AC: Do you feel like it's sort of cheapening things or...

JB: Yeah, I think it's a kind of conveyor belt of y'know ah where you y'know it's just after another after another after another after another and I'm sure they go on to do good bookings and do well and things like that y'know in a, in a sense that it frees them a

bit from maybe being nobody knowing them and there's nothing wrong with y'know it's fine but ah I don't know for me it's just not, not what it's all about y'know.

AC: So that was kinda like a little bit of an obstacle for you...

JB: Yeah very much so, 'cause you get tarred with the brushes y'know what I mean, y'know, to shake these tags off. Y'know I know it wasn't me who'd been on The Voice kinda thing but y'know, it did y'know, I had conversations, when I was doing stuff with Ragsy, I'd have conversations with other musicians around here almost having to justify why I was doing it, 'cause they were kind of like, why are you doing that?

AC: Oh right, so you were getting questioned a lot...

JB: Yeah, yeah got questioned by a number of people.

AC: What sort of things were they saying then?

JB: Oh I didn't think that was kinda you, where are you at like? And I was [inaudible] with them I said for me it's an opportunity to make money. I know it sounds cut-throat and mercenary but, I'm not saying I didn't get anything out of it in terms musically 'cause I did write a substantial y'know, I contributed then substantially to what he was doing musically put it that way. Um, but it was always Ragsy and it was always his name and I was happy to be the silent party in that y'know more than happy but, yet y'know when people I guess have maybe the same opinion as maybe I had The Voice and the kind of artists that maybe who are, if, if you're going to do that, then I was obviously part of that now [AC: Right] and maybe then that's why people were questioning me?

AC: It's reputation I guess that says something I suppose doesn't it [JB: Yeah] You didn't want that to affect it I suppose?

JB: Yes. I hope that doesn't sound big headed in any way [AC: No, no] but yeah that was ultimately why I stopped doing it. That, that was the very reason I stopped doing it. 'Cause my wife even turned to me and said, I think if you continue doing this you're going to end up looking a bit silly.

AC: That's fair enough, can't argue with the wife [laughs]

JB: 'Cause I was feeling that anyway though, she was only confirming what I was feeling y'know because I wasn't up for the situations and the decisions he was making.

AC: Okay then so that could be you felt like you had no control over where it was going?

JB: Not really no, I had a voice which was sort of I thought listened to but ultimately he was gonna do what he was gonna do which is fine, that's why I got out, it wasn't because I hated his guts or anything. I stopped doing it because I thought I'd gone as far as I could with it. Um, like we spoke then about yeah, I was like then I feel like I'm compromising myself reputation wise and musically, um, what he was proposing next, or the road he wanted to go down certainly wasn't the road I was prepared to go down, and um, I couldn't commit to what he was wanting me to anyway, so that ultimately led to the end of that y'know.

AC: So, would you say there was, whether that was deliberate or lack of communication from the other person to you and...

JB: Rather than a lack of communication, I think it was more selective um, selective communication where I'd only be told so much to keep me happy in terms of um y'know he'd spring things on me where y'know I'd be like y'know dumbfounded, what I can't do that, that's preposterous y'know

AC: Sort of taking advantage a bit really?

JB: Well, I think it was...more a case of I think he thought that I would just go along with it, um, bear in mind y'know what I mean, there were other circumstances in terms that I had full-time job, um, I was playing in other bands, including making my own album and things at the time, um, which was put on hold as a result of the work load that I had with him. But um, he didn't have a job, y'know he didn't really have any responsibilities financially or otherwise. I was married y'know and things. So, we were in different places, so he could afford to do whatever he wanted anytime of the day or night, weekends, weeks, whereas I couldn't, so [AC: He didn't recognise that?] no he couldn't at all so y'know that was one of the main reasons why my decision came down when it did, because ah it was just insane what he was asking me to do. So, y'know that was that y'know.

AC: Okay, um, let's have a little look, um, so what, we kinda touched on this but if you can expand it a bit maybe to the area, so the resources that use or rely on or really need, you were saying you got a lot in the house [inaudible] all your instruments, a place to do these things. Is there anything else in Aberdare?

JB: [Laughs] yeah there's The Shed [laughter] have you heard of The Shed? [AC: I have yeah] Have you been up The Shed? [AC: I have had the honour of being up the Shed] There you are then, there's the Shed [laughter] [inaudible] I love the Shed, it's great, yeah, we've played up there, rehearsed up there a few times, well the last few times we rehearsed then has been up The Shed ah with Cripplecreek um and y'know it's great. We managed to get a good little sound in there, even though it's like y'know it's as wide as y'know I can hold my arms [laughter] y'know and Simon and a few of his mates are always sitting there listening and um, yeah I like it up there, it's enjoyable.

AC: It's like a little historical [JB: It is] time-capsule isn't it?

JB: It is, it is completely y'know um, it's great, I just love it for what it is as well [AC: Yeah] apart from a place to jam in. Just like you said y'know it's a little time-capsule y'know and you got Stephen and the boys sitting there y'know having a couple of beers what have you and multiple bands have been through there y'know over the years, y'know all the local bands and stuff and there's a, there's a bit of a kind of, again it's that hub thing isn't it y'know, I think that's the good thing about when you have 'scenes' y'know music scenes and things like that, there's always a hub and y'know that hub will change over the years y'know but there'll always be somewhere where y'know people kind of gravitate towards to either rehearse or to gig or to hang out, whatever it may be y'know, there's always some, somewhere.

AC: So, The Shed is one of those places right now?

JB: Yeah, yeah I think so.

AC: Is there anywhere else where people rehearse?

JB: We've rehearsed in Jacs before, during the day on a Saturday kind of thing but like that's not so easy now 'cause it opens up through the day um...

AC: But that's like the main playing venue in Aberdare would you say?

JB: It is yeah. Yeah it is yeah. I mean there used to be a place in Cwmaman, back in the, oh god you're looking, so many bands rehearsed there back in the day, the Stereophonics and before the Stereophonics kind of thing y'know they all rehearsed up in Canolfan [AC: Is that still there?] It's still there but y'know it's a community, well you couldn't call it a hall it's only small but it's a community based building it is, um, so they use it for all sorts of things y'know, not, not for bands anymore [AC: Why's that?] I think some of the younger bands used to trash the place a bit and as a result, the place was getting damaged put it that way and err people weren't respecting it and yeah they pulled the plug. But for many, many years that was err, that was [AC: The main place?] yeah it was yeah, um...

AC: Are there any sort of pubs around Cwmaman way there where people rehearse now that that place isn't there or [inaudible]

JB: I couldn't tell you to be honest, I, I don't know, I don't think so? I don't know who's playing up there these days, nah people tend to come down this way to do their practicing now y'know um, yeah, yeah. There may be a place up there that as far as I know young bands practice, I don't know, I don't know?

AC: Perhaps they're doing it privately y'know garages and things like that perhaps?

JB: There's lots of um, what has popped up over the years y'know there's quite a few of them around now like ah rehearsal studios where, there's like NUStudioz over um in Merthyr where there's a PA and a drumkit there. You pay I don't know a tenner an hour between you y'know it means you don't have to take your PA and drumkit, y'know you just take your amps, all the mic's are there y'know, breakables, ah 2 hours job done. Y'know there's a place in Cilfynydd, the Green Rooms I think that's still there, that's again another place where everything's there. So I think bands do tend to use those sorts of places maybe quite a bit as well now y'know. Not a lot of young bands have their own PA's and stuff anyway, y'know [AC: So they tend to go out of town really?] yeah I think so.

AC: So, it's a kind of, is it like a select few or a certain group of bands use The Shed, you all know each other? Or are there people you don't know?

JB: Yeah, yeah, we all know each other, I mean there's a big bank of people around here who have been playing around here for years y'know we've all been in bands together y'know all collaborated somehow. Y'know I mean Dead Shed Jokers y'know that was kind of their HQ I think it still is.

AC: Is that because one of them is related to Stephen?

JB: Yeah, Nathan yeah, it's his uncle

AC: Right, is that why Stephen agreed to do that 'cause Nathan took an interest is it?

JB: I'm not sure? Y'know in all honesty, y'know Nicky's old band the Psychic Spies with Gerry and Scott from the Broken Vinyl Club, he was the bass player and Mappy was the singer, um, this is going back a good many years ago now, they used to rehearse up there so whether that started it? [AC: Okay] I'm not really sure, for all I know Stephen had mates who used to practice up there as well I dunno? But that y'know, yeah I think a lot of people who know each other certainly sort of [inaudible] [AC: You

say there's a place here and...] yeah [AC: Like a snowball effect?] Aye that's it, so that everybody knows the Shed now really [SC: Okay] yeah.

AC: Um, so how often are you playing live at the moment?

JB: Not very often, there's usually um y'know a month or two in between gigs, maybe you'll have two close together and then another month or two in between.

AC: Are they mainly around here or...

JB: They have been yeah. I think the furthest we've gone in recent times is Newport. But um, yeah [inaudible] around here.

AC: Whereabouts in Aberdare then?

JB: Well Mountain Ash [AC: Jacs?] oh yeah Jacs. Um, Cwmaman, things like Cwmfest, we've played up the Falcon a couple of times and the Shepherds, the Globe and then there's the um, the Butcher's Inn, the Butcher's Arms actually in Mountain Ash. Yeah they've been the last, we've always been a regular gig there.

AC: There's nothing more Hirwaun based way or pretty quiet...

JB: No, nothing really nah...

AC: So it's more so this end really?

JB: Yeah, yeah, and yeah I used to play up in Brecon quite a bit with the 4 Brothers thing as well I'd play up that area quite a lot.

AC: Okay, perhaps that's a bit quieter than normal...

JB: It is, yeah it is a lot quieter there, one of the guys promoting a lot of the gigs up there isn't doing it like he was now, so ah I think it's died off a bit yeah.

AC: Do you know who's taken his place or...

JB: No, I don't think anybody had really as far as I can see, y'know like the Facebook page, the Brecon music scene one y'know there's not a lot up on there these days, so maybe it's going through a bit of a lull.

AC: Okay, um, okay, so what or who, or and who is critical in enabling you to make your music?

JB: [Laughter] It depends which...

AC: It could be you [laughter]

JB: I think it depends which, which context it's in like with the band obviously the boys. Um y'know when me and Paul do the 4 Brother's thing, me, and Paul [laughter] and then when I do my own thing me [laughter] so I think it's me getting out of bed in the morning is the critical bit [laughter]

AC: I'll scrap that question [laughter] I mean is there anything that um y'know ah anything that y'know you need around here as in it could be physical things rather than

people, it could be tangible stuff or is it all y'know do you have to go anywhere else do you have to rely on anyone else [JB: No] outside of that?

JB: Not really, no not these days, no I don't.

AC: How important is making music to you?

JB: It's everything, yeah, it really is yeah.

AC: Can you develop that? Can you expand on it?

JB: Well, y'know it, it I think gives you a sense of purpose, it gives you an identity, ah a creative output, um it's good for your soul it's good for your mental health, it's good for your y'know you're brain, y'know you just get so much from it y'know, everything kind of. If, if I'm doing that then I feel like I'm doing what I should be doing y'know...

AC: Does it make like other stuff in other social aspects a little bit easier [JB: Oh yeah] that's going good and...

JB: Yeah even if it's not good, as long as it's going [AC: Yeah] y'know that to me is good because y'know there's been times where I've wanted to stop or thought I wanted to stop, um, because I haven't enjoyed it y'know, so the fact that it's going is always good because it does yeah you're right it makes all of these other things so much more doable y'know...

AC: Okay, what motivates you? What do you get out of it? You kinda said a little bit there but what really is the driving force for you to continue writing and...

JB: I think it's the cathartic thing y'know it gets your feelings and thoughts out and y'know it um, it's a place to put things y'know if you're writing sings I mean y'know lyrically or whatever y'know it, I don't know it for me it, it's just something that's always in my head and the desire is always there, I dunno where it comes from really I don't feel like it's a conscious thing, only, it only becomes a conscious thing when I'm not doing it enough and then I start thinking more about it then and thinking I should be doing more of it [laughs] y'know but luckily it's always just happened that I've just wanted to do it y'know...

AC: Okay, and that want is it to get something done or is it to have an experience so y'know...

JB: It makes me feel good about myself.

AC: Good, so it's like a therapy?

JB: Yeah, if I'm playing well I feel good about myself, I feel like I'm doing what I should be doing and doing it relatively well. When I'm not doing it well I feel like I'm out, rusty or I'm out of practice it starts to bug me and it starts to irritate me, I y'know I irritate myself so then eventually, it's like, it's like y'know leaving your homework to the last minute you're feeling like y'know and eventually you gotta do it.

AC: Yeah tell me about it! [JB: That's it!] [laughter]

JB: So when I do it then I do start working better, harder at it again, and again I feel better about it again y'know...

AC: Okay, so um, how do you find the time to um do the writing and the rehearsing and things, what sort of things do you have to put in place or is there a kind of timetable or something?

JB: Not so much with the writing and things like that y'know because I just tend to pick up the guitar when I can and y'know if I've got some time I'll spend some time on it or whatever. Rehearsing is a bit more of a logistical ah thing where you gotta plan ahead y'know make sure that night's free or you haven't gotta be sort of looking after the kids or whatever it may be.

AC: Who organises the rehearsals then?

JB: Well we all kinda say right shall we book a rehearsal in and then y'know we'll throw some dates around when a date comes up that we can all do we chuck it in the diary y'know it's like that now I mean because the boys play in other bands as well y'know they gig with other bands and stuff to earn money um, so yeah, it's a bit more planned if you like. But doing my own thing I can do that just as I go y'know, yeah.

AC: Have there been any sort of um, instances where things have gone terribly wrong or things have gone very different to what you thought it would go when you're just doing a regular rehearsal or gig or whatever...

JB: Wrong in what way? Like we play it wrong?

AC: No not playing it wrong is there anything happened that hasn't gone to plan or has messed things up...

JB: No I can't really think of anything?

AC: No limitations or things to sort of scupper...

JB: No, not that I can think of apart from the odd slip up here or there it's never been, luckily touch wood, no catastrophes y'know or any major disasters...

AC: No double bookings...

JB: Ah there's always been we've had the odd double booking in the past but not for a long, long, long, long time y'know because we don't gig very often these days, but y'know, no, nothing that I can think of really, no, no.

AC: Okay, um, so just thinking about Aberdare and the surrounding towns, villages what factors do you think make it difficult to make music around here right now?

JB: What factors? Um...

AC: Y'know so you could think about yourself but also think about y'know maybe youngsters or people new to the scene...

JB: I don't think there's I mean y'know there's the odd venue but y'know it's not like it was where multiple pubs would always have bands on y'know and you had a pick of, just in this valley alone you had your pick of, right from the top from Hirwaun down to Abercynon, there were loads of pubs. Y'know you could play, y'know all of them These days there's very few um and yeah it's just, the music scene has changed an awful lot y'know. Depends on what music you play as well, if you're a covers band then you stand more of a chance of getting into a pub I suppose. If you're an

originals band then you gotta be looking for the original gigs in certain places y'know, more venue type places I suppose. Um, where they're putting a live original band night on or something y'know.

AC: Is that quite rare to have an original band night or is it...

JB: I don't think it's rare, again I'm out of the loop a bit with this anyway but as far as I know like over in Merthyr there's lots of young bands in places like The Crown I think puts on multiple bands y'know and band nights and stuff and I'm sure there's kids out there organising gigs of their own y'know promoting it themselves wherever that may be, I'm sure it's still all going on but I don't know whether it's, it's not like it was just because there isn't the places anymore that you can play y'know.

AC: I wonder why it's all for the covers and there's not much, not many places to accommodate original music as much.

JB: Yes, it's play something we know thing isn't it, y'know people want to hear music that they know and I think again y'know where a scene lives and breathes and where it develops, whether it, whether it dips and peaks again wherever that scene is, it's kids putting gigs on and other bands and their mates going to see them and that creates a thing in itself so again that's what, we were talking about with the Voice thing earlier on I think y'know there's different categories of musicians and different categories of people y'know so you got your original band, bands who don't give a shit about playing a cover all they wanna do is make music and write it and get their angst out or whatever it is y'know, then there's the covers bands who don't write their own material so they are more designed for people who wanna hear y'know Freebird or whatever it may be y'know, so that's more you're pub thing, y'know in the same way then that people who go on, on talent shows and things like that have got more of an intent that way like y'know where they're booked into clubs and things like that y'now, under the moniker of being on the voice or being on X Factor or whatever it may be so they attract again a certain element a different element of people, so y'know there's always music happening in different places but it's the different categories of it y'know.

AC: Do you think that it's the audience are more, audiences are, not orchestrating it but making it shift that way because more people want like you said what they know...

JB: I think a certain venue will always book a certain kind of person anyway I mean y'know I don't think that say I dunno for some reason this just jumped into my head, Alfred's down in Ponty. Right, I don't know why I thought of that 'cause I think it was because I saw Mike Platt was on the Voice last year, I know Mike um, his band were playing down there the other day I noticed on Facebook, I used to play there with Ragsy kind of thing and stuff but that was y'know, you wouldn't have an original band going down there and, and knocking out an original set I don't think because they, the kind of audience are people who wanna hear songs that they y'know you have to play something we know thing y'know.

AC: So the place you're saying um the cliental of places that are available to play are not necessarily geared up for originals [JB: Yeah, yeah I think so] that must have changed then?

JB: Yeah I think at, I think yeah with the pub culture, y'know I think bands would start off in the pubs if they get a bit of a name for themselves going around the pubs maybe they elevate up to clubs a bit more because people like, there's more, oh I've seen that band y'know, they're great they were playing songs there the other day now

they're there y'know. Ah they're gone up a bit now more people and things like that, they go up a bit further kind of thing but that was always you're kinda training ground if you like and, and that isn't there like it used to be y'know I mean we played pubs for years and years and years oh God hundreds probably thousands God knows and you could get away in some pubs with an all original set 'cause they were all music heads but then you could go to another pub and you'd have nothing whatsoever until you played something that they knew and then you'd have a bit of a response y'know so you, you gauged your set depending on where you went y'know.

AC: Okay, interesting, um, and ooh the last one is, is there anything else you would like to add?

JB: [laughs]

AC: Anything you want to go over or...

JB: I don't think so, I think y'know, unless there's anything you think that we haven't touched upon...

AC: Once I've transcribed it I'll know [JB: Yeah] and I'll be back in touch [laughter] Okay I'll finish the interview there thanks Jim.

JB: Cheers Anne!

Interview with John Phillips, 24-01-2020, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 11:11 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

JP – John Phillips, Participant

AC: Hi John how're you doing?

JP: [referring to the time] eleven seconds [laughter]

AC: Bit scary isn't it [laughter]

JP: I'm okay thank you

AC: Um okay so the first few questions I'm gonna ask you are quite general so um, what sort of music do you like?

JP: Ooh I like most things that are good, um, err, I especially like um certain psychedelic music I like pop music, I like foreign, all sort of foreign music like South American music from the Andes and things like that y'know um, but I like prog rock I like a lot of y'know reggae oh everything more or less.

AC: How did you get into music from South America and things like that? What piqued your interest?

JP: Um that was in the early nineties, well from the eighties. What it was 'cause I was playing on my own a lot I wanted as many instruments as possible without being a one man band [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I thought pan pipes would work with harmonica but I couldn't get hold of any pan pipes until um, until I was older, 'cause they had um there was a trend that came over here the pan pipe bands and um in 1994 I had my first two sets of pan pipes and I, I've spent several years um going around with the South American bands busking trying to, trying to learn the rhythms 'cause there was no, no information [inaudible] except the British Encyclopedia of music and I couldn't get to grips with the rhythms listening to it, I wasn't confident so I did that and then um I made a contraption that I could play harmonica and pipes together y'know and they seemed to sound alright as well, but um they excited me [AC: Something different?] yeah. And [???] cantation had a hit I think it was in 1992 um a number one hit of a very famous tune in the Andes called 'catch a fire'? And um that was exciting but didn't hear anything else, I, I got bored, I, I needed a break from all the music I was listening to and I found that was something that excited me y'know.

AC: What was you listening to previous to that?

JP: Um, all the big bands, I like I'm a Pink Floyd, Queen man and but I like anything, anything that's good like y'know. I like a lot of the, I was influenced by my mother and father who were into the fifties y'know and the sixties so there's that, and there's um, later on there's like Talking Heads and um people like that y'know but yeah.

AC: So what sort of music do you play?

JP: All of those [laughter] I like not to be pigeon-holed um, um I find a lot of my favourite artists are not, you can't put them into a pigeon hole that well, and um, I like to do a kind of a mixture of all of it y'know and um...

AC: So you're saying you got a harmonica and pan pipes, what other instruments...?

JP: Guitar and charango a charango is a South American flute from the Andes, it's about that big they make, they make them out of armadillo shells but they also make them out of wood and they're illegal to bring an armadillo shell into this country and um I think I'd lose people's interest in me if I had a dead animal hanging around my neck and they smell [AC: I bet!] but they got a lovely sound but the wood ones are great and um so you might have seen them in the pipe bands they're a little guitar so about that big [uses hands to show]

AC: A charango yeah?

JP: Yeah C-H-A-R-A-N-G-O yeah that was my first [inaudible] instrument but guitar is my father instrument as I call it, I understand the music. Like with the charango, pan pipes and harmonica I don't bother a lot of the time realising what notes I'm playing y'know I don't go F#, G [inaudible] [AC: Yeah, yeah] but on the guitar I would like y'know.

AC: It's more familiar yeah?

JP: Yeah and [inaudible] understand the other instruments

AC: What are the other instruments you'd draw on? Have you got, do you just stick to those or?

JP: No, I dabble with keyboard, a little keyboard like that 'cause I play in um a comedy band as well called Gaudy Orde um I play um, what instrument? Oh, a little bit of penny whistle um I also play dog toys [AC: Dog toys?] um [AC: Do you wanna expand on that a bit?] I bought one of those chewy pigs um it reminds me of Pink Floyd 'cause they always had a pig in their live shows. So I have my little pig, I've got a squeaky thing that goes like that [makes noises] and um, and, oh! And in Cool Beans I'm bringing a washing up bowl, a washing up bowl into the act and because I'm pretending, I always wanted to be a man who walked under the sea from one country to the other, it was an old fashioned method so we're doing a recording and [inaudible] with water I just go [makes a watery trumpet sound] like that, try to make a [inaudible] noises.

AC: Is that to tie in with the particular narrative of a song or...?

JP: Yes, we're making a film, we're making a film, Cool Beans, um we make little videos ah for a laugh but we making a longer sort of film now, where we're all different people and we end up with a highlighting life and then we fall from grace and ah, and then we're all on the dole and we end up being alright after and there is a slight happy ending to it all [laughter]

AC: Who's concept was this originally then?

JP: Um, Cool Beans

AC: All of you just [JP: Yeah] collectively is it [JP: Yeah, yeah] and y'know can you give me a little insight as a fly on the wall at that rehearsal where this idea came about.

JP: Um, we, we're just thinking of it at the moment, be, um, um Steve the drummer um Steve Bennett, he came up with the idea originally about making a film and then we've all contributed. has been a great influence into it and Neil and myself y'know we all got our different parts and we're working on the story of the film the minute before we start filming different scenes for it. We've recorded about four or five songs already that can be used on the film and we think we need another four. We don't want to repeat our previous songs we brought out an album last year y'know and um only locally y'know and err, err that's it really.

AC: How long has that been, been [inaudible] for?

JP: Um, for the last two or three months

AC: Okay so it's relatively new then?

JP: Yeah, yeah. We're still working on the story and got an idea now and once, once we got an idea, we're still working out how we fall from grace, um which we've almost done, um which isn't difficult! [laughs] and ah, soon, and I can get a Gorilla suit 'cause there's a gorilla, Kong, Kong is in it. Written a song about Kong and um Neil Galsworthy is, is gonna be King Kong, got the gorilla suit. Ah is gonna be an astronaut and Steve, I don't know what Steve was gonna be, I've forgotten what he's gonna be?

AC: Does Steve know what he's gonna be?

JP: Um, I'm not sure, I'm not sure? I'm not sure what he's supposed to be?

AC: Okay, um so I just really want to get you discussing your musical activities...

JP: Oh I like Muse as well, even though I don't [inaudible]

AC: Muse as well yeah okay

JP: [inaudible] a large gap for me even though I think they've gone downhill the last few years like.

AC: So there's that sort of classical influence

JP: Yeah

AC: Almost prog rock

JP: Yeah, and um I like a lot of the modern beats that have gone on in the late nineties and 2000's even though I think it's a lot of repetition [inaudible]

AC: You've got a really eclectic taste in music

JP: Yeah, yeah, anything that, that's, that attracts me [laughs]

AC: So you just like what you like?

JP: Yeah, yeah it could be anything

AC: So talking about your musical practices how do you can stay with Cool Beans if you want, um how do you go about writing songs, generally?

JP: It's a lot, most of the time it's very quick, ah some of my, we write as a band all of us together which is great it's like, I've never learnt so much um being part of a project like this, um where we're sharing ideas so much y'know and it's free and easy and laid back and we have a laugh for like y'know we're, it's a laugh basically.

AC: Can you give me sort of um any little anecdotes or stories about y'know instances where you've been writing y'know and something funny's happened or something amazing has happened?

JP: Um, well the first video we did was oh um, David's Hateful Babies it was called and we had a great reception of people watching that [laughs] and because I'm not really much on the internet people were showing me on their phones ah you haven't even seen you're new video yet have you? [laughs] um, ah, with the writing of music ah we

have a laugh um, and we don't normally hang around long doing the production of it um, we move on quickly even though we have been held up once or twice we want to perfect certain things y'know, had a laugh and other things are just quick y'know.

AC: What sort of time-scale are you talking about writing and...?

JP: And sometimes it can be like the music can be done in one night [AC: Really?] yeah other times, well Kong has taken months [laughs] 'cause I've been, I've been quite um, trying to be inventive on my parts so with certain things and some, like we all take it in turns to write the lyrics or we write the lyrics together as well y'know so, um one great one we done the other day, what we thought was great was so quick, we were all um, saying opposites like um, ah oh, start it up, oh, um like say the word up was in it and the next line would be down y'know and it would be opposites like that then and within a night [inaudible] what everyone was saying we're all down [inaudible] we had the chorus right there y'know

AC: Do you just decide initially right we're gonna have a game and do like ah opposites? Was it like a game or kind of...?

JP: Um, it just sounded good so I wrote that down and it wasn't originally we didn't mean to start it like that but then somebody's said something else which was opposites, so we wrote that down and thought we'd go along with that doing it y'know.

AC: I suppose that's different every time you write a song then, it had to be opposites for that one...

JP: We, we don't try to repeat that then, we try and do something new y'know and they're all in it all together and have a laugh but then you gotta craft it a little bit y'know. We had a funny incident with the song Kong because sometimes we throw in a few wind up things and they wanted to put um oh what is it, Frank Spencer is it? Who's that guy now?

AC: The ooh Betty guy?

JP: Yeah, yeah, um they wanted to put a bit of that in it, and I couldn't handle that, y'know if you're talking about King Kong it's a boof! Powerful thing y'know and they were laughing at my face y'know, I didn't say [inaudible] being diplomatic I thought there's a way out of this, we'll do two versions [laughs]

AC: Did you do two versions?

JP: No, no

AC: Alright.

JP: We're still working on the same one but we've almost done it now and um we had a good jam on Wednesday y'know, we jam and Neil and might have an idea, Steve might have an idea, I might have an idea then, we throw our ideas in then.

AC: You jam once a week [inaudible] yeah?

JP: Yeah more or less unless one of us is busy or can't make it

AC: And that's up Steve's place, isn't it?

JP: Yeah, yeah. We used to practice on top of Charlie's place down town, on Commercial Street...

AC: Is it above the [JP: Spectol] yes, the opticians.

JP: Yeah he had glasses [inaudible] special [inaudible]

AC: Okay, so you said about rehearsing, where do you do recording then?

JP: Steve does that for us yeah

AC: Okay and...

JP: [JP's phone goes off and he has to answer it] Do you mind if I answer that?

AC: Oh yeah, sure no problem

JP: Sorry

AC: That's alright no problem

JP: It'll be my father I got to answer him [inaudible] because he's old...Oh it's my sister! [Talks on the phone] Thanks a lot Anne sorry about that

AC: That's alright that's no problem, I won't transcribe that [laughter]

JP: I might have one more phone call um [inaudible and about phone calls]

AC: So going back to like the ah Cool Beans so was saying that the writing process is almost like a stream of consciousness [JP: Yeah] just sort of falls out y'know [JP: Yeah] would you say that's the same for yourself [JP: Yeah] 'cause...

JP: Yeah um it's been great 'cause I haven't written any stuff for myself my solo stuff for a few years it's all gone into Cool Beans like y'know, which I'm happy with 'cause it's nice being in a band, you got all that power of sound and the people and they're experienced musicians so there's no nonsense we just get on and do it, we have a banter as well [AC: Yeah] and Steve is an incredible host he does all our recordings and videos and now is doing more the sort of directors stuff 'cause he's working in um on the Gadlys with that sort of thing so.

AC: Tantrwm yeah?

JP: Yeah, yeah. So we're all throwing in ideas and Steve is into home brewing as well so we got beer on tap his wife brings [inaudible] [laughter] it's a lovely, it's really nice environment and his family's lovely his wife comes down with cakes and stuff and food and it's lovely y'know yeah

AC: So you kinda got it's like a kind of band paradise!

JP: Oh yeah [inaudible] oh it's absolutely perfect

AC: How did you, how did Cool beans come about then, how did you get together?

JP: Um Neil and Charlie, had formed a band beforehand and um I was doing that name that tune up in the club with my instruments part of another quiz and um used to

come up there with his family in Cwmaman and I'd learn about fifteen tracks to do the live name that tune around [inaudible] the music around the place, and he asked me one day by the bar do you fancy joining up with me, Neil and Charlie. I was so grateful 'cause I've spent a long time hidden away, I've come back and fore but it's I, I've never worked with them properly before and um local boys, family boys and we had Harvey as a drummer but he moved to Australia and um we were wondering who to have and thinking of people and Steve Bennett came around and he was just absolutely brilliant y'know.

AC: Who was the link between you lot and Steve then? How did he..?

JP: Y'know what I've forgotten, I can't remember 'cause I didn't know Steve before, it might have been Neil or who had the link with that, I'm not sure? [inaudible]

AC: And when was that when did it all kind of take shape?

JP: I would say, it was about um, ah, three to four years ago (this is odd because I know Harvey left for Australia when Leela was about three years old, so that would be about ten years ago??) We've been going for about five or six, I think? But I'm not sure, can't remember.

AC: Okay, so do you have certain responsibilities and roles for each band member?

JP: Um, is usually the keyboard player but he'll play other instruments like um xylophone, accordion, penny whistle um, Steve's the percussionist, drummer, samples he does samples as well. Neil can play all sorts of guitars, bass, electrics, acoustics, plus a pad um what do you call it? A sample pad [AC: Oh right] [inaudible] percussion on that, is a good drum...Neil is a good drummer as well and I play my instruments as well and [20:01] we sing, all sing and make funny noises with our mouths and stuff and. Um Neil and have largely been, if we needed equipment for a gig, they would sort that out, um and that's about it really um, we do have like different roles like Steve may say, Steve is good at organising as well like, he might say you gotta be like this or you gotta be like that especially for a video [AC: Right okay] um you play that role or something like that, we all chip in ideas and add more y'know but that can be something, I'm not very good at um pinpointing things [laughs]

AC: No it's just general stuff, honestly it's great, it's great the stuff you're saying. Y'know who would look after say booking gigs?

JP: That's a good question um normally it's Neil and ah we only gig once or twice a year because they're all busy in other bands that gig regularly and um, so um it takes about a month five weeks to practice up for our new set or whatever, we write so quickly we gotta learn our songs then [laughs]

AC: A learning curve...

JP: Yeah, yeah, yeah

AC: How long does that take sort of writing ah writing quick but then producing it.

JP: We record, yeah, that can be quick because we move onto the next song it's all so quick and everything moves so quick um you gotta remember how to play the song [inaudible] which we never really learnt in the first place [laughs]

AC: And when you do gigs where would you normally play?

- JP: Um, anywhere, we played um, outside the Boncky in Cwmaman, just outside Cwmaman, we've played in Jacs in Aberdare, we've played up the Mount Pleasant and um the White Lion in Trecynon and, and oh we played the music festival in Cwmaman in the old club as well and we played The Shepherds, most of our gigs are free and to help out, like The Shepherds when they first opened and also [inaudible] music festival as well, I think that's about...eight?
- AC: So it's local gigs [JP: Yeah] is that a conscious decision to keep it local?
- JP: Well, no, it's like I'd like to gig more but especially when we're practiced up because it takes us that long to get ready, not long but long enough and the boys don't want to be doing that a lot because they're in, they do that in other bands. So they find this a breath of fresh air not to do it and they like the creative process more. Like I'd like to gig, like we'd do one gig but it would be nice to do three or four while we're practiced up y'know
- AC: Where would you like the gigs? If you could take them anywhere where would you go?
- JP: Um, it would be nice to do some festivals or y'know, people book us at least know who they're booking because we're an alternative band [AC: Yeah, yeah] a lot of the time, we're not doing covers or regular songs that people know y'know so we're a very acquired taste y'know [laughs]
- AC: Do you think that the original, ah, y'know ah original music has more difficulty getting heard over covers and...
- JP: Um, I think so 'cause what um gaols me is that I played, supported the Spectrums up in Hirwaun Rugby Club and um, ah, The Spectrums are a wonderful cover band so I thought I won't be doing any covers just to break up the night doing alternative but I found that you'll have the odd compliment [laughs] y'know but a lot of people thought that I couldn't play and I was out of tune and I was just playing different chords and things y'know and it's deliberate [AC: They're not understanding..?] yeah you get that and if I play something simple that people know they think oh he's great he is! He's getting better he's good not bad after all but if I play something that's obscure I think why do I bother but I do it for myself and my own excitement y'know so I gotta be careful what I do and I do throw in cover versions that people will know, y'know I don't do a full straight all my own stuff thing mostly I don't no.
- AC: Did you think y'know original music is, whether rightly or wrongly it's undervalued greatly?
- JP: Yeah it can be and ah it's very difficult for people who want work to get work doing that y'know I heard this for a long time when I lived up in Preston, the band there the drummer said he knows a band that plays all their own stuff and they don't get any work, you might get the odd venue local, the local you might have a small following so that's okay right y'know
- AC: What do you think people can do y'know to get round that? Y'know there's a lot of local original music y'know
- JP: The thing is to get people out like people who like listening to what they're familiar with, there's so much going on and the way the pubs are these days every pub I look at is a potential venue y'know and to get people out is just difficult so a lot of the time

I think if there's an event going on in time and you know there's going to be an audience, well you hope there's an audience going to be there, that's a good time to play at that particular event because you've got an audience maybe, hopefully already [AC: Yeah, yeah] rather than trying, set up a gig yourself trying and hope people come along y'know. Sometimes you need, luckily I, we play, Cool Beans has played, supported um John Otway [AC: Right, in Jacs wasn't it] yeah, so we had a lovely crowd there, um so that was there for us and Gaudy Orde another band I'm in we supported Neil Innes and it was a great um crowd there like y'know.

AC: How did those gigs go?

JP: It were fantastic! It was great, really Jeff Gourdy Orde, um Jeff Japers, he had two Kazoo's and when we had done our act, performance we sat down by the side watching Neil Innes and he did I'm the Urban Spaceman and we were sat in the corner like two naughty boys and um on kazoos and Jeff passed me a kazoo and Neil Innes heard the kazoos over what his band were playing and he said come up on stage! [AC: No way] so we're up on stage doing the kazoo solo for, um The Urban Spaceman with Neil Innes like [AC: In Jacs in Aberdare like?] yeah, yeah, it was absolutely brilliant

AC: What was the John Otway gig like?

JP: Great, he's a sparker, what was great about it was a lot of the youngsters around here I know didn't know about him and one guy said to me um, one of my friends Fish his name is, I don't know if you know Fish he's... [AC: Fishy is it?] yeah [AC: Did he used to go out with Bronwyn?] yeah, yeah [AC: Oh yeah] he turned round with a big smile on his face and said this guy's great in he! [laughter]

AC: He'd never seen him before?

JP: No, no so it's nice that a lot of the youngsters, I was watching the audience reactions, they were into him like y'know

AC: It's interesting because it's original music [JP: Yeah] but it's really pulling them in [JP: Yeah] What do you think was different to these events just to get people to come in, blind if you want?

JP: Um... that's a good question. Ah a lot of the older people knew Neil Innes and um John Otway and they know the words to John Otway songs as well like y'know. Um, so I don't know it takes one or two friends from groups of people to say let's go along here, or they might have heard older people saying about this y'know, 'cause a lot of the time people listen to music on their phones [AC: Yeah, yeah] and they're tinny speakers y'know [AC: It's rubbish like...] yeah y'know listen to Pink Floyd on a tinny speaker y'know [AC: There's no point really...inaudible... any benefit from that at all like yeah] I remember when I used to do guitar lessons, I did guitar lessons, great family and guy and I said to this young guy I said um you don't listen to music through hi fi's do you? Y'know proper speakers. My father had one once when I was eight [laughs]

AC: It's like some weird antique in the house y'know

JP: Yeah. You get people with headphones on like y'know

AC: So would you say I dunno? Social media hype or local hype that...gets people to go...

- JP: I'd say that's a big thing but um, it's interesting that is because I'm not on Facebook and a lot of people just advertise on Facebook y'know and um I've been in Cwmaman club when that was open as a regular going in there when my local pub closed down and I'd be in there nearly every night and I'd be smoking a cigarette on the ramp the next thing there'd be people coming from upstairs in the concert room, local now in the village that I am. There'd be 200 people upstairs and I heard hardly anything about it. The people say aye you should be on Facebook see.
- AC: Hmm... so that's kinda saying that that's the way things are circulated now [JP: Yeah, yeah] if you're not, if you're under that radar you're gonna miss out really.
- JP: Yeah that's right yeah
- AC: So that's interesting [inaudible] so what about local, local news y'know do you get to hear much about the music scene through newspapers y'know Aberdare Leader and things like that or?
- JP: Most of the time for me, it's word of mouth what people tell me...
- AC: Can you say that again then [laughs because of the noise]
- JP: Most of the time for me, it's word of mouth what people tell me [AC: Right, right] I do ask and I've had really good input because I was really bored and needed some input um, where to find music and what's going on, about two years ago, and people were inputting all the time and it was fantastic I had a great year and great 2 years and Radio 6 live I got into as well when I was looking after my friends' house, on the radio they were pumping music. One of my mates was gigging in Cardiff and I went down to, is it Wallaby Street, by City Arms there's a lane up there where the music scene and [AC: Oh Womanby Street] Womanby! [AC: I know yeah, yeah] and um I went there and realised it's a scene on a Friday night [AC: Yeah, yeah] and it was free as well um it was great. And Jac's is a brilliant music venue.
- AC: Do you think if it wasn't for Jac's there's be much of a music scene in Aberdare?
- JP: No because after the previous, that venue closed down before and Jacs opened up, the music scene had disappeared for a bit y'know and I thought I know people have put a few gigs on in the Con Club, it's a big enough venue for bigger events and so um it had died a death and youngsters are dispersed with all their music scene as well a lot of the youngsters were telling me that a lot of the bands they've gone now and there doesn't seem to be much of a music scene.
- AC: Have you got any ideas why it dipped down the way it did? Because it was quite vibrant...
- JP: It was yeah, um I think there was a lot of um, there were a lot more venues like the Cwmaman Club for example and the grants there were a lot of things grant based y'know instead of people putting money into a pot and trying to build up that way like the old days that's the way it was when I was growing up that's what people did, they charge at the door save money in the pot and they could afford the next band. They'd go round and there was no internet then, they'd go round looking at bands and seeing bands to see which ones were suitable and might be good quality y'know.
- AC: It's um, the funding and things like that do you know where like Cwmfest for instance gets its funding?

JP: Um, yeah they do the odd few gigs around the place to raise money but a lot of that is from grants and funding from companies y'know and also um, like um, sort of bigger bodies like councils or things like that y'know.

AC: There's a committee for Cwmfest as well

JP: Yeah

AC: Who's on that?

JP: I was but when Neil Galsworthy dropped out, it was nice to drop out myself then and have new input coming into it and the new input boys are doing well. You got Doz, Matthew Palmer, a few others I'm sorry I can't remember but the main man for that is Robert Jenkins

AC: Robert Jenkins

JP: He's almost seventy years of age now mind, if not seventy and he supplies a lot of funding and it's a legal organisation now Cwmfest so you gotta be careful with things like um keeping the police happy things like that y'know.

AC: [inaudible] and order and stuff like that?

JP: Yeah, yeah

AC: I'm gonna write that man's name down

JP: I'll get you onto him if you want, he drinks...Robert Jenkins, he works for Solar Windows or something, but um I'll let him know and have his phone number because I had to change my phone and sim card last year so I haven't got his number but I seen him in The Globe a lot he drinks with the older guys.

AC: Pass my mobile number onto him

JP: Okay yeah that would be great

AC: Y'know rather than me texting him he can drop me a text [inaudible]

JP: He plays at the last Friday club which is in The Globe sometimes when he's not [inaudible]

AC: Yeah 'cause I'm interested in how Cwmfest sustains itself really 'cause y'know there's other festivals in other places don't seem to do as well or they're short-lived y'know

JP: Yeah, um Huw Chidgey is part of it as well he's another good guy in that um, it's, it's local people, and, and there's a good turn out with people as well, the audiences y'know and the pubs are all in on it and benefits and the whole thing was set up to benefit the pubs in the first place as well

AC: Was that the intentions to get the money in

JP: Yeah

- AC: Into those pubs
- JP: It was um to have a festival for the village and which would also benefit the pubs because we thought about having marquee's around the place but that would be, that involves a hell of a lot more organisation and money, you're taking money away from the pubs as well then y'know
- AC: That's a good idea actually. How did it, I'm assuming you, you were there in the early stages?
- JP: I was I went to the first few, I'm not a committee man I could say the stupidest things and end up in jail y'know or something like that [laughs] I don't want to get into politics or people winding up um, there was none of that to be honest so I went for the first few months to make sure The Falcon, the landlord of The Falcon and the landlord of The Globe were okay and it wasn't just gonna be in the club [AC: Yeah, yeah] even though that was a massive part of it, and also the Top Club was part of it, and the Boncky as well um, but um... what was the question again?
- AC: Um, more so kind of talking about y'know how did it all come about in the early stages...
- JP: Oh right yeah! And once. Once I knew they were alright and the landlords came up and we all talked like um, I dropped out then and then years and years later I was coaxed back in over the last ten years and I said ah okay then and it was lovely basically I had a libra? On the weekend, bringing equipment round and cleaning up stages and I collected money [AC: Voluntary yeah?] Oh yeah all voluntary, no one gets a penny from it, um that's the committee that is y'know and it's all voluntary.
- AC: What made them form a committee?
- JP: Um, there was a few people who suggested this and then we had a meeting and then, I didn't want the word committee being part of it, I wanted them to call it something else [inaudible] well something not as, that, that sort of style y'know it's an artistic, like y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] but I suppose to get funding from places you have to be and as time went on y'know we had to be more legalised and there were more things pushing us like we needed insurances as well y'know and things like that, so it grew that way.
- AC: Were there any tensions between y'know, no names need to be mentioned but [JP: Yeah] and what sort of effects did they have on the processes involved in getting the festival going?
- JP: Um, there were disagreements like y'know one person said which I thought was a good idea, don't create a monster, don't create a huge thing, um we didn't want Aberdare to take it over because Aberdare doesn't give us any advertising [AC: Really?] yeah, we don't get any advertising in the Leader or no write ups about it, no, and why they call it the Cynon Valley Leader I don't know because if it's called the Aberdare Leader still I'd understand it but y'know why not report it, like there's been hardly any trouble in the festival whatsoever in all the years it's been, the eleven, twelve years it's been running and um, but if there was an incident perhaps they might report on that y'know instead of reporting on the success, always been like it's a magical occasion y'know, the church is involved in it sometimes and you get all the kids um and choirs and their families and things like that y'know.

AC: It's just odd that they don't advertise I mean, the success of Cwmfest, what would you say that's based on? What modes of um communication is it based on?

JP: A lot of it is Facebook but we did um I'm not part of the community any more but I'm friends with them and individuals where I've said look um we need posters in pubs to say where each act, where each set-list, not set-list, each day what's going on in each venue because that wasn't going to happen but last minutes they made sure it did happen 'cause people didn't know and not everybody's on Facebook.

AC: It was really handy to be honest to see when and where...

JP: That's right, yeah, yeah, yeah

AC: So that's your idea?

JP: No um it was a lot of people's ideas, a lot of people's ideas, I did mention it to a few of the committee members like y'know and, and there's a lot of people, a lot of the audience they're not on Facebook [AC: Yeah, true] so posters are great y'know

AC: Um, so how important is music making to you?

JP: It's been my life, even before I could play instruments, I used to sing in my bedroom and have an elastic band guitar on a shoe box um my sister's alarm clock making noises and I used to pinch her [inaudible] glockenspiel, I, I was fascinated, I used to pinch her tape recorder when she was out, put two tape recorders together, I still got a recording of it [laughs] very um, very embarrassing now, childish the lyrics are and everything. Um and then I was given a Bontempi organ um and as time went on I used to be so excited about music they used to have me up in assembly in school so I was banging them, I couldn't play an instrument so I was being an idiot really [inaudible] bang tables and cupboards, pretend to do synths and [makes a noise and impression of a synth sound] and all this, what a great clown or not so great [laughs] they'd have me up in assembly in front of the school to do that and when I started learning guitar at the age of 14 ah they preferred me without my guitar [laughs] but I've always as far as I'm concerned I've always been writing even as a kid 'cause if you didn't know the words to a song I'd make them up anyway y'know

AC: So you've always had that sort of creative flair [JP: Yeah] and thinking outside the box a bit? [JP: Yeah]

JP: I like the way us, ah music always grabbed me and when I saw a few ah bands on the television wah that was it like I wanted to play guitar and [AC: Yeah, yeah] like that.

AC: What sort of bands were they then?

JP: Ah when I saw Queen on TV doing Milton Keynes and my father had got me the Queen and um, I was blown away with that y'know and all the old guitar bands as well like y'know and luckily I've seen a lot of these bands before they finished y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: Okay, what motivates you to continue making music? What do you get out of it?

JP: Um... 'cause I have gone through some stale periods, y'know when I was a busker, I actually took a break from busking for a year collecting scrap metal which was non-profit making y'know um creating a mess about the place in my mother's back

garden and back yard and my mates' parents back yard [AC: Yeah, yeah] um I'd go home and put my guitar against the wall I'd been playing it five to seven hours a day, six days a week y'know it was just that was my life and then. So when I went down my mates then and I had a few more years off because I worked in pubs for two years and then um, when I went back to busking then a different attitude I'm gonna do it three, three or four days a week and then I'd break down, I was living off it as well you see, so I'd write down all my best places for money and I didn't like to repeat the same place, so people don't get sick of me and I'm still like that now, if I play a venue now I don't want to play that venue for another two years if I can help it [AC: You don't want to saturate...?] that's it yeah, getting fed up [inaudible] but I'm so glad people do play the same places 'cause they keep it going [AC: Yeah, yeah, that's the thing y'know sustaining these places] yeah, yeah, it's like last Friday club, if it wasn't for Huw Chidgey it wouldn't exist and it gives myself and everyone else opportunities to playing anyway like y'know.

AC: Do you think um rather than physical infrastructure and venues it's individual people that keep the music sustained around here or do you think it's a mix of both?

JP: Ooh I would like to say it's a mix of both 'cause that's how I have a lot of the time been and like when I was younger there was, I did a gig over in the old park in Cwmaman, hundreds turned up I had no amplifiers, a tape recorder a nylon string guitar, two knitting needles a biscuit tin and a cardboard box and you invent things yourself no matter how bad they may be like and in the early days there was none of these posh venues there were church halls so us teenagers you get the older punks, the punks were around the leftovers from the punk world they'd organise a gig for the punk bands and myself, I was part of a trash metal band back in those days as well and in church halls and they were freezing and you'd sneak in your own beer, y'know wine or whatever y'know and that's how it went like. Over the last twenty years there's been so much funding all these big buildings and posh places to play y'know and there's [inaudible] so that has helped. There's been a lot of um, it's like busking, now it was taboo in the, in the early days y'know before my time and [inaudible] in the '80s, '90s and the council started to think a bit more of a tourist attraction it would be y'know so things changed and you had y'know a lot of funding like in schools they're doing different things to what I did in school, they're studying different music y'know [inaudible] yeah, yeah, yeah [AC: We never did popular music in school] no, not at all. I remember being in music class and um we were into Madness and The Specials y'know that's what I grew up with as well and they said right we're gonna do a piece of Handel something like this and um, they said what piece would you like to do? And one of us said Madness! And they said that's not proper music [inaudible and laughter] I'm so stupid [laughs]

AC: So what factors do you think make it difficult to make music? Young or old in a semi-rural village like Aberdare, what do you think makes it difficult?

JP: Um, ah, I dunno?

AC: It's a tricky one, I mean other people have said it's a lack of rehearsal space and things like that y'know.

JP: Right 'cause there used to be um rehearsal spaces around when all that funding and things stopped with the London Olympics like y'know and um and venues closing down and if you get a friendly landlord, like I got, Gourdy Orde has that's Rob ??? in The Rock. I know Fireroad practice upstairs in The Shepherds and there's a friendly landlord up there who gave them that opportunity and also there's another band um,

they're in their fifties, most of them and they create um, they practice in the local community building opposite the Top Club in Cwmaman.

AC: Okay, who's that? What band is that then?

JP: I don't know their name and I was doing their sound and they were asking my advice and things like this [inaudible] [AC: Do you know the guys in the band?] pardon?] [AC: Do you know the guys in the band?] yeah, yeah, Chris Reese and he's older than me, ah Harris, ah Simon Harris he's older than me and they've only just formed that last year Dean [???) which is the drummer, um and then there's Gareth and Luke who's just got to know [inaudible] and Dean. Um, I dunno what their name is called? Um...

AC: So is it the Canalfon [JP: Yes, that's right] that was there the...

JP: The Stereophonics did practice there yeah

AC: They put money into it didn't they?

JP: Yeah they might have? Yeah.

AC: Okay, so that's still open, is it open to anyone to practice?

JP: I don't know I'll ask then that...

AC: [inaudible] specific people allowed, others have said it's not that available because people have trashed it in the past.

JP: Right, 'cause I did try and practice up there um but it was hard work and they said yes but I could never get a contact and at a certain time I don't want to mention names [AC: No that's fine they can be omitted] right um, but we had the theatre and certain [inaudible] from the institute they allowed us to do it but when they closed down, well I wasn't in a band then, um some, some pubs will allow it if they got enough space because a lot of pubs have neglected their upstairs, the pubs were built with the function rooms upstairs and it's a lot of money for them to sort out the building because they try and do it all downstairs and a lot of these pubs are awkward shape as well like y'know.

AC: The Sheps is...

JP: Yeah The Sheps is but they've taken away one of the pillars now. I like it downstairs it's my local place as well and there's The Globe, Martin's tried everything round the pub where people can play and we've settled in a certain place now which is interesting 'cause that's an awkward shape for a pub.

AC: Oh I see he's tried different [JP: Yeah, yeah] combinations [JP: Laugh, yeah and different areas of the pub and he's gone round in a full circle laughs] has he found the optimum place now?

JP: Yes, yes and the maximum size of a band [laughs]

AC: Can Spirit of Boogie fit?

JP: Laughs, no [laughter] [inaudible] for youngsters what I found as a youngster it was very difficult because they were into Shirley Bassey and Tom Jones and you had very

experienced good quality bands in pubs and for you to play, to start off there were no open mic nights at the time. It took moving to Preston in Lancashire before the whole music scene opened up for me y'know 'cause there was no, it was hard to get [inaudible] the door for an inexperienced player and musician, beginning, beginners y'know where do they play like, it seems to be more opportunities now thanks to the open mic nights and landlords are more opened up to it like y'know, but in the early days, clubs were out. My first ever gig was in Aberdare social club which is The Marquis now and um I did whatever I wanted to do which was Pink Floyd and they wanted Shirley Bassey and um Tom Jones and [inaudible] so I got paid off after my first set. We had an older guy called Billy Hunter[????] The Green Man he called himself, he was the oldest punk in Aberdare and he used to ride a push bike and he, he used to have the equipment so he'd go on before me 'cause I didn't have the equipment and I'd go on after him like y'know, so that was um at the start y'know me trying to do my own gigs [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I didn't have my own equipment for years, that was a big thing and even though I have now I haven't got transport [laughs]

AC: Ah that's the thing living around here. Would you say that's one of the constraints of living in a place like this is transport.

JP: Hmm, well I think it would be the same in a city because you're not gonna take your PA on a bus and a lot of taxi's don't want it y'know [inaudible] taxi and you'd wanna watch the weight. Like it's my fault y'know I didn't want to learn to drive and sort of relied on other people. I was going to learn to drive up in Preston to take the ownness off the other boys but we split up after we bought the van [AC: Oh right] I'm glad I didn't...

AC: Who do you rely on for lifts and things?

JP: Um Neil Galsworthy, um Davies, ah Gourdy Orde um that's Jeff Japers that's all of them then basically [laughs]

AC: Gourdy Orde I'm not familiar with

JP: The, the, the members start from Cardiff up to Builth Wells [inaudible] we're spread out um, um there's six of us in the band, we're like a surreal comedy band and um we've gigged a lot as well like but we're crap at being agents for ourselves [laughs]

AC: There's no specific roles? And it just kind of...

JP: We don't wanna, we don't do the circuits and we know we're an acquired taste um and we know where we are and we have played some prestigious festivals y'know like the Royal Horti, horticultural, the flower show, um Marifest and um ooh ah, um Tintern around Tintern there's Folk on the Lawn I think it's called? We play Cwmfest nearly every year um but you gotta have the right venue because we're a visual band as well so we need to be seen y'know.

AC: What do you do visually then?

JP: Um, we, we, I, I, um, we do different movements, dances um acting um maybe hitting each other over the head with different things [AC: That's the visual] yeah [inaudible] yeah, yeah. Um and we got different people playing different instruments like Helen spoons, she plays spoons and other instruments. Um Alex plays um, he plays Bouzouki largely and um other knocky things and we got Andy, Romany Bob he's called because he plays um scratchboard and many other things including clarinet

and other forms of military hardware. Um you got Joy, Tall Joy she plays bass mainly but she'll do anything and I play anything from bursting balloons and Irish, a really bad form of Irish dancing [laughing]

AC: You gotta dance like your ankles are broken, haven't you?

JP: Yeah [laughs]

AC: Um so how did this all come about then covering such a wide area then? It's not local is it?

JP: No, well Gourdy Orde used to come to Cwmaman and they played I the festival down in The Falcon years ago and I thought this is Glastonbury in a nutshell. 'Cause they'd have quite a professional dancing coming on dressed as a chimpanzee dressed in a plastic mac and with a blue rucksack drinking a can of coke and the movements were great and I thought this is Glastonbury in a nutshell. And they come up a few times and they were playing in Cwmfest one year and I said to the committee I wanna link with them, I wanna sup, I wanna go on before them, get to know them more 'cause I only see them once a year have a chat with them and they really liked what I did, they come in just before they played they were impressed with what I played and then, so we swapped phone numbers and a year later they asked would I join in with them as part of this event that was happening in Cardiff in a pub near the Motorpoint. So I played with them for that period, didn't hear anything from them for a year and then they asked me if I could learn twenty two songs, in a month [AC: twenty two?] and it wasn't all their own songs it was Christmas songs as well so I was reading from paper a lot of the time, I couldn't [AC: That's a lot isn't it] so after the January the last gig I thought I hope they're gonna ask me to join the band y'know twenty two songs is a lot like y'know [laughs]

AC: Induction into the band [laughter]

JP: And Jeff Japers, they had to be careful, you gotta be careful with new members whether you like them or not [AC: Yeah, yeah] they said are you sticking with us now they said? And I thought great like I was a fan of them for four years before I joined so it's been wonderful and we're all friends we go out outside of the band or go to see other people or do each other's gardens and [inaudible] or whatever [inaudible] I sleep down their houses and [AC: Sorry, that's my phone [inaudible] I had turned the volume down [inaudible] state of the art phone [laughter] it's rubbish like [laughter]

AC: So um, nearly done, what would you say the benefits are for creating music in this environment?

JP: Um, one of the South American's I played with he was in his fifties he was a Bolivian, he said something good to me once he said, music keeps you younger and he got that enthusiasm and spark and, it does and it's good to keep the mind going that way like, I'm into magic tricks and illusions as well so when I'm walking around the mountains, I'm into walking and camping as well I can dream, when I'm working my work allows me to dream and think things whether it's music or um illusions or magic or, or like um performances of all kinds like videos y'know like I do my videos, I don't think videos so much but performances [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know um, so I'm dreaming all the time, main thing is, is ah to create a song, a lot of the time y'know a piece of music

AC: Do you find you get any inspiration from the environment here?

- JP: Yeah, yeah, what I've started to do recently over the last few years, 'cause um, cause of that, um I was slow at first in Cool beans they said come on! When are you gonna write something? Well I had to perk up my ideas relying on them I'm not normally like that. They were doing it so quickly it's unbelievable so I carried round, being a songwriter I used to always carry round pen and paper and for years I didn't and I thought what sort of songwriter am I? Y'know so I started carrying one again [AC: Yeah, yeah] in the end I was writing loads of lyrics and loads of songs and um even now they say we need another one from you [inaudible] [laughs] besides the ones we all contribute together y'know and um which is great 'cause we all come up with ideas and that and but um, I got pen and paper again on me 'cause I lapsed the last one, my book is almost full been carrying it around. Since I've been carrying it around [inaudible] what other people say y'know I've been using that as well, I never did before it all has to be come from original, none of it is original really is it? [AC: Not really] so um, that's what I've been doing watching other people saying writing things down besides what comes out of me and then suddenly you got a load of lines and that amongst all the crap y'know...
- AC: It's like getting a load down and then sifting...
- JP: Yeah, yeah, I'm [inaudible] yeah, I suggested out of my things, I suggested to the band how about this line, that line, and they got their lines as well like that y'know.
- AC: Um is it necessarily people you're talking to or is it...
- JP: Anything [AC: Anything?] like people I was talking to the other day I heard, I was in someone's house so or I saw something on the TV and thought that was a good one [AC: Yeah, yeah]
- AC: Have you got any examples of that, that you can think of?
- JP: 'Cause there was one line on the TV but I didn't write it down and it's gone [AC: Yeah, yeah] this is from other people in the pub [gets some paper from out of his bag] and I was so drunk the other night someone had to write it down for me [laughter] and, um, oh it's the wrong piece of paper. Right one guy said to me the other day, there, that's another one that is [talking about another piece of paper], um your head is like my cupboard he said and I thought I wrote that one down but I always credit it, um, there was one song from [inaudible] that I had all the words, all the music, but I couldn't make, add up to make it all sense 'cause it was a wacky song and um my mate, my next door neighbour said how about, thank you for flying with Cwmaman Airlines, and that finished the song off [AC: Did it really?] yeah and it made it all sense 'cause the song is, I call it my new Christmas song for 2027 'cause I like to be ahead of the times [laughter] that's a shame it goes up to 2030! [laughter] and it's called The Tarzan Swing Needs Fixing [inaudible] and um it's pretending to be on a Tarzan swing, swinging back and fore playing around and um it um ends with um 'Grandad it wasn't me that trod on the frog' and it goes [makes noises] like that, after so many seconds and at the end, how am I gonna end it? And it goes, thank you for flying with Cwmaman airlines! And if I'm playing somewhere else I'll say Aberdare airlines y'know or something like that [inaudible] yeah, so that's an example of someone giving me, credit where credit's due that was Chris Morgan that was my next door neighbour, brilliant guy [AC: Yeah, yeah] and, and this girl up in Cwmaman, Lisa, 'cause she said, when are you gonna walk under the sea? 'Cause I was gonna do it for real see [inaudible] old fashioned no oxygen tank, a tube and a football or whatever and um, but I realised how dangerous it was [laughter] and I'm not a diver anyway [laughter] I don't like the cold and water like [AC: Unless it's Pirates of the Caribbean [inaudible] [laughter] and she wrote down, 'cause it's 2020, 20, 20 leagues

under the sea [AC: Ah right] so she wrote that down [AC: that's a good one, Yeah, yeah] yeah

AC: Okay, um the last question you'll be glad to know [laughter] is there anything else you'd like to add? Are there any stories or anecdotes you can think of?

JP: Um, music has taken me all round the place, as a busker I've played in marvellous places and compliments, if people are dancing to you that's a compliment and um if kids like it, I think they're a good compliment, blind people compliment you, that's a compliment. Um, but forget the compliments I, I've played in lovely places but and met lovely people, it's driven me wild, mad as well music y'know and my instruments when they need kind of fixing or change your instrument but um I wouldn't swap it for anything and it's split me as far as a career goes um, at an early age so that's why I haven't got a career in work and I, I like, 'cause my life is quite cheap these days, I'm a lodger now um, I'm not in a relationship anymore so it's a cheap way of life. My expenses are low so I don't have to work too much to cover my bills and everything I just gotta stop drinking in pubs every now and then to let the money build up for a holiday or something but um, so I can think about music all the time, a lot of the time anyway.

AC: So your work choices allow you to have a bit more free time and flexibility [JP: Yeah, yeah] and that's a conscious effort then? A conscious decision?

JP: Um, I dunno it might be um, I'm not very good at knowing myself sometimes [laughs] [inaudible] stepping outside myself and looking sometimes it takes other people to do that but [AC: Yeah, yeah] um, yeah, I, um, I wouldn't like, like I've turned down jobs, I've turned down twelve hour shifts, six and a half days a week because it interfered with my lifestyle y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: It's wellbeing I suppose is a big thing for you then? [JP: Yeah] mental wellbeing [JP: Yeah] [inaudible] drinking and all that but keeping music as the focal part of [JP: Yeah] of what you do yeah?

JP: Yeah and I like, I'm into walking and walking around Wales and [inaudible] life goes on [inaudible] live long enough to complete it but I love being, I've walked a hell of a lot of mid Wales now and I love it, it's unbelievable and now I'm [inaudible] the Highlands of Scotland, um, so I'm doing both now every year, I'll spend a week in the mountains half in Wales and half in the Highlands y'know. Every few days I'd get supplies from the shop get the food in and drink with the locals and [inaudible] and then back into the mountains for a few more days [inaudible]

AC: Do you find that helps the music process, the writing?

JP: Yeah

AC: When you're detached from...

JP: Yeah and it's good to have a break sometimes y'know and I think the most important thing sometimes is a pen and paper, because you can replace your instruments a lot of the time but it's very hard to replace some of the south American instruments because music shops [inaudible] and they're not good sellers around the place, so you gotta bump into south American people or go to Spain perhaps y'know and the pen and paper, I read this thing once The Making of Men, I know it sounds sexist but it was after the second World War and the first part of the book was interesting and the rest of it was all the names who had died, it was only a small book but the guy

said at the end, to prevent another war from happening all us men now need to put pen to paper to get things out of you, um and that would be a way of sorting the world out y'know but that's just something else I drifted off into that, I do just drift off at times.

AC: No, no that's fine

JP: But pen and paper I've always said, writing your ideas down y'know [inaudible] or ideas...

AC: And that's what you're doing?

JP: Yeah, yeah.

AC: Okay I'm going to stop the recording there.

Interview with Katy and John Morgan (Phoenix) 02-02-2020, Participants' home, Aberdare @ 4.15 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

KM – Katy Morgan, JM – John Morgan, Participants

AC: Right thanks for meeting me guys

KM: That's okay

JM: No problem

AC: I'm just going to ask you a few general questions before we get into the nitty gritty of what you do. Um so what sort of music do you both like?

JM: I like, I started off liking Madness and then these came along and everything, I, I, I didn't really like, apart from Queen, Dire Straits. My father had 12 Gold Bars Status Quo, he had Bat out of Hell and that was, that was me and a, and a Carpenters [AC: Alright] singles, 78 ah 74 to 78. So that was my musical [inaudible] it wasn't a particularly musical family. And then the 80s started coming around and Queen and Quo and Dire Straits, anything, and anything with a guitar, I remember like Tiger Feet from when I was a kid, I remember Slade and Wizard y'know the Christmas songs were my favourite 'cause they were kinda like rock bands. [AC: So guitar-based stuff] it was, guitar music just caught me straight away [AC: Okay] ah and then I was, I, I bought a few tapes and some, some fella up, Barry knew, Dire Straits stuff I thought I'll record that off him so I got loads of C90s sent it back to him and he sent it back, he recorded everything he had and ah he sent it back to me and I had about two or three C90s over and everyone who's into Iron Maiden in my school at that time, so I went to my buddy John and he said chuck a bit of Maiden on b'there 'cause you're on about them, let's give it a listen. And he had Somewhere in Time and Piece of Mind he put on one, he put Live after Death on another one, the live album and the first thing I heard off Iron Maiden was the start of Somewhere in Time which was [gives a vocal rendition, boom, der, der, der] and I was just like [laughs] what y'know it just, y'know the sound it made was just, I hadn't heard, I hadn't heard a bass chord before in popular music and boom with this synthy thing and I was just like and then it just took off [vocal rendition dung digger, digger, dig, dig] and I listened to the thing and nothing registered it was just like [AC: So really caught you?] yeah it really caught my, I said I gotta listen to that again 'cause none of that made any sense. To be perfectly honest like I heard the first thing then after that it was, it was nothing I'd y'know 'cause, how old was I? fourteen, fifteen, that wasn't getting shown on Going Live or anything like that. I remember Tiswas, I remember Iron Maiden being on Tiswas, Run to the Hills, I couldn't remember it and I remember I Love it Loud the Kiss video being on there. They used to have a bit of rock on it and I remember those and going what is this? I don't know who it was, came in half way through and especially the I Love it Loud video they put on, and that was about '83, '82 and stuff like that, I was like what is that? 'Cause I dunno it just immediately grabbed me and it was something I was interested in. I didn't know who it was, I didn't know where to get it y'know did you see that y'know Tiswas, I, I, didn't know where to get hold of it. And then I got into that Ozzy Osbourne which was 'cause John lent me the live after I got into Maiden a bit, I was like this is amazing. He lent me a video, ah recorded video on Live after Death concert, which was the ah live album, he recorded me and 'cause it was a three-hour tape the end of that was Ozzy Osbourne from Salt Lake City, and I go, who's this! [AC: Who's this John guy then?] John Jones [AC: And how is he...] I went to school with John [AC: He's a mate of yours?] Yeah he's a friend of mine aye, John Jones ah John just lived up the street from me in Dean Street [AC: And you're both the same age?] yeah same age yeah, a couple of months older than me but we went through secondary ah primary school together, went to the same church y'know all that y'know and secondary school together like, so he was just someone I always knew. He's a hell of a guitar player as well, he had his hair down here [pointing to his waist] into Yngwie Malmsteen and all that type of really fast stuff and he cut all his hair off then and started listening to Radiohead and I was like what? [laughter] y'know so anyway but that's how I got into it and then I, I just loved that there was a music that I liked 'cause I always liked the rocky stuff in Queen, I always liked the rocky stuff with Dire Straits and things y'know like Status Quo stuff I

y'know that 12 Gold Bars I dunno like I loved it, and Bat out of Hell so it was that's the music that kind of grabbed me and then it opened up and I knew who these bands were and I actually liked it and that was the end of that then [AC: Okay] that was the end of that.

AC: What about you Katy?

KM: I never really had anything, I'm one of those ones that if I listen to it and I like it I like it. I grew up with A-Ha, Go West, the usual y'know and I, it [JM: Aztec Camera] [laughter] I haven't got a clue who that is? And then [JM: Icicle Works, laughs] I never listened to much 'cause I didn't listen to the radio, I'd tape the Top 40 on a Sunday [mumbling] that was it until I met [5:11] him [JM] really. He used to um, record, tapes for me [AC: Okay] Iron Maiden and Bonfire and [inaudible]

JM: Alice Cooper's Trash album

KM: Alice Cooper and stuff like that and [AC: This is when you first met?] when we first met when we were kids, I was fifteen and he'd post that down to me and I would listen to that and I started getting into that then [inaudible] and then I stopped [JM: We went to Donnington didn't we] we went to Donnington then [laughter] and then, I, I again stopped listening to music really I got [inaudible] because it upset me 'cause we'd split up mumbling and JM whispering] Level 42 so I started listening to Level 42 and...

AC: Did you find you were drawn to the music of whoever you were with then?

KM: 'Cause they listened to it and I didn't really listen to anything [AC: Okay] now I got, sitting in the car, I'm more into like pop, I prefer rock stuff, stuff with a good beat to it, something [inaudible] [AC: Heavier like..?] not really heavy but heavy-ish, but yeah obviously don't listen to A-Ha and Go West but those were the ones that I got myself into when I was a youngster that's why I listened to the radio on a Sunday but I've never been, I don't go out and buy albums or download albums or anything like that y'know download songs normally just to learn something for the band [AC: Okay] I like music but I don't have any [AC: Specific] specific, no I just, it's not a passion of mine like it is for him [JM] [mumbling and inaudible] it's um, yeah...

AC: Okay

KM: I'm not the type to sit in the house and put an album on unless I'm doing some hose work or something which is very rare [laughter]

AC: What about the music you guys play then? I mean how would you describe what you play?

JM: Ah popular rock, popular, popular pop rock so y'know it's kinda like pop rock so the type of stuff we, we will do would be Queen, ah it's just basically y'know if, if, it's guitar-based kinda popular music so that can be anything from [KM: Anthems that people know] yeah y'know if you don't know it, we'll veer away from it we're not ah we're not y'know you get some bands a bit evangelical and will go listen now, listen now audience now listen to us! We're gonna educate you in music 'cause what you listen to is rubbish! Right, I'm gonna play this Walter Trout number for you now and you're all gonna sit down and appreciate this and I'm like well I've always, my, my, I've got two kinda like anecdotal, well allegories shall we say. Look the first one is if you wanna, self-pleasure yourself butt, shut the door in your bedroom and do it there because it's not a spectator sport, no one really wants to watch, you'll find that with a

band, but, and this really leads into my other point is musicians have a real, real difficult step I dunno it's like crossing, stepping from North to South Korea for them, it's like oh God, vampires stepping into a, uninvited. You're a musician when you're learning ah I say when you're learning, when you're practising and rehearsing that's when you're a musician as soon as you step in front of a crowd you're an entertainer, you gotta have a different mind-space or it's not gonna work for you, all it will be is another guy in a pair of jeans and I T shirt playing songs you like to an audience that's completely indifferent 'cause it doesn't get played on Heart Radio. Right 95% of the crowd you're playing in front of haven't got a clue about music, like that kind of Yorkshire man, I don't y'know, y'know I know what I like y'know that type of thing y'know I'll, I like y'know I like what I like and if you're not playing it and not that interested like, you, you're there to entertain them.

KM: There is a bit of that in the band though, if there's a song we don't like we won't play it, even if it's a popular song.

JM: Yeah but like I say the conversation from last year or so we had like are we going to go there, what do you think of that, if they like it, it stays if they don't like it we'll pan it. Y'know it's [AC: Who said what in that conversation then?] Well, um, what were we doing? Was it Rolling in the Deep or something like that [KM: Yeah] or ah Long Train Running or something, it was one [KM: I think it was both of them actually] yeah it's one of those ones y'know [inaudible] easy enough to do like y'know just put it in front of a crowd and...

KM: I think we all hated it or at least two of [inaudible]

JM: I think, I think y'know [KM: What if it's only one person saying it?] and for our band, it's, so one it's gotta be a popular song so our first, first, ah we got One Vision by Queen into really, You Really Got Me which if you're a Van Halen fan is great if you're a Kinks fan that's great, then we do Teenage Kicks, then we do 20th Century Boy now they all go to, and we just play them boom, boom, boom, boom, 4 songs y'know and y'know I jump in the crowd 'cause I got a wireless system I get in the crowd, on tables start playing and we're an entertainment point y'know. We're there to entertain, right, but within those first 4 songs you've got Queen alright so you got Queen, everyone loves Queen you can't go wrong our always fallback [inaudible] you're stuck, Queen, Bon Jovi 'cause you can't go wrong right. Really Got Me can either be seen as a carry on from Brian May into Eddie Van Halen or the older oh a Kinks song and it's got a [thumps a beat on his leg] y'know it's got, those songs link well together because of the tempo. Third song in you got a slightly different kind of bracket which is punky sound of the suburbs thing, then you're going into Glam rock, then after that we do a Stereophonics track, then after that we do We Are Young by Fun and we do It's my Life Bon Jovi, you can't go wrong with Bon Jovi we do Kings of Leon. So that's the type of thing we do, we do ah remember Jeff Healey? [AC: Yeah] the blind guitar player, he done a version of Stuck in the Middle, been playing that for about twenty years, great version of it can't go wrong, again, can't go wrong with that. Y'know does a similar type of thing as like You Really Got Me, that, that's by anyone, tons of people have covered that song, tons of people have done Stuck in the Middle, everyone knows those two songs, so you can't go wrong with them. Then we do Maggie May, we do another Stereophonics song 'cause we're in the Valleys can't go wrong with a Stereophonics song, ah and a set and a half is ore, more of the same type of thing and it's, it's so what we try and do is pick, um we pick songs we think y'know think are going to go down well but they offer different things to different people, so if you're a bit of a punk fan we've, we've y'know we got your Teenage Kicks and stuff like that we got Green Day, we do a Green Day song and All the Small Things and things like that. So what we try to do with the set is try and paint a

picture to cover all bases y'know if you're a pop fan we do Mamma Mia, we do a kind of rocky version of Mamma Mia [inaudible] yeah, we do an Abba tune. Um, Rolling in the Deep [does an impression of the opening riff on guitar] turn the guitar up on that y'know. You got Black Stone Cherry playing that like y'know it's just, it's one of those songs 'cause it's a musical guitar thing you can get away with murders there but the thing is the singer is the sing right and it doesn't matter 'cause y'know that's the thing we always got told when we, when I first started my other band, oh this isn't going to go down well, but it always did 'cause you choose y'know I wanted it like hard rock guitar sound, right and the idea of the band first off was Bon Jovi doing a cover set so the plan with that, that's what we planned and it ended up being more like Motley Crue with keyboards doing the cover set but it was Motley Crue with keyboards doing a covers set [AC: Tell me more! Laughs] but that was it y'know that was the whole thing, the whole thing, we spent more on our outfits than certain bands done on their ent, done on their guitar and amplifier Y'know our outfits cost five hundred quid.

AC: What's this for? What you wear when you go on stage?

JM: Well, well the other band I was in [inaudible] the other band I was in, this band is going the same way [AC: Right] because three members of Devious are in this band so we know what works and we know the main thing you gotta do, one, so there's a couple of things you gotta do, one, do be like a duck alright, do, do all the hard work underneath all that's kept away from an audience and anything like that alright. When you're on, so when you go away and learn your stuff you'd be disciplined, if we're doing three songs this week, you're going to bloody learn them right, that was one. Two, so when you come to rehearsal, rehearsal's for doing that, it's not for learning songs or jamming or faffing about it's about doing that and getting it tight, there's a limited y'know people go to jobs, people got work to do y'know people have had a row with the missus and you go round to rehearsal, all that type of thing which happens alright. Then in that three hours or whatever you got gotta be productive, that starts with one, you're the weak link alright, two, you can be open to each other and just 'cause the two main things with bands it gets personal, you're this, you're that, when all he's trying to say is you haven't learnt your bit, you haven't done your homework and then it just turns into a shit match, that y'know in this band it's [inaudible] but it's always about the song, it's always about is this happening, is that happening, blah, blah, blah, is this sounding right. Where are we going wrong b'ya. It's not you've balled this up or whatever y'know it's never kind of personal y'know like yeah. It's con, constructive but honest, so y'know if you got an ego park that outside 'cause you don't need your ego in here this is where the work happens. So then, when you're in front of an audience all the hard work has been done y'know you don't go and present a song to an audience until we're very comfortable with it like and then it gets presented, so that, and that's been and the other thing is as well this is a business arrangement alright, unless you're keeping people in there, dancing, singing, drinking beer and this is my other little analogy, you could be in there sawing puppies in half alright, right, if people are going that's disgusting I'm out of here alright, right, y'know the bar the guy who owns the place is going well he's not coming back. Alright, y'know but if you're in a [inaudible] sawing puppies in half and the guy comes and everyone is going fantastic oh right well we'll have him back 'cause that's all he's interested in, he's not interested in being a vehicle for whatever kind of musical delusions you got going on in your head. Can you make this a crowd of people who listen to Heart Radio, who listen to Radio 2, who don't know anything about music can you keep them entertained to drink beer in my pub. That's your obligation to the guy that's paying you. So for you to go out on a limb and stuff like that, like certain places encourage it. 95% of places you're playing in don't encourage it. So y'know it's like they want to keep people in there and have a good time and that into the good time then is the entertainment you gotta go out and put

on a show alright and that's where I find a lot of musicians can't make that jump. People think they're there to watch them, no you're there to entertain those, it's not they're here to watch you, you are here to entertain them and they've shown up, 85% all they wanna do is be led, so you have a good front man that understands y'know it's my job to entertain the crowd, I'm the y'know I'm the kind of user interface between the band and the audience and a front man needs to understand that, you gotta have banter with them and chat and stuff like that y'know and it's gotta look like it's easy and everything's tidy, y'know because you done all the hard work beforehand [AC: Yeah] Y'know what I mean, watch Wales yesterday [inaudible] the work that goes in behind that y'know we're not there to see the drop goal and all that lovely passing and all that, the tries beneath the posts that's what you wanna see, not prepared to see the hard work that goes on behind it, they're in the gym 6 days a week y'know [inaudible] in the air y'know 'cause you're injured and stuff like that, that goes on behind the scenes y'know and a crowd can smell fear y'know and always, always could, it's body language, 80% of all our communication is body language.

AC: What's the um consequences of them knowing that you're nervous then? Have you seen...

JM: They just won't buy into you. I've seen it happen I've seen it I just seen it happen, a crowd, y'know I mean y'know I, I can't remember what it was I was watching some BBC documentary as I'm prone to and it was on about 80% of our communication is done as body language I don't know I'm giving it off you don't know if you're picking it up but it's there, alright, and that's what happens, the crowd will go I don't believe you, none, y'know someone in this band is, is doesn't believe in what he's doing, so if he doesn't believe in what he's doing I' not going to believe in what he's doing, that's when the talking happens and that's when the heads on stage, oh they're not liking this no, that's where the heads go down and that's, they're not entertaining anymore, what they like, oh they're crap, never mind if you're the best players on the planet, but if, but if you're not engaging with an audience it doesn't matter. I'm an average guitar player, average, right my pentatonic bluesy solos, don't have it too long boys 'cause people start spotting a trick b'here right, so just keep short solos, nice and short, right [inaudible] look good doing it and people are like oh butt what an amazing guitar player, 'cause they've bought into the kind of y'know they're only seeing what I want them to see, like you're not seeing y'know.

AC: What sort of um and this is for both of you, feel free to chip in [laughter] what sort of strategies, they might be subconscious ones that you'll only draw upon now that you're thinking about it but what strategies do you use to sort of engage the audience both of you and it could be really subtle or really obvious.

JM: Fairly obvious, I'll tell you, I'll this is strategy one okay [JM gets up and puts on his electric guitar unplugged]

AC: Do I need to move out of the way?

JM: No [laughter] this is what wireless systems [strategy] were invented for right [JM stands right in front of me strumming his guitar] and this is the strategy right I'll stand basically in front of you right and you'll look and then and then you look at your friends and you'll be like this and your friends will start laughing, honest to God now you might think it's a joke right, your friends will start laughing and then you will start laughing, I've won, and then I move on to someone else [AC: Okay] that's, that's the strategy is to get into the audience's face and 'cause it's dead easy to ignore you. It's dead easy to sit at a gig and ignore you, don't happen with me. I'll stay there, you break before I will.

AC: 'Cause you can move about and I know [aimed at KM] that you can't

KM: I can't but I'm static and to the side as well, I'm not even facing the audience I'm facing him [JM] and the singer.

AC: Do you find you're doing any body movements or anything to that effect?

KM: I, I [JM: It's coming] yeah, I um, try and dance about a bit I try it depends how focused I am on what I'm playing or what, no, I tell you what it is, is I mucked up, I mucked up the um, the opening of the last gig and that just put me in a bad head set, so I did just stand there and there's a video of what I was doing and I watched the video and all I'm doing I just stood there and I'm [inaudible] and I completely went blank, I stopped playing you could see me going, and I'm like this and then I just went [acted out a slumping of the shoulders and head down]

AC: Yeah, yeah.

KM: And then I went right! And then joined back in in a place I knew where I was but the look of defeat and my arm just kinda flopped and like I'm not even going to try anyway 'cause I'm pressing the wrong thing and I'm making it worse and it just put me in a bad head set and I couldn't get into the gig then. I think [inaudible] in the second half [inaudible] I torture myself too much but um...

AC: But you're relatively new to...

KM: Um, yeah

AC: Very much so compared to John, I just want to get that on

KM: Yeah, well the last I mean [JM: three years in it? Is it three years?]

AC: It's not a lot really is it?

JM: It's nothing

KM: I think it's four but if you count the bands that I've been in, the two bands, well three now, we never did, we never did many shows, we'd only do about twelve a year [JM: It was hard like I say] exactly that, so where, so I think if it, been if I joined Phoenix a year ago I'd probably have about fifty gigs under my belt, but in one year of Phoe, this year of Phoenix I think I'll probably do more gigs than what I've done in the last five years, so I think by the time the summer comes I think I'll be a lot more, I mean already the key, ah the iPad is going to start going away 'cause [JM: She got an iPad as a safety blanket y'know] [inaudible] it's not for every song...

JM: She's dealing with guys who've been in bands for twenty plus years and she's come in as, and everyone's very impressed with her y'know like. The thing is she's gone away she's done the work, the harmonies are sounding nice y'know when we get it right it's, it's a good band y'know because y'know you got the kinda right people and, playing with Carl and Paul was very good 'cause the other, the other guys we play one of them we're playing with now but it wasn't a very encouraging atmosphere for a beginner it was a bit... [AC: Competitive?] No I wouldn't say competitive [KM: He [Lee probably] was very, he was, he was very judgmental on me] yeah y'know he wouldn't it would be one of those things where he's not being encouraging [inaudible] or, or [KM: He would [inaudible] Lyndon 'cause he and Lyndon [inaudible] but when I

joined that band it was to do backing vocals wasn't even [inaudible] I literally just joined to use the backing vocals just wanted to get up on the stage and wanted to sort of be there but] the band [KM: Yeah] [inaudible]

AC: Ease yourself into it I suppose

KM: Yeah, but, but then y'know an Eric Clapton song turned up and I thought I'll get the GarageBand up and [JM: We had a wedding to do and they wanted Wonderful Tonight as their ah first dance and we played it and I thought that sounds dead empty just a three piece [sings a bit of the song] and I can't remember where it came from but someone had GarageBand, someone mentioned GarageBand] Lee probably [JM: That's right!] playing the chords, next thing I know I got the um, he bought me a Casio keyboard donkey's years ago so that was out [JM: That came out of the attic] and I was like [JM: On a Sunday afternoon] I can play this! Next thing I know I'm buying [inaudible] ah a synth keyboard and well oh you got this now you can play on other songs too! And I was just like [inaudible]

JM: Basically if you, right

KM: That's when I started having piano lessons with Jim

JM: G, C, D [inaudible] G, C, D and A minor and an E minor and a A and I just looked at her and thought well that's Sweet Home Alabama sorted y'know three chords that's that one, what other ones can we do, oh right we can use and all of a sudden, she's forced [laughs] against her will to play keyboard [KM: I wanted to sing I didn't want to play keyboard oh right, it's taken me till this band, now I'm enjoying playing keyboard]. 'Cause I think it's y'know the other band it was just, it was [KM: If we were going to a Dysfunction Junction gig [inaudible] bored] yeah. With this one she's, there more, challenge I mean she's done, she's done more work, when, when did we start, September time something like that [KM: Ah August] and I was worried about One Vision [sings a bit of the keyboard intro to the song] the first like this is going to be on you like, pressure, she starts playing [inaudible] terrified her, nailed it and I thought thank God for that we'll just keep it to chords now and then ah but that's like me and Terry were talking about it [KM: But we knew it was going to happen I knew..] yeah but [KM: I sort of made it happen] there was a brain fart coming alright and the thing is, is that we all make them get over it [AC: It's a learning curve] it's a learning curve like I said we had gigs I remember doing it [KM: I play it out every single...] but that's where it gets in like and just slam it straight into your head. I remember playing it's my life for a crowd and just and I've been playing it for about six, seven years every gig and I just I thought I can't remember what's coming next? [AC: There's no rhyme nor reason] no it just goes and do you know what I did? I just ah right forget about it I'm, hopefully the hands will go and it did [inaudible]

KM: That was the whole thing [inaudible] I put my hands back by my side it was, no, it was me clearing my head, that was me going and I know Lee was going you should have done something you should have y'know you should have tried this..

JM: What she done she came in half...

KM: No but I was like I hadn't, I had to stop

JM: When she knew where she was and basically everyone

KM: And I came in on the second bit, I thought oh I gotta clear my head and come back in because I was panicking so much over that bit and that bit comes in the middle of the

song as well and I was like I'm not going to be able to play it again in the middle, what's gonna happen when we get to the end of that second verse and I gotta play that again and I played it!

JM: Y'know it's something, that's the thing with live music then, I've never played a perfect gig I don't believe I'll meet anyone who ever has [AC: No it's a myth] y'know it just doesn't happen...

KM: When I...

JM: You're gonna miss, you're gonna miss something out right. It's a lot of, it's a lot of information and it's a lot of things and sometime or another y'know a light will go off and catch you or someone y'know, something will catch your eye and all of a sudden [clicks fingers] y'know, then you're playing catch up then y'know that's when you're urgh! That happens like y'know but y'know it's, it's that's the whole part of it, that's [inaudible] y'know.

KM: When I made that mistake I walked out across the dance floor to go to the toilet and they were fist pumping me and stuff [inaudible] it wasn't as bad as I [AC: It's seldom as bad as you think] then they're sitting there saying oh that bloody keyboard player they really want to get a new keyboard player...

JM: It's just something that happens..

KM: I relaxed then second half [inaudible] I do try and get some eye contact look at, get out on the dance floor, seeing who's dancing and when I see then all up dancing I relax more and then I'm dancing about a bit and then...

JM: But that's stage craft it's not something [inaudible] it's not something you can learn, y'know you gotta go out there and experience it, y'know like I said that might seem silly to you, oh he just stands there with a guitar and stuff like that like and I y'know will break eye contact if you laugh, right, that, that has worked for me for what twelve, twelve years. And it works all the time [inaudible] anyway, but it works it's a little trick of mine to getting people to relax, y'know it's getting people who are here for a fun night, y'know don't read too deep into this it's just a bit of music y'know it's a bit of fun and we can have a bit of a laugh.

AC: Have you done any gigs for whatever reason, the chemistry's not working and you really don't [inaudible] can you give me something [inaudible]

JM: Caerphilly social club

KM: Yeah a member of the audience came in because we were, it was when we were the Alley Cats. Basically the drummer had been the main singer and I think what he said was they were expecting him to be the singer in the new band we were in, he wasn't John was [JM: I'm not a singer] and they didn't like the style they were expecting more rock n roll stuff...

JM: They were expecting Gene Vincent and ended up with Tuesday's dog...

KM: Yeah she came in half way and well demanded more rock n roll. Turn it down first of all and more rock and roll, want this that and the other and all this lot [inaudible] all of us were just like...

JM: Yeah the band wasn't, that's the only, can't say that's the only gig but y'know there's some gigs y'know. Like I say with that band 'cause it was totally unrehearsed I think y'know it ended up in venues it shouldn't have been in.

AC: Say a bit more about that, what do you mean...?

JM: There's certain bands that go down in certain places and certain things that unless you're a sort of top notch band that can that's got that, right. Similar sort of thing we got put in as Devious, the motely Crue of the Valleys, with the fireworks and the lasers and the big y'know I got, with a Marshall stack alright [quiet laughter] I'll show you where's my phone, I'll show you a picture of it, a white Marshall stack okay, so I turn up to the gig with my white Marshall stack, I've got my new rock boots on ah [KM: They can't hear that, see that on the recording] I'm just gonna right so, and again agents, this is what agents do alright, let's have a talk about agents. Agents get money for nothing, they haven't got a clue they don't do any research into the outfits they got, they just see money I got someone who can go there, I got someone who [inaudible] in there, so y'know I'll have the money off that. They don't particularly care about who goes in there. [Asks KM] Can you get my profile photos up on that thing? [Referring to his phone]. But basically they took a hard rock band who show up in leathers, new rock platform boots y'know. Y'know rock n roll T shirts and everything like that y'know that helmet, ah there you go [shows photos] so there's my stack, there's me in y'know, my white PVCs and my white American football with a Dave Mustaine Flying V and hair down you [indicates long hair] y'know looking like a cross between Slash and Brian May alright and they sent us to Canton Liberal Club, alright which was basically, walked in, there was a girl behind the bar, green hair y'know looking a bit Goth, I thought oh we'll be alright here tonight [inaudible] Canton Liberal Club, walked up to her and she said oh hiya you're the band are you? Yeah. Ah do you do Penny Arcade? No? Oh well you're gonna die in here tonight like because y'know, but y'know that's all they're interested in. We walked in the air was y'know like God's waiting room it was [laughter] it was the blue rinse brigade out in force y'know, and we played y'know we had sound checks. Terry hit the drums, oh! Too loud! Can you turn the drums down? How do you turn a drum down? Y'know how are we gonna turn the drums so y'know basically we'd been booked y'know not as a rock band. The week before we went up to the Rat Alley up in bloody Yorkshire or somewhere like that for a bunch of hairy arsed bikers and Neville from Hawthorn oh that's the perfect band for Canton Liberal Club they'll have the ah Tony Bennett and Matt Monroe tribute in there last year and follow it up with Devious [AC: Right]. So you get in there, it's the wrong venue for this band but you still gotta perform. What you don't want as a band is to be paid off never happened with Devious, we always, we always came out on top, and that's why you got a list of about forty odd songs. So we have what I call my base defence which is, that'll be my base set, alright so our set will be this [AC: Is this relevant to what you're doing now?] This is relevant to what I'm doing now, it's exactly the same now [AC: Okay] 'cause all these tricks worked, all these things worked [KM: You're learning so many songs] you gotta learn forty, you gotta have forty songs and you gotta have forty, you gotta have [AC: Is that to cover...] base, this is, if you get up in front of a crowd and do that [KM: You gotta see what type of audience you got] You don't type of audience you got [KM: Until you get there] but you are [inaudible] and might think this, that and the other yeah [KM: If they're ninety] If they're all ninety right y'know it's [inaudible] but, as people are getting older y'know, so anyway you get your base set and then you got stuff then and you pull this one out right, pull four, five songs out of that set and replace them with appropriate songs I think for this audience and the whole slant of your set has changed. Y'know if we're playing a biker gig or something like that where we pull Adele out, well [mumbling] maybe we'll keep the Adele song in there 'cause that might be something of a change, like with Mama Mia that's a bit of a

quirky one. So we'll pull the Kaiser Chiefs out and we'll chuck Black Night in or we'll pull this out and put in something else or we'll pull that song out or Poison by Alice Cooper, we'll pull this song out and put that song and all of a sudden the set has slanted to a more hard rock type of thing like, and then...

AC: Sorry, how much advance notice do you get to do this y'know...

JM: You go in and look at the crowd and use that experience [KM: We'll have a set list] yeah and [KM: We'll probably go in and then we set up have a look and if we need to change things about...] the set list we got now, it's got a few numbers left over. But the song selection we're picking now it's, it's subs on a bench like y'know, like y'know you can, who can we bring on y'know it's that type of thing replacing this or we can change what we like y'know.

AC: So it, it's the expectations of the audience and also it's all audience driven I should say really...

JM: Everything's about the audience if you're not playing for the audience stay in the house.

AC: Do you think that's specific to covers and tributes or covers in particular 'cause it's any songs rather than original bands...

JM: I, original bands are different...

KM: People don't see that specifically tribute [JM: Exactly] but they like that particular band but with regards to a covers band..

JM: If you go down to Mickey's club and an un-originals band turns up, sit through y'know an hour and a half [inaudible] how can I put it you're there for, attract a different person and you're there for a different reason alright, for an original band. Original bands and covers bands have absolutely nothing, it's like rugby league and rugby union, there's not y'know they're both bands like but there's a different code and a different set of rules and different things. You are there to entertain them. That's where a lot of musicians can't get it through their thick fucking skulls that they're an entertainment when they get on the stage in front of people. Oh y'know and after y'know, and! Musicians work ethic is completely and utterly sloppy, a lot of them are y'know just think they need to show up and jam their way through the thing. Nah, nah, nah, nah [AC: Have you seen stuff like that?] Oh absolutely, absolutely!

AC: Can you give me, you don't have to mention names, can you give me some examples?

JM: Well he works behind the bar in Jacs [laughter] alright, I don't know his name. Right, he works behind the bar in Jacs, supposed to be a good bass player, long hair, beard, I dunno his name, came to rehearsal, and he picked the wrong band to be in, me, my brother, Tom on the drums and he came in and we were gonna put a little band together right. It was for Cwmfest, we were gonna do like a, we're gonna do a mid 80s kind of metal type of thing.

AC: When was this?

JM: This, this was a couple of years ago. How many years ago I can't remember but it was a while back, but my brother, lives up in Cwmaman, so what we were going to do was we were gonna be like a, we were gonna do a forty five minute set of 80s

metal tunes, right [AC: Nice yeah]. Awesome, yeah. What are we gonna do a bit of Scorpions, oh I didn't even think about the Scorpions, we're gonna do Living After Midnight, do a bit of Judas Priest, a bit of Scorpions y'know all the classic kind of, y'know there was a period we were looking at around like y'know so we learnt this song, that song and that song, Tom learnt it, my brother learnt it, he learnt it alright. We're all working, well Tom's in college, me and my brother working. He turned up and said oh I haven't had a lot of practice, I had, she turned up for rehearsal which we paid for down in, whatever it was kinda ah blah, blah [mumbling] it was kind of Bargoed way, I haven't been over Bargoed for several years.

AC: Oh was it Practice Pad or something?

JM: Something like that, that's it Practice Pad. When there showed up, paying pound an hour or whatever it was like y'know and he shows up alright, hasn't got a job, doing piss all, shows up and ah boom, boom, boom, oh I haven't had a lot of time this week. Me and my brother went not had a lot of time this week busy working was you butt? Aye I don't work, well there we are butt I do, he does and he goes to college and you're the only one shown up who's done fuck all, all week and you're the only one shown up who hasn't learnt the songs. Fuck off out and that was the end of that [AC: That was the end of it?] That was the end of it, and that's exactly the right y'know, we don't carry passengers. Y'know if you wanna do something properly, you gotta get the right, and that needs to be, y'know a lot, a lot of musicians don't get anywhere 'cause they're too lazy to put the time in away from it. Y'know that's all it comes down to. Yngwie Malmsteen once said about Steve Cropper, I don't know anything how good he is but everything that he's written and everything he's done is fucking brilliant, but it doesn't mean he has to be a brilliant guitar player y'know. But that's it, Knock On Wood is fantastic, you can't argue with Knock on Wood like, I don't know how good a guitar player he is but it doesn't matter, I y'know if I'm entertaining, if I'm in a covers band entertaining people, it doesn't matter how good I really am, it doesn't matter how good Katy really is, if she can go ding, ding [sings intro to Mama Mia] all people go oh that's Mama Mia that's fantastic this is great. Oh they played a load of songs really well, y'know it, it's kind of like Strictly Come Dancing, Katy's in the stage now where she's on Strictly, it's exactly Strictly Come Dancing, she goes and learns a, she goes and learns a Pasodoble [inaudible] doesn't mean she's ah, doesn't mean she's a dancer but she can do the Pasodoble for that night and then next week she'll go and do a Cha-Cha-Cha, might not be a dancer but you go and you learn your bits and then in front of a crowd, 10! Y'know what I mean that's the type of thing it is it's about pulling it off in that live situation, doesn't matter how really good you are because, a band should be more than a sum of its parts, it should be about a collective coming together and working hard, 'cause hard work alone [inaudible] with talent all the time, y'know hard work, things will happen I a song which you might drop out. Y'know we're doing Sweet Emotion and the chorus for Sweet Emotion is quite an offy one, like look I aint even gonna do that because if you can't get the harmonies in Sweet Emotion there's no point playing the song, and just on that [inaudible] is a little off thing in the chorus. I said I'm just gonna put the wah wah on and [inaudible] I'm gonna go from A to B and the bass [makes a sound of a bass] will carry that alright, and the vocals will carry that and if some Aerosmith geek wants to come up to me at half time or second half and say ah I didn't play the riff, everyone else is not going to give a toss.

AC: So do you listen to these songs, um I'm assuming you don't listen to these songs and try and play them exactly, you kind of do an arrangement is it?

JM: What I find...

KM: We try and get as close as we can

JM: Yeah, there's issues, y'know if there's issues like that in the, trying to do a two guitar song with one guitar and put a backing vocal in, a harmonised backing vocal in, now what's more important, you gotta play for the band, you gotta play for the song and if playing for the song I don't play the riff and I just play that [makes wah wah sound] and just do a D and an A in the vocal [KM: inaudible... the keyboard part at the beginning, I play something similar but it's nowhere near what you [inaudible] but you can recognise it the beginning, people know...] Capture, capturing the feel of a song for me is far more important, it's far more important than actual notes, I went to see Kiss in Cardiff Ice Rink in 1990 whatever 91, 92 something like that and right I'm a massive Kiss fan I'm second bloody [inaudible] and they come on to I Stole Your Love, they haven't played that song since 1977 [imitates the music and the crowd going mad] going nuts right and one of my favourite songs ever they opened up with it in Cardiff. Then the guitar solo came along and I'm like a massive Kiss fan so I'm like, I, I was convinced that he played the solo and then 6 months later I got a bootleg of them playing the same set in Sheffield and I was like, that's nothing like the solo, y'know that's nothing like, and there's me a massive Kiss fan in the moment didn't, it didn't matter [AC: So it's getting a flavour...] it's getting the flavour, like I do, I play Sweet Child O Mine and I'm not going to go that y'know [sings a bit of the solo passages] when that wah wah kicks in, that escalating run or ascending run [sings a bit more] I just stick it on the wah wah and give it the old pentatonic [sings a bit more] and with a wah wah you capture that type of, 'cause a wah wah, 'cause the thing about that it's a building thing and the wah wah kicks in, if you end it on [sings a bit more] and then you kick off from there it's [inaudible] I've got a rule if you can sing it you've gotta be able to play it [inaudible] like all those little solos before [sings examples] you couldn't play anything else there you gotta play exact, well y'know exactly what he's playing but when it kicks off just go off on one then y'know it's about I dunno selling I dunno, it's about y'know capturing the feel of it, now a lot of bands will tell you oh we got to play it note for note like y'know but 95% of people out there don't know anything about music and won't be able to tell you what the wrong note is or the right note is or anything y'know.

AC: I might be a bit annoyed if someone came onto me oh you played that D y'know [inaudible]

KM: No one's gonna come up to you

JM: No one's gonna come up to you and say [inaudible] the most important thing is they're having a good time, so that's why it's all audience driven, for the type of band we are. Now if I'm in a tribute band that's a different kettle of fish as well. If you're in a tribute band, let's just imagine now you're in an Iron Maiden tribute band alright, and you're Dave Murray alright well in that regard Dave Murray's off and he plays what he feels and that would be perfectly in-keeping with what Dave Murray does at a live gig, he, he's off. If you're Adrian Smith, Adrian Smith don't do that, he tends to keep it nailed on so that the solo you hear on the album is 90% the solo he'll play live y'know within the same band, within the same vehicle they're doing kinda different things like and if you're a real fan of the band which you probably are if you're gonna see a tribute then he'd y'know I'd like my Dave Murray to go, just shut his eyes and look at the stars and give it all that like but my Adrian Smith 90% of that has to be banging, different guitar players like and you gotta capture those different type of elements y'know, if you're doing a Thin Lizzy band all those army stuff has gotta be in there and it's like different rules for different vehicles. And again, y'know Simon Davies? From Abercwmboi, singer he played in or anyway, great guy Simon great voice he played with a band now, oh what are they called? Traitors Gate or something, rock,

metal singer y'know loved Rob Halford [AC: Original music?] erm he's played originals, but um, Traitors Gate is an originals band but he wanted to put together a Judas Priest cover band, he rung me up, are you interested in being in a Judas Priest tribute band? I said [mumbled] I said I haven't got time for that butt I said y'know when ah I said um a Judas Priest tribute act y'know and he said well if you like Maiden you'll like Priest y'know. I wasn't really into Priest that much anyway but I didn't really didn't have the time and ah I said ah alright then so you're getting, oh no I'm not doing the leathers and all that like it'll just be like jeans and T shirt [45:06] I said you can't do a Judas bloody Priest tribute act in just jeans and T shirt like, you gotta, you gotta put the leathers on, y'know if you wanna be a Judas Priest cover band like, if you wanna be a Nirvana cover band like y'know wear what you bloody like y'know but if you're gonna be in a Judas Priest cover band you gotta turn up in the studs and leathers otherwise it's not gonna be bloody Judas Priest it's gonna be four blokes [inaudible] four blokes playing or five blokes playing Judas Priest songs, that's a completely different effort from a tribute act so y'know. I remember we played um, oh crumbs where was it, Monmouth festival [AC: Who's this now? You guys or..] No, no I'm going on about the other band I suppose 'cause that's more, but this, this band is going on the same trajectory as the other band because three of the guys in that band knew what worked and parrot fashion is good enough for now and in between for Kar to get her bits and bobs sorted out, every song we're kinda learning is teaching us something else and every song we're doing is, she's picking up a different skill y'know, so she's coming and everybody's like what I dunno if somebody asked me to play keyboards and get up three, four years ago and stuff like that and most of them just banging out one note chords y'know or the Hammond sound like they're playing Mama Mia y'know all the stuff she's gotta play in different styles and things and it's getting now to the point now where shut up! Y'know I don't need to know I'm listening to this and he's not telling me to play what you're telling me to play, he's playing something different, that's what I want so she's growing playing at a rate by going out there and doing it y'know what I mean, it's not, it's not y'know. There's no kind of ah, it's experience you can't buy that you can't learn that you go out and you do it.

AC: Can I ask, I asked you earlier about experiences that didn't go to plan I mean have you got any gigs or experiences where it exceeded your expectations at all?

JM: Yeah, third gig in [inaudible]

KM: Shall I speak for once? [JM: Yeah you speak] [laughter] [JM: Y'know what I'm like when I get going]

AC: Tell me about that gig then.

KM: Um, Mickey's in Mountain Ash and it was um the 4th of January this year [AC: Just gone yeah] yeah, we'd only done three gigs [JM: When was our first one?] Our first one was the 2nd of December then we got two in December. We did two in December but one wasn't with our singer it was a different singer. Then we done new year's day then the Saturday the 4th of January with um down in Mickey's, um the usual set up start playing and I went off for a cigarette half time and he comes up and says they [inaudible] the committee and asked if we would play new year's ever this year. They wanted to book us for this year and then we were all excited about that and then obviously we didn't, we haven't agreed yet or anything. But then during the second half we're playing my son's there with his girlfriend, my best friend is there with her boyfriend and I can see this guy go over and start talking to them and it's like, who's that then? They were writing stuff down and apparently, they'd gone over to them and asked how well do you know them [the band] how well do you know the band.

They're like well pretty well [mumbling] my mum and [mumbling]. We want them either Boxing Night or New Year's Eve you got to get them to agree to it and write it out and brought a note up to John during the second half trying to get us y'know it's only our fourth gig [AC: That's great]

JM: The third show was that band like

KM: And then the last show apparently we were better than Devious, 'cause of the harmonies and things, we done ah A Little help From My Friends for the first time [JM: The Joe Cocker version y'know] and that was the one I mucked up the beginning but they said that the um DJ yeah [inaudible] that was after [JM: After that I didn't notice a muck up] yeah it's the one I came out of [JM: No that was] no I'm talking about the last one with the lady DJ [JM: Yeah] that was right behind me that was our last, that was our last show [inaudible]

JM: What do you mean you came out of and you mucked up?

KM: One Vision

JM: Oh sorry I thought you were talking about [AC: Yeah] With a Little Help

KM: No, no, no, I was perfect on that

JM: She's mucked up once like y'know

KM: I, I again like that was another one 'cause I'm opening it but I think after the [inaudible] I mucked up the first one and the last one but she was gob smacked with the vocals she said the harmonies and everything that's always brilliant and we are so much better than Devious and [inaudible]

JM: And this is the thing we did, I'll go back and it's all about how much effort you put in and that's life how much effort you put into anything will dictate how good you're gonna be. We have the idea of like I say we what we were gonna do and we didn't have a singer so, but y'know we were planning on getting a singer and, what we did we learned about twenty, oh we got about twenty five songs done as a [inaudible] So when we got a singer in, it was, it was as much an audition to him, if we wanted to get a good one, it was as much an audition for ah him, than we were auditioning 'cause you go in and you play with another and maybe or not, not interested y'know we had to put up present the best kind of ah version of ourselves and that took oh I dunno it must have been a couple of months of just well a couple of months get these songs sorted out before the singer came in 'cause it's as much our audition to him as it was that, so I wanted to y'know if you wanted to get a good singer it had to be y'know pie hot like and when Ceri did come in who is a good singer ah we were y'know again, same thing as the crowd y'know you, we had to go out there and present like and he's going oh it's a good band this, I wanna, I wanna be a part of this and that's what's kind of carried on y'know ah [KM went to the toilet and JM is filling her in on what we've been saying] just saying about doing the ah the couple of months rehearsal getting the songs all alright just before we got the singer.

AC: Where do you rehearse then?

JM: My friend Terry ah he owns GT Super Bikes he's one of the co-owners.

AC: Where's that?

JM: It's down in Talbot Green. So he's got above his so he's got the work, ah the showroom here, he's got a little workshop, garage there and above the workshop, garage there's kind of office space and we use that, so we're very luck ah

AC: How often do you go down there then?

JM: Once a week

AC: And is it a set day then or..

KM: Normally a Thursday, a Monday or a Thursday [JM: Tomorrow [Monday] we're going down] tomorrow we're going down and we're only going down this week 'cause we got the gig on Saturday, he doesn't want to [inaudible] to close 'cause normally we do it on a Thursday but he's been, [in a quieter voice] he's being a bit of a poof with his voice [AC: He wants to rest his voice?]

JM: He's got one of those raspy voices right

KM: We did a gig two Saturday's in a row and we didn't have a rehearsal in-between those either and he was oh my voice is [inaudible]

JM: That's a muscle like anything else y'know what I mean, he's one of those guys that's come from ah like he writes his own stuff original, that's the type of stuff he's been doing, doing a fifty minute set in a pub with an acoustic right is different from doing an hour, an hour forty [inaudible]

KM: Derby which is two hours there [inaudible] straight through

JM: When you gotta headlining show up in Derby ah at a biker rally for about 1500 people like so y'know we're doing that um and that'll be good but y'know those shows are out there waiting for us because of the Devious connection, Devious aren't doing so much but Terry is the guy that gets the Devious gigs [AC: Ah so he can...] So basically what he does is, obviously if they don't want to do it, right I got a band that will, so we just go in. So the thing is when you got that opportunity you know you gotta be as good as that you gotta [KM: They trust Terry as well] yeah [KM: So they know when Terry turns round to them and says they're a really good band if you like Devious you'll like these [inaudible] then they know that they got [inaudible] they're gonna get what, yeah...

JM: And that, that always come down to interaction with the crowd and, I don't want to say showmanship but yeah, being polished you know what you're doing and then you gotta go and make them which is, that's a different job from being a musician in a band you gotta go out there and be an entertainer and that's, that's my, and that's what I do, I'm an entertainer that plays guitar rather than a musician. As a musician y'know that's, that's not what I do. I can play guitar, I'm okay at guitar, I'm good enough y'know to do what I need to do, y'know if they want to do an Yngwie Malmsteen cover ah I'm not gonna be able to do that boys y'know.

AC: I don't think there'll be much call for that [laughs]

JM: Y'know what I mean like but I'm saying no one's interested y'know

AC: I can't imagine anyone complaining if you didn't [laughs]

JM: Well yeah like y'know I do Sweet Child O Mine and I'm happy with that, that's a big, long guitar solo. We done Fleetwood Mac didn't we, Go Your Own Way, went down a storm, put a big Free Birdy guitar solo in that [KM: They absolutely loved that] that went down a treat] [inaudible] and again like I say we're working on stuff back there like backing vocals and things like that y'know, all this stuff it doesn't just happen, y'know it is it's behind the scenes [KM: Well it does with Lee he doesn't even pull the bloody mic out] aye sometimes with Lee aye, aye [inaudible] [KM: He will tomorrow 'cause we got a gig on Saturday so we wanna do something but otherwise he doesn't wanna]

JM: Oh sorry go on

AC: I was just going to ask have you got any individual roles ah like responsibilities like who books gigs and who deals with the finances and the promotion and that...

JM: Terry [laughter]

AC: Just all of it yeah?

JM: Terry, just to answer that, Terry [laughter] Terry's the contact, because he runs his own business, I used to do it all for Devious, it went on to Terry 'cause he runs his own business, he's the boss [55:20] he can pick the phone up, he's got the diary in front of him [inaudible] he can talk to people and stuff, pop a text out [inaudible] 20th of April? Aye.

AC: Have you got a kind of group chat?

JM: Yes we've got a group chat, we've got an online diary [KM: Yeah online diary] you book it off, y'know if you're going on holiday, if I, if we got to go away for a week in Spain in September we got till August, July to tell him. Now if you're off you put it in the diary now because the type of work we end up getting will be [inaudible]

KM: If we book off next Saturday and he gets a call he can go straight to the online diary and go [JM: Not available] and that way [KM: Jock and Katy not available next Saturday can't do it sorry, but if it's blank he'll go right let's just double check 'cause he won't take the no, nothing in there as] 'cause that's what happened to our singer, the singer is used to this [KM: He put it in the diary but didn't put it in his own personal one instead of the group one and then we tried to book a gig for last Saturday and he was like well I'm away but I put it in the diary] after saying yes he could do it [KM: Took a photo of it and then put it in and we were like that's your own personal diary.

AC: Explain a little bit more for this about this shared diary what is it, is it a...

KM: Like Google they call it like Google diary

AC: Ah so you've all got access like an open source sort of...

JM: No I haven't 'cause I'm a luddite [laughter]

KM: No, yeah he's the only one who's got a [inaudible] just links to your diary ah calendar on your smart phone and it just shows up and you put something in it and it'll just show up on everybody's diary then.

AC: And the other thing is WhatsApp yeah?

KM: WhatsApp, yeah

JM: Yeah we have a WhatsApp group [KM: Chat] another thing we done as well we didn't put out any promotional stuff out about the band until after our first show because it was a private party so we had right do you know Les Davies?

AC: Is he a photographer?

JM: Yes

AC: Yes

JM: Les came along and took photos, 'cause [?] was in the Thorns with Les anyway so him are good mates so he came up for the first half and took a few photos, 'cause basically what we want is, one of the things this band's about is punch, so the guitar solos aren't gonna last too long, I think there's gonna be one ballad and that'll be about it like y'know but the bands about [slaps his own fist] punch, it's about oh [mumbling] it's not about dragging the arse out of things that don't need the arse dragging out of, it's about [?] not hanging about but y'know so we kinda pick up-tempo songs, we don't do any kind of slow one's really apart from we do Every Rose Has it's Thorn, y'know the cheesy one you gotta have a cheesy one chucked in like.

AC: Get the lighters out for that one

JM: Get the lighters, or the phones now [inaudible] so all that type of thing. Um we got our cheesy one, um Little Help is the start of the encores like y'know 'cause it's a big song, we need to have that as a thing and then whatever but, um, so we wanted, when any information or press or any social y'know identity came up or anything y'know we wanted to be boomp it's not a oh got a band starting with me and a couple of mates [inaudible] we wanted boomp, so we got, we bought a banner with Phoenix written on the back of it, Terry had a drum head with Phoenix on it like y'know, aye yeah only put it up once but something, something y'know it's [inaudible] it's not even that, it was still learning about equipment because we've got a PA and Lee's got a PA and the singer's got a PA and it's all about linking each other's equipment in, so that's taking a bit of time and it's getting a bit slimmed down now 'cause we know what we're doing but again, that's another thing that a band never thinks about y'know, have you got a spare lead? Have you got a spare extension lead? Have you got fuses? Have you got the right fuses just in case one of them in the back of your amp goes? Y'know have you got spare this? Have you got spare that? Y'know if something goes down is there any member in your band be able to sort this out, like bridging speakers oh we'll have to come into this that way and do that blah, blah, blah. Y'know spend five minutes like, well a singer is chatting to the audience to get his stuff sorted out. You got a specific amount of time, y'know you got a specific amount of time to get there, set your gear up, have a bit of a sound check before bloody Bingo starts. All this stuff means that one you know where you're going to, so the online WhatsApp group will be something that [inaudible] I haven't played Coed Ely, no it wasn't Coed Ely it was um [inaudible] Pont, yeah Pont, something down Cwmbran, Pont something club down there alright whatever, showed up there like y'know but y'know the Bingo's on at half past eight like so you gotta get in there and you gotta get everything set up and you got a certain amount of time to do things, so you can't be fat arsing about, I'll have a pint I'll have a fag no you get in there you set your gear up as quickly as you bloody can get [inaudible] boom sound check, everything's working y'know have you plugged something in wrong y'know, all that type of stuff, it's a professional, the attitude you've gotta have is like a professional

thing y'know like I say we used to get, we, we the guy who got us the show in the north of England, ah he runs the stage for the [inaudible] Beer and Bikes thing up in ah, in ah, where is it, Builth Wells but they got their own crew they're all round the place, they do festivals all around the country and when y'know they really enjoyed us as a live kinda party band and said you are one of the best bands in the UK fantastic. He said the best thing about you, is you plug your gear in and you don't mess about you plug your gear in and you wait. You're not [imitates twiddling guitar sounds] you plug your gear in and you're ready and you, he said you just stand in front of your amps like that, right ready, waiting to say are you ready and then one, I'm sorting the drum kit out none of you were playing, right bass! [imitates repeated bass notes being played] is that all the sounds you got? Yeah that's it, right fantastic, guitar! Rhythm! [imitates guitar sound check] ah have you got a lead sound? Boomp yeah [guitar sounds] oh that's already set is it, yeah it's all set butt, oh fucking brilliant! So that's what they kinda liked about us so again this comes under preparation, it's not how good you are about being a musicians it's about how hard you work and how well you prepare [AC: Efficiency I suppose] efficiency is a part of it and that's where the, I found this thing's going exactly the same way 'cause you got the same people involved, the same people, whup, let's do that again you because the same mistake is happening all the, or we don't know where we are or y'know the structure hasn't been worked out on this one. Y'know it's [inaudible] for rehearsal always make sure every single song we're doing everyone's got a copy of it, right they can play, so if there are any issues, y'know every song I got, I got a set list on it, it's my playlist, every single song we do is in here [points to his phone], it comes to rehearsal every day and it, y'know turn your speaker on and put it on a microphone, right I see it's a double chorus alright no problem and things like that y'know it's about, for the type of band we are, a covers band, one y'know like I say you're an entertainer but you gotta, gotta know what you're doing and you gotta have um a professional ah attitude to it and being efficient and like I say it's just learning stuff parrot fashion, no one's interested in you actual musical ability, they're interested can you perform that song well, can you entertain, can you put a smile on my face? Can you make me go to the bar and stay rather than walk out the bloody door and that's ultimately what it's about and that's how you get a good reputation, and don't be a big head [AC: Okay] y'know

AC: Um one of the things to crop up in ah academic literature I've been looking at not that there's been anything written about Aberdare, apart from my paper which will be out this month, and I'll send you a copy [laughs] um, they say about the lack of resources, the lack of this and the lack of that because we're not in a city we're in a semi-rural area we almost overlooked and I was just wondering what your thoughts are about factors that make it difficult to make music in Aberdare or this kind of environment then?

JM: Um, the main thing is pubs will not speculate to accumulate. It's all down to the pubs, the Rhondda completely different story [AC: Is it?] Oof! Have you never been over the Rhondda? Oh right yeah sorry over the Rhondda um the clubs are still going, whereas now I think Cynon Valley Club is closing down [KM: Cynon Valley Club is closing down, the ah Band Club in Aberaman has closed down, it's been sold so God knows what's going to go there, none of them, none of them are putting the money into them to get a younger crowd in, so you got all the eighty and ninety year old people going to these clubs and they're not doing anything to get y'know younger people forties, our age forties and fifties to come in so they're still doing Penny Arcade and all that lot [AC: It's not sustainable] when they all

JM: Buggar off, die. When they die, that's the end of it [KM: There's no one to replace them and then you got the clubs] clubs won't, [KM: They won't pay] they won't pay [inaudible]

KM: They'll pay 200, 150 pound, 200 pound for a single artist but then won't pay 300, 350 pound for a band.

AC: Who says this? Is it particular pubs or just general?

JM: There's only one good, that's the White Lion KM: White Lion] but, but the main problem is people like my son's generation, not interested, that's the main problem, they're not interested alright so you're playing to people, thirty I dunno, clubs should be looking at thirty five and older as what do you want? Because maybe you're fed up with Mobassa bloody soul band or the [inaudible] as oh will this one upset the oldies, buggar the oldies. The clubs in the Rhondda have pushed their old-time dancing to a Sunday afternoon, why's that 'cause they're not making any money off that old buggar drinking Fanta for two and a half hours.

AC: How are they drawing the younger crowds in then?

JM: Put bands in they've actually talked to younger people. They've actually got rid of the ah the old secretary's and entertainment secs who wanna see Matt Monroe tribute act or whatever like that knowing full well it's not going, well it's never gonna draw a crowd y'know.

KM: The Butch in Mountain Ash, they've stopped bands [JM: They've stopped bands]

AC: Have they?

KM: They'll only have an artist now, because they haven't got the money now, because they were paying 200 pound for a band but they haven't got 200 pound 'cause they're not having enough people through the door to see the bands anymore so they'll only pay sixty, seventy pound for an artist.

AC: But surely over time that would accumulate...

JM: So what was I saying at the start, speculate to accumulate. If, if they were serious about it...

KM: There's no advertising either, I was out, I was looking, it's my birthday next week and I was, we're going out into Aberdare and I was trying to see what's going on in Aberdare, absolutely sod all apart from Jacs, the [inaudible] I don't know who they are but um, nothing else I was trying to find some rock, pop bands, 80s, 90s, rock covers band or something, no, absolutely nothing, so what do you do, I was looking at all the other places like Jacs and they all say the Crown in Merthyr will give you a list of events coming up and they advertise and you can see it there and everywhere and I thought oh I'll have a look to see what the Butchers have got on, just in case they might have something and they nothing, there's no telling me what's going on next week and I was looking back over their past and they put, they put a post-up a couple of days before the gig and I was like how are you going to get somebody, if I'm looking for a band and I can't find anything and [inaudible] organises it now a week and a half in advance I wanna know where I'm going to go next Friday, I want it all planned out where I'm going to go. If they don't post anything up until the day before it's too late then I've found something else, if they'd done that I would have gone. But clubs aren't they're not advertising [JM: Not in this valley] no.

JM: Because either they're thick alright or they ah totally incompetent at the job and I think, I think it's the latter, I mean [inaudible] we go over and play, we play a couple of clubs all around the Rhondda and I've played loads of clubs in the Rhondda, there's always something, there's always something going on y'know and it could happen very, do you remember the Rug Sunday at Tylorstown? End of the month, oh see this is the, right Tylorstown Rugby Club would have a band on 2 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the afternoon alright and that was on the hill going up to Pen Rhys right, over the top down to Pen Rhys, so you go down the hill by Pen Rhys turn right and about a couple of hundred years up the road was Ystrad Rhondda Rugby club now the same Sunday at 6 o'clock they'd have a band on. So people would come out at two o'clock right, they watch a band at four, a load of taxi's would show up, you'd have to be finished by six 'cause the taxi's would show up to drop them to the club 'cause there was a band starting at bloody 6 o'clock in Ystrad Rhondda and then half past eight in the New Inn, which was another quarter, half a mile up the road in ah Ton Pentre there'd be a band on in there from about half past eight till about half past ten y'know.

AC: Would they be networking with each other to make sure...

JM: Absolutely and this was before social media and stuff like that people just knew what was going on.

AC: Do they still do that now?

JM: No, they don't do it now, I don't know why. But the same guy who runs it Simon Wills[?] is doing the Soul Suite, you always know what's happening in the Soul Suite 'cause he's on this is what's happening in the Soul Suite, this is what's happening in the Soul Suite, the Soul Suite's always full now, it might be 75, 80% full but it's better than 20% full. The pubs in Aberdare, why is the Cynon Valley Club shut down 'cause all they're interested in is darts and the bloody racing right you're not getting anyone from the younger generation in there. Let me say that's a perfect example, I've been waiting for that club to die for about fifteen years, having gone in there and looked at the clientele and thought, no, this place is dead. Now upstairs, upstairs they got a nice big room, now if they had any sense about loyalty to their club and whatever like that and keeping it alive for future generations, they would have done something about it but they don't want to. So, they either don't want to, they don't want to listen to it so the future of the club will die in their hands right that's basically it and then the other ones are too tight to spend out, you're gonna lose money, expect to lose money for the next six weeks, two months you're gonna lose money but word will get around. Jacs was exactly the same, Jacs now is doing pretty well why's that 'cause they had the guts to say we're gonna lose money on this but in the long run we're gonna win [AC: It's persistence then?] It's persistence yeah [inaudible]

KM: The Soul Suite didn't even work I there did it [JM: No...] it only starting working again when it became Jacs...

JM: So y'know again if you, if you narrow your music venue you don't wanna see like Phoenix every night or every bloody weekend

KM: They're getting names in as well and..

JM: But that's it, those names cost money, y'know but that's what you've gotta do, you, you've gotta think as much as I'm paying the band, I can take that over the bar so I can pay the band and be in profit. So y'know you gotta have a think about your

prices, you gotta have a go and y'know see what actually [inaudible]. It's gotta be good otherwise people won't pay the money.

AC: Do you think though the perception of profit is something as well

JM: Of course it is

AC: Ah I spoke to other people in a different town over there and it's almost like they're making profit but it's not enough profit [JM: Yeah they try to squeeze the bands and stuff like that yeah] y'know is that something you've found round here or [JM: Um] and it's detrimental to the music [inaudible]

JM: Of course, it will 'cause you'll end up being a bunch of sixteen year old kids who don't really know what they're doing, doing stuff they like, their friends turn up and like y'know it's not gonna work.

KM: Somebody won't play an extra fifty quid, 'cause if you go down, obviously 'cause there's five of us in this band we'd all like to walk away with at least fifty quid so y'know we'd wanna go out for 250 quid and then they go on oh we only pay 200 [inaudible] for fifty pound you're gonna get a really, really good band.

JM: I had one woman come up to me in the High Corner down in Llanharan, we were playing a gig down there and we ah, she, she came up she owned a place down the road like and she'd come up to see us and things like that thought we were great alright. She's talking to Terry about it, how, how much? Ah for a Saturday, for a Sunday? Well y'know we were charging 550 on a Saturday night and she, we said when do you want us a Saturday night that'll cost you 550 quid, oh I only pay 250, can't have us then. Alright, and Terry said well that's it you can't afford us. Ah but my place is a venue I've had all bands come through there. Don't think we've ever played there love we done 84 shows last year so we don't, we don't need it. She came up I walked over and said alright Ter! You aye tell him that they have to come and play my venue, go and play her venue Ter! He said ask her how much she's paying. How much are you paying? Ah 250 quid tops, I [laughs] not happening then love is it. Well you should come and play my venue this Saturday night and I said to her I tell you what I done yesterday love I went down the Porsche garage do you know that one Stratstone on the way into Cardiff. I went in there and I said I want that 911 GT3 I want the dog's what's names and do you know what she said, she said, he said I want 80 thousand pounds for it, I said well I only got, I only got thirty and he said, do you know what he said to me, he said well you can't have it then [laughter] right and that was the end of it. Y'know if you're prepared to y'know there's plenty of bands that'll go out there for 250 quid great, good luck to you. If you're not prepared to stick to your guns and know your own worth, don't bother playing them, people don't know me in Aberdare 'cause I don't play in Aberdare.

AC: No you guys don't play Aberdare a lot

KM: I get it all the time

JM: Pain in the arse

KM: What band's that and he was in Devious [JM: That's the only reason] and they're like never heard of it. Ask over the Rhondda different story about Devious everyone knew Devious.

AC: Why, what y'know what are the reasons these people are digging their heels in and not paying...

JM: They're not paying 'cause they, Aberdare's not a great music, live music place. It's produced some great musicians. When Cripplecreek play in the Conwy how much did they charge for that? How much did the Conwy pay Cripplecreek, five of the best musicians you're ever likely to meet. How much are they getting paid? Peanuts! [AC: I have no idea?] Right, they'll probably clear 250 quid for a band that's that good alright. Right but that's basically it y'know I, I, who knows. Alright the fact of the matter is [KM: We can't go out for peanuts] well, it's not [inaudible] it's not so much that it's kind of don't play the places [inaudible] that's their fault, you got...

KM: They just want to play they're not interested, some of them, Carl, Carl doesn't work he makes his money from gigs.

JM: On the bigger point alright we're not just talking about Carl right. On the big picture alright no one in the good bands will come here because they don't pay enough, therefore there's less people going out. Why is there less people going out, 'cause they won't pay the big bands. Well I'm not gonna pay the big bands 'cause there's not enough people coming out, so I'll pay another band [AC: Vicious circle] it's ever decreasing circles is what it is because they're not prepared, none of the places round here are prepared, so you've lost all the clubs that stayed open in the Rhondda alright are still open 'cause they're prepared to spend the money, the people go there 'cause they know they're gonna get a good turn alright, and this is different all the time alright. That's why Cwmbach club in shut down, massive, big club huge stage [inaudible] went a couple of years ago we had [AC: That's a shame isn't it] hmm, who was there we had [KM: Spirit of Boogie] Spirit of Boogie [KM: The Spectrums] why is everybody calling it Spirit of THE Boogie? Spirit of Boogie that's what it's called. Right Spirit of Boogie, the [inaudible] and ah what they called Skacasm. three bands there the place was rammed, where's, where's the entertainment secretary going like this, we could have this every bloody week! Not once a month, not once every 6 months, when they wanted to raise awareness for Cwmaman festival. Cwmaman festival only lets original bands up there, who the hell do Cwmaman festival think they are?! They Glastonbury or something?

AC: Is that right no cover bands?

JM: Yeah, there's no cover bands up there

AC: Is that the reason you guys have never played there?

JM: We've never played there, Devious never played there [AC: And it's because of that?] It's because they don't have cover bands up there, and! they don't pay enough. We could go and play in a rugby club in the Rhondda and get y'know, we'll, we'll be getting 350 a gig, in we [asking KM]

KM: Yeah

JM: Oh having said that a couple of those shows have been, the minimum we go out for as a band now that's done five gigs, that came from nothing alright and hasn't been playing around for years we've got guys y'know as y'know we're getting 350 pound in big clubs off the bounce. Alright it's all to do with contacts and stuff like that but people trust us and they know what they're getting. Y'know four shows, first four shows not bad, you're coming back, you're coming back, you're coming back [inaudible]

KM: It's the first time we walked in, we walked in and I was carrying my keyboard and I bloke looked at us and went, same old, same old and then he was one of the ones congratulating us at the end, 'cause we weren't the same old, same old, he was eating his words at the end of the show but that's what you're getting in Aberdare and Mountain Ash is the same old, same old.

JM: Y'know there's a lot of, they're playing it safe, think having y'know a soul artist in ooh y'know that's like y'know that's 60 years ago [inaudible] is it [KM: That solo artist where we played um where was it, just before Christmas] oh yeah we played the Woodbine club [KM: it was only our second show] Ah yeah, no it was our third show 'cause we had Andy. Andy, Andy came in as a singer 'cause the singer, our singer was not used to being in this type of efficient environment ah 'cause he writes his own material and he's off on his dunno but anyway he's not as efficient as we are. He said I can do the gig, Terry said he can do the gig Saturday yes everything Saturday is fine. Terry confirms the booking, ten minutes later he rings up oh I forgot I, I'm away in London. Wah!! We can't cancel it 'cause this is how it works, you can't cancel that show this is our third gig we can't cancel a show, we haven't started yet. Y'know stuff like that gets around y'know so we, so we had to get another singer in, so the Thursday before the gig we were going through songs that the singer knew we hadn't even met him before Thursday, we're gigging on Saturday night.

AC: How did you get him in?

JM: Ter, Terry our drummer plays in another band with him, so he got him in. Well he does this stuff what do you do, what do you do, what do you do? Like cobble together a set of about twenty three songs, that's it, went out there, slayed it alright and the guy before us was playing, what's he doing Bobby Darron, thingy, y'know all the kind of big band type of stuff, youngster himself like y'know. Complete lack of interest like y'know [KM: No clapping] no clapping nothing, he went off to sound of his own feet like y'know. Complete, [inaudible] complete apathy.

AC: What was the crowd demographic then?

JM: Ah [AC: Generally, like] generally I'd say mid-fifties up right so he's playing, he's done his thing, he's gone oh I'll have a look at the crowd.

KM: It wasn't as full as they were saying

JM: Because they were away for something, Christmas thingy trips

KM: Christmas and new year

AC: Okay

JM: So anyway, he goes in and he does his thing and y'know he's done what we all do he's judged, he's looked at the crowd oh right I'll stick with the big band stuff b'here, not interested at all. So, we go on and I can tell you, like he's kinda looking a rock band's gonna die on its arse, but you start off with [sings the intro to One Vision] this is why One vision works alright because everything we do it's a tool to do it, not tools to do a song but tools to do a job. One Vision [sings a bit more of it] [AC: Gets people going don't it] So, what you do you stand on the stage [stands up and starts clapping] you start doing that [imitates the bass drum on the kit] boom, boom, boom, bass drum, clapping y'know and you got the crowd clapping and right and three of you haven't done anything yet [sings a bit more] but then you gotta be able to follow it up

to make, so third song in which is Teenage Kicks I go in the crowd and that's when I start looking at people, jumping on chairs playing guitar and showing off, being the guitar...God type of whatever, whatever you get out there y'know you show off, be a rock god, better, y'know whatever it is, that's entertaining that's what you're supposed to do and then all of a sudden then [inaudible] while you're doing that, boom, boom, boom, boom, you're back on stage then you hit them with, what is it? Ah 20th Century Boy [inaudible] and stuff like that. So this guys on it [inaudible] Wayyyyyy!!! Oh!!! JM: Is clapping loudly to imitate the guy listening to the gig] fantastic!!! and everyone's clapping and the guy's there like that, what's happened yuh?

KM: How did you do that?

JM: How did we do that? How did we do that?

KM: He's not seeing it he's...

JM: Yeah, y'know he's heard the crowd going [inaudible] and [inaudible]

KM: And he still comes off to the sound of his own feet

JM: Yeah, but the thing is y'know what you, what, y'know that thing I done with the wireless system get into the crowd, it works all the time, it's like, I, I, I dunno. It's like I don't really know what it is, it just works. But you got to have the confidence to believe in yourself that you are a rock God at that particular moment in time and I am going to entertain you and you're gonna believe 100% what I'm doing.

AC: Do you think though that it erases that boundary of them and us, audience and...

JM: Exactly does that, that's exactly what it does [inaudible] it fuses that we're all yuh for a good night. And if all you do is you go to work, there was a guitar player God! He was up his own arse but it was funny, I don't care, y'know I haven't got y'know I got an ego as a collective ego for what we can achieve as a band and it's fairly calculated y'know I know what to do b'here trust me 100% follow my lead 'cause I know what I'm doing. Right, so but, the end of it everyone has a good laugh at the end of it like, we have a bit of fun, they have a bit if fun, Oh great band, did you enjoy it, oh aye y'know. Excellent, excellent y'know come and see us, tell them don't tell me, tell them in the club that they can come back again y'know that's that what, we know what we're doing it's calculated in, in, and we got, we know we got an ego where we can go anywhere and do the same job, never played to a bad audience to be honest y'know when I'm allowed to do what I want to do which is be the kinda side man, say side man, yeah be the side man goes out in the crowd, right, it's never failed, never ever failed but you need the vehicle behind you and the support behind you of y'know four guys, three guys or whatever it 100% believe in what they're doing as well, so you don't look like some idiot that's just, so that, your attire everything about it sells it. One of the things, like you say we used to take a big PA y'know if I got y'know if I got time and stuff like that y'know. I got a double stack I'll bring that in, right or and that big PA that works as an ice breaker 'cause we're wheeling this stuff in and Jesus Christ! Who's this? Bloody Hell, Christ Almighty have you got smaller stuff? No butt, you'll enjoy this now y'know, y'know. Get your teeth in butt 'cause y'know we're gonna rattle them in your head for you after. Y'know you have a laugh, people are laughing they're seeing your stuff [inaudible] and it's completely different and set up it's a spectacle. All of a sudden you're in y'know and with One Vision you've got them over before you've even started like but that interaction just bringing the gear in with people that's important. Y'know to be a successful band you gotta, the crowd, it's like watching a comedian, yeah if you don't like the comedian he's off,

y'know I don't like, like Michael McIntyre I really don't like Michael McIntyre nothing he's ever done has ever made me laugh but the psychological thing if you don't like the person there's nothing he's gonna do that's gonna make me laugh anyway [AC: Yeah] y'know and it's exactly the same with bands, if you go in there with an attitude that you're better than or you're something special, no, you're one of the y'know, y'know exactly [inaudible] the Bingo caller y'know he's there to do a little bit of a job y'know [inaudible – the dog came in] that's, that's it and why it's not working in this area it's because people haven't got the belief, one they haven't got the venues [inaudible] Oh there you go Market Tavern. Market Tavern new year's day they had Tex and the Mushrooms in there the year before last, that place was rammed out the doors. Right, where's the business behind the thing, shit! I could do this every weekend. How much it cost me, four hundred quid for that band I wish I'd take over the bar in places like that, fucking [inaudible]

KM: Never had a band in there since!

JM: Never had a band in there since! What the hell is going on? If they, now you're got a licence to print money b'here, y'know it's three pound, it's three quid a pint alright, let's say it's three quid a pint, if I y'know, you get 100 people in there and they all buy a pint each, you've nearly paid the band off. Y'know if they had two pints each, you're in profit!

AC: And most likely people are going to have more than one drink d'y'know what I mean [inaudible]

KM: They're stupid and go and charge five pound entry fee [inaudible] I'm not paying five pound for a band I've never heard of. Why don't he charge a quid [JM: Don't charge!] But yeah [inaudible]

JM: Well who makes the decision on what to charge?

KM: If you wanna make that extra bit of money to pay the band

JM: Ahh!!! And there we come to the crux of it innit. I need that extra little bit of money. That's the whole point of it.

KM: I'd rather put my hand in my pocket for a pound than a fiver, I'm more likely to pay a pound to go in and see a band than I am a fiver [inaudible]

AC: A donation almost...[KM/JM: Yeah!]

KM: A quid's like oh I don't mind paying a quid, it's just okay...

AC: Or buy one drink?

JM: But, but why bother with that. Y'know why bother 'cause in the great scheme of things that's 100 pound neither here nor there is it. If he gets 100 people in a pub that's 100 pound [inaudible] and if they all buy two pints that 200 pound [inaudible] the chances are they're gonna stay for another pint if the band's any good and for 400 quid there'll be a decent band. Alright so if 100 people come in they buy two pints each, your band is covered and your staff is covered for the night, that's you sorted everything else then you're on gravy. Right, it's that it is. How much you charge 400 pound! I'm not paying 400 pound for a band. Well alright then butt well you won't be counting the takings after [AC: Okay] Y'know, and, if that band's good people who go and see bands will say a cracking band on, and you'll get a bigger

crowd. The third time you're there it'll be I dunno the fourth time they won't get any more people in there. Then that's, then that's down to you, alright, first you gotta go and show you gotta, you gotta be good enough to take, it's like anything else, if you're given an opportunity you need to be prepared to take that opportunity y'know. If you're a footballer and a striker gets injured and you're the striker on this thing you gotta go on, that's an opportunity, that's luck, bad luck for someone else but good luck for you but you gotta be mentally, physically prepared to take hold of that thing when it lands in your lap [AC: Okay] y'know.

AC: And we've covered quite a lot of ground here. Is there anything else you can think of to add anything about um, round here specifically?

JM: Round, well round, round here is dead y'know the White Lion y'know, the White Lion will have a band on [inaudible] yeah, here, here's what used to happen to follow Rug Sunday they done in Aberdare was Rug Sunday. Aberdare would have the Rugby Club, 2 o'clock there'd be a band, there'd be a band in the Pickled Pepper at four and then the White Lion at six or something like that alright and for some reason they stopped doing that. Now, one of the reasons they stopped doing that was 'cause the Pickled Pepper and the White Lion put bands on the same time, rather than ringing up between each other and thinking we can all, there's money to be made, we can all cash in on this. Rather than splitting the audience they [KM: There's half an hour before the others so you find they go to one pub and then they go, then they [inaudible] quite quickly, obviously the one's in town so it's easier.

JM: But, but y'know if there was a conversation between, let's have one here this at time and then one two and a half hours later at half time we could all earn y'know, y'know. That, that's basically it, I don't think there's any real call for it, um, because the younger generation, kids in their twenties aren't interested in bands. Some of the last shows I done with Devious were um, like I said to you, they're, we'd be on stage there'd be a few people in b'there y'know or whatever you'd have a decent crowd there. All the youngsters would be down the back on their phones and not completely, disinterested in what was going on 'cause it's not their thing. Y'know they, Beyonce's great, Taylor Swift is fantastic and club music is fantastic y'know and all of that stuff's great. A little rock band they're not interested that's yesterday's news it's like, so y'know I can see it kind of coming to an end where kind of y'know, we kind of the middle of, how can I put it how we are that kind of ah popular guitar pop rock covers band, will get to a point y'know when was the last time a great guitar song came out...d'y'know what I mean [AC: I'm trying to think?] you're trying to think, yeah exactly, something that's not an acoustic guitar with some moany git behind it right which is not inspiring at all to anyone, Ed Sheeran and James Bay and James Blunt and all these, Jack Bud and all these oh they're fantastic singers, no they're not they're boring arseholes, that's what they are they're boring the pants, y'know strum, strum, strum, strum let's paint the town beige, that's what they are boring the pants off people but I'll get a load of tattoos now and I'll look like I'm in fucking Slayer. No. Then sing about y'know being still in love when you're seventy two, y'know bollocks to that y'know if you're twenty four years old we don't want to hear that. Go and put a Motley Crue record on, people watching the Motley Crue Dirt, oh that's what being in a rock n roll band is all about! Chicks and getting drunk and getting off your head on drugs and smashing guitars up and fighting the audience! That! Yes! More of that less of Ed Sheeran, that's what it is it's boring. Y'know the music, the guitar music that's coming out now is boring or it's [does an impressions of a death metal singer] there's not that middle ground where it catches people, there's no, y'know when's the last time Pour Some Sugar On Me, a new Pour Some Sugar On Me, a new Crazy Nights, a new Slippery When Wet came out. Y'know Aerosmith, y'know even Aerosmith are doing, like I said last, big thing they had was that bloody, fucking, poxy,

balladdy thing on Armageddon y'know [AC: That's it] y'know what I mean since then, like Guns n Roses what have they done, nothing. Y'know what I mean they got too big of themselves and just shot the whole thing in the foot like y'know. Y'know that's what happened. Nirvana killed all the rock bands by being boring and then he killed himself, well that was great thanks for that little experiment. Brilliant, well you left everyone not giving a toss about guitar, where're they now oh they're down in Nashville doing studio work for bloody country music, fantastic. And that's what happened, wipe the arse out of it and it hasn't really come back and to play guitar y'know you gotta be covered in tattoos, have all sorts of shit on your face and it doesn't really attract the middle ground, it doesn't attract the girls who chuck their handbags in front and dance round them, they're not interested in that. Bon Jovi great, love Bon Jovi and Bryan Adams, like Queen where's that like clever rock music that appealed to the masses gone? It's gone to the extreme [inaudible] err just gone y'know that pop punk stuff y'know, y'know, y'know so America got about Green Day and Blink 182 and we got Busted and McFly. That's another thing Brits are just so fickle y'know they are really, really, really fickle like y'know. When was the last great rock band to come out, the Foo Fighters have been out about twenty years [AC: Yeah, true] people are now trying to tell you Coldplay are fantastic, boring y'know [makes a noise like shivers] y'know U2 to me I just find them dreary boring rubbish. Y'know Coldplay is the new U2, oh you're absolutely fucking right about that [laughter] new boring dreary rubbish no one wants to listen to. There's nothing about it that makes you wanna feel like, I dunno? I love Kiss. Why, why do we love Kiss because they're up there, we're bigger, we're larger than life and we're not afraid to say yeah it's about rock n roll, it's about girls, what's wrong with that for a young man, nothing wrong with that at all, don't treat them shabby but that's what it's about. Y'know you can have a couple of beers y'know, hey! Brilliant! What's wrong with that? Y'know good looking girls meeting good looking guys having a great time, Fantastic! What's wrong with that?

AC: Do you wanna add anything to that Katy?

KM: [Inaudible, joking about what was said KM and JM are talking over each other and laughing too]

JM: The thing is as a musician I wouldn't say I'm a musician I'm a guy who plays guitar to entertain. I made that distinction long ago. I know what I need to know to go and do my job as an entertainer and my vehicle y'know for that is music. I'm a decent guitar player, I'm no great shakes but I know how to entertain. Y'know and that's what people want, entertainment. If they wanna go and see a band, unless you're in a specifically kind of, um, how can I put it, a specific place for a specific type of music, like a specific originals place, or a specific, like the Patriot places like that y'know. Y'know specific, absolutely specific for what they're doing, y'know which is great 'cause you know where to go if you want that type of thing. But for the overall general sort of public, the youngsters aren't interested ah right, the youngsters round here aren't interested, the places around here aren't interested in spending the money and that's why it's not happening y'know. Even with the Aberdare, say like the road races in Aberdare, perfect example could set a few marquees up there and put some rock bands up there. Will they do it, no 'cause they got noise complaints from bloody ah Trecynon ah y'know motorbikes going, you're in the middle of a park, you can, y'know you can be half a mile away from these houses, are they gonna complain then 'cause [makes low sounding noise] oh they might do yeah, they might do but it's for two days in the bloody year [inaudible] [AC: You've got the noise from the bikes anyway?] Y'know, you can't do it while the motorbikes are on but y'know where's the thinking [inaudible] the people now have travelled from all round the country, you got a load of guys up there okay, parked up in a paddock alright with the racers the team

bikes and all the thing like that, put some entertainment on for them in the park, how hard would that be [inaudible] in the afternoon so those bloody ah Jagger and Woody things and stuff like that they put up, they have a fun stage [Opi?] does the bloody stage for them, it's like bloody Donnington, what's wrong for using that for bands in the night. Do the same thing that's why, y'know they could have done it with a carnival y'know when the carnival was big they could have done that. I was there they were having meetings with them for years with the Cancer Trust thing, oh well you got jazz bands up there. Jazz bands! [Does an impression of a trumpet, taking the rise out of jazz music] Yeah, really? Y'know this, it has its place but its place was in the sunshine in the afternoon with all the kids and they could have gone then and you could have opened something up and there's entertainment for the adults or something like that y'know. [AC: Okay] That's my take on it alright, this area could do a lot it's got a perfect, Monmouth does a fantastic thing [KM: Oh god] I'm serious Monmouth puts on the biggest free festival in Europe alright they put it in the car park, they put a big stage up, they put a big screen up there, in the car park they've got a bar they got a burger van they got Spud u Like y'know, vegan sausage rolls whatever the hell you want and it's free and they put two acts on. We played that, fantastic they film it and put it on a big screen [inaudible] and every night for a week. Aberdare's got a massive well like y'know, Aberdare's got the room to do it [AC: Okay..] right they could take a field in the summer alright, down the bottom of the Ynys, on the flat you could build y'know you could do it all. You could absolutely do it all. Can you imagine, just imagine now Stereophonics now wanted to play the Ynys. How many people could they get in for that, fifty, sixty thousand people [inaudible] [AC: You'd get a lot of people] course you bloody could. Is there any ambition here to do it. Is any, is anyone on the council gonna make a deal and say we can do something y'know, we can do something, even if it's just a car park y'know. Find somewhere, Aberdare park's absolutely perfect. Where they do it for the kids fun time thing y'know you're not asking for anything else, all the, all the big ground work is done, bring your back line boys and drum kit y'know and we could have it as a festival, we could have it in the night and y'know the town could attract people in 'cause the town's dying, we're taxi drivers, they shut Pound stretchers the town's dying [AC: Yeah, true] y'know what I mean, so that, that all of this is, Aberdare is dying the Rhondda's still alive 'cause it's working hard at keeping it alive, live music or whatever you go to Treorchy in the town [inaudible] the people up and down walking and shopping and stuff like that [KM: High street of the year! In Great Britain] [AC: Yeah] I told you, I told you this you go to Treorchy, the Rhondda's a different place like y'know, 'cause it's so inaccessible they gotta make things work in their own place. Aberdare it doesn't care, it's given up, that's what I see, they're not interested, they're not interested in live music at all, apart from their own little geeky, little things like that of pissant bands that no one cares about, in my opinion. Spectrums are a great band they should be going out for more money. Y'know he's Lewis 's [Aaron Lewis] got his Adam and the Ants thing now and that's going up in London, go and earn the money butt. They never earned the money like that until Devious offered them spots at the gig we were playing in front of, ah the three counties got a New Malvern, Fireroad, went up there. Fireroad we took them up there alright gave them decent money. Ah Spectrums went up there, decent money alright, they never earned as much, they weren't earning half of what we were earning but they earnt fucking three or it would have to be for travelling all that way we'd after charge you oh 300 pound, are you fucking serious, is that all, ah yeah no problem 300 pound I'll give it to you. Fireroad were the same, ah Skacasm were the same y'know, we, we took a thousand pound from that gig y'know and people didn't know who we were from Aberdare. They knew me about 'cause y'know long hair Jock ah we know him like, I don't know what he does, says he's in a band I've never bloody seen them [laughter] right, and then they come up and they're like that, y'know even Carl Harvey [inaudible] Carl Harvey came and played with Devious once up in Bristol for an ah he

got 200 quid out of that gig ah no 150 quid 'cause I, we ah oh I can't remember it was either St. Patrick's night or Boxing night or Boxing night right, he done three shows with Devious, never earnt so much money off three gigs in his life alright and he'd never seen a show like it and then Paul, the bass player couldn't make one so we had Paul come in as the bass player and Paul was saying oh I'm not sure and he [Carl] said you gotta go and do a Devious show butt he said it's like a Queen show, he said they got smoke they got the lights, fireworks the bloody lot, lasers [AC: Great] y'know and you earn a load of and earn a wedge of cash, that's five guys from the valleys [AC: I'm gonna stop the recording here] believed in what they were doing and were 100% going for it right [AC: I'm gonna stop the recording laughs only 'cause I gotta transcribe this laughs]

Interview with Mike Thomas, 11-05-2019, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 3 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

MT – Mike Thomas, Participant

AC: Hi Mike.

MT: How's it going, alright?

AC: Okay, so just a couple of general questions first, um, just say whatever comes into your head like I said, there's no right or wrong answer.

MT: That's fine no problem.

AC: What music do you like?

MT: Err well, like as an avid music fan it's hard to pin down my exact genre of music I like. But I'm a big fan of everything really. I grew up listening to punk and rock and developed into electronic music. I like some rap then and I like a lot of um modern rock music, so a bit of everything really.

AC: What are you listening to right now?

MT: At the moment I'm listening to a band called the Towers of London, a rock band, and another band called [hesitates] who am I listening to at the moment? Honestly, there's so much stuff I'm listening to it's hard to keep up, um.

AC: Is it a particular genre of music at the moment?

MT: Electronic music normally but it's not, it's like electronic rock I would say, so bands like the Postal Service and... it's a hard question [laughs] I can't remember how many artists I listened to this week y'know. But I've listened to Art Brut and We Are Scientists, ah The Police, a bit of everything really.

AC: And what music do you play then?

MT: So, I'm in two bands, I play in a covers band, I do mainly eighties electronic covers, so that's things like um, Devo, Sparks, Depeche Mode, Culture Club, and then in my own original band, Head Noise, I play electronic rock then, it's a mix between dance music and punk music then.

AC: What's the instrumentation used...?

MT: Okay, so in The Spectrums I'm the singer and in Head Noise I play keytar and drum machine, as well as singing [laughs].

AC: Okay, and how did you get into music-making?

MT: So, I grew up in a musical family, but I couldn't honestly say I was a big fan of the same music my parents were into. My mother used to sing when she was younger, doing, singing like Neil Diamond around the clubs, things like that, and my father was singing like ah rock songs around the clubs, and they were both musically inclined.

AC: Were they doing that together then?

MT: Oh no separately so yeah, they did over different period of time through the years, but I, but I started veering towards my Dad's musical taste, he was into bands like Franz Ferdinand and Pulp and the Who. I started picking bits of music I enjoyed from what he liked then. And I grew up getting into music through bands like Monty Python doing their songs and.. so I started with comedy really, Spike Jones and Spike Milligan, doing their songs and it slowly got me into the creative side of music then as well.

- AC: Okay, that's interesting, and how long was your mum and dad doing the music thing, was that their main thing or was it a hobby on side or...?
- MT: It was kinda a side job for both of them so, ever since I was about three years old I remember them singing round the clubs and things. I used to go there as well when I was older, that's what got me into bands like the Human League then, they'd be covering songs by them. I never saw my dad sadly, but I knew he did it for about five or six years in the past.
- AC: Okay, okay, um, so your own music-making, so you kind, you were saying that the early inspiration were your parents and what they were doing. Who else was involved in the stuff you wanted to do, when you felt like you wanted to start a band?
- MT: Okay, so um, when I was growing up and started getting into music, I first started to learn to play the drums, ah, there was a rock school project up in Aberdare Coliseum. So, I was about fifteen, sixteen years old maybe? That's the first time I've ever been in a band y'know, with a group of people so, we joined the rock school and they put us into teams of people then, so like luckily, I knew all the people I was in a team with they were all people I'd know in school or known locally. So we started our first band called Viva von Schnapps and it was all 3-chord punk and it was simple music but it was good because we got together to make music as friends, we were quite young and all new to it.
- AC: How old was you at the time?
- MT: So, I was about fifteen, sixteen then, same as the other members of the band. Another time I was with my partner who played guitar, my friend Rhys from school then who could play guitar as well then. We met a bassist called Adam Jenkins, and we started making music together through that and then it developed into bands the older we got then.
- AC: How did you find out about the rock school thing?
- MT: From what I remember there was like an advertisement, in, either in the Aberdare Leader at the time or something directly in the Coliseum. There was like a three day music course being advertised, you come along, you learn to play instruments, you learn to play a couple of songs then and then you perform them then and it's all original music which I thought was quite important 'cause no one was playing any cover music it was all stuff you created yourself then.
- AC: So that was like ah, would you say that changed your opinion about going?
- MT: Oh, definitely yeah, so um, at the time I was more interested, I was really into punk music, like the Pistols, Dead Kennedy's. I thought it was a kinda punk thing to do, throw a band together last minute with your friends, and see what it turns out like, it came out really well, we were happy with it. I think um my friends parents taped the gig, and I look back on it today now and that's about, how many years? twelve, thirteen years later and it still has a great impact on me y'know, gives you that confidence to perform I thought.
- AC: So when you see that back again, like y'know a lot of people would be like oh my god y'know...
- MT: I thought it was inspiring really. Don't get me wrong we weren't the best, but we had fun with it, it was all about performance for us because I wore a fake French

moustache and we put a dress on my friend y'know so I think it was a visual element as well as the music which is great [laughs].

AC: That's cool, was you sort of aiming to go somewhere with that or was you just having a laugh and see where it goes?

MT: Pretty much yeah, like um, when I first started doing it, it was um a case of trying out something new and seeing what it went like and I got hooked from there onwards and I always wanted to be in bands, I wanted to be an entertainer really, 'cause I think a lot of musicians now forget there's an entertainment aspect to the music they're making. Like I've said countless times, I've gone to see bands perform live and I think I've been bored, they could be amazing musicians but like I really enjoy the aspect of like people performing as well as making music, and I've kinda picked up that myself then and put that into my own music then.

AC: Where do you think that element of you wanting to put the perform aspect in, where did that come from? Was it school or..?

MT: I think it came from, when I was younger I wanted to be a comedian more than anything I wanted to be in like sketch shows and y'know comedy troupes and things and I started doing that for a while but then, with music 'cause the attitude of the Sex Pistols and seeing Adam Ant dressed up so whackily and these characters just inject into the music, I got really inspired then, I wanted to do it myself.

AC: Um, so, I want to know a little about your musical practices. What I mean by that is um how and who else is involved and where you write, rehearse, perform...

MT: Okay, so, we're very lucky at the moment to have Jac's music venue in Aberdare for us because, I help out a lot with them for promotion and other things, along, y'know like setting up shows, helping them running the nights, so in return then I get to use the place for a practice area for the band then. So, Head Noise it's ideal 'cause we don't have a drummer you can turn the music right down you can hear each other properly. I suffer really badly from tinnitus and hyperacusis, so having the music at a low level's great, it helps me hear the music basically when we're creating it. But I think people around me like my friends have been really influential in the music we've been making, 'cause I met Warren Bassett, who plays guitar with Head Noise now through mutual friends and listened to the same music over the years, picking up um, y'know knowing people who're into the same music as you gives you a lot more to talk about and it can help you collaborate together to make music.

AC: How did you bump into these people and...?

MT: You'd see them on nights out and you'd see them at gigs, gigs mainly.

AC: Mainly gigs?

MT: Y'know, it could be on Facebook as well just talking about music and you've got them as a friend which you've added because of mutual friends. Say you put up a Radiohead song and they say, 'oh I like this' and then you get talking about Radiohead and it kinda goes out to other types of music then and you get to know more about each other. Like that's how you make your friends really as well, through your musical taste. For me definitely all the friends I've made over the years has been through gigs or listening to music.

AC: Okay, and when you say you're um, with Jac's now, you're setting up stuff and helping with promotion. What exactly does that entail?

MT: Okay, so, Jac's music venue used to be a venue called Elliot's bar and it shut down. I used to promote and put on small shows there, but since Jac's has been re-opened with a new manager and owner I wanted to get more involved with the venue then so, at the time we started throwing around ideas to the owner about booking big bands like Space and Electric Six, and Neil Innes, John Otway. So, I put a team together at the time called Blowout, we used to put a lot of shows on locally around Aberdare but when we went to Jac's then we managed to get more interest to people and, 'cause it was a really good venue on our doorstep, one of the best in south Wales in my opinion, I thought it was like a place to push new events and big events and, 'cause the venue can keep up to 200, 300 people, there's the perfect place to try and book big American acts like Electric Six, so the people, including myself got together then.

AC: Who else was involved in that?

MT: So that was Christian Lewis, he lives in Bristol now, he's from Aberdare originally, and we had a couple of people helping on the side like Jordan Brill and Warren Baker again but it was between me and Christian Lewis promoting in, well he was promoting from Bristol, I was promoting in Aberdare, we were collaborating together to put big shows on in Aberdare and was um, we had a couple of good shows but they fizzled out over time. At the moment I've been helping put on original shows in Jac's every Friday and Sunday, so I get personally involved then by booking bands that I think will be suitable for the night and any tickets they sell keep all the money for them, help them promote their own shows.

AC: So, what were the reasons for the Blowout thing fizzling out you said?

MT: Ah, it's just, I think the problem with like a local music scene is there's only so much you can do over a small period of time. Because there were two of us working together to do it we had a bigger team to hand out flyers and promote online, the problem is nowadays is to get a lot of online presence you gotta pay for the privilege, so Facebook and sponsored posts and things like that. It's difficult then 'cause the more money you spend the less you have then to pay the big acts which are selling tickets for. But, um, I think we wanted to bring Blowout back at some point keep but on a smaller scale. 'Cause we were really proud of what we done over a small period of time but it can get quite disheartening then when some shows are quiet and you're bringing big bands down and you don't get a good reaction, it kinda sucks doing it. But then on the really big shows and there's loads of people there having fun gives you the drive to put on more then.

AC: Do you or any of the team get um financial incentive for doing this or is it purely for practice space?

MT: No, there's no financial, or gain we really want from it, it's just we are happy and proud to be part of the Aberdare music scene 'cause of the history, and we just want to see people y'know coming out and enjoying themselves. When we were growing up we didn't have the same sort of experiences as the people we know who were in bands in the nineties they'd have busy gigs and you see these old photos, it looked fun and then when we finally get to play in a band locally there'd be about like seven or eight people in the audience. We thought if we put enough effort and grit into it, we can get enough people to come and support these other shows and give new bands a chance, chances that we never had when we were out gigging in the early days.

- AC: Do you think um, saying about in the nineties in the wake of the Stereophonics and, would you say that musicians had it easier than you did?
- MT: I think personally the internet has spoilt people's musical, wanting to go out and watch bands because we can be way more specific nowadays because before the internet you'd phone your friend and say 'there's a band on' they wouldn't ask what genre is it, what style of music, yeah there's a band let's go out and watch the band and the room would be full of people then. They might not be into the type of music, but they might enjoy it and have a good time. But nowadays you can pinpoint what you want to see and listen to. Say I wanted to watch ah, I dunno, an upside-down electronic folk surf band from Japan in Cardiff, you can search for it, you can find it, you can go see it. It wouldn't be, there's a band playing down the road tonight, want to come out? So I think it's way more specific nowadays, you know what you want and you know where to get it I find. There's so much opportunity to see what you like, and it's advertised everywhere constantly y'know.
- AC: Are you kind saying that it's diluting everything?
- MT: Without sounding brash, I'd say y'know it's hard to shine through the shit so to speak. There's like, for every like five good shows there's 100 bad shows and it could be... for any reason really maybe you don't like the genre of music or some of the bands playing only have a short set and they haven't like, they might be bringing a lot of their family out to support them, or they might not be a very good band. I've seen hundreds of good bands over the years play to nobody and then really bad bands play to a big crowd because they know more people. It's difficult, you can never gauge it I find. 'Cause it's nice to take a punt sometimes to see how it turns out on the night. For example, I had a problem tonight in Aberdare, I booked a Pixies tribute band, we only sold three tickets in advance and the band are coming from Manchester so I thought it would be a good idea to cancel it to save them the embarrassment of playing to a small crowd and nobody making any financial gain from the, that's the end of it then. I was really surprised because I know everyone in Aberdare loves the Pixies. But another issue is that the Pixies announced their tour in Cardiff in a couple of months' time, so when there's a living artist playing and you have a cover band playing a couple of months before, who would you rather go see y'know. It's just down the road [laughs].
- AC: Um, let's get back to the..
- MT: [laughs] yeah that's fine.
- AC: Rehearsals and live performances and Jac's is one place that...
- MT: Ah, the good thing about Jac's is they help out a lot of local acts but I think from Jac's perspective it's like, you play for us, well err, you practice with us you play for us sometimes which I think is fair, 'cause if you're getting free practice time then they can y'know reap their rewards by playing a show at Jac's and it's nice to see a venue go from strength to strength 'cause they want to support the local music scene as well, but it's difficult then because sometimes the bands don't want to play Jac's 'cause they might be playing there too often then. It's, it's complicated really but, there was a recent tribute band to Rage Against the Machine who practiced in Jac's for about 6 months and they played their first gig there for a reduced fee on the basis they had free practice and it worked out great for everybody then, the venue had a really great night, the band they took a small amount of money home but they were happy because they had the free practice and had a really good show then.

AC: So it's more of a kind, of a...

MT: Helping each other out I'd say

AC: Favours?

MT: Y'know I think like, I've been making music in Aberdare for years and this is the only time I've seen in Aberdare where a venue wants to get actively involved with the musicians.

AC: Why do think that is now and wasn't the case before?

MT: Well, obviously it's down to making money but, I think that the staff there are part of it as well y'know. They're friendly, they want to get to know the people and they want to see the longevity of the venue because y'know, youngsters have no places to play, venues locally because, it's difficult on the weekend because Friday, Saturday nights that's when people go out and get drunk and If you're in a band about fourteen, fifteen years old you don't want play, but places like Jac's gives you the opportunity on a Sunday then in the afternoon for bands to play. But, as they get older then maybe they can play a Friday or Saturday night y'know they'll get better in time so, y'know it's kinda part in parcel balance, balance is the word.

AC: So, I'm trying to think of questions...

MT: No, it's fine, to be honest I've got too much to say on the subject [laughs].

AC: Um, so when you're rehearsing with, ah, let's stick with Head Noise for now, that's original music isn't it? Where does the writing take place?

MT: Okay, so, we've got a very specific way of writing music with Head Noise. Over the weeks, over the recent year now we've had a bit more successes because we played with some bands like Public Service Broadcasting and Wolf Alice and it's all been done DIY by ourselves which I think is great, it's been fun y'know it's been a nice experience. But, we had a bit of a shake up with the band but the current line-up is three members where one member writes the main bulk of the music so that's the drums, the electronics and the guitar, the second member myself then adds the extra keyboard bits then, any ideas I have collaboration ideas and the vocal, lyrics for myself, and then there's the third member Jordan Brill then who comes in and tightens it all, helps us do the music live really well and then he also adds his own little bits and his own quirks. I think um, one thing with the band is we don't have, we don't need a large area to practice in so we can write music in our bedrooms in the house, so we can send it via Dropbox on the internet. It's very digital and technical and modern, but It works quite well for us then because we can practice in the house and sometimes we don't even need to practice before a gig 'cause if we practice alone we can bring it all together then in the live arena because it's the same principles the idea was playing to a backing track with the drum machines.

AC: Was that a conscious decision then not to have a drummer or did it just turn out that way?

MT: Okay, um, I've always wanted to try a drum machine in a band and our first gig was in the 2016 where we played for an art exhibition and I thought it would be great to just have a kinda simplistic 4/4 drumbeat, like bands like The Fall in the early days things like that, and we could jam over the top of it y'know, thinking like Pink

Floydish, early experimental music I thought would be interesting to try. And then, after a time then as the music started getting more expansive bigger sounding I didn't want to lose that quirk, I thought it was interesting to keep that with the band 'cause it was kinda our identity then. I think a live drummer might ruin that sound and um, how, the way we're perceived, because we're a three-piece with a drum machine behind us, but I think if we had a drummer, we might lose the edge.

AC: Okay

MT: 'Cause you can change the sound of the drums and, it doesn't have as much power so we can play in back rooms of pubs and in cafes and things and I think it gives us more scope then to be ah artistically creative in small environments as well as the big venues.

AC: Okay, can I just nip back and talk about Jac's at the moment?

MT: Yeah, yeah.

AC: Who um, who're the people you think are key that work there, you were saying they're passionate about the music scene. Could you isolate a few individuals that are key.

MT: Okay, so when I first went to Jac's, I met with Paul Taylor the manager and he knew I was a local promoter and frontman and he pulled me over one day and he said 'oh come sit with me, I want to have a talk with you' and I said why's that y'know, knowing in the back of my head I'm a promoter he wants to get me involved but he sat down with me, I was with Christian at the time, the Blowout member, and he said 'look, I've taken on this venue I just wanna see the place, I want to see some great bands here, any of these you got send them my way, don't worry about costs, if it was a big band, if it's a small band send them my way and we'll talk about it'. So we were a bit over excited then thinking about bands like Electric 6 and Space and then little did we know a year later both the bands came to Aberdare and then there's the current manager Gavin Wagstaff then, he's so passionate about the people there, he's into, he likes the music, he speaks to the bands and gets involved, he has a laugh with it y'know it's about making a relationship with these people and if you look at the reviews on the Jac's page people are saying lovely staff and that, they know us because they're dedicated to the music as well, 'cause I know Paul is a huge fan of The Jam, mod and ska weekends and things, he puts them on all the time, and then Gavin himself seems to like Slipknot, alternative rock bands. When you come Aberdare then it's nice 'cause you see the staff dancing and enjoying themselves. Even the bar staff enjoy the music and that's why they want to work at Jac's and it's nice to be in the background as well as a punter and promoter, just watching people enjoy themselves. It's empowering really, it's nice to see it.

AC: So, do you think these people are um crucial to, vital cogs in Aberdare's music scene?

MT: I think so yes, well, I've played the pubs and they've put bands on in the past and you can tell that they got dollar signs in their eyes y'know, I understand that y'know I, I, if you're running a business that's what it's about and things like that, so it fine, it's nice to have a dedicated live music venue in Aberdare, we've never had that before. Maybe back in the 90's y'know the Black Lion that used to put on bands and that. I feel Jac's is specifically aimed towards music fans because there's something on Friday, Saturday, Sunday gearing towards different people. I feel like, feel like I'm advertising the place now [laughs] but it, it y'know it's nice to, there's something

happening all the time, people come from Scotland and people have come as far as Sweden in the past to see shows in Jac's and I'm proud to be part of that little clique who help make that happen really.

AC: Do you think by doing things constantly that possibly is why Jac's is surviving and it didn't survive like for the Black Lion and Elliot's, were they too sporadic or not specific on music?

MT: Well I find, I find Aberdare's quite a tough place to crack sometimes in terms of music because, like I'm a huge music fan, I'll happily go out Friday, Saturday and Sunday and watch bands, I've hearing problems but it wouldn't bother me 'cause I'd get to see the, get involved but, I know the general consensus of people want to go out to see something they particularly enjoy. So, for example if there's a King's of Leon tribute band out on Saturday night people will go to Jac's to see that the majority of people from Aberdare will see that 'cause they like Kings of Leon. But if you book, oh I dunno ah, a math rock band from Helsinki on a Friday night you're gonna get less people there, 'cause people in Aberdare are closed minded I find sometimes. Well, you need to compare Aberdare to a city like Cardiff, there are more people in Cardiff so that means there's more people into music, so more people are gonna like Helsinki math rock than in Aberdare. People are hard to fathom sometimes, I find people in Cardiff find people in Aberdare, 'cause it's a valleys town, they look at it as a dangerous place, they don't wanna travel up, not all the time. Some people have said that to me in the past, they'll say, I think it's ridiculous 'cause I've met a lot nicer more relaxed people in Aberdare than I ever have in Cardiff from my experience in music venues, People are more open up here anyway. But um, y'know I think um, it's nice to have things on all the time, which is important and great, which I'm glad Jac's does, one night will be quiet and the night after might be busy so it balances itself out then. There's always something on so people can say, I know, there's something on in Jac's tonight, they can check the website and if they want to be specific they can check the bands out playing or they can just turn up and enjoy live music for what it is when they get up there.

AC: Is there anywhere else in Aberdare where you perform in?

MT: Okay, so, in Aberdare there is but, it's not as frequent as Jac's for example. So over the years I've played in the Con Club in Aberdare, so big tribute bands or cover band events but they've always been really good, great venue, fun night. The Cambrian in Aberdare used to put bands and singers on, it was small, a little more awkward but it was always a good night there as well. Um, the Mackworth used to put gigs on, always a good night.

AC: Are you still playing in any of these venues?

MT: Sometimes, um, I'm kinda biased towards Jac's now because it's the only venue in Aberdare that has its own PA system, in-house PA system. They've got a sound guy as well and things like that. The problem when you play other venues in Aberdare you have to bring your own equipment like, PA system, guitar amps, drums but it's all at Jac's because that's dedicated towards music, they've got the tools needed then for people who can just turn up and play then.

AC: Is that a real clincher for you y'know, if you're playing a gig here it might not be for more money but it's the fact you're getting a PA and

MT: Oh yeah, no, that's the thing um, when I was with Christian with Blowout started we were up at Elliot's with the current manager at the time trying to ah persuade him to

book a PA system. We were saying please book, please buy a PA system, please get one installed it'll make the world of difference, get rid of the carpet and make it look like a music venue, music pictures on the wall of like of the Who and the Sex Pistols y'know. Make it look like a music venue and people will come. I mean, I don't think he was interested in spending money at the time but then a couple of years later the new manager took it over and did exactly that and it's gone from strength to strength. I think if you concentrate more on, y'know what a rock music venue, I'll say rock 'cause rock it's mostly rock music I find as well as live music. Focus on a genre and a style and a particular thing people might wanna come out for that extensively then. If like, Joe Bloggs who was eighty years old and wants to go for a pint he'll go to the Welsh Harp or he'll go to the Wetherspoons for one in the afternoon. If there's a music fan in the area who wants to watch live music they might want to go to Jac's then, 'cause they know that's the first for live music. I should stop talking about Jac's [laughs].

AC: So we've touched on writing, rehearsals and like performance, promotion, what about recording, talking about Head Noise again where do you record?

MT: So, when I was seventeen years old, I started my second band Admission which came straight after the rock school, with some members who were in the rock school at the time, and we first, we used to play a couple of covers gigs around the local area to save up money to pay for our original recordings. So, at the time we recorded with Tom Campbell who is Phillip Campbell from Motorhead's son over in Church Village, we must have spent about £1000 on recordings, spent a lot of time saving. And, we went to his recording studio, recorded an EP, about 6 tracks, it was good fun at the time, we spent a lot of money but I found them, like after all the effort and all the money we spent, it wasn't, y'know what the recording sounds great, it wasn't really worth it in the long run then to have nice recordings and they sounded great recordings but we couldn't do much with them apart from hand them out at gigs. 'Cause it cost us so much money and we were quite, keep releasing, we had the kind of attitude of bands like The Fall and Frank Zappa where they keep releasing loads of music all the time, 'cause someone's gonna find a gem in all the music then. 'Cause we were limited to like £1000 and five, six songs on this EP, we jump forward four, five years ahead with Head Noise we do all our recordings our self, so it doesn't really cost us any money, but it gives us the opportunity to give our recordings out and maybe someone will find some of interest and maybe they can pick us up to record it then, we're comfortable, happy to record ourselves, 'cause the overheads so, recordings are very low and we, we can do whatever we like which is great and we do collaborate with people, there's no effort, doesn't bother me just making music, it's so much easier to, instead of going in a room with your band for three days and like and bit by bit we can slot in anytime you want with Head Noise, whenever we can, I'm always listening to the demo's as they're progressing in the car on the way to work in the morning and thinking of ideas to add in and there's, I can go off up Warren's house where the recording studio is, he has a spare room decked out for recording, with microphones, and um, soundproofing and you can add bits in whenever you like, so if you're happy with the final product you can release it as and when in a low-fi DIY fashion. I prefer that than spending a lot of money on trying to push yourselves, there's more freedom as a musician then.

AC: Um, why did you go to Phil Campbell's son's studio? Was he recommended by someone or?

MT: So, at the time, I think I saw an advert for his recording studio in Gareth Rees' newsagents window but I, I didn't take the advert from there, the name stuck in my head it's called Squad, Tom from Squad, the studio. And, um, I dunno, I like, you can

hear of this guy producing tracks, people in other bands releasing songs and sounding great, we were kinda jealous and wanted, to make super cool music as tight and as great as them, y'know I think knowing that his father was in Motorhead, kinda, we thought oh we can get our songs recorded with the guitarist of Motorhead, y'know, not sure anybody was a fan of Motorhead at the time, but it's nice to have all the little connections to like famous people, or, basically it's special, might even sell the record you never know [laughs].

AC: So with the um, so from then on in, you're saying you do more of the DIY, is that purely for convenience and financial convenience as well?

MT: Well, I've been in bands for about twelve years now and, I've never been signed, I've never had a booking agent, I never had a manager. Do you know, if the opportunity came along it would be great, I'd happily take it but, y'know, you can work at your own pace and y'know, you're your own boss really as well then, you can make up the rules as you go along. 'Cause what I like about it is, if we play a one-off show we book in England and someone enjoys it and they want to book you back, it gives you a nice um sense of empowerment and you feel great about the music you're making. If one person enjoys it and they want you back then other people might enjoy it and. Y'know, 'cause I feel if you're making music, then, I mean not many people like your gigs and you're not happy with recordings you don't feel it's worth doing and that. I've been fighting the fight for twelve years, it only gets better then, especially being in charge of what we do, because you can take it in any direction you want to take it then. With the recordings, we can like put out, we can make it sound the way we'd like it to sound. I've sent some songs off to reviewers in the past and they said they don't sound right, they don't sound professional enough, but then, it makes me laugh then, 'cause I like it, I don't care if you don't like it, I don't make music for you. It's nice to see your opinion on it yeah but other reviewers might pick it up and like that aspect, and I think over time we're getting better at our craft now and at the time we were making really rough sounding demos but the songs we're making now they've had BBC radio airplay and I think we're getting better at making music as well as recording it to give to the world really.

AC: Is there any particular software, you say Warren's in charge of recording, what sort of software does he use?

MT: So, [laughs] if I remember? Warren uses Logic I believe, so that's the main Apple program, he uses Apple Mac and Apple PC, he's got two screens and he... I'm not as musically minded as Warren but, he has all the um separate tracks and he can easy manipulate and change the music as we're going along so. Y'know, if um, if me and Brill in the band haven't got time to record, he'll add his little bits he'll send them to us through Dropbox or Hotmail, and say can you check this out is it okay, I might say it's great, can you change this? And like, he's always on the ball with his technology. I'm a little bit lo-fi myself, I either record on Audacity, which is a very simplistic version of, it's like an 8-track from the eighties y'know, it's only two or three layers but I can make a rough sounding demo just to get an idea for a song we send it over then record it professionally in the future then using Logic. But in the past like I used things like Premier and I've used Magic Music Maker X like an old program I bought from Woolworths. I think the software is great nowadays because it make it so convenient and um. You gotta compare to bands from the seventies and eighties they needed to be in a room all together creating bit by bit. You kinda see professionalism then, how tight some of these bands sound, you can't tweak it digitally like you can nowadays. But like some things are great nowadays, 'cause if I like sing a chorus twice on a recording and the second one isn't very good, you can

copy and paste the first one and none, no one will be the wiser y'know. It's kind of cheating in a way, it makes the song sound better, can't fault it really [laughs].

AC: Um, so we touched on responsibilities and roles, promotion as well as lyrics and writing in a band. Am I right in saying Warren is more responsible for the writing and recording aspect of the music? Would it be fair to say that?

MT: I'd say Warren is definitely production and musically lead, he's always been a background character, but I think he wants to stay a background character. He's been in some successful bands over the years like Serotonin did quite well at a point and I was in a band with him called Replaced by Robots, I was like a backing musician then but it's nice to be out in the forefront with Head Noise now. But I find Warren is a very impressive character 'cause he's always, the production side, I always found Warren to be focused on the technology side of it, he wants to download new software to help intensify the sounds and he's always watching documentary's on like how Metallica recorded certain albums, it's interesting to see someone who's very technologically minded with that side of things. I'm punk rock, I like to get out there, jump around, make a noise, perform. But with Warren he's very, he like to sit in the background and make sure everything sound great. Then you have a member like Brill then who sits in between, he's very intelligent with his production side but then he wants to rock out with me as well then so. It's a nice mix in the band 'cause you got one and a half rockers and one and a half um music producers and y'know it makes every single show we do, if there's 5 people in the audience or 500 people in the audience, it's fun, it always is fun, 'cause we do it as friends as well, which I think is vital when you're in a band, 'cause the people you're playing with shouldn't be acquaintances you meet to make money at the end of it or do it a project or what do they call it? Session musicians. I think real music of passion and heart and meaning comes from friends who do it together 'cause they enjoy it... and that's honest I mean that it's the truth [laughs].

AC: It's on the record now [laughs].

MT: You get to delete it in 2023 so it's fine [laughs].

AC: Um, so how often do you play in Aberdare then?

MT: Right, okay, I suck right, I can honestly say I'm obsessive right, I think people um, kinda like put it down to egotism but I just love to perform live, I like to be around nice people, and meet, meet nice people in nice places and with the band like, on average I'm out about once a week.

AC: In Aberdare?

MT: Not in Aberdare, in Aberdare I try and keep it, try, and keep it balanced about, three or four months in-between. 'Cause um over the years, I've been in bands and like I've played a venue once a week and, you learn then it's overkill, it's too much. People don't want to see you 'cause they can see you anytime and. It sucks the fun out of it then unless the people come to the shows but. I think it's a nice balance between y'know, coming to your home town doing a show every couple of months, people might come along, 'cause they haven't seen you for a while and they want to hear new songs and, maybe they missed it the first time, and can see it the second time, but like, as a more general broad consensus with the, like the cover band I'm all over the Rhondda and England sometimes, south Wales, at least once a week, which is great then 'cause you appreciate coming back home because, it's easier then, it's a less of a journey to take your equipment, and you get to see friends. It's a

better experience playing locally but you can say that for any band really because if a band plays a hometown gig all their friends are going to be there and it's more comfortable then. It's like anywhere, I've played gigs at Bristol and a Bristol band played and brought friends and family and. Nice atmosphere then 'cause they got their friends supporting them and it's nice to see them having a better crowd in the place they're from as well.

AC: How serious do you take your music-making?

MT: [Laughs] From day one I have never taken it seriously, that's, that's my downfall personally because I've always wanted to be a comedian when I was growing up 'cause I was obsessed with Monty Python and Loony Tunes cartoons and. Like, I love the performance aspect of it. I look at people like John Otway whose a great musician, he's a character from the seventies and eighties who back flips and he head butts microphones. I love to entertain people, like and, I do take the music seriously it's just, I think, honestly, 70% performance and 30% seriousness for me, because I write the lyrics of the songs and I'm singing songs about microwaves and people's limbs falling off and songs, what else have we got um, songs about like microwave food might give you internal diseases and, it's a comedic element for me, but always will be I think. I've been in bands for many years and like don't want to lose that slight niche I have myself. It's nice to play around people who do take it professionally and seriously, because you can get their opinion then, like I say to Warren, Warren we've been offered to play ah support band for a drag queen night and he'll come to me and say, I don't think we'll suit that, but in my mind I'm looking more at the fun aspect of it but then Warren takes a more professional response and he's like, well I want us to be a professional band who sells records, I don't want to play all these strange, offset concerts because it might affect the image or the look of the band in the long run but, my opinion is quite punk rock I don't care, y'know, if we, what's the word, if we um, not utilised, if we, what's the word for like segregate, if we segregate our fan base that's not my problem because I'm doing it for myself and if anyone wants to follow it's up to them

AC: So, it seems like you got a good dynamic there between the three of you, it seems to, even though it's very different for you and Warren, very different ideas on what should we do, it still works well yeah?

MT: I think um, with Warren um, he's a lot, lot older than me and Brill. So, Brill is twenty two years old, he's the side guitarist and synth player. I am 28 and Warren is 42, so he's a lot older than us but he's been through the whole experience of being in bands when he was in his twenties and teenage years but I think he likes playing with a younger demographic now because we've got the drive and the kind of excitement for it even though he's more lead towards how it's perceived in the world so. I've been in bands with people my own age in the past but it's nice to be in a band with someone older who gives their experience, their, thoughts on how they had experiences in the past for us to pick up his ideas, take them on board and do things that way really.

AC: What motivates you to keep going, what do you get out of the music?

MT: So, I'm quite traditional really. When I'm, when I'm like eighties years old I want to be sitting in the house with a photo album, peeling back every single page saying remember that time I played with Wolf Alice and they'll have a picture from the Aberdare Leader, you turn the page and y'know you're arm in arm with I dunno, someone from like Deep Purple, y'know it's kinda like nostalgia reasons y'know I, I don't do it mainly for that reason like. I enjoy going out and I'd rather to be out

making music with my friends and watching good bands than just going to Judges or a nightclub on the weekend and ah getting drunk and, I dunno it's partially being entertained and it's partially being involved in the scene then. I think the scene's important because, most of the friends I've made, some of the best friends I've made over the past ten years have been people who've been musically lead. 'Cause I find we got a lot in common then because music doesn't only branch out to how music sounds, then you got like art and I think the band, the band Tool made music videos using stop motion and I'm into stop motion animation myself. I've met people who are into bands that make music videos in that way. It opens up a world talking about film and y'know ah like art and the galleries and things like that and y'know it's quite cultural for me personally, I'm very switched on with culture, I'm always out, being creative any opportunity I can like. My father is a painter and I'm a stop motion animator, plus musician I just like to get involved as much as I can with the people around me because, I dunno, it's endearing really to be part of ah, your own little group then. And the group's always growing, if you meet more people, 'cause I'll go watch a, I'll play a gig in Swansea, a three band line up and a band I've never heard of or seen before might be playing and I might think they're great and I'll go speak to them afterwards then, I'll add them on Facebook and I'll say if there's any shows coming up why don't you come play Aberdare, then they'll offer us a show in Llanelli and it kinda balances out then and you make friends and you get good opportunities and I think that's important really because it's the longevity of what you do but you're not doing it just for that y'know what I mean, you're not sucking up to someone to get their opinion you're making genuine friends and meeting nice people, it's kinda like, it's nice sociable time then. I like to be close with other people and

AC: So the motivation is definitely a social thing?

MT: I think, I love the music more than anything, like some of the subjects of the songs are quite silly and but um, but there is a lot of heart and effort put into it from all the band members and, it's a big social, big social part of it but then like everything else that comes in-between then like sort of. We love, we love making CDs, we like stay up late at night, burning them on um iTunes y'know for gigs and that. It's fun it's a bit of a ride, we've all got day jobs and that, but this is like a little escape then, it's our own little artistic world outside of um the nine to five basically.

AC: So um, we've touched on how you keep connected with other people, what if anything limits what you do around here what would you'd like to do?

MT: So, like I touched on earlier, the problem is um, in a smaller valleys town, small environment people are more, people kinda tend to go for, well-know things, things they seen on TV. Like I said, there is an Oasis tribute band, a lot of people [inaudible] on Oasis but if you play a big area like Bristol or Cardiff or Newport, it's a bigger town more people are open minded and they want to go out and experience new things, Like, there are limitations in Aberdare which I'm totally aware of then there's this kind of comfort to come back home then. Y'know I think, if you do well where you come from locally it's like you, sort of have a seat of importance then and you want to get them on board 'cause you know the more they're gonna follow you 'cause we're like a drop in the ocean when you go to these cities. It gets a lot more difficult to get shows in places like Cardiff and Bristol because you need to be from the area because promoters look at you to a band effectively how many people can you bring? And, if you're from Cardiff you can obviously bring more people because more people you know from the area and things like that. And I understand it's from a business perspective the more people there, the more people buy drinks, the more people spend money on entrance fee helps cover the cost of a night. But I find things in cities are more expensive, like entry for shows, drinks, locally they're a lot more

cheaper, so, y'know, for example if there was a gig on in Aberdare you might have free entry and £2.20 for a pint it might give someone incentive to come out for the night. In Cardiff then it could be £4.50 for a pint, £10 entry to a show that's because the costs there are higher then, to put on, organise shows and put, the city, like is more expensive, and it's, it's always a great experience to go to play a city with the band but there's always less of a response because then 'cause the people who go to these shows aren't, they don't know who you are because they're not from that area. But you get very lucky sometimes, if you play places in Cardiff and Bristol if you play a show to people who are from Cardiff and Bristol they may enjoy what you do, and they might follow you, they might add you on Facebook, might buy a CD or a T shirt at the end of the night and they want to follow the band as a whole then. So, it's important to get out and go to these places and meet new people but at the back of your head there's always a lingering feeling you want to come home it's the comfort of, you know people here people to come out. You know it's easier to organise, I'm sure from my perspective as someone from Aberdare, saying that like, there's bands in Merthyr that put on shows I know like The Rivers and they can put on show in like the Crown in Merthyr and they get, they get a bigger crown and get a better reaction 'cause that's where they're from. When they play in Aberdare it might be a different story. You can never gauge these things but from my experience over the years I've seen that things are quite elusive to, to where you're from. Like if you're a big band that's broken out of the mould from for example um, alright like Public Service Broadcasting they were there in the muni 'cause they recorded an album in Wales, it's about Wales, more people are gonna go see them around Wales then. If they had recorded an album about the coal mining industry in Newcastle and they played all around the north of Wales, uh the north of England they might get more people coming to see that y'know, it's specific, it's difficult. You can never tell but I think it's all down to how popular you are as a band because some bands break out of Wales um say the Phonics for example or more like recent local bands like Croma and the Sandinista's and. These bands, they're from Wales but they getting good gigs in like Brighton, London and places like that.

AC: How do they get, what advantage have they got?

MT: So, there's two things that come up in my mind for that. The one is because they make good music and they got a modern style which approaches modern audiences they got a niche they can slot themselves into, but then there is ah fighting side of me saying they're getting funding from like off the councils, or they get on, they're like young schemes for like ah.

AC: Do you mean the Forte Project?

MT: Forte Project, young promoters network, um all these like things in Cardiff, it's great to see like these places giving them a boost up but you kinda think, what about everybody else in a sense then? You don't want to sound like jealous or envious about it but you kinda see the same stuff getting recycled over the years and you kinda wish they'd take more of a curve ball, taken something on a bit more, a bit more odd ball maybe?

AC: What are the limitations of this funding? Why have they got funding and you haven't?

MT: Well, from my experience, it's down to certain members of bands might be, know people who are part of some scheme like, they might have had run ins in the past at gigs which is fair enough if someone who owns one of these um schemes goes and sees these bands live and wants to take on afterwards then I understand that. 'Cause, these people could have seen us and enjoy our music or our friends' bands'

music but then um, y'know they live in, more, in areas like Cardiff, they're able to get more involved in the Cardiff music scene whereas bands like us we'd like to but it's a lot harder to inject yourself into these things. Well, y'know like I never know if this is definite but from my own experience from what I've seen over the years, these, particular things only for certain ways for certain people, and.

AC: Why do you think that's the reason then? What do you think about it working out for others but not for..

[50.00]

MT: Well, it could, it could be multiple amount of reasons, it could be age of the bands 'cause like if they're a lot younger, for example Warren is quite old in our band compared to us, but it's kind of an edge, releasing a young band into the world having a modern sound because people could perceive older, older people who make music to be quite dated. If there's an old punk band making music it might sound like it came from the seventies and there's no modern audience for that. But then there is a modern audience for it, but they're a lot older. It's all about building up a music scene for a current generation now and growing up. I found it very difficult to get gigs in Cardiff over the years, sending multiple emails being as honest as you can, being polite and y'know finding artists you sound like which you can say we sound like these, we'll try our best to bring a crowd and. It all boils down to how many people you can bring sometimes, as well as y'know promoters have they favourites 'cause they see 'em, it's their friends they book, like I, I, I'm guilty myself booking my friends bands but I try to give everyone an honest, honest go, because I think that it's important to nurture everybody and not the majority but, well not the minority but the majority and give everybody a go no matter skill or the sound of music try and find somewhere for them because who knows they might be the next band that's on Top of the Pops, if it ever comes back!

AC: So you reckon there's a lot of nepotism going on?

MT: I'm, personally, I'm quite bitter because I've lost opportunities over the years, I've had some brilliant opportunities but I've lost a lot as well.

AC: Why would that happen?

MT: Well, people, people who are in charge of certain shows and things they'll have the ultimate decision, if they don't want your band to play and certain things even though you could be fully driven and have all the [inaudible] to push yourself forward and do your best y'know it's, one person doesn't want you to be part of it they won't let you but. I totally understand that I've learned that over the years I used to be a lot more bitter with. Being a promoter myself now, you can, you can understand from these people's perspective better than why they don't give it the same sort of experience as you want to have. But y'know it could boil down to people who're in charge their own personalities and things like that y'know. I've met a lot of rude people who put on shows, who don't care about bands, they're just there for the money after, then I've met people who just love music, they want to see bands do well and they're the ones down the front, pints spilling over themselves, smiling, it could even be the people jumping around smiling by themselves down the front just because they love the music. It's difficult then to gauge what, what people are like really. It's all down to their own preference, 'cause I've met nice people, I've met people who aren't so nice and that's it really.

AC: The last thing I want to touch on, you mention video. How do you go about making them?

MT: So, I've only recently been switched on to the Horizon's project which is a project funded through BBC Wales, where bands apply with their music and um, biography and a bit of information and they request um money then from the scheme. You get up, you can get up to £5000, it could be any amount, say you wanted to buy um, new instruments and you asked for £500 they'd give you that to help provide you with instruments [inaudible] to push music and if I want to make a music video they give you £1000 to do that along the lines of like that. What I found out recently is that they help mentor bands as well now. It's mainly younger bands, that's fair enough, because younger bands need the help and assistance they don't have as much as experience in the field.

AC: Is there an age limit on the funding offered?

MT: Well, I always thought there was an age limit on there, but I've applied anyway with Warren and I didn't mention his age. He can pass for a teenager see [laughs] it's how he looks, how he acts. I've never, it's never been age discrimination with Warren, I'm looking at any, any mate. With the covers band I'm in the keyboardist, he's in his 40s, the rest of the band members are in our twenties. It does not make a difference to me, age does not enter into it. There's bands like the Mystery Jets from years ago and like their band members were in their twenties and their father was in the band was in his 60s that was amazing, it was great. Do y'know how inspiring that is, an elderly musician. Anyway, back to the subject. Age is nothing really is it. Like if you're younger and see an older musician you always dismiss it as not being cool. Doesn't bother me, it's never bothered me. I was young going to watch bands in their fifties, sixties up in the White Lion like and I just like the music y'know. I think there can be ageism in music though definitely. I see it all the time. But, back onto about grants and that though. Yeah, Horizons um, it's great to see what they do 'cause they get funding for bands to make videos but then there's bands like us then who do ours DIY. So, through our gigs we've met photographers and videographers and we talked to them and they said ah we'll give you a free video and that, we'll do it really cheap and sometimes you make money from gigs it's very difficult with an originals band but if you're selling T shirts and CDs, we play um venues outside of Cardiff, 'cause sometimes they pay you money for the shows, you use the money you've made to help pay for the videos. We've made a lot of um low-fi videos it's been great, we've had fun and y'know it depends what sort of video you, if you want a very professional high-quality video it costs a lot of money and you gotta spend money to do it or get grants from the local arts council and things like that and then like it goes back to the DIY and it's nice to do it ourselves sometimes. I'm open to spending money on a video one day and kinda hoping it comes, the opportunity because videos can be as important as the music sometimes 'cause a visual representation of the band, or the art they create can also be a representation of their music. 'Cause sometimes, see for example, you think of a music video for like Nothing Compares to You by Sinéad O'Connor d'you remember the kinda, her crying into the camera and it creates an emotional sense, but, but y'know if you just heard the song alone you could think of any music video could do that she could standing there in a black dress in the dark and it might not have the same impact but it does, watching her in that specific video crying into the camera y'know. I think it's great really I'm a huge fan of visual representation 'cause that's how I got into stop-motion animation. I saw the Peter Gabriel Sledgehammer video and, literally, it, that kinda exploded my own creative output then, I started animating, making short videos, making music videos and things.

AC: Have you done animation for your own bands then?

MT: I'm going to. I found, timing, time is a lot, an issue lately 'cause when you spend so much time promoting an originals band, gigging with a covers band, working full time, looking after your son and doing everything, there's no time to do animation, it's a very, very time, what's the word? It eats up a lot of your time yeah.

AC: Where do you work then?

MT: I work in an electronics company.

AC: Doing what?

MT: So it's distribution and sales. It's a very stable job, but without that job I wouldn't be able to continue my music career basically. I wouldn't like to work in music 'cause I think it'd suck the fun out of making music. I studied, I studied animation, I studied animation in um university, I had to quit the course because it was taking the fun out of it for me, I think if I spent too much time and effort making something into a job and career it might not have the same impact as being a creative [inaudible]. That's just my opinion.

AC: And lastly, is there anything else you would like to add? What do you rely on?

MT: Okay, so, when I was growing up music around here was very limited, it was always there but there was no one to spearhead it, no one to push people to do things or, it was very sporadic, it wasn't very often, it was all over the place. Like maybe I'd go and see a band in the Kings Head now and again when I was younger but I met people nowadays, I kinda consider myself to be one of those people who like to push people into doing things and I meet people who are not confident and I say, get on stage, do something, don't waste your talents and y'know I've seen a steady increase over the years now of things getting better musically.

AC: In Aberdare?

MT: In Aberdare and other places as well, Merthyr and over the Rhondda as well. Like south Wales I think is a treasure trove for music you just need to dig deep enough to find it.

AC: Why do you think it's getting better?

MT: Well as much as the internet's killed music, it's also, in my opinion, it's also opened up a world as well because if there's a band from Porth who starts sharing music video they can share with their friends in Tonypany and Maerdy and they all come together. My mates band are from down the road, let's go them and see them and things like that. Y'know, even though I thought it lacked some communication in the past just by using the phone and the internet it stopped people coming together it's kinda made people come together as well.

AC: So it's a contradiction?

MT: Oh yeah definitely it's a contradiction but like, I've always found music to be up and down, promotion wise and live wise. Sometimes you get a good night sometimes you won't, that's all down to who's playing, when they're playing, things like that. If you put a gig on on a rugby night there are going to be people out, but it's gonna be a busy night and have fun. I've always found music to be very sporadic, all over the place constantly. You can't, you can't focus on pushing one thing obsessively

because one day it could be great and the next day it could be next to nothing [laughs].

AC: Thank you that's fine, I'm just going to stop that recording.

Interview with Neil Galsworthy and Steve Bennett, 23-02-2020, Bradleys Coffee Shop, Aberdare @ 11.42 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

NG – Neil Galsworthy, SB – Steve Bennett, Participants

AC: Hello guys how're you doing?

NG: Okay great!

SB: Very well thank you

NG: For a Sunday

AC: Um I'll start with a few general questions, what music do you like?

NG: Go on

SB: Shall I go first?

NG: Yeah, I could be a while

SB: Yeah, I'm quite a simple creature, I like, I like to go and watch metal bands mostly, um, Whitechapel is the next one I'm going to see, although I don't really listen to it very often, I go and see it more than I listen to it. Why? I dunno? 'Cause it sounds so awful I suppose? [laughter] It's, I tend to listen to more sing songy things in the car, well mostly, it's a couple of things, it's either women singing sad songs [laughs] or, or...

NG: This is a revelation to me and I've been in a band with him for years.

SB: I like a bit of drum and bass I listen to a bit of that in the car, but then I dunno, I guess it's all a bit of extremes with me either like it full on metal or the saddest sad, or the, y'know what is it like the [AC: Aphex Twin?] handbag house whatever it is, that's the, that's what I do so, that's the music I like really, well that's what I do with music but most of it, I don't listen to a huge amount that's the truth of it, in the car but other than that I don't at all really or in the garden maybe, that's it for me I'd say.

NG: Me, anything nothing's off limits. Basically.

AC: What an answer [laughs]

NG: It's hard to narrow anything down, I mean I sort of grew up listening to metal and then the grunge thing turned me around on listening to punk and stuff and then the '90s dance music came in and y'know set me off on a route of anything goes.

AC: Would it be easier to say what you don't like?

NG: I couldn't say there's anything I don't like, not really, even the cheesiest pop music and now and again a song will pop out [inaudible] this is okay y'know. With pop music you gotta be, you gotta realise it's made for that market anyway y'know [interrupted with the coffee]

AC: Um what about country and western?

NG: Country and western, it's funny you mention that it would be the one thing I'd say is the hardest, I don't like the commercial side of it, but when you get into the raw side of it I mean, the more commercial side of it, Johnny Cash [inaudible] single band guitar that's alright, it seems, the Dolly Parton stuff and [inaudible] but then with every genre you've got that commercial side [inaudible] a bit tacky.

AC: Is that what puts you off music that commercialism?

NG: Usually because at that point it's usually watered down, over produced and made for that [inaudible] market...

SB: Isn't that middle of the road Dolly Parton, she's the real thing isn't she?

NG: Well, [inaudible] what's the guy [inaudible] thousands what's his name

SB: Oh I know what you mean Garth [inaudible]

AC: Garth Brookes

NG: Yeah that's over the top y'know.

SB: I'll be on there, I can't stand that stuff

AC: Okay

NG: I retract the Dolly Parton [laughter] she was alright at Glastonbury actually, although she mimed apparently.

AC: Really?

NG: That was the um, controversy...

SB: I saw her at um, in the CIA and people said she was miming but subsequently the [inaudible] that she's singing along with and if she starts going wrong it starts helping her out [AC: Like an auto-correct kind of thing] yeah so, it'll switch between, when she's getting it right it lets her [inaudible] going wrong it'll go hang on now [inaudible] [laughter]

NG: I could do with one of them [laughs] or a drumming version

SB: Exactly [laughter]

AC: So what sort of music do you guys play? So, how would you describe that music?

NG: It's hard to describe the music, I mean again it's a anything goes philosophy to writing so anything can be put in the mix I think. I don't think, I don't think anything's been frowned upon apart from...

SB: Charlie won't let us do any modern music will he [inaudible]

NG: Charlie fights the ah, the electronic ah anything post '85 no of course '75 [inaudible] a little bit but we're turning him around.

AC: Can you give me an example of something he's absolutely not...

NG: Put it this way when he's not there and he misses the odd practice it's like a side project goes on then [laughter] the drum and bass beats come out. I love it, I wish we could do more like that but ah, we will.

AC: Is that using software to get that sound?

SB: I don't think he likes the whole thing of it, the genre, I think he thinks it's crappy [laughs]

NG: Which I find strange for a keyboard player, a keyboard player would be more into all that sonic, electronic stuff y'know but he's more traditional.

SB: Yeah you got more choice haven't you just press a key any sound can come out you'd think the sky would be the limit but he's organs and pianos isn't he.

NG: Yeah

AC: Old school sort of [inaudible]

NG: Yeah, seventies sort of rock organ

SB: I think we have, it does seem to go a certain way I'd say the songs aren't all completely different because there's always...

NG: Yeah, because there's gotta be a current, there's gotta be a sort of thread running through that links them that's a fact that we're all putting the same input in all the time but um I mean as far as genres we cross a few genres [laughs]

SB: Yeah, we don't, no one said you're not allowed to do something, if anyone's got an idea then we'll probably have a go at it.

NG: [Laughs] what was it? What was it? Kong, we wrote a song Kong, Charlie wanted to put that Some Mother's do 'ave 'em theme smack in the middle of it so it [inaudible] Kong is quite y'know [chants] Kong, Kong, Kong, Kong, it's got this sort of feel about it and out of nowhere [laughs] he starts playing this thing that sounds [inaudible] and ah John Phillips was dead against that

SB: Oh yeah, yeah

NG: Shocked he was, you'd ruin the song by sticking that [SB: Yeah, I know] but I would have gone with him.

SB: Yeah, I would have too [inaudible]

AC: How long was that little chunk of Some Mother's...

NG: Oh just [sings how much] [laughs] and that would have been it [AC: And then back into the...] yeah back into the yeah, but we haven't, we've done that before...

SB: He won't have any, any music that isn't ours, we haven't written ourselves, there's one exception isn't there, Major Minor.

NG: Who James

SB: Yeah, yeah

NG: And he [inaudible] as well wanted us to write that as well, ah just steal it, just steal it, and sing over it.

AC: What's this?

NG: Um, a song we did that just abruptly ends and then we've got a recording of a 1920s, 1930s sort of [SB: Big band] so

SB: It's not really big band is it?

NG: No, it's, what's the style back then it's sort of...

AC: Marching bands?

NG/SB: No

NG: Pre-sort of crooning but y'know it's a single guy singing...

SB: It's something you'd hear on a 78 record y'know like a single voice singing over an orchestra sort of thing all ditty type things...

NG: Mr Chubbly Warner type ah scenario innit. So we just took the music which had scratches as well y'know really [inaudible]

SB: So we're just singing over the intro and it stops when the guy starts singing.

AC: Alright

NG: So we stole the music and made up the lyrics

AC: How did Charlie feel about that?

NG: Charlie was alright, it was John that ah, John is the one who doesn't like taking anything [AC: Oh right, okay] that's not ours and we've created which is fair enough I'm all for that but ah...

SB: I think he's worried about copyright and things like that as well he doesn't like the idea that [NG: Someone can come and get you] [inaudible]

AC: Okay, so tell me a little bit about um your musical practices, how do you go about writing songs?

NG: It's pretty spontaneous I mean, ah now and again me or Charlie or John will come along with a part but never a complete song. It's usually just ideas, look I got this, Charlie will go I've got this, can we match that with that, yeah we can match anything with anything. And again, that's another philosophy y'know don't matter what it is we can slap two genres together which we have done and there's a song. So that's what I love about the practices, spontaneous sort of jamming element and turning that into a song.

SB: But we don't jam for hours.

AC: How long do you jam for?

SB: Well normally just for a few minutes and then it's nearly [AC: Just a couple of minutes?] well like five, ten minutes and it's nearly always, Neil he'll say he can remember what we were doing, I dunno? I can't I don't think anyone else can so we got we've got a bit there haven't we, and then we've got a bit if you like. And then, we always do the vocals last don't we, it's always the music [inaudible]

NG: That's the way I've always written I can never write lyrics before a melody, before music, I don't understand how that's even done to be honest, lots do it [AC: Yeah]

SB: Paul McCartney

AC: Does he do that? Lyrics before music?

SB: I think he did, I've seen him doing it at the same time, pretty sure I seen him on telly doing that [inaudible] write a song [inaudible] Wanna Hold Your Hand didn't he [inaudible]

NG: On an instrument you gotta think how it would be sung over but I'm big on instrumentals anyway I don't care [laughs] I don't really care about lyrics y'know I just love music. A lot of what I listen to is instrumental stuff whether it be electronic or anything y'know.

SB: With the exception of metal [inaudible] there's some classical music, but even that, even then like I prefer the ones that have singing in them. So there's no, I don't really, I don't know I can't wait to get to the lyrics most of the time.

NG: Ah a recent song we done Xanadu, was it called Xanadu?

SB: Yeah Xanadu but spelt with a Z [laughter]

NG: So...

SB: It's completely different [laughs]

NG: So the lyrics for that were found just by doing a Google search on Xanadu and then every result that came up we just took the first line from [AC: Almost coding your lyrics] yeah we stuck it in the song so it weren't, it means nothing to anyone plus ourselves which goes for most of our songs I think.

SB: But it's all about Xanadu

NG: Yeah, it has there is a link there, but ah Charlie come up with that I thought that was a great way of writing lyrics [inaudible] it'll be brought in again that will. I get stumbled on lyrics I gotta be honest, it takes me ages to write lyrics where music comes like that [quickly] y'know so yeah it's quite creative, that's what I like about it.

AC: Is it like a conscious effort to mix like genres and things like that or do you just find that was the only thing that [inaudible] lets you do what you purposely wanted to, investigate, explore I don't know? Or was it accidental did it just happen to turn out that way?

NG: Personally speaking I've always got a problem with something sounding suddenly commercial or ah and I fight against it then by putting something I don't know [inaudible] in it I mean um, that can be a pain in the arse sometimes where we had a tune which is probably a good tune, it's um too catchy for my liking so something odd has gotta go in there just to y'know [AC: Bring it back down?] yeah [inaudible]

SB: We consciously I'd say would finish a [inaudible] trying to make a song different or [inaudible] there's only a, well one or two songs that are verse, chorus, verse, chorus, middle eight, chorus, ends. Everything has got like different, different bits, or the verse and the chorus are very different, rather than y'know there's a [inaudible] we're actively I'd say trying to make a, quirky is a shitty word but there it is, it's a bit like that

isn't it, hang on oh we could put something in there, that's different but still seems to work.

NG: Or It's been going on too long now, we need some change here, and a lot of it is just stitching bits together [inaudible] you see y'know other bands, not local bands in bands that have recorded [laughs] he says wearing the T shirt um [SB: I'm a big Rush fan too by the way] [inaudible] and I'm sure it's done in a similar way they're part stitched together y'know, something like [inaudible] that had to be done in sections and put together and that's how we write, a lot like the way we write [inaudible] it's nothing unique like y'know

AC: Y'know you were saying quirky and that kind of thing was that for yourselves to push the boundaries of music or was it for other people to pique their interests?

NG: Well the other people, we don't, people don't really hear it apart from us

SB: Well

NG: Um, we don't gig, the recordings are out there but god knows who's listened to them or whatever, so, it's to please ourselves before, I think it's gotta be that way hasn't it?

SB: That's exactly what I was gonna say y'know I'd [inaudible]

NG: We'll please ourselves and if others are onboard, it's like well done

SB: Yeah

NG: And if people don't like it I can totally understand that as well [laughter] and we've had people [inaudible] frown and go what the fuck is this? Y'know that's acceptable, when you're writing stuff that's off the wall and that y'know you're not going down the commercial route so you gotta accept that an equal amount of people will not like it as like it.

AC: Um, do you record rehearsals then? [inaudible] or do you do specific recordings?

SB: We don't record the rehearsals, Neil remembers how the songs go, almost singlehandedly and we can remember the bits that we were doing

NG: It's handy 'cause you three are crap at remembering songs [laughter] probably the worst people I've ever played with for remembering songs from one week to the next...

SB: [inaudible] what bit were you doing, ah well, sometimes it comes back sometimes it doesn't [laughter]

AC: Do you find it's got a constant organic feel to it? Because it'll slightly change each time I should imagine?

NG: It can do yeah, it can do

SB: It definitely does on drums 'cause like I said I can't remember what I was doing before so [inaudible] [NG: Better than what it is] the in-between bits just get from one bit to the next if you like, which is fairly easy on the drums [inaudible and laughter]

NG: But he's got a nice shed and good recording equipment [inaudible] that's why he's still in the band

SB: They can't live without me, and I've got a big car as well [laughter] [inaudible] to do a gig

AC: So all the Cool Beans stuff is done at your home isn't it Steve?

SB: That's right yeah

AC: And you said you've got a recording out, was that recorded there as well?

NG: Yeah

SB: So I'm the engineer, producer, mixer, not producer. So yeah, we've got a, I've got a studio at my house let's call it that. Purpose built to have a band in it really 'cause I live in the countryside so we can make a lot of noise then [AC: Yeah, yeah] um and then, yeah once we've got a song and we record it and I record it into my computer and then I'll mix it and they'll get the chance to say well do this or do that and that can be how it goes but we normally record y'know a bit at a time, like ah not the whole band together.

AC: Okay

GN: It's pretty much done then, we don't sort of spend loads of time putting overdubs and y'know 'cause you could do, I mean you can go mad with the ah the scenario

SB: Some of them have got quite a few tracks on them

NG: Yeah but I mean

SB: It's like [inaudible] they don't know [inaudible] let's just do it [inaudible] I'm the one who does all the brain work obviously

NG: Well yeah, he reckons he spends hours mixing and all that [inaudible]

SB: Recording we take it for granted [AC: Yeah, yeah] [laughter]

NG: I've [inaudible] a bit of recording as well, get a mouse that's all it is

SB: Yeah, yeah

AC: Um, so are there any particular roles or responsibilities, you were saying you're the engineer of sorts y'know, who books gigs if you do, organises rehearsals, who instigates things?

NG: No, not really, I don't think there is any sort of leader in this band is there? As such.

SB: Not in that sense no, but we're quite good at practising every week so we...

NG: That's the thing that's amazed me, we practice every week, without fail, apart from I was away last week [SB: Yes] [laughter]

SB: Every week before the last four weeks

NG: For four, five years?

SB: Four years?

NG: Yeah it's gotta be, um I don't know why I'm amazed by that but we're pretty regular on that 'cause I love it I just love going up and jamming writing stuff, I don't really care if anyone never hears it [inaudible] we don't.

AC: Why do you think it's so disciplined then? 'Cause I know other bands and I'm sure yourselves played in other bands they don't get to practice for months.

NG: Well, for me personally because it's so enjoyable and um I've been in other bands where we practiced regular and you might be going through a set every week and then that becomes a bit y'know boring.

SB: They're not practices, they're called practices, but they're not really practices we do one or two gigs a year, so in the run up to that like four weeks before that we practice the songs but other than that we're either writing a song or recording a song and that's how, that's how it goes.

NG: It's down then and perhaps not played again, unless we got to 'cause we played I think [SB: Yeah [inaudible] I find leading up to a gig rehearsing of a set then a little bit stale.

SB: It's a bit more like hard work then 'cause it's not...

AC: Are you constantly creating normally?

NG: Yeah, yeah

SB: Normally we're just trying out new songs all the time [AC: Yeah, yeah] then it's like being in the business of being in a band where you have to play them in front of people and we don't want to be, even though someone told me like we're halfway through a song and we'll look at each other someone's messed up or something and the people in the crowd are going well they haven't got a clue, they don't know the songs so they can't tell it's gone wrong and because the songs, well some of them are quite difficult to like [inaudible] you wouldn't know we're playing one thing then we're playing something else [inaudible] and then if someone completely screws up it just appears that we're playing something else again [inaudible and laughter]

NG: The only reason to play live really is to just prove to other people that we can play live [laughter] in my head that's all it is and I've got nothing to prove to anyone so I don't give a shit [laughter] but um, no I like that aspect of it um, I'm out every week playing mind you I'm not that's the thing [inaudible] might want to do it more than me. I'm in the live scenario every weekend y'know and so it's not such an important thing. Then other people question well why are you writing songs and y'know people are not hearing them y'know or whatever but I can't really answer that [laughs] it's just for my own gains I think [inaudible]

AC: If you enjoy something it's a [inaudible] in itself y'know

SB: It's the thing about music y'know if you write, why are you writing it, why are you in a band? [inaudible]

NG: You start off saying you like live music more than recorded um, yeah I understand that the whole like vibe of being in it but I'm [inaudible] question why, it's a strange, it's a strange thing when you think about it, strange thing go and see a band playing these songs you've got copies of anyway y'know um, I dunno it's a weird one but I can understand getting caught up in the live thing like.

SB: I mean if people were turning out to see us, y'know, I'm gonna open up now are you ready for this? If you, if you do a gig and it's really good and it's definitely your own music you go wow that's amazing and that is a real buzz it's something it's an ego thing, coming off there, feel like a million dollars, what a great feeling. That, if I'm honest I don't think I'm ever gonna have that experience with Cool Beans.

AC: What? You might do?

SB: [inaudible] I don't think it's going to be like that. I don't think it's going to be like that, like I say [inaudible] pretty unlikely

AC: In a different way [inaudible]

SB: Who knows [inaudible] there's different points for doing it I suppose so the point for me is, one I can't get out of it 'cause they come round every week and it's my house so [AC: Have you tried pretending you're out?] [laughter]

NG: Well we've done it without you, he just left the keys for us [laughter] I know exactly what you're saying but that's different down to the fact that the music isn't commercial music so you're never gonna have that y'know ferocious cheering crowd throwing knickers at you [laughs]

SB: No exactly [inaudible] said on my behalf but that's the thing isn't it, I wouldn't describe us as particularly sexy

NG: No, an appreciative clap would do nicely

SB: Exactly

NG: It's better than having something thrown at you or booed [laughter] so y'know

SB: Yeah

AC: So tell me about this film then.

NG: That's your department

SB: So we, for some of the songs, Jesus, right some of the songs [inaudible] some of the songs we do videos as part of the thing really so if we get a song and it's going to get a video, then we, well it's a bigger deal y'know and then the video becomes part of the song if you like, so part of the artistic package you get a video with it and we, we put out a CD I don't know a few months ago and it was basically all of our songs and that was like ah well what are we going to do next. So we decided to make a film, a musical film with Cool Beans songs in it and a plot, and so yeah I dunno, I know what the plot is, but how the, how the songs fit into it [inaudible] the idea as well but the actual content of what's going to be in it is still [AC: What's the plot?] well hang on now [AC: This doesn't come until 2023 so don't worry [inaudible] [laughter]

NG: Well I don't know myself?

SB: Alright, so the plot is, essentially there's four individuals who are King Kong, Kubler Khan that's me, an astronaut and the first person to walk from one country to another underwater [AC: Is that James?] Yeah [laughter] but that's a genuine ambition of his [inaudible and laughter] lead boots and a pipe to breathe through and he's gonna walk, right, so, so these people meet in the, in the dole office, signing on, they all get turned down for any benefits because [inaudible and laughing] and then form a band obviously, become extremely successful, lose it all, go back to the dole office to sign on again and this time all of their, they're successful in their applications and the, the punch line is that the guy who's filling in the forms who denied them last time is now approving them all 'cause he's a Cool Beans fan, so he's, so that's a happy ending.

AC: And who's involved in doing this? Is it just the band or have you got help from outside y'know?

SB: It's just us.

AC: Who's doing the filming and script writing and editing?

NG: Well you and Charlie tend to be the um...

SB: Charlie has got a job and knows something about filming so that's helped no end, working for Tantrwm, so he used to be [inaudible] but now he's done some work setting up or part of the thinking [inaudible] see how it goes or whatever [inaudible] a hell of a lot easier.

NG: He walked the boards from an early age [AC: Charlie?] yeah, he was in theatre groups, so he's got that, that flamboyancy about him, I left them sort that one out, just tell me what you want, dress up as a gorilla right! [laughter] I don't mind.

SB: Sit there and do this

NG: So um, yeah the one's we've done have been good fun and the thing is with videos they tend to reach more people than your audio, as soon as you're on YouTube you'll have a lot more hits than you would than if people were just listening to tracks on a website so...

AC: What have you done so far [inaudible]

NG: How many have we done? 8?

SB: Yeah, I was gonna say we must have done seven or eight? They're all on our YouTube channel

AC: Are they gonna be incorporated into the film?

SB: No, it's all new songs, well, nearly all new songs, new film, new videos to go with it.

AC: And when do you envisage it'll be out?

SB: We don't set ourselves targets like that [laughter] 'cause there

NG: We haven't even started yet so, it'll have to be a summer thing when the weather's better I think anyway so...

SB: [inaudible] on a Wednesday night filming so [laughter]

NG: It's a narrow window [laughter]

SB: [inaudible] when it starts brightening up

NG: When we move the green screen in we'll be made we can do anything

AC: Um, I'm just gonna [inaudible] very briefly I wanted to ask you about the open mic nights in the Aman Tavern 'cause you organise those don't you?

NG: Yeah

AC: Can you just tell me about how you went about making it happen?

NG: Well my step son runs the pub and um he's been asking for a while to do it and I've never been a fan of open mic nights really but to help him out then we started doing it, um September the first one? On a Sunday night and it's been hit and miss, Sunday night is a little bit sort of ah and it goes on till half ten so you're expecting too much of people being out on a Sunday with work the next day, so um, we're still trying it but um there's never been no one there but we want to get more punters in watching, the thing is if you get punters in and no one's playing there isn't a night, at least when you get people in to play there's a night y'know but then 'cause the pub's [inaudible] and the takings and we're trying to grow a little bit so it's slow but steady then at the moment. But we may change the night to another night of the week [AC: Just to get out of that Sunday night thing y'know?] yes that's right, but um, I think these things one in here [Bradley's Coffee Shop] goes on? [AC: Apparently] [inaudible] and there's one in The Globe that's been running years the open mic, the last Friday Club, well it's been in various venues all over, ten to fifteen years now, so um there's a few going on [inaudible] supported quite well it's good. 'Cause a lot of people, I, I've never done that sort of open mic thing myself, I always like sitting and playing with other people, I don't like, I've done one or two but I'm not comfortable with it. So the last couple we've introduced a bit of a jam night as well and y'know and getting a few people just jamming songs together [inaudible] it's nice but um...

AC: Do you find it's the same people coming to these things?

NG: It is the same sort of crowd going around them all y'know but um, there's enough of them to keep it varied y'know we plod on with it and see where it goes.

AC: And sorry Steve [inaudible] again, and talking about the pubs in Aberdare, the physical infrastructure if you like, what's your opinions on that are there any limitations [inaudible] Aberdare [inaudible]

SB: Like I say it used to be, it used to be fairly easy for us playing the Cajon there's no drumkit, as soon as you got a drumkit you got a lotta noise so you need a bigger space and the whole thing shoots up a level doesn't it, whereas...

NG: When you gotta bring a drumkit

SB: Yeah exactly it's like, that's obviously out of the question [inaudible] electric kit, so it's even worse, there's more setting up not less, you set it up then you start plugging it in, it's um I've never taken that out, never taken it out of the shed it's in now I think, the day it arrived so [laughs]

NG: I'd like to do a gig with all the gear we have y'know [inaudible]

SB: New songs got the drums with me playing drums instead of the Cajon so if we did a gig now, I'd have to have the drums wouldn't I?

NG: Yeah, we should do a set with no compromises everything up there we should bring

SB: Yeah, I know, I think that's a good idea

NG: Um, going off subject slightly here, venues here well I mean Jacs is the main venue here in Aberdare and y'know we've never had a dedicated music venue so that is great [AC: Yeah, yeah] Um, back in the day there used to be a lot of pubs doing bands [AC: It's changed quite a lot?] in the nineties we had, well it was quite a healthy scene around here and that was mainly bands organising it, it wasn't really the venues y'know the bands themselves said do you want us to put on a night? Aye go on, bring your own PA and set up and it was a good vibe for a while um, but Jacs has topped that in the fact that it's a dedicated music venue y'know it's got its own PA, its own sound guy, never had that and um, I think it's great, but apart from that I think there's not a lot going on.

AC: Do bands tend not to approach pubs now?

NG: I don't think they would with Jacs y'know. The Con Club over b'there used to be a regular venue, we've played a few times there with um Spirit of Boogie and Warthogs and other bands I was in, we'd have good nights there but um, lugging a PA up those stairs and all that y'know, when you haven't got to do that, just walk in, plug in and someone else is doing your sound y'know it's more, there's nothing that can compete with that [inaudible]

SB: Yeah if you wanted to have a band and do a night you could get into Jacs, if you could get a decent night y'know I think they have bands in there on a Sunday night, original bands and it's a very mixed, sometimes it's very badly attended y'know and other times there's more, they do better I've got a big problem with cover bands and tributes, tributes especially are [inaudible] I'm out to get them [inaudible] I know your partner's in a good one but [inaudible] even with my friends I can't [inaudible] I can't let it go [inaudible]

NG: Well, they've been going years, I played with them [Sabbath Bloody Sabbath] in the nineties [inaudible] how long's he been with them?

AC: Fifteen, twenty years?

NG: Yeah, yeah.

SB: He'd just joined them when I first moved down to Aberdare or when I first met you and him, so, I remember him talking about it, it was [inaudible] so yeah [inaudible]

AC: Can't get a gig in Aberdare for love nor money

NG: Are they a Swansea based band?

AC: Yeah, three of them are from Swansea

SB: 'Cause the guitarist Peter he's in work with me in the DVLA, I know him, I knew him before I knew he was in the band [inaudible]

NG: Have they not played Jacs?

AC: They phoned up [inaudible]

NG: It's tribute band central at the moment [inaudible]

SB: I'm gonna be eating my words now, they've had Children of the Gravy in there, you probably, I'm sure you don't like them, they were so it must be personal, they've clearly had Sabbath in there.

AC: I think it is

SB: Really? Oh god I don't know? [inaudible]

NG: But I know that has happened ah in the District Club in Ponty. Dai Barrow and High Voltage tried to play down there, they already had an AC/DC tribute and that does sometimes affect it. Children of the Gravy haven't played there for ages now mind have they [inaudible]

SB: No, not that long [inaudible] less than a year surely? Yeah when you were there we both saw them at the same time [inaudible] they've come again since then [NG: Oh have they?] they didn't play Supernaut, which is my favourite song [inaudible] will they play Supernaut? [AC: I'll tell them [laughs] it's on the application please play Supernaut, tick [laughter]

NG: Have they been going that long or did they stop and start again or?

AC: They were kinda just doing one gig a year for many years [NG: Alright] they had trouble with the drummer, he was gigging and couldn't make gigs 'cause he was doing other, a wedding band or something but they got a new drummer now, so it's picked up a bit.

NG: We supported them, that's right we supported them, I'm sure in the Con Club years ago and they wouldn't let us use their gear [laughter] [inaudible] but no the singer jumped up with us in the gig or something but this as gotta be in the nineties [inaudible]

AC: He looks and sounds exactly like Ozzy, the singer you shut your eyes and go that's Ozzy [inaudible]

NG: Well you gotta have that I mean the music's gotta be there with the singer. If a tribute band isn't quite there, when we went to see that Holy Diver [inaudible] the Dio one, fucking terrible, he didn't sound like Dio, he was a good singer but sounded more like Rob Halford, ah Bon Scott, he was up in that higher register and it killed it for me, the music was spot on, but if you're gonna tribute a singer, you've gotta sound like him.

AC: I mean...

NG: Ozzy's a hard one, I've tried singing with the Sabbath songs over the years and...

AC: He brings it down now they drop it down [NG: Ah that's cheating] [inaudible]

NG: They'll never play this town [inaudible]

- SB: We'll be down the front throwing things [laughter]
- AC: What's your opinion then about the ratio of tributes and covers and originals, because when I first came to Aberdare it was heavily weighted towards originals and over the years now it seems to have shifted. I mean is that 'cause there's less original bands?
- NG: There is less original bands around but what sort of [inaudible]
- AC: 2002, 2003?
- NG: Yeah coming out of the nineties there you had the Phonics making it and a lot of bands forming because of that, thinking that they could follow, that sort of, I'd say from about '96 to early 2000's, yeah there was a lot of bands, but the gigs were like you say the bands putting them on. Bands supporting bands there was a lot of that camaraderie sort of thing going on y'know [AC: Is that lost now?] it is lost in the sense that the bands are [inaudible] you don't see. I mean I was around before that [laughs] I was playing before the Phonics and that, played with them obviously in the first band they were in and then there was a lot of youngsters starting bands, you don't see that now, youngsters...
- SB: I don't think...
- NG: Starting bands or playing instruments now...
- SB: The world has changed so much, that when I first got in a band, there was like the dream to be a Rockstar absolutely right in front of your mind, there's no joking about that if you like, that was all part of it but I don't think, I dunno, I'm not in touch with the youth at all but I see them as seeing that as a route to something.
- NG: Don't forget too for original bands back in the day we weren't getting paid I don't know how many gigs I've played for nothing, so the pub were on a winner just having people through the door, we don't have to pay the band, ching, ching, but now with Jac's and that, they have to make a profit, they've gotta get a crowd in so it has become a sort of tribute band thing but I mean [inaudible] they're playing decent money to some of these tribute bands so whether they're actually breaking even or making a profit is debatable but, yeah it seems to have gone that way. I mean I like it, he hates it unless they look, sound play exactly the same cymbals...
- SB: No that's not it, even then [NG: Seems like it] even then it's wrong it's, well I don't want to get too on my horse about this it's out and out bloody theft [inaudible] they are making a living aren't they [inaudible] they're not, not keen on them either, they're not. They're making a living off the back of someone who may still be alive, wrote the bloody songs [inaudible] anything classical wasn't written for that guy to play was it [inaudible] impersonating the police, you can't, you can't stand up there and be a Rockstar, then play you're on bloody songs y'know, play someone else's and [NG: [inaudible] tribute bands myself [inaudible]
- NG: If the band isn't around anymore that's the next best thing right. Even so there are bands around now who are too old to be doing it and sound shit, you're probably better off seeing a tribute band. And what I will say about Children of the Gravy I think the singer for them you close your eyes and I think he's on the mark.
- SB: Yeah, he's good

NG: I've seen Ozzy with Sabbath in the reunion years, twice or three times it's not good like, he's struggling y'know what I mean [inaudible] and when you see another band doing it and hitting the notes [inaudible] he can't even sing anymore [inaudible] and ticket prices pay eighty pound to go and see an original artist when you can see someone doing it probably as good for a tenner fifteen quid, it's got my vote and it's only round the corner.

SB: Yeah, I think, well anyway I've said my bit really, I did enjoy [NG: You're a bit arsy about it] I am, I have enjoyed seeing tribute bands.

NG: We went to see a Police tribute and he was disgusted that they didn't have the right cymbals...

SB: No, there was a lot wrong with that band and it wasn't just the drummer

NG: No they weren't great. That's another thing I think if you're gonna do it you gotta do it well you can't go out sort of half arsed as a tribute act y'know you got to sort of deliver the goods and [inaudible]

SB: They're big bands and big songs, if you got up there and did what they did to Everything Little Thing She Does Is Magic then you should be in court that's all I'm saying [laughter] but no, anyway, he's absolutely right if you're gonna, if you are going to do it then it's gotta be good and it doesn't have to be exactly the same but it has to be good, y'know people come up to me yeah you got this now this is clearly...

NG: The thing with Skacasm is that we're a tribute to a genre rather than a band [AC: Yeah, yeah] specific bands or, as long as you sound mildly right in that genre [laughs] you'll pull it off like y'know.

AC: That's quite clever really, rather than just pin pointing a band [inaudible] look like a particular band or...

NG: I mean if we went out as a Specials tribute then people would be questioning why isn't there seven of them in the band? [SB: Why are they all white?] yeah exactly, so [SB: Yeah it would be exactly like that]

AC: How important is making music to both of you?

SB: I'll say if I'm going to do it then I gotta be making music, so I, it's conceivable I would join a band to do gigs y'know covers, it's not impossible, but for me if I'm going to be doing it, I haven't got a huge amount of time y'know with my busy lifestyle. If I'm gonna do it I wanna do what I wanna do y'know what I mean I don't want, I'd rather be in Cool Beans [inaudible] a band like working like y'know you must be going out some Saturdays working and thinking Jesus Christ y'know [inaudible]

NG: It was like that last night I come out and it was pissing down with rain [SB: Yeah] I don't wanna be here tonight y'know what I mean.

SB: I mean that is work that is, I mean if you're getting paid then fair play, you're working but if you're not getting paid then it's gotta be fun.

NG: I wouldn't do it if I wasn't getting paid. Y'know prior to this I've done twenty years of original music and travelling and paying to play [AC: Yeah, yeah] but you do 'cause pushing your own music is a lot better and ah I live for it, y'know I love it. I mean form day one when I learnt the guitar I just found learning other people's songs were a

pain in the arse I don't get it like they play it so I'll make my own songs up and y'know from the start it was always about writing original stuff.

SB: I think you've made a really good point there, if you, if you can't, if you're writing your own songs then you can play them as well or as badly as you like or make them as easy or difficult as you like and once you've got one and written it y'know then, then it's yours [AC: Yeah, yeah] and if you're a brilliant musician, it still can be a shit song or you can be a third rate musician and still write a good song, so I y'know, I appreciate that and I think one of the, it's a confidence thing as well, one of the reasons perhaps I don't like I dunno, I haven't got the nerve to ah go up there and do it, 'cause it's like well [inaudible] I saw a band recently in Bristol doing um Sweet Home Alabama and I was sitting with a guy, said great y'know wait for the open hi hat at the end of the start, there's a [makes a hi hat sound] and these guys didn't play it, and the person I was with was like what was the point of that? Y'know he was furious, I was like I couldn't care less really but you've got people, I'm aware of people lie that in the crowd [laughs] and if they wanna hear the open hi hat [inaudible] you'd better bloody play it or they're gonna be...

NG: I saw a Ramones tribute once I won't say their name 'cause they are local-ish [AC: The Ramonas?] No not the Ramonas, we had them in Cwmaman festival one year and they could not, they couldn't do the counting y'know, the 1, 2, 3, 4, which is every song so they went through the set then and I think the drummer was just counting in y'know [inaudible] they come to do an encore and I just shouted you can only do an encore if you count in like Dee Dee! [AC: Yeah, yeah] and the bass player shouted and they all come in wrong [laughter] and they had to start again with the drummer counting in I thought ahhh, that for me was over the y'know, come on!

AC: That's a distinguishing feature of the Ramones y'know you can't just go [inaudible]

SB: So well you get the point don't you...

AC: What do you guys do for a living? What's your main, your proper job if you want?

NG: I teach engineering in Nantgarw college

AC: Oh right you're down there with my other half then, Grant, he teaches on construction [NG: Grant] yeah Grant Avon [NG: Ah right] he must be down there with you [NG: Yeah] yeah.

NG: I don't think I've ever had a conversation with him but y'know I see him all the time, we're in the photocopy room together and alright, how are you, aye alright y'know and he keeps popping up on my people you should, people you know on Facebook all the time [inaudible]

SB: Sabbath Bloody Sabbath

AC: I'll tell him

SB: You'll have something to talk about next time you see him [inaudible] [laughter]

NG: How long has he been with them would you say?

AC: I'd say sixteen, seventeen years maybe

NG: I'll have a chat see if he was there

AC: It might not have been him now listening to you talking I think, like you said it wasn't long before I met you [SB] that he joined.

NG: Right, it was definitely in the nineties that ah that I crossed paths with them

AC: He wasn't, I don't think he was there in the nineties

NG: Ah, that's him is it, that's him

AC: Yeah, yeah, cool I'll let him know. What do you do Steve?

SB: I'm a technical project manager so I manage projects to make software for the DVLA

AC: Okay, okay so how do you find the time between doing those, especially with teaching as well you bring your work home a lot of the time for marking.

NG: Not so much with me I'm more a workshop instructor [AC: Okay] so I don't do the classroom side it's all practical, so there's not a lot of bringing work home in that sense. Well I mean there's stresses attached to any y'know teaching job y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: How do you find the time around your working day [inaudible]

SB: It's alright for me nine to five Monday to Friday the odd evening or weekend if we're doing a bit y'know release of software or something but that's not very often so...

NG: The Cool Beans thing is laid back enough it's only once a week that doesn't affect much and the fact I'm in education and I don't work weekends frees up for Skacasm [inaudible] it would be hard otherwise if I had a job on shifts and things like that, working weekends would be almost impossible to do this sort of thing I suppose

AC: What factors do you think make it difficult for making music in Aberdare? A semi-rural environment outside of the city.

SB: It's having somewhere to practice isn't it. Y'know we're in clover up there in my ah mansion so there is no [inaudible] but anyone else if you're gonna have drums you gotta have somewhere where you can make a lot of noise, 'cause the rest of the band have to keep up with the drum kit so it's always and I think like that, and also transport as well, so I started playing drums when I was about fifteen, I played right through until I moved to London when I was twenty two, it stopped overnight I didn't have a car, y'know it's impossible to be in a band, it's impossible to be a drummer without a car is what I'm saying unless you're gonna be a right pain in the arse for everyone else so, that was it I stopped for years it was only when I moved back to Aberdare I was living in Cwmaman at the time, I had a place where I could make a noise and I got a drum kit again and started playing again, so that was um for me it was drums are about transport and somewhere to make the noise y'know.

AC: What do you think people do around here then, 'cause there are a few bands that rehearse but y'know where, is it the Canalfon? In Cwmaman [NG: Yeah] am I saying that right? Canalfon?

NG: Canalfon, yeah, I think, the Canalfon hut they call it right at the top [inaudible]

AC: Is that used for rehearsals anymore?

NG: Ah yeah it is [inaudible] band practice there, covers band but there was a time when that was fully booked. I mean we'd practice there and the Phonics started off in there um, but um, complaints, it's always the thing noise complaints y'know it always ruins it.

AC: I know Jac's offer space but if you play in return or something? Is there that sort of deal?

NG: I'm not sure to be honest I don't um...

SB: Plenty of bands used to practice in there though wasn't there? Spirit of Boogie practiced in there.

NG: Yeah, um, Mike and his lot have always used it and um, Skacasm have had a few practices there...

SB: But he doesn't charge it's free isn't it?

NG: I think they have started charging now, it's not nothing phenomenal like y'know, I think it's only five pound an hour maybe ten if that?

AC: And that's with the use of the PA and everything

NG: Use of the PA as long as you can, you can run it [laughs]

SB: Someone will pour beer into it, mixer [inaudible] sorry yeah

NG: Well you got Andy there now haven't you, he's changed things around apparently.

SB: He's a lot better mixer than the last guy they had in there

NG: He walked out, walked out mid gig apparently, they had a Prince tribute and he just walked out [AC: What happened?] the sound guy they had there um, what was his name? Can't remember his name [SB: Brill?] no it wasn't Brill, it was, a student he was from, I think the Rhondda college, they got a music place up there [AC: Llwynypia] Llwynypia yeah, um I dunno what happened but um he threw a bit of a wobbly...

SB: The gossip is, the way I heard it, is that Andy was in there at the time and mixed or did the sound for a band which was better than what the guy had done the real guy and when he came back in and found out that Andy had been pissing about with the desk he stormed off [inaudible] but it turned out for the best 'cause Andy is a lot better at it and can work the desk, they got a digital desk in there now so it's quite, need some brains to work it y'know.

NG: Some people are weird [inaudible] especially students they go a year or two and then [inaudible] he did the sound for us Skacasm when we played there, he was alright, he was a nice guy, nothing arsy about him but he, they don't like other people telling them what to do [laughs] it's ridiculous 'cause someone will always know better.

SB: It's control is what it is [laughter]

AC: Very mature student [laughter]

- SB: I um I fancy myself as a mixer [AC: Yeah] [inaudible] with bands I've done the sound for them a couple of times and there, there's a way of doing it y'know and people they're not listening, they're just moving the sliders up and down and a sort of sound comes out and they go that sounds alright there's no you can't hear the guitar, can't hear the bass [inaudible] why can't you hear that, those things.
- NG: You'll have a sound check with these settings, obviously things change when a room fills up with people anyway but doing sound for a live gig is constantly changing things y'know there's a trumpet coming in b'there right you can come up a bit b'there but bring it back down, they don't they do the settings and think that's it for the gig, it's not it's constantly working throughout the set to just emphasise things and bring them down, a lot of it as well is having a good knowledge of genres, having a good knowledge of what type of music, we went to see, I think it was that Holy Diver one and the guitarist wasn't loud enough and I think, I went over to the sound guy and it was a different one then and I knew him as well Mike, I said guitar [inaudible] Mike and that's just from knowing that heavy metal ah guitar has got to be up y'know and then like other types of music like Ska and that totally different bass seems to be up guitar down, it's just knowing the music you want y'know and everything else.
- AC: Would you say it's a lack of knowledge?
- NG: That comes with age [inaudible] [laughter]
- SB: A bit too kind to him there, you're absolutely right about those different mixes and type of music obviously there's um [inaudible] it was a rock band different occasion I'm sure, different, the vocalist was so much louder than everything else, there was no guitar in there it sounded dreadful and then someone tweaks [inaudible] instead of the band being terrible the band were good y'know but it was just the mixer y'know ruined their set for them really.
- NG: That's the thing we played through Pas where other people are controlling them, you just don't know what the sound is out there [inaudible] you only got your monitor, it might sound great here and y'know you're at the mercy of someone else which if they're good it's brilliant, but if they're not too good it can come out disastrous [laughs] I much prefer doing our own sound which we do sometime y'know.
- AC: Are there any other things that make it difficult or make it really easy to make music round here then?
- NG: [inaudible] I don't know really?
- SB: Well the easy thing is computers, and the availability of music software, so if you've got any talent y'know the sky's the limit y'know for dance music or electronic stuff like that like Fishy he really rates, he's sitting in his house with his laptop coming up with some great songs, I mean he can play guitar and bass as well, he can really, so that makes y'know and in the current world of course we live in that can be enough y'know you don't have to have a band you just have to have some software and...
- NG: It's the ease, the ease of recording now compared to back in the day where you had to go to a studio y'know and that's where you get the city and rural thing, 'cause it was always the thing, you had to go, you had to go and play London or you had to go and play at least Cardiff and all that bloody nonsense and half the time there was no one there watching you of any importance anyway. And the same applied to recording you had to go and pay for a studio somewhere, we've [inaudible] and come out, most of the time I've come out dissatisfied with the results because y'know you

got a limited time ah limited budget, you're rushing, you got a guy recording who probably doesn't have a clue to what you're trying to achieve basically y'know. Our first demo we were sort of like an indie slash grunge type thing and the guy recording us was a black funkier, he didn't [inaudible] this song goes a bit more like White Zombie and he was like uh? Straightaway it's like, y'know what I mean [inaudible] home recording that's brilliant, they quality and the result of it you wouldn't tell really these days from home recording to a professional studio if it's done right.

SB: Well you got the power, it's fairly easy, well, fairly easy to get professional software onto your laptop without having to pay for it, so you, there's nothing, you can get what the best people in the world have got and if you can work it then you [inaudible] band to a place to record on the weekend which actually every time I've done I've really enjoyed 'cause it's a trip away you feel like rock stars and you do the thing and you come back [inaudible] but that's about mixing, so mixing now, we just record it straight into the computer and then that's the start then you can do what the hell you like with it you can record a clean guitar [inaudible] maybe that's not a great example but you can get results if you know what you're doing whereas before you couldn't so.

AC: What software do you use?

SB: Cubase

AC: Cubase, oh okay

SB: And that's only because that's the first one I ever had when I had an Atari ST when, back in the day [inaudible] that's a quite easy one

AC: And is there anything else you'd like to add? [inaudible] or a couple of funny anecdotes or something like that?

SB: No I haven't got any funny anecdotes

NG: Nah

AC: Or anecdotes [laughs] they don't have to be funny

SB: The thing that I think is um, 'cause of my age I can see the difference in motivation for music you see. When I was in my teens you were defined by what music you liked, I'm a rocker, wear a leather jacket and that's all those are my friends and that's [inaudible] and there were the skins and there were the mods, all these other people going round and they all had [inaudible] and you attached yourself to music, to bands [inaudible] and that, I think has completely evaporated now as far as I can tell I don't think, apart from metal perhaps there are some y'know out and out metal heads out there [inaudible] but there's not a lot of it...

NG: I believe even those type of guys would like a Prodigy track. Whereas when I was younger it was metal and that was it. I mean you almost couldn't like anything else y'know.

AC: Couldn't tell anyone anyway.

NG: I bought Two Tribes Frankie Goes to Hollywood and I snuck it out under my T shirt [laughter] from Woolworths so no-one [inaudible] there's no way the other boys in Cwmaman are finding out and it was that y'know and what annoys me is I missed out

on so much great music that I've discovered since [AC: Yeah, yeah] I hated The Smiths, you couldn't like The Smiths if you were into metal [inaudible] and now I realise Christ [inaudible] The Pixies the same and bands like that just passed me by in the eighties 'cause I was too narrow-minded [inaudible]

SB: That was a route into music for a lot of people as well, so that is, you, I think you wanted, not that you wanted to be that band but you could be in a band like that as well, so that's some of the things that I think, if that's missing now y'know you're not going to be Adele right unless you're, unless you're Adele really so, so there's not many, I think that was a motivation for people to be in bands because they wanted to be like that, which I think is missing now with the exception of metal possibly [inaudible]

NG: There's too, ah varied

SB: There's too much on offer really

AC: Do you think it's diluted? The whole scene diluted?

SB: I don't mean this in a bad way but it's bland, there's some great songs and some great musicians and artists all doing it, but you wouldn't, you wouldn't be able to pick out those big differences would you [inaudible] the themes aren't there, who the [NG: I think that all changed back] [inaudible] a long time now but who do we, who do we wanna be like?

NG: Well, urgh

SB: It was easy for me y'know [inaudible]

NG: Kids want to be Ed Sheeran

SB: Um, yeah that's absolutely right again like, a bloke stands up and sings with a guitar, it's a song does he want to be Bob Dylan? Not really y'know I wouldn't mind having his money to actually [inaudible] if you were going to be Ed Sheeran you better have something to say and you better be able to write a song as well. If you wanna be, if you wanna play y'know Smoke on the Water go and knock yourself out you can go and you can do that it's achievable [AC: Yeah, yeah][inaudible]

NG: I think the talent show has changed a lot of things hasn't it [SB: Oh yeah] [inaudible] studied fame and wanted fame more than y'know being a musician or whatever that's affected a lot of youngsters, I think.

AC: Do you think that's compromised quality at all? Do you reckon the quantity, there's lots of musicians out there but, that's what I was saying about diluting, the quality [inaudible]

SB: I think the cream will float to the top if you like but not always and sometimes [inaudible] the people who'd be at the top of it would be good but there's no filter, there's no [AC: Yeah, yeah] down from there [inaudible] Soundcloud oh my god [inaudible] there must be a lot of terrible music on there but there's no real filter anymore no grovelling to a record company to make a record

NG: [inaudible] There's loads of unsigned bands and things have written songs as good as anything in the charts [AC: Yeah, yeah] it's all about luck anyway, luck and timing that's a big part of y'know it's not down to how well you can play or how good the

songs are 'cause they can all be y'know, a lot of it is down to luck and timing and whatever.

AC: Do you think 'cause we're so out of the way, well I say out the way it's not mid-Wales or anything do you think the luck factor is a bit more-scarce 'cause we're out of the city.

NG: Well I think twenties years ago yes, but now because of the internet we can get, I mean someone in Australia can hear a Cool Beans song right now [AC: Yeah, yeah] if they want to, there was no way of ever doing that, you'd cut a CD in a studio and got to send it off here and there and you'd never get your music as wide spread as it is now, so I mean I know what you're saying still thinking of the valleys being cut off and thing but, in terms of prom, promotion everyone's in an equal position where everyone is on the internet y'know, there's never been a better time but then because of that there's so much but um, things get lost then y'know.

AC: Get lost in the mix almost

NG: I've often wondered how many great songs are out there, that could have been, but just never got heard y'know loads, there must be loads y'know, like ours [laughter]

SB: Exactly. I think I've got it off my chest

NG: You managed to get the tribute band thing in.

SB: That was the main reason I came down here [inaudible and laughter] Grant, you don't have to mention to him [inaudible and laughter]

AC: I'm gonna stop the recording there.

Interview with Warren Baker, 10-01-20, Researcher's Teaching Studio, Aberdare @ 6.05 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

WB – Warren Baker, Participant

AC: Hiya Warren how're you doing?

WB: I'm very good thank you.

AC: Thanks for meeting me.

WB: No problem.

AC: Um, so a few general questions first, to get an idea of where the land lies [WB: Yeah] Um, so what sort of music do you like listening to?

WB: I do like a lot of stuff and I hate it when people go oh I'm into a bit of everything, urgh, it grinds me but I, I, I like, growing up, listening to my Dad's 4 track and stuff like um Beatles, Bowie, T Rex, The Move that kind of thing got me into music. Stuff I mostly listen to now, is stuff I've grown up on is yeah all the indie stuff really like um, more sort of low-fi alternative side of it like Beck, Clinic, Wean, King Missile, massive Radiohead fan, massive Nirvana fan, liked a lot of heavy metal growing up [inaudible] music that was a little bit different from all the pop tracks y'know Guns 'n' Roses, Motley Crue, Poison, gone through it all. Then heavier stuff Metallica, Megadeth and then I wouldn't say grow up but start going into other stuff, the alternative and indie Britpop broke the same time as the American thing with Nirvana, Soundgarden, Mudhoney, Sonic Youth, all that sort of stuff came to the fore, The MTV generation. Then Britpop, Pulp [inaudible] Menswear all the stuff, Blur, but I like the stuff that's a little bit more interesting, sort of um, makes you think a little bit more, so most of the stuff now I say is edging towards that [inaudible] of Canada, Air, um, I like Prodigy, Muse, most, mostly guitar based but a lot of synth sort of bits in-between as well.

AC: Not so much mainstream then it's...

WB: Yeah, yeah but not super underground, but it's like um, stuff from the nineties like David Devant and his Spirit Wife, like um, massively underrated band I think, I thought they'd be bigger than they ever were, but that kind of stuff then you do listen to and then oh that's piqued my interest [inaudible] I'm liking that, challenges you a little bit.

AC: Okay, so what sort of music do you play then?

WB: [Laughs] well it's most, it's hard to say really because [inaudible] my primary band at the moment is Headnoise and I'm in the with Mike Thomas and Jordan Brill and that was formed by me and Mike for his Dad's, his father's Will Thomas, he's a local artist and he was doing an exhibition over in Merthyr in um...

AC: Redhouse was it?

WB: No not Redhouse, no, it was Theatre Soar but it was the café part of it, I can't remember what the café is called

AC: I think it's café Soar

WB: Yeah [inaudible] so there was like an exhibition going on there so Mike asked me, 'cause Mike 's in a band with me Replaced by Robots [inaudible] another six members of various bands which were sort of thing so Mike said do you wanna write a bit of backing music for my Dad's art exhibition. I said we'll have a go, what kind do you want me to do? He said now, just make it low-fi, not like up in your face, something going on in the background so, we wrote a couple of tracks together. I wrote a bit of music, I sent it to him, he added some lyrics, we listened to it and though this is a bit fun let's put a little CD out on the night just for y'know shits and

giggles so to speak. So we turned up Mike with his little eighties keytar that he paid a pound for in a [laughs] car boot sale, myself and guitar and we had a drum machine backing and we done a couple of sings and people thought it was a bit odd and different [inaudible] said let's do a few more and it just sort of cascaded or snowballed as you call it and got another member then, a guitarist to give it a bit more beef 'cause we didn't want it to seem like it was all backing track and no music, sort of playing live music and [inaudible] backing, we just found the backing thing worked which was drum machine, we didn't want to go down the route of having an acoustic drummer, it's going to sound like every other band and that sort of thing. So that's my primary band at the moment which we've released a bunch of EP's, just released a full length album three or four months back, it's a bit quirky, massively influenced by stuff like Devo, early Human League, King Missile, Beck, Clinic, so you got your jangly post-punk guitars with synth, synthesizers, eighties sound and very theatrical where like suits, for myself were designed, we got a bit of an image going on. Mike the frontman he brings props on stage, he's got robots walking about, we got cullenders, skeletons, it's just the whole thing it's a theatrical thing, so that's the one main band I'm in. I'm also in another band, it started off as a project with my friend ah Alyn Price, he's a singer/songwriter and he's wrote a bunch of songs, he did them for years and years and then we got talking and we said, I said come on up and we'll do a couple of tracks, we'll do a little EP, he said that's fine and as he started writing them we think y'know this could go somewhere there's some decent stuff here, so we've ended up over the course of three years writing a full length album but at the moment we're just gigging it just as a guitar and acoustic 'cause it's quite a vast album so that's another project then I'm in ah, I do another thing on the side which is a studio based project called Reality Distortion Field which is massively influenced like by the Prodigy and sort of my love of sci-fi and films, so there's lots of film samples in it, it's very hard hitting electro stuff and I just sort of release something on Bandcamp every three or four months, if something takes my fancy I'll grab, I'll watch a film and like some of the samples [inaudible] and then I'll write a song around that. So, that's been pretty cool and um,

AC: So are you on your own then?

WB: The majority is on my own but then I'll ask someone else then would they like to collaborate so it's Reality Distortion featuring and then we'll get some other people, some from Cardiff I've had one of the boys from Western Super Mare, ah Alyn Perkins is actually featured on one of them ah, my little boy we done, we done ah sort of like a remix of the Halloween tune and my little boy was playing piano at the time he was and he played the little piano riff on there so it's all in and I do a little bit sort of 'cause I got a small little recording studio a lot of people want to record with me, I add little bits to their stuff as well so, do, do a bit of guitar on them, alternative project sort of um, Smashing Pumpkins, Foo Fighters-esque type called Feverjaw which I've laid a couple of guitar tracks down and recorded for one of the boys Dale Hawkins um, just always keeping busy.

AC: Who's this Dale Hawkins? Is he from Aberdare?

WB: Yeah, Dale's from Aberdare, he's from ah the bottom of Aberaman he is.

AC: And is he in a band himself or?

WB: He's been in bands through the years, he's been in a band called Jets to Zurich [inaudible] ah they were going for a good few years on the scene late nineties early 2000's. He dips in and out of the music scene, but the last going off this Feverjaw it's going on for about eight or nine months now, I think this is the project he's pushing

forward with. It's been interesting 'cause when you write your own stuff it's great but when someone asks you to write y'know you get sort of not just a buzz but it's nice to know that someone values your creative, creative output that they would like you on their records so, y'know that does give you a bit of a sort of a nice lift.

AC: Okay, so we got, sorry just recap so we got, Alyn Perkins [WB: Yeah] and Headnoise [WB: Is Mike Thomas and Jordan Brill and myself] and then what was the next one then?

WB: There was um Feverjaw is Dale Hawkins and Reality Distortion Field and that is just sort of myself and people I just ask.

AC: Okay I'll call them RDF now

WB: That's what I call them [laughter]

AC: Oh yeah, yeah. So if I can just go over a few of those, with Headnoise um, so you said that was...

WB: My primary band.

AC: That's your main band and that came about just being...

WB: A bit of fun, yeah just doing a bit of backing music in a corner for an art show, we've had unbelievably, massive, well we call it massive success [inaudible] been brilliant. We've actually been lucky enough to support Electric 6, um Wolf Alice which, when they played Pontypridd Muni which was absolutely immense um, Public Broadcasting Service when they played in the Muni again, that was fantastic, they actually done an album all about the coal mines around here and they stayed in Ponty and they played four, four or five gigs, Blackwood Miner's, Ponty and another two places, I can't remember and they were looking for a band and we sent them stuff and lucky we had the gig and that was absolutely fantastic. I brought a couple of bands down, called the Nightingales um, a band called Check, Check, Check from New York which were a kind of electro dance band, we kind of fit in 'cause we do the kind of punky thing with Headnoise because of the guitars, we can also do the electro dance thing. Um, we've made a couple of music videos they're not all about gimmicks as such, interesting things, this last album was called Uber Fantastique which Will Thomas Mike 's Dad again the artist designed the album cover which we thought was absolutely brilliant. We have a song on there called 200 thousand gallons of oil, which is about oil, people ask is it a political song? It's not a political song it's literally about so much oil, that's us, the thing sitting by the road [inaudible] he was thinking about it and he just wrote it and I sent him some synthy bit and we wrote it um, and when we released the album we made these little plastic barrels, which actually oil in barrels and we had a limited edition and we put the album on a usb, we put magnets in it, stickers in it, it was the whole sort of [AC: Package] package so, and the one before that then we done Microwave EP which we put in a metal film can and when you opened it the CD actually looked like a real tape so y'know we like that sort of things so, growing up when I used to buy stuff like [inaudible] picture discs, stuff was interested you'd read the sleeve notes, you'd wanna know more about the band, unfortunately today 'cause it's so easy to listen to stuff and stream it, I love streaming don't get me wrong having as many songs in my pocket at any one minute like but people don't listen to music, like kinda sit down and listen to music it's something that, music is going on around and they are there, they don't take time y'know hang on let's sit in a room now and we're just gonna listen to some music, so that's all we used to do is listen to music, read through the liner notes, look at anything interesting

y'know the band, you get a free back stage pass with this or something or another, just something interested that again keeps you interested, it's not just music it's the whole package.

AC: Yeah, I think it has to be now like you were saying y'know people want...

WB: That's, that's the thing [inaudible] and most bands, musicians know someone who's handy on Photoshop, got a bit of tech savvy they can actually write, record, release and do all the promotion and do all the design y'know whereas before you'd have to go to a specialist place and probably charge you an arm and a leg, it can all pretty much be done in house now which is fantastic.

AC: So talking about those sorts of things do you all have a role each or do you just do whatever, whenever?

WB: We haven't got designated roles in Headnoise but I really don't like phoning up for gigs and doing all that side of things and [inaudible] I've said straight, I said it's not for me, I'll do all the um, helping out mostly writing music or collaborating with other who do all that, sort of the formation of where the band is going, the style sort of [inaudible] where the lyrics what kind, what kind of song it's going to be about um with the Robots we played [inaudible] a 7 piece we always used to wear black suits and red ties, I made this big massive robots head that you could put on, neon [inaudible] lights and all, y'know people there in the crowd at the end of the night would put it on and dance with it [inaudible] again, interesting not just going to see a band you don't want to see a band just playing guitar blah, blah, blah this is my song blah, blah, blah this is my next song just interesting stuff so yeah, so...stage craft

AC: Where do you get that theatrical element from then?

WB: I don't know see, I can't really pin point it, I weren't like that growing up and stuff, I said I wasn't a massive fan I'm not really a big fan of Kiss and I'm very, I'm very not an extravert I'm very introverted but perhaps that's just like a sort of ah...

AC: Like an outlet?

WB: An outlet yeah, yeah it is, yeah it probably is 'cause as you know every band I've ever been in or formed trying to make it a little more interesting push it but even when I'm playing I'm the one in the back being quiet [laughter] [inaudible] yeah you just carry on with it, I'll just play my bits.

AC: So talking about the writing process, you talked generally across all the different projects you're involved in. Um how would you describe your writing process and go into quite a bit of detail about that.

WB: Um, I'm just constantly writing ideas, a lot on the iPhone, maybe just a lyric, like I don't sing, I can't sing, never have [inaudible] write a few lyrics, I don't write any lyrics for Headnoise I leave that one with Mike 'cause Mike is thematically sort of sculpted out [inaudible] or as lyrically as it's going to be [inaudible] with that but I'm always writing and recording little bits and pieces. I say I've got a small bedroom studio so I'm always writing bits and pieces. Um, Garage Band on the iPhone, um, I got a guitar in work, I pretty much never ten minutes away from my hands on a guitar [laughs] so there's a guitar in work, I think we found it in a skip, it's, the strings have been on it for about twenties years probably [laughter] um, sounds terrible but it's a little outlet every now and again [AC: Get a tune] get a tune out of it like, write a hell of a lot of ideas on that. I come home then, my wife Liz Baker she's a freelancer

illustrator so she spends all her time doing her thing, so if I'm upstairs doing my thing y'know it's cool [inaudible] I got a find time to portion our time in the day now I do my nine to five, or eight to five pardon me, then it's music but I, even when I'm doing other stuff I'm still thinking about music, oh we could do this, or could do this [inaudible] ideas um...

AC: Okay, and um, thinking about rehearsing and um, so are there any particular places in Aberdare you rely on to be able to rehearse?

WB: Yeah, Jacs pretty much all the time um, Barry, and ah Ian and Paul the owner mostly but, bot mostly but they got a PA set up there so it's a lot easier to go there turn up. It's really nice they let us play there for, pretty much for free and everything. Growing up again in the nineties when we were doing the thing it was so hard to get rehearsal spaces, even finding a PA y'know you'd be cobbling bits from three or four bands just to get a practice, y'know it was a massive effort y'know just, just to get a practice and people weren't driving as much so [inaudible] run over to someone else to get the speakers, we need more leads, oh have you got some leads? I don't know and it was the beginning of mobile phones you had to phone people on the landline it's like...

AC: So would you be relying a lot on other bands y'know different bands for different things?

WB: In the early days yeah, in the early days yeah, well most bands would be reliant on something that's why if we ever did a gig sort of mid 90's you'd also get the other band to support you y'know 'cause they'd bring a bit of gear and y'know you could cobble out a decent show then 'cause there was no, even that probably the largest venue around here in the sort of mid-nineties would have been the Con Club but then you had to hire your own PA which would probably cost about 300 quid to have a decent PA for that size, so y'know you'd have to sell 300 quid's worth of tickets before you even got there but with Jacs having the PA there y'know it's half the battle you just turn up and get on and practice which is fantastic, we would have killed for that system, ten, fifteen years ago like.

AC: Is that the norm now for places to have their own PA set up?

WB: It's getting there more like now, venues, not so much pubs, but mostly ven, like a lot of places are trying to be venues will have a decent PA nowadays and again the prices have come down so much compared to what they used to be y'know still quite expensive they are affordable.

AC: You can have them in your house now y'know home studios and

WB: Well there you go innit

AC: Um, [inaudible] so recording you say you're in charge of, so the recording you do all of it?

WB: I, yeah all the recordings so I um, with the Headnoise 95% of the time I'll write a track idea which will possibly be like drums, possibly be guitar or drums and synth, a few little lines, then I send it to Mike, he'll just sing over the top of it a few ideas, then we get together we got to rough it out and turn it into a song or [inaudible] on guitar with a little bit of keyboard backing just on the phone sort of thing, an idea and we'll take it all from there. But actually recording it it's all yeah, I record it all, so we track it all up [inaudible] track it there, ah mix it there, master it there, it all gets done there.

AC: So you do the lot.

WB: We do it all, we do it all

AC: Self sufficient

WB: Yeah self-sufficient. I, um, if we get his Dad to do the artwork, he's done the artwork for pretty much all the stuff in Headnoise he'll do the artwork, send it to me, I'll photoshop it into the format it needs to be done. I'll sort of sources the CDs what we're going to end up actually doing with it ah, project wise [inaudible] like I bought, found the barrels, found the usb's, found the magnet place just all the sort of things we need for promotion. Mike found a T shirt place, here's a, it is, it is a good mix but recording and those sorts of things y'know probably a lot... But Mike does all the sort of booking the gigs and that side of things, he's constantly filing off emails and getting reviews [inaudible] Brill just turns up and plays guitar [laughter] He does take a little of a back seat but he was the last member in but we're happy with Brill's output anyway y'know when, when he plays, [inaudible] proper ideas and stuff he's there so...

AC: It's a band as well and if you all wanted to be in the front, the main person...

WB: Well, that's, that's it as well y'know [AC: Problems] you don't want to designate roles but people just fall into the roles, that they, that they got. I wouldn't be recording now at the moment if one of our members Craig Chapman who was in Replaced by Robots the seven piece, he moved to Brighton and I thought well if I don't learn to record the chances of getting recordings was slim 'cause it's a lot of money to go to a studio so I gotta learn it being in around the music since the early nineties I realised I picked up a lot and really wasn't that hard to jump into that role just doing it, so one night I was just noodling in the bedroom and the next minute then there was a bunch of Eps, stuff and it just hasn't stopped since then sort of thing like which is really good.

AC: So you learnt your recording skills from Chapman did you?

WB: I learnt a lot from him but no-one actually taught me as such just a lot of YouTube and just stuff that I actually realised that I'd just picked up anyway, just along the job yeah. Because lucky enough, oh there's another band as well sorry, mid-nineties was Serotonin and that was with Craig Chapman and that, we were lucky enough to go on this thing New Labour brought out called New Deal for Musicians 'cause I, I'd just finished college and I went on it and literally it paid for us to record an album. They said what do you want to do and I said I want to learn music and they said okay find a studio, so I found a studio and they pretty much gave us three days and month down the studio so we spent a year writing that in a proper studio with y'know that would have cost us money, y'know most bands practice, practice, practice turn up and knock it out as quick as they can 'cause they're paying by the hour, we were lucky enough to, they were paying, actually writing in the studio which was absolutely fantastic I didn't realise I learnt a hell of a lot being down there for all that time y'know with musicians and everything and like I say for the Alyn Perkins project we had thirty three different musicians come up the house over the last few years, we basically been recording it, the past few years every Sunday over the past three years give or take a Mother's Day, a Christmas or some sort of thing. Ah we've had countless guitarists, countless bass players, cellos, brass instruments, flute, oh, loads, extra vocals, piano, electric piano, it's been a massive sort of thing, and again I've learnt a lot of stuff on the job really like and mixing with musicians and...

AC: Any classical guitar? [laughter] [inaudible] so how did that come about with Alyn then? What was the impetus...

WB: It was quite funny really, I've got a little film club thing on Facebook right like a little film group, we talk about films. My wife was talking to Alyn on there about illustrating and she said oh you'd probably get on with my husband Warren and then we got talking and when he started talking about this that and the other it actually transpired that about twenty years previous I went to watch his band, 'cause I actually remember some of the names of the songs they played and they played a cover version which is Park Life and at the time not many local bands around here were playing covers of modern songs it was all Status Quo all that kind of thing, so this was new, fresh like and um we got talking and he said yeah we played [inaudible] down in Abercynon and I thought why would I have gone down the [inaudible] we're Aberdare boys we, we don't go down there but it worked out that their drummer Carl was a friend, he'd come home from Portsmouth University and said we're playing Abercynon tonight come down and watch us. We went down to watch Carl and he was in a band with Alyn and a guy called Paul Maskell, the three of them were in university in Portsmouth, so he'd met them in Portsmouth [AC: Okay] so, that was the sort of connection [inaudible] that was quite strange and he knew all the people I knew but we'd never actually met over the years 'cause he knew a lot of my friends like Neil Galsworthy, Jamie Kindleton, he knew Gerry, he actually jammed with Gerry, jammed with Jamie, he knew Charlie Denning from Cripplecreek, he knew a lot of the people but never, we'd never actually met. So, we got talking in the film group [inaudible] we worked out we kind of liked the same things so, I said come up one Sunday I said bring your acoustic, strum me a couple of songs and we'll just have a look. So he played one or two songs and I said I like them, so he said my real idea is to make band songs not acoustic songs. So, I said that's great we'll have a go at that and then three years later we got the album out so...

AC: And like the videos for some of the songs, who, who's involved?

WB: Well Alyn does most of the videos for the [his own] stuff, ah he's been using the Wintercroft masks I think he made sixty or seventy of them, I think?

AC: Oh really?

WB: It's up, it's up, the company Wintercroft um they make geometric masks with animal heads. You buy the plan and then you can make as many as you want [inaudible] like you buy the plan to make the panda one a geometric shape and if you get enough card to make it, it all fits together with glue [inaudible] big or small [inaudible] yeah, yeah. So we made the video, we were up in the woods and he wanted it to be like animal folk so he, we're all dressed [inaudible] like animal folk ah we were supposed to film it on the nice day but we couldn't something happened, we couldn't do it so we had the Sunday and the Sunday was miserable and cold and everyone, we climbed up the top of um, Cae Garw, Cefn Pennar, it was horrible and cold and muddy and the hill, was like an incline to get up there but we got up there and it was a fabulous, fabulous day up there, ah we had must have been about fifteen, sixteen people like my boy Gabriel, Alyn's boy ah Bailey Zane which used to come when we record, when we record Bailey Zane would be near enough the same age as Gabe so they were playing downstairs on the play station or wrestle and stuff, we'd be upstairs [inaudible] leaving everyone to it and they were, becoming friends and everything and both of them actually come and recorded on the album as well there was some backing vocals on ah the Memory Tree.

AC: How old are these two now?

WB: Gabriel is now thirteen, he was a teenager in December and Bailey Zane now is probably about eleven or twelve.

AC: My daughter's twelve now, yeah so, it's that age

WB: It's all that girlfriend and bloody and spending money [laughter]

AC: They get more expensive the older they get

WB: Oh God yeah, he's got a bank card now so it's not even Dad can I have some money, what it is Dad can you send me some money [laughs] I don't even see him now y'know to look at his face while he's fleecing me but physically fleecing me now like...

AC: He can do it remotely

WB: Yeah remotely fleece me so, but...

AC: So was it a conscious effort to get um like family members and everyone involved?

WB: I think, I think it was really 'cause as we were going along Alyn was saying I'd like to have this kind of sound on it and then who do we know who plays this? And as the entire album, it's called Working to Design, there's seventeen tracks and it's about life, loss, alienation, everything but it's a real emotive album y'know really hits, tugs at the heart strings so to speak, so like the songs needed a lot of natural instruments as well. So [inaudible] I used to do [inaudible] at this open mic night and this girl plays this and we ask her and we're friends with all of them [inaudible] Myspace friends. We've had a couple of people from ah Cardiff John Barnes who I've done some stuff with, with um RDF fantastic piano player ah he sent some stuff [inaudible] playing piano um, Jennifer, Jennifer O'Neil Howard, she's from Massachusetts Alyn's friend from the Myspace days, she sent us her vocals...

AC: So this is international?

WB: Oh yeah, yeah, one of the tracks on there um, let me think [inaudible] eleven is I didn't actually produce that one, is a friend called Big Long Baby [inaudible] and he done that one, Alyn done that one a good few years ago and he done it for the Rowan Tree Cancer Trust and he put it out as a sort of free thing so he wanted to put that on there anyway, so that went on there, it's the only one that I didn't produce but it's [inaudible] we got um Matt Williams, he goes by the name the Brigadier he does Beach Boy-esque harmony and vocals so he sent us like 120 tracks of ahs and stuff and we had to sort through them, they sound fantastic when they're done but when they come through they were all individual like ahh [giving examples of different pitches] How do you put all this together? Like he gave us a formula of how he done it and we worked it all out and when we worked it all out we listened to them and my God it sounded like the Beach Boys [Inaudible] sitting on the sofa going yeah, this is gonna be, this is gonna be something. Um, we've had um, what I call, what I call the old guard [inaudible] guys who are a little bit older than fifty, play some nice stuff on there, they played um, I can never say the word the bovan, bodhran?

AC: Oh the Bodhran is it?

WB: The bodhran that's it yeah, the Irish drum yeah. Tony, played the flute, fantastic...

AC: Was that Christine Chandler? Who done that, the Bodhran?

WB: No, no, it was um, oh I forgotten his name, [inaudible] I can't remember his name? But he was um a little bit older than fifty, I think? [inaudible] [laughter] yeah so many people just coming back and fore everything and it's been really, like I say you got a proper community feel to it.

AC: It has, it has yeah, I've seen the stuff on Facebook and I thought oh that's [inaudible] thing [inaudible]

WB: Yeah, yeah, 'cause when we were going along through it we didn't actually make any we'd do little snips of videos but there was no sort of this is the making of video, if someone was up we'd like to get a photo with them, so you could probably track back through Alyn Perkins' feed and see how [inaudible] everything like but y'know we didn't really consciously decide to make videos and um, oh Cat Southall came up and done a bit of singing, she's fab, she's fabulous Cat I've known here for years and years and she was in the band Sal many, many years ago [inaudible] solo album. We sent her a track it had a real bluesy, stoney feel, we wanted to get that sort of um rock n roll circus where everybody joins in at the end, that Hey Jude thing where everyone doing, just jamming doing [inaudible] she put some cracking vocals over the top of it. Charlie actually played on that as well, Charlie um, Charlie Denning who's in Cripplecreek played fantastic sort of um electric piano and like a [inaudible] organ at the beginning which sounds brilliant.

AC: And was it all voluntary?

WB: Yeah they all came up. Yeah, yeah we just asked them do you wanna come up and lay a track down like and they say yeah, yeah we'll, I'd feed them y'know give them biscuits [laughs] a cake or something [laughter] coffee but yeah, everyone was more than willing 'cause like I said Alyn is a lovely guy, he's been on the scene for years and years with the open mic, he helps out nothing is no problem for anybody. Same with the artwork for the album, Michael Gustavius Payne he's a Merthyr Tydfil artist, he's um, he's got art all over the world he's very well established.

AC: I've got a couple of original Payne's in the house

WB: Have you really?

AC: He gave them to me ah, they were in the back of his wardrobe years and years ago um, 'cause I'm from Merthyr originally

WB: Ah fantastic

AC: He didn't want them and I was like I'll have them 'cause you're really good like y'know

WB: Mad

AC: So yeah, I got two, ah really early Payne's that's what I'm calling them [laughter]

WB: Fabulous so yeah, he's um, Alyn's, first of all, Alyn was friendly with him in college, so he got back talking to him and he said I'm doing this would you be willing like to lend us a piece or two? For some of the covers then. He said what do you want and I think Alyn sent him the album and told him the whole concept and he actually gave us permission to use all of them so we got seventeen individual pieces that all relate

to each song title and he actually done apparently two original pieces for the front and back of the album for us.

AC: So the cover of that album...

WB: Actually original pieces. The album, you can join each of the photos either way 'cause it's about the passing of time, the seasons and everything so you can put them both ways it's like a never ending loop of life like, yeah so he's been absolutely fantastic, letting us have them paintings and uh.

AC: So it's like an artwork and an artwork musically as well

WB: Yeah, that's what it is it's a totally, total, total immersion of the music and the artwork

AC: Was that intentional to mix the two or did that just happen that way?

WB: I originally I think there would have been a theme going along where all the artwork would have sort of blended in, I don't know if Alyn had in mind all seventeen tracks would have their own specific artwork because at the time we didn't have, we didn't even have an album cover so I think as he got talking to Gus who realised we could 'cause Gus's stuff it sort of fits aesthetically what the songs are about.

AC: And how does Alyn know Gus again?

WB: I'm pretty sure they were in college together

AC: Cheltenham, or Merthyr was it?

WB: I think it was Merthyr? I'm pretty sure Alyn said they've been friends through college, I think it was Merthyr college?

AC: Okay, and Alyn is he a full-time musician or?

WB: No, Alyn, Alyn's got a normal job as well but um like he does the open mic's and stuff so he's not a full-time musician, he'll be a bit more of a busy musician now coming up because we actually um, we've put together a band to tour, when I say tour to actually gig this album, we're doing a bunch of gigs but it probably, probably won't be a long term thing 'cause we, I think the album deserves to be listened to performed.

AC: So who's in that set up then?

WB: It's ah it's quite a lot I think we're a ten piece at the moment. Yeah there's um, there's Alyn on the acoustic guitar, there's myself on the guitar, there's Adam Perkins Alyn's friend who can't make it 'cause he's on other stuff on the guitar, there's Terry Phillips I want to say [inaudible] he's one of the older guard on guitar and acoustic, there's Adam Gregory who was in Serotonin towards the end he's on the drums, the Robert, Rob Lear who's on the scene very well-known and respected musician he's on the synthesizer which is quite bizarre 'cause everyone sees Rob with an acoustic or he does ukulele, it's very organic but Rob sent us stuff as well [inaudible] we were doing a track called uh [mutters oh I'm not sure what it's called now?]

AC: Is this on the Alyn's album?

WB: Yeah it's on Alyn's album yeah, I wanna say [inaudible] I'm pretty sure that's what it was [inaudible] seventeen tracks it's hard to keep track of them yeah [laughter] I sent

him the tracks and add some guitar to this if you could, so when I sent the tracks over we were using this new system called Splice where you can take a Logic project off my computer and send it to somebody else and it's a sort of whatever they do will affect my project.

AC: Okay

WB: So you can collaborate with people all around the world y'know theoretically, when I sent it to him 'cause it was new and early stages it was my fault or his fault but what he received was the drums and the vocals so he actually wrote all these synth parts and guitar parts for it, so when he sent it back it sounded actually better than what we had initially there, so we go we really like this. We said Rob look we didn't ask you to do all this but he said yeah but you only sent me the vocals and we worked out what happened. So, he sent us all the stuff and again we said Rob you need to be player more synthesizer 'cause it's fabulous. So like, we were like listen to this this is brilliant and it really fits where we wanted to be with the song, he's got like an R.E. emmie, Americana kind of vibe but there's all these like sort of bubbly synths going on but not like in your face electro synths just nice sort of seventies prog sort of synths.

AC: It's interesting that something not going right...

WB: Well, that's it innit [inaudible] happy accidents isn't it. Sometimes that's the kind of thing that, yeah, yeah, that works well.

AC: Are there any other examples of happy accidents that you can think of where something's gone wrong and [inaudible] produced something amazing? [Inaudible] any anecdotes of particular instances?

WB: Um, not anecdotes as such we are using a credit card and a beard for percussion

AC: [Laughter] do you want to explain that?

WB: On the four singles we released we wanted to put a cover version, we put a demo version and a cover version of songs we liked on the B side so to speak only on the physical copies. So we done one, a cover version of The One I Love by R.E.M. We done a cover of Lucky by Radiohead but we kept it all low-key acoustic, small synths and we didn't want a drum beat on because it was a bit too over powering and we didn't want like regular percussion because we wanted it to sound a bit different, so we said how do you make that sound in Stand by Me, y'know [sings the opening with the scrape sound]

AC: Oh I know what you mean yeah.

WB: So we tried everything, scraping things down the floor, this that and the other nothing would work and Alyn said chuck the mic b'here, give the mic for him b'there and he, he was a bit stubbly so he grabbed the credit card and he'll just go like that across the thing, and I'm like that's it! That's exactly so we added a little bit of reverb and that is it so this actually uh, this credit, we had it down as percussive beard [laughter] so that was real, real fun, nice little bit, oh that sounds awesome and it really worked and I was like yeah, I bet that's what they done on Stand by Me innit, I bet that's what they used 'cause uh we were saying those things the [inaudible] the wash boards but everything sounded like too much attack and wasn't nice enough.

AC: Too full on?

WB: It was too full on yeah his beard just done the trick [laughter]

AC: I've never heard of the credit card beard before?

WB: The percussive beard yeah, yeah

AC: That's really cool, so, um, so thinking about um Feverjaw and RDF so how did those things come about what happened...

WB: So with RDF my, my initial plan was before I took on all these other projects and became in Headnoise I was going to release just going to stop [inaudible] not finished but sort of died down 'cause Craig was living in Brighton everyone was in other bands so it was a quiet time. My plan was to write and release a single, one a month for twelve months I thought this is going to be cool. So started writing them and thought I'm enjoying this but I thought it might be rushing, pushing this doing one a month so when I started working on them uh I thought oh it's fun but it's not as much fun when you're working with someone else like, it's the creativity, they send you something and you think oh that's good and you think you're doing something, oh I like that I know what will fit nice with that, I decided then oh do something more like that where I'll have a collaboration on everything. So, I wrote the first one, done it myself and thought I enjoyed that but the second one I done then, I sent it to my butty his name is Industricon [inaudible] um, Barry Richards, he's, he was in a band called Break 2 Wrists from down Weston Super Mare So he sent me some synthy stuff back and I really enjoyed that, really liked it and then he sent me some samples from a film, I can't remember the film? A UFO film it was and that really fitted so I thought this is [inaudible] now then. Every now and again I'm just going to write and release and push one out. I think I've done four, no five at the moment and I'm going to do hopefully in the next month or two if I get two minutes I'm going to do another one a sort of Blade Runner inspired one and again the Feverjaw thing has come about because I had worked with Dale on the [inaudible] stuff, Dale had actually cut his hand on a lawnmower accident, his dad repairs lawnmowers and he cut his hand so he couldn't go to the studio to finish recording the tracks for the album that he was working on, that would have been six or seven years ago at least, so he said will you come down and do my bits, so I went down [inaudible] when you're down there do you want to do some bits? So we done some bits and yeah it was good and then for a while do you want to join the band y'know so I joined the band for a little bit which was great fun, um, that just sort of dissipated then like. He was in a band with his brother then he got married and he a little baby so y'know things with work and what not, so I think that sort of went away and then the last couple of months now he started the Feverjaw thing so. He messaged me y'know would you be interested in helping me out and I said record whatever you want I said, I'll pretty much play whatever you want and he said um do you want to play live? I said well at the moment I'm so full up I can't really commit to do it [AC: Yeah] 'cause you know it's kind of you don't get much time when you work full-time and then it's only in the evenings and you got kids and you got everything else. So I said I can do as much as I can, I'll come, I don't mind coming up and I'll play like one song at a gig y'know if it's a local gig but I said I can't really commit to practices and doing this and everything I said I just, I just honestly can't do it like, so he said oh that's fair enough, so he's been up a couple of times now and I think we've got four to five tracks, we've released two singles [inaudible] received and we're going to release the EP now, March I think? And that's all we recorded in the studio, Alyn's playing bass on that and I'm playing some guitar bits. Dale is [inaudible] he [inaudible] the entire song, complete piece and then I will, I will produce sort of co-produce it if he doesn't like where, what I'm saying 'cause [inaudible] again I like to make things a little more

interesting 'cause, like, Dale, he just likes loud guitars, he keeps saying put the guitars up louder, have a listen now, if you put [inaudible] over there you can have something that's a sort of, makes it sound a bit nicer than 'cause every mother and their six kids have got just loud guitars do something a bit different. He had um, he got a girlfriend Nat, Natalie Cottingham who's singing on it you got a bit of a difference anyway and with that nice soft, she's got a Paramore-esque voice, that sort of nice, powerful but nice voice y'know you got avenues to explore which is a bit more interesting. So, the two singles with Natalie and they were really good so, I think he's warming to the idea of being a little bit more melodic which is nice [inaudible] to suggest things and people take it on-board.

AC: Yeah, that's what I was going to say I mean, it sounds like he's quite used to sort of this, I've got a vision that's very clear and that's how it needs to go, do you think perhaps working with the likes of you then and where you are...

WB: I think so 'cause like y'know I don't like to think oh I'm the producer but I've been doing a lot of it now and it's and listened to a lot of music and stuff and I kind of, I can see and hear things I, a little bit different to what I used to and I think sometimes you well y'know you can do something to make that a little more interesting even if it's a couple of little notes on a keyboard or something or just a little lick or drop something out it hasn't have to always be full on all the time and that's with, that's with all the bands there's always gotta be dynamics if there's no dynamics if everything was all loud there's no dynamics if there's no dynamics you haven't got an interesting song [inaudible] pretty much it's one-dimensional and that's what you get y'know, the interesting, the interesting bits going on you got your quiet and your light and dark.

AC: Yeah, um, let me run through this 'cause you have answered some of these questions. So, [mumbling] how often do you play live in Aberdare then?

WB: Um, Aberdare we've, probably, once every two, three months sort of thing. What we kind of do with Headnoise at the moment is we release something have a run of gigs usually end with Aberdare home show 'cause it's the home and then have a little bit of a breather then write and release something else as a sort of a cycle type thing we're not always constantly gigging but I think last year we played Aberdare about 3 or four times one because we don't want to overkill it. At the moment only Jacs really is the only music venue y'know going on, y'know harking back to the nineties y'know you could on the Monday go to say the Market Tavern or the White Lion, or the Black Lion say can I put a gig on Friday night if they say yes you'd run out with the boys to do some postering you wouldn't think about would anybody turn up, you know you'd have a good night and y'know now days it's getting harder and harder y'know you really gotta promote stuff y'know it's just as it is now pubs now sort of getting a battering in music everything y'know, it's hard so y'know it's just, just like that really.

AC: Do you think um y'know like the same back sort of early days really y'know you've been pretty much constantly gigging

WB: Oh constantly yeah when I was in Serotonin we'd do five, six gigs a month, that would be a lot, that would be a lot of pubs as well and we'd do like a 50/50 split of covers 'cause you'd have to play covers and we'd do stuff like Blur, Manic's it was all indie stuff as well so I always sort of like, we had [inaudible] response around the valleys bands not doing the Status Quo stuff, back people my age then which would have been sort of mid-twenties ish [laughs] doing the stuff that wasn't modern and y'know relevant to them y'know so you'd have the Stone Roses, you'd have y'know ah the Manic's, what do we do, the Stereophonics, Super Furry Animals we'd have stuff like um we'd do Radiohead covers, Nirvana all that type of stuff y'know ah

Teenage Fanclub, stuff, Supergrass, stuff that ah were listening to at the time, they were like y'know playing them songs rather than watching someone do five or six Status Quo songs and Sweet Home Alabama type of thing like [AC: The stereotypical types of songs] that's right yeah.

AC: Um, so do you think that that was a conscious change for you then like you guys in Headnoise to just tour the album and then sort of go back to the studio writing.

WB: Yeah, I think that is the sort of thing we like doing but when we say that we always end up doing gigs in-between anyway, so we're kinda say oh we'll do these four gigs now and 'cause we done the four gigs um, we done Cardiff, we done Clevedon, we done Aberdare and we done Ponty so they were the four local ones, but then there was another two in-between so we said oh well we'll do them now and then something always comes along y'know so, we end up doing more than we always plan 'cause we got one with Headnoise on the 22nd in The Moon in Cardiff and then we got one on the 25th in...yeah that one's in Clevedon, that's cool Winterfest, we've played that a couple of times now and luckily we're going up the bill every year which is really nice, but it's fabulous it's um an all dayer, it's a big [inaudible] like the side of a mountain type with the jetty and all the water um fabulous reception, it's good 'cause you got the bar and the pub and when one band is playing b'there the other band is setting up, so they go from one to the other and it's back and fore which is great, we've played over the years where there's three stages and everyone is playing at the same time so, you can hear even the bleed from one room or something but then it's like oh I wanna watch them but then I gotta go there, it's nuts when people actually y'now make the decision to move from one to the other. It's great you're not stressing when setting up 'cause one were playing forty minutes you were there, setting up and it's great, yeah we played, this will be our third time now and they're all brilliant and these are the last two gigs now what we will be calling touring this album 'cause we've sort of 80% written just as it happens like a, an EP which we plan to release sort of March, April which will hopefully um, we were gonna do a vinyl at first 'cause everyone's doing vinyl's but we really thought well we're not really that kind of band y'know I'm not a vinyl purist like I had vinyl growing up I collected picture discs but y'know...

AC: I like the usb idea to be honest I think things like that....

WB: Well, funny enough that's what the next one is, the next one is going to be I actually bought one um, it's a cassette a plastic cassette, same size and shape as a regular cassette but it's a usb, so it opens out and it's literally a usb so we're going to make our next EP, it's a usb cassette and we're going to make it look like the plan is an 8 bit sort of Sinclair video games so the cover will look like [AC: That's cool] thing um, the working title is Scram and each song is alliterated so we got let me think now Screwball Scramble was the first one then it's Candid Camera and then Ronnie Rocket which is based on a unmade David Lynch film, then it's at the moment it's alliteration again but I think we're going to change that 'cause we're just no feeling it, and then it's Meteor Man and it's going to be different 'cause it's all electric we're playing no guitars on it so we've decided we wanna do a full electric EP.

AC: What are your playing on it then?

WB: When we play live as Headnoise Mike plays the keytar, I play the guitar and I play synth and Jordan, Brill we call him plays guitar and the keytar so like one song could have me like with guitar, Brill on synth or two synths or I'll play half guitar one song and half synth so there's always a massive electro synth vibe going on this we wanted to do a full synth sort of Kraftwerk-esque inspired um type thing so we've

written the songs, so that is the plan then usb cassette and that'll sort of be a limited one. I've sources the CD's um the usb cassettes, got everything all lined up and everything it's just a matter of just getting everything done now, finding time to get it done, the plan is there's no rush 'cause we're sort of still selling the albums so to speak, March, April, May sort of thing coming up now this year, that, that's the plan for that and Alyn's album we got the physical one coming out end of February at the moment and we released a digital one in December that's, that's [inaudible] and getting some really nice reviews and we've got some other sort of things in the works as well, sort of running 'cause that was finishing and we got to the point where there was so many mixing and mastering there was no, we still had time to do bits and pieces so we started writing some bits and I sent him some bits and he sent me some bits and we started doing more bits and more bits turned into songs and turned into practically another EP type thing so that, the plan is that'll be a five track EP but that could be June, July or August or something there's no rush on that. We just, like once you've finished one thing you just want to get the next thing out but you gotta let that one thing that you just let out breath and yeah you gotta let and sell it at the end of the day 'cause y'know you don't want to be pushing more stuff out when we're still selling what, what we've got here at the moment.

AC: Do you find though that um, you're pressured more or to, to get stuff out quicker or is it just an out pouring there's a lot to come out?

WB: It's I don't know it's a hard...

AC: There's a lot of artists that y'know really, it, it seems like quick

WB: Yeah, yeah, that does seem to be the thing nowadays it's like a lot of people are not releasing like sort of albums and Eps, I've done a lot of research online and they say that singles are the way forward because obviously with Spotify people don't take the time to listen to Eps and albums when I say people it's the majority of people who [inaudible] or not what do you call, people who are proper fans, so y'know they're saying like singles are the way forward y'know put a single out every two, three months and that way y'know you can build up. So, what we did do with Alyn is put a single out one a month, I think [inaudible] I said look Ant I said y'know it was getting to the point where people were saying when's the album out, oh it's nearly there, nearly there, and it's like year one, year two and I spoke to Charlie, and funny enough I saw him in Lidl's and I said oh funny enough Charlie last Sunday I said I finished mastering your track. When's it bloody out then!? I said it'll be out soon now I'll let you know! So keep going and going y'know so it's like when are you putting stuff out and I said, I said oh look put something out so people get a taste of things to come and we'll take it from there, that'll give you breathing space. It's the same with Headnoise, we had, we put the Microwave EP out just for breathing space 'cause you've always sort of gotta be current and keep things as if y'know if you just dropped by people just sort of forget about you kind of thing and to me the livelihood of any band is how fresh their music is, how new their music is y'know that's any band can sort of do the same old schtick going over playing the hits so to speak. You wanna see new music, so.

AC: Yeah, perhaps because of Facebook and all that then...

WB: That, that's it y'know people just want instant you want everything now, there and straight away [AC: Yeah, yeah] quicker.

AC: Okay, um, so how important is making music to you?

WB: Oh it's everything [laughs] [inaudible] it's not even a thing we think of this is music and [inaudible] it's part of me I've been into music ever since my dad's [inaudible] reels and spools and he even had the cassette eight track in the [inaudible] everything it's just [inaudible] there's never been a time, well, there was a time I was ill, I um, I had a quite a life threatening disease and [AC: Oh gosh] I had a big operation this that and the other, I'm alright now touch wood, it's something I've gotta live with like and I didn't do music for about two years 'cause I physically couldn't so [inaudible] I still think about music but I didn't make any music, so shortly after that is when I phoned [inaudible] robots and said look [inaudible] and the idea was formulating as I was recovering so um...

AC: Was it you that was thinking

WB: Yeah, I need to know, it was there just constantly there [inaudible] pick the guitar back up y'know and stuff and y'know it was a long, it was a long process, so that sort of knocked me for six so to speak but after, when the Robots idea formed it was a three piece, [inaudible] it was me Craig, and Dave Holt so, so that was the core of it and it was just, can we record these tracks and ideas? So we wrote a couple of tracks and thought this is good so we recorded some more tracks and all of a sudden you got an album and then we got an album so can we do it live? And what shall we call ourselves? And this kind of stuff happened so [inaudible] I said if we're gonna do this we don't wanna be just like y'know t shirt and jeans like indie band let's do something else I said harking back to the Kraftwerk and all that sort of thing where you got a bit of an image and something that's stark and easy recognisable so yeah [inaudible] music is constant, constant . I come home just now and quick shower and took a few strings off my guitar and retuned it [laughs] [inaudible]

AC: It's part of your everyday routine?

WB: It is, it is constant and when I leave here now funnily enough talking about lugging Pas and stuff, Jacs now have made a refurbishment on the stage this weekend so we can't practice, so the Sheps, the Shepherds Arms in Cwmaman have let us practice but we don't have a PA so we're borrowing a PA from Nelson, the boys who do an open mic night. Alyn's car broke down yesterday he had to wait 5 hours to get towed home, so he hasn't got transport now so as soon as I finish work now I go down to Nelson to grab these speakers and then to Glyntaff to grab the PA so band practice tomorrow up the Shepherds, so yeah it's constant, there's always something.

AC: Well this is [inaudible] is um well this is the next question, how do you find the time to make music?

WB: [Inaudible] it's strange it's not like oh I gotta do this or I gotta put this much time away, I just don't think about it, once like work has finished and I think about music and work and playing the guitar a little bit um, my boy's thirteen now practically grown up he does his own thing and [inaudible] my daughter she's twenty three so she does her own thing. Like I said Liz is in full-time employment and she's doing her own thing, she does the illustration, she's done the illustration [inaudible] Replaced by Robots, she designed the Replaced by Robots cover, she designed the microwave cover um, she's always doing her thing which is fabulous, I think if the studio wasn't in the house it might be a little bit harder because you'd be out of the house a lot [inaudible] the Alyn thing was always in the house so [AC: You're there anyway] yeah and Liz is working on Sunday's so, she used to call Alyn my Sunday wife so we call him my Sunday wife [laughs] but, yeah, it's, it's I don't know it's not a thing I have to

find time for in the first place, it's just gotta be done. It's constant. It's [inaudible] completely a part of me.

AC: Would you have it any other way?

WB: Not at all [laughter]

AC: So what's the motivation to continue doing this? What's the aim y'know? What do you get out of it?

WB: It, it's creativity, it's an outlet um, if I got a song in my head, to me a song isn't a song until it's actually recorded so that, that's the thing I like about the recording process and I like all the sort of behind the scenes of how a song gets made and all the mixing and EQs and all the really interesting stuff like that that really takes an idea and turns it into something which is fully formed out there but also I like the fact if you get 5 people, get them in a room and you make music and took one person out and grabbed another person that song wouldn't be exactly the same and how it takes for events in life, metaphysical now, for everyone in one point in time to create that piece of music...

AC: Yeah, yeah it's never the same...

WB: It's never the same like y'know um, that's amazing and it's amazing how you can just have a spark of an idea and then you could turn it into something and collaborating there's nothing better than playing music with somebody else, whether it's just two guitarists y'know someone sitting down with a little drum or something it's just that back and forth that you get that you don't get, well in sports, I don't play sports but I, I can't see it it's not as I can't see it as creative like, it's very rewarding as well, very tiring [laughs] and y'know you gotta have quite thick skin y'know 'cause some people might not like your music and some people will love your music and it's hard and you get knock backs and stuff but y'know you just we just keep on plodding.

AC: Have there been any instances where y'know you've worked with someone and it's been absolutely untenable?

WB: Luck, luckily I think I'm pretty easy going um, most of the boys call me the voice of reason 'cause if something's going on it's great but there's a lot of ego's in bands and this, that and the other like, sort of settle an argument and find the good and bad in those situations and try to mediate so to speak but luckily enough I've never been in a situation where things have gone really, 'cause I know some people who've really, I've always been easy going, recording everyone's been so easy going and think we're never gonna get a problem. Nah I've never had a problem with that luckily.

AC: That's interesting do you think it's the nature of [inaudible] around here 'cause it is so collaborative a lot of the things you do...the people involved

WB: I think we possibly do yeah, yeah.

AC: But then that's the opposite with Headnoise I suppose?

WB: Yeah 'cause there's three of us yeah and, and Mike is hard work [laughs] but not I can kind of talk him down but y'know we just get on we just sort of, it's like a ying and yang thing if you want to go down that sort of route like y'know...

AC: You know each other well?

- WB: Yeah, when you know people well enough you know when to say like y'know, Mike, nah, simple as that yeah [laughter] yeah, not just Mike anyone but very rarely I can't even count on my fingers that it's ever come to a point where it's ah I got to go out for a minute let me have a breather y'know it's luckily enough it's always been really easy going and I've always said if it stops being fun that's when I'll stop. And to me it's always creativity y'know I don't want to sell a million records or anything as long as I can keep putting things out I'm happy like, that's what it's all about.
- AC: Okay and what factors do you think, a really general question but you can be as precise as or vague as you want. What factors do you think make it difficult to make music in a semi-rural village as opposed to a city?
- WB: Practice spaces are the most important I would say so y'know, pardon me, and obviously it's time again, 'cause everyone is pretty much working full-time these days.
- AC: Are there any full-time musicians in Aberdare?
- WB: Um, I think there's quite a few ah...
- AC: I know Justin...
- WB: Justin's teaching guitar yeah, there's um, Chris Summerill teaches full-time, he teaches, Scott Howells I don't think he's in Aberdare now he used to be from Aberdare he teaches I think they're all over in the college in Merthyr I believe?
- AC: I think so or Nantgarw?
- WB: Yeah, yeah, um so there's quite a few of them full-time um, um I think Ragsy is pretty much full-time doing his musical thing, I don't know if he's working, if he's working a proper job now to my knowledge but I'd say 95% of people who are musicians it, it's a part-time thing.
- AC: Yeah, I was gonna say because most of the people I've spoken to they've all got full-time jobs [inaudible]
- WB: Music on the side yeah. Well the full-time thing, you just gotta pay the bills and that's what most people do and ah. I mean watching a couple of things on Facebook, internet and the bands signed to labels and stuff, not major labels now but small like indie bands that do tours around the U.S and they all work sort of part-time jobs and stuff. Y'know. Um, again to this point now I think the end of the big record label is gonna slap a massive [inaudible] to you y'know for a record, y'know them days are gone innit y'know so pretty much most independent bands now are all doing it themselves whether they fund it themselves or fund it through selling the records, merch or digital sales it's all done, it's all done themselves.
- AC: So that's pretty much the trend at the moment?
- WB: Seems, I think that does seem to be the trend yeah around here I'd say we sell the records, we sell the t shirts, we sell stickers, all the money just goes in a pot that'll pay for the next project.
- AC: So as well as rehearsal space can you think of anything else that um, make it difficult for someone to start or continue to sustain your music-making around here?

WB: I don't think so [inaudible] if you've got the equipment and the know-how, I think there's a large enough network of musicians around here who are more than willing, there's plenty of open mic's, there's open mic's in Jacs, there's the open mic night they do in the Cambrian, they do an open mic in the Aman Tavern, sometimes they do down The Falcon, there's a few then down over Nelson way um Merthyr. So if you've got a guitar or a piano or a triangle or anything really I'm sure you would find a like-minded person who is y'know willing to do something with you like.

AC: Okay, the final question you'll be glad to know [laughter] is there anything else you'd like to add?

WB: The coffee was very nice [laughter] oh I think that pretty much wraps it up, it's been really interesting ah really appreciate you asking me um...

AC: Oh no, thank you, thank you

WB: It's brilliant, it's good reminiscing about stuff, when people ask me about the time I started on Tom Jones at the Welsh Music Awards um...[laughs]

AC: C'mon then you gotta say...

WB: Oh go on then [laughter] this is the outtake um, we were lucky enough with Serotonin to be um nominated for um Welsh Music Award for one of our videos Videodrone we'd um sent it to Channel 4 and they were doing a thing called five Minute Wonders and they accepted it and there was a panel of producers and each one had to pick one of the songs, accepted and Greg Haver picked ours and he was the Manic Street Preachers' producer so we ah won and were allowed three days in Rockfield Studios recording with them to re-record the track which was just amazing and the Manic's had just left, so all the gear set-up was their gear, so that was fantastic, that was just an experience, like a proper old-school studio um. The recording desk they had there was one half of a Trident desk which they said was used by Queen, which was amazing, shipped down from somewhere in London I can't remember the name of the studio but it was one half of this 24 track which was the 48 track that Queen had used, I can't remember the name of the album but so that was quite amazing and um...

AC: It doesn't matter what album of Queen...

WB: Yeah, that sort of thing. So, ah that was quite amazing and from that then they made the video, and we had a [inaudible] of five thousand pound which was absolutely mental.

AC: That's bonkers.

WB: Yeah I couldn't believe it like um, we said um well what are we gonna do, I don't know what we do? I said first thing I don't want to be in the video I said. I hate videos when I'm in the video, all the videos you make I'm in! [inaudible] let's do something else. At the time and this was like '98, '99? CGI was coming into its own, so we found a company up in London and they made a CGI video, the song's called Videodrone, it's inspired by JoJo 1984 so it's about a world constantly being watched, this that and the other, CCTV. Now more so than then [inaudible] not as much as it is now, so the video is like this revolving sort of tentacles like globe with all these camera screens on it.

AC: I think I've seen that?

WB: Yeah it's on YouTube yeah [inaudible] intercut with some of the screens then it's us playing, we're in it but we're kinda not in it [inaudible] Um, anyway that got nominated for the Welsh Music Awards so we thought oh fantastic [inaudible] this is mental guys. So we went down there with this massive table, all the alcohol you could ever imagine on this table and it was all free [inaudible] I'm just gonna go full [inaudible] so apparently I drunk everything. Chucked a bucket of water, champagne water over somebody behind me, I was in the toilets, apparently I was calling Tom Jones or something, has-been because he's playing Vegas, it was completely embarrassing I absolutely remember nothing about it. I just remember waking up was this, in my house, my driver from work picked me up so somehow I must have rung him to get picked up and I woke up and I had pockets full of test tubes? And I thought oh my god what have I done? And they were um, Jägermeister, girls walking about like [inaudible] with all Jägermeister's. So I was knocking all these Jägermeister's back. I had one pocket full of empty test tubes and another pocket full of bottle openers they were black plastic ones and they had lost horizons written on them and that's the name of the company who were putting the event on, so I had about fifteen of these bloody bottle openers to give to everyone afterwards and about four years later I met one of the people who was down there and they said oh I remember you, I said oh don't even tell me and I said I gotta say I said I stole about fifteen of these blinking things, we ordered 200 of them. So apparently I was completely embarrassed but I thought ah well it's my one rock n roll story so there you go.

AC: That's fantastic that is [laughter]

WB: And there was a guy in EastEnders called Paul, he was Paul, Paul Truman he was in EastEnders many years ago um, and he was comparing, he's a stand-up comedian and I was [inaudible] many years ago, anyway he was the one comparing the evening but apparently I was like arms round him all night like my best friend so I think he really enjoyed my company! [laughter]

AC: Fantastic

WB: So yeah that was great fun

AC: So, do you want to add anything else?

WB: I think that's about it?

AC: Are you sure?

WB: I think so?

AC: Glad for anything, I'm going to stop the recording b'there now, that's absolutely...

APPENDIX F

Transcription of Merthyr Tydfil Interviews

Interview with Anthony Jenkins, 05-09-19, Telephone @ 10.33 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

AJ – Anthony Jenkins, Participant

AC: Hi Anthony, how're you doing?

AJ: Inaudible

AC: Can you hear me then?

AJ: Yeah, I, I [inaudible] just two seconds let me just make sure, get a bit more signal 'cause [inaudible]

AC: I can hear you okay.

AJ: Oh you can [inaudible] I'll stay where I am then [laughs]

AC: Ooh yeah I can hear you fine yeah.

AJ: Okay?

AC: Yeah, absolutely fine [inaudible] um, did you get a chance to read over the consent and information forms [AJ: Yeah] and are you happy?

AJ: Yeah, absolutely fine.

AC: Yeah, you're happy to carry on yeah?

AJ: Yeah no problem at all.

AC: Okay, so the first question is what music do you like?

AJ: Do I like? [AC: Yeah] um, okay so I listen to a lot of um sort of jazz I suppose ah funk, soul I'm quite diverse to be honest anything from classical to jazz stuff y'know um, I grew up listening to a lot of [inaudible] guitar and stuff, obviously I play the piano as well. So, I leant classically [inaudible] play a lot of jazz, quite diverse really [inaudible]

AC: Okay, so what sort of music do you play?

AJ: Do I play? [AC: Yeah] um, so, so I'm in 2 bands uh [laughs] I practice, I play the piano um and guitar in a band called the Moonbirds which is the sort of main band we call it [inaudible] sort of funk based [AC: Okay] groove, groove to the music [inaudible] quite a lot of jazz influence [inaudible] very diverse in sort of call it punk funk it can go in any direction really y'know [AC: Yeah] um, and then [inaudible] and then I play in a like jazz gigs and quartets and sort of trios and things um, and then I'll

play with a guy called Steve Jackson who sort of y'know Steve, guys like country, sort of Americana stuff [AC: Okay] so I sort of play whatever's needed really but y'know it goes in all directions really.

AC: Okay, okay. So, I'm gonna ask you about your musical practices [AJ: Yeah] so can you just talk to me about the writing processes and who else is involved?

AJ: With the Moonbirds it's sort of um, [inaudible] between me and Mitchell whose the singer, um, with most, we both sort of, I write, I write most of the music and, and [inaudible] Mitchell mainly does the writing of lyrics and things. Um, and so initial ideas are y'know it's kinda like we, we get together the two of us um, I got a shed at the top of my garden um which we converted into a music rehearsal room and stuff and um yeah [inaudible] it more sort of bringing ideas [inaudible] he'll put some words or I've got some words, start there and then work on some ideas what [inaudible] y'know we edit it together, see what works [inaudible] y'know keeping things simple all the time not, not y'know trying to over-egg an idea for example 'cause sometimes we'll find ourselves like when we [inaudible] practice them with all the boys [inaudible] 'cause quite busy y'know 'cause there's a lot of instruments going on 'cause we're a five piece, not massive but um [AC: Yeah] [inaudible] um, when we [inaudible] strip things back or y'know work out sections [inaudible] it can take quite a lot of time for us to get the final song and, and, one, one of the biggest problems is everyone in the band has got quite different things everyone's [inaudible] and everyone wants input so it can be, can be a problem [laughs] sometimes we gotta [inaudible] but um, yeah a lot of the time we're stripping things quite back and being simple y'know when required we [inaudible] written a song um quite '70s Motown influenced [inaudible] I took an idea to the [inaudible] I wrote the words as well to that first one [inaudible] practice which I know is [inaudible] so I ended up just playing tambourine one the [inaudible] the other guys playing [inaudible] guitar based, drums etcetera [inaudible] a lot of singing as opposed to a lot of playing y'know, so any, it, it depends y'know like [inaudible] I don't know if that's any use to you? [laughs]

AC: Yeah, that's great, that's great. And um, what about the other bands then is it a similar sort of thing or um...?

AJ: Like, like with sort of Steve Jackson, um, he, he's the main song writer in that and I do like a lot of side work [inaudible] they, they are the sole artist really and they bring, they bring the songs [inaudible] we play on them y'know to whatever they want really [inaudible] playing what's required y'know as good as you can really [AC: So it's a bit like session work really I suppose?] yeah, yeah, [inaudible] with Steve can do something like [inaudible] [Kitty Crawford?] um and that's [inaudible] like soul, neo soul sort of stuff really, yeah, and a lot of the time it can be like [inaudible] I like, I like that whereas [inaudible] I spend a lot of time transcribing a lot of um, that sort of stuff y'know so I know exactly [inaudible] it takes quite a long time sometimes and it's quite complex stuff [inaudible] y'know.

AC: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Um, so you mentioned about rehearsing, is it with Mitchell in, in the converted shed at home [AJ: Yeah that's right yeah] are there any other places where you use for rehearsing in Merthyr?

AJ: Yeah, in Merthyr there used to be, there used to be one on the Goatmill road but, but it shut down now. We used to go there quite often, um, with a guy, a guy called Steve O, Steve Jones, he, he's a drummer, he literally [inaudible] a couple of years ago, he finished it and we go now to um, if we go outside, we go to um, practice in my shed,

you know Lloyd, don't you? [AC: You what? Lloyd?] Yeah, you know Lloyd, don't you? [AC: Oh yeah] He um [laughing] [inaudible] his mother's side room [inaudible]

AC: Right [laughs]

AJ: But [inaudible] official practice there's one over Aberbargoed called the Practice Pad [AC: Right, yeah] [inaudible] in the Merthyr area there's nothing, there is one actually thinking about it um, up on Pant industrial estate, that's called NU Studios N U and studios [AC: Right] we, we do tend to go there sometimes but the gear's not that good really it can be hit and miss [inaudible] now.

AC: It's not reliable enough to get a good practice you mean yeah?

AJ: Well, I mean the gear like the equipment in these places have got, you've obviously got PAs and stuff y'know it's more sort of um makes things easier, it's more sort of like [inaudible] it's not an inefficient music studio it's more, it's used all the time y'know they do let different people but [inaudible] the sound. In the past we've gone up there they've left the key there for us to let ourselves in and they haven't been there they've forgotten do you know what I mean, a waste of a trip [AC: Yeah] yeah, we, we don't tend to go there. It's basically those, the Practice Pad, uh my shed, oh maybe Lloyd's mother's side room if I'm playing with Lloyd or we y'know places in Cardiff like MusicBox and places like that y'know.

AC: Yeah, yeah and what about recording then, where do you tend to record? Is it in Merthyr?

AJ: Um, we, we did, when my mate Steve the one on Goatmill road had a studio uh, as well, so we did do some recording in there. Um, but I mean, like, I can't think off the top of my head, [inaudible] the Redhouse but they don't let, don't let anybody else use [inaudible] at the moment, it's there but it's not uh doing enough with the art etcetera um [AC: Yeah, yeah] we, [inaudible] we gone, the Moonbirds, the first recording we went to Leamington Spa [AC: Oh really?] to record with a guy called John Rivers um who did the Specials stuff [AC: Okay] um, now that was through a promoter we know in Cardiff who loves [inaudible] a musical journey or something and um he, he knew this guy 'cause he's from [inaudible] white elephant and we ended up recording with him in Leamington, I mean the recording [inaudible] we spent a few days up there actually. The studio was called Woodbine, Woodbine studios ah I'm trying to think where else, where else I've been to record really um, obviously there is one, there's one in we used in our band called Belle Mellor as well [AC: Okay yeah] we, we've used um Sonic 1 in Llanelli, not Llanelli um, yeah [inaudible] just off the M4 um [inaudible] [AC: Over Carmarthen?] yeah that's it Carmarthen, Llangennith mun that's what it's called sorry [AC: Yes, I know] yeah we recorded there with Tim [inaudible] in the valleys ah off the top of my head y'know I couldn't think of anything y'know I [inaudible]

AC: Why do you think there's a shortage y'know or a lack y'know, lack of in Merthyr particularly?

AJ: I, I dunno, it's funny really because, like because I, when I started y'know it must be four, five years ago [inaudible] with our line-up, the line-up we got now, the definitive line-up I think um y'know [inaudible] in Merthyr [inaudible] bands kicking off then you got The Crown y'know um [inaudible] and the scene now [inaudible] Merthyr Rising Festival [inaudible] a lot of gigs on you'd think y'know it would be um y'know there would be an increase in places to record and y'know in Merthyr itself but I mean y'know it's [inaudible] home studio sort of thing and obviously the Redhouse has a

studio but it hardly ever gets used apart from the college y'know I'm not really sure it's, it's whether it's funding or, you'd think it would be y'know with all the bands coming out of Merthyr and that [inaudible] and this area you'd think there would be um, [inaudible] something reliable y'know [inaudible] if you're going to someone's house to do recording [inaudible] know what they're doing they haven't done that before y'know, never really worked [laughs] I, I'm not certain why that is? But obviously [inaudible] needed really [inaudible]

AC: So you think it's booming now at the moment yeah?

AJ: Yeah, I think it's still um yeah, yeah I think y'know the scene is, is very good and like when I finished with um when we started Moonbirds um, I did, I did cover bands before that y'know and that scene was pretty good y'know but when we did original music when we started and a few bands around us then it started picking up playing original stuff it's obviously [inaudible] [AC: Yeah] um, yeah everything's been y'know [inaudible] still a good music scene, lots of good bands.

AC: It seems odd doesn't it that there's not more implemented, if something's growing 'cause it y'know [inaudible] good scene...

AJ: Yeah, yeah exactly that's what, that's what I mean y'know I think y'know things like [inaudible] rehearsal rooms in, studios and stuff we, [inaudible] grow in it y'know but I'm not sure whether like [inaudible] shutting these studios [inaudible] not getting much funding for it like or whatever um, yeah, yeah it's a tricky one really but yeah it, it would be beneficial for, for a lot of bands y'know.

AC: Do you think it is a question of money or could it be something else? Some other reason for it?

AJ: Um, I think, I think yeah I think it's always [inaudible] gets ah um [inaudible] in a sense but I mean there again you look at like the Welsh language and music scene and stuff and there's y'know, there's lots and lots of funding in that y'know 'cause [inaudible] the Welsh language [inaudible] I don't speak Welsh myself but um, do you, do you know Theatre Soar in Merthyr? [AC: Yes, yes] [inaudible] they're Welsh language based, I played [inaudible] for quite a while and y'know [inaudible] lots of [inaudible] Welsh language. There's lots and lots of um funding in that but yeah but I'm not sure [inaudible] I don't really know [inaudible] haven't taken the plunge y'know and uh [inaudible] building a studio [inaudible] I dunno it's a tricky one really [laughs]

AC: It is tricky yeah um, do you, when you've been in the Moonbirds and other bands that you're in uh [AJ: Yeah] do you rely on funding or any other financial help outside at all?

AJ: Ah no, we literally um, well every band I've, well I say that, apart from when I did the Welsh language stuff with um with Delyth, she was part of the um, have you heard of the New Horizons Project? [AC: Yes] yeah, so she was part of that and obviously funding for y'know [inaudible] with the Moonbirds we literally um, I guess we've just gigged y'know [inaudible] money um [inaudible] fund ourselves and things we got a bank account y'know, we put everything in y'know [inaudible] put into the account and save up and [inaudible] a recording in October we'd save money in the fund for that although we um when we drove to Leamington Spa, a guy we know um, he, he did give us some funding actually to record um that's the only thing funding we've ever had really, y'know most of the time we just gig to earn money that way to ah, to fund things.

AC: How did you meet the promoter?

AJ: [inaudible] so we um, it's a funny story 'cause we, we played in the moon, The Moon in Cardiff y'know the one on Womanby Street? [AC: Yeah] we played in there um, and um [inaudible] I think we were supporting somebody um, and a guy um was it, a viola player from Cardiff called Bernard King, I dunno if you've heard of him? [AC: No, no] he's um well he had, he, he [inaudible] in London to college and to Canada y'know he's played along with some pretty big, big names orchestras and stuff [AC: Yeah] um and he saw with his friend who um said oh I'm in this band and um great y'know and uh, y'know you should, you should get involved with them, he liked to work with bands himself y'know play on the tracks or whatever um and then his friend sadly died, I'm not sure how but then y'know it sort of comes y'know I remember him saying that about his band and he wanted to get involved with us y'know [inaudible] Bernard did um y'know he wanted, wanted to help us I suppose ah he, he managed us in a sense for a while y'know like he y'know he asked to get on the [inaudible] recording, sort some video stuff out y'know and he knew, he knew the [inaudible] Francis [inaudible] called New South Wales um I dunno if you've heard of them? Based in Cardiff and a lot of new bands and he writes for [inaudible] and puts gigs on in places like Chapter y'know [AC: Okay] uh the arts centre um, so, so, so he knew [inaudible] and Francis met up with us and [inaudible] he came to see us like [inaudible] he funded our first set of recordings um so basically he, it, it was by chance really that we uh, we happened through a gig y'know so like y'know like in music [inaudible] aren't they really unfortunately that's how it is sometimes um [AC: That's right yeah] [inaudible] if bands do a gig, got this funding and it went from there really.

AC: Yeah it's right place right time isn't it sometimes y'know...

AJ: Well, that's exactly what I meant y'know what I mean unless you're on the [inaudible] it happened to work out for us y'know.

AC: Yeah, how would you describe your relationship with the people that are most important to your music making, who are they and how would you describe it?

AJ: Do you mean like in the band? The bands I'm in?

AC: Um, yeah and anyone else, if they're outside the band but they're crucial to you being able to do what you do.

AJ: Oh right okay, [inaudible] the Moonbirds for example again the band with my girlfriend y'know um I think it works for us then 'cause it's all very um we were in the same friendship group anyway y'know um, so we were friends anyway before we started making music together and we our social lives together outside of music I think that's a big part of y'know things, how things can work well 'cause y'know [inaudible] bands sort of uh have lots of problems 'cause they don't get on or whatever y'know um but yeah I don't think, the biggest thing y'know is we can relate on a musical level and on a social level as well y'know I think that's a big, a big thing in band, 'cause a lot of bands playing are y'know are um, are [inaudible] one person is a friend or whatever or some outside of that [inaudible] y'know I turned up to rehearsal I got on with them that's the main thing then [inaudible] 'cause I work ah then the same with people outside with [inaudible] and Francis y'know we, we, we got on [inaudible] people as well, they didn't seem like they were gonna rip us of or something y'know so yeah, I think yeah it's a bit [inaudible] the bigger thing is being able to get on and have a personality but even before music y'know comes into it really.

- AC: Was you in school together with your band mates?
- AJ: Um, so well, we, Mitch, I was in school with Mitchell in Afon Taf and so was I who else was in Afon Taf, ah Sam was [inaudible] schools [inaudible] Lewis Boys and the other, [inaudible] went to, where did he go? He went to ah, Bishop Hedley, I think it was Bishop Hedley and then the band, the Steve Jackson [inaudible] I just know him from open mic nights and [inaudible] 'cause I played piano and guitar 'cause I play that as well [inaudible] piano player 'cause there's so many guitarists around [AC: Yeah, true!] [laughter] I always, I always make that joke y'know [inaudible] piano players and um well me and my girlfriend started I, [inaudible] I'm in the Welsh College doing a Jazz Degree at the moment [AC: Ah fantastic, cool] so I'm doing jazz, jazz, jazz piano [inaudible] but um yeah he's actually a classical guitarist, do you know Paul Gardiner? [AC: Who's the name again?] Paula Gardiner [AC: Paula Gardiner?] she does, she's um she's our bass player now but she used, she started out as a classical guitarist in the college I think?
- AC: Ooh I don't know? I went to Guildhall so I wouldn't know [AJ: Ah right okay]
- AJ: Yeah, well um, I just realised now, I remember that she is but yeah me and Isabelle and another friend who plays in the band, we met through the Jazz degree um being in the college but she, she didn't [inaudible] these places are quite intense aren't they y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] and I, I done it a bit later on in life y'know I'm twenty seven now so I feel I can cope with it much easier than if I was eighteen y'know [AC: Yes, I think it's a good idea yeah] I met [inaudible] in the college [inaudible] to play the rhythm section an stuff y'know so most people yeah, I know like the [inaudible] bands in school [inaudible]
- AC: Okay, and what sort of responsibilities do you all take on, if, if you use the Moon Birds as an example I mean who deals with booking gigs, and the finances and...
- AJ: Well um so, mainly I, I do all the adminy sort of stuff um whereas like them, so like, so like Gav's [inaudible] gigs and whatever. We don't tend to chase gigs anymore y'know [inaudible] working on gigs and trying to book gigs we [inaudible] we get offered y'know a load of gigs [inaudible] the diary is full [AC: Great] um, but like um then we got like social media then and [inaudible] he's quite creative in his writing so he does all the social media and like, y'know uh about gigs coming up and posts and things and [inaudible] get a lot of that um but like the admin side like the mail and dealing with the money [inaudible] I, I do most of that [inaudible] myself really.
- AC: Okay and how often would you say you play live and how often is that in Merthyr then?
- AJ: Oh my God um, right so, my, myself playing live? [AC: Um, yeah, yeah] well I, I do lots and lots of gigs I mean like [inaudible] was last Friday, I haven't played in Merthyr since, oh God, Merthyr Rising, that was in May so before last Friday it was May I did Merthyr, oh I done actually, I have done in-between [inaudible] Woodfired, the pizza place [inaudible] um, [inaudible] an acoustic thing but a prop, proper gig it would have been Merthyr Rising before la, last Friday in The Crown, it is quite few and far between y'know.
- AC: Yeah, why do you think that is um y'know and where is that in town?
- AJ: Um, well last week was The Crown, [inaudible] so I'd say that's the only real um the only venue [inaudible] I mean there's something happening most nights of the week

y'know and the weekend is all, is all music um, I mean what else I play [inaudible] there's the odd festival they have occasionally y'know on Bank Holidays and things which are like in different venues then apart from that [inaudible] gigs that often and then you have like um [inaudible] Bowstrong and Rock at the Top and um, [inaudible] a bit more sort of um they're more sort of drinking festivals than music y'know what I mean [laughter] dolled to the nines you'd swear they're going to the horse racing or something [laughter] and um [inaudible] outside the tent and getting drunk where the music's on inside I don't see [inaudible] y'know [AC: laughs, yeah] not to be [inaudible] then Merthyr Rising I suppose that was um, that, that's very diverse the music, comedy and politics that's the best festival we've had in the town but in regards to venues I l'd say only The Crown is the place um that has live music y'know.

AC: Yeah, yeah, [AJ: It's a shame really] it is a shame yeah it is definitely. How important is making music to you?

AJ: Oh my [inaudible] how do you answer that question [laughter] It's very, very important y'know just from I dunno like just before talking to you now I've been arranging horn charts for a gig I got on in November y'know [AC: Fantastic] [inaudible] and then [inaudible] I was actually in Merthyr funnily enough, funnily enough you caught me at the right time, I haven't been playing in Merthyr much but I got one tomorrow as well [AC: Oh cool, cool] But yeah, it's very, very important y'know, it's basically uh, 90% of my life I suppose.

AC: What motivates you to keep going?

AJ: Um, I think [inaudible] the enjoyment of it y'know like I, I find [inaudible] myself um keep myself doing different things so like I've been, doing some writing with the Moonbirds [inaudible] arranging these horn charts y'know [inaudible] Belle my girlfriends band [inaudible] gig we put on in November with my girlfriend's band we're doing like [inaudible] acoustic [inaudible] every week y'know [inaudible] record and video them and [inaudible] mix them and stuff and the um I'm playing [inaudible] jazz next week and try and diverse all the time y'know [inaudible] um, I sort of uh [inaudible] you've heard of Frank Zappa have you? [AC: Oh I love Frank Zappa] so I [inaudible] big Frank Zappa fan [inaudible] if you're in music it's all over the shop [laughter] there's so many elements to it and that's what I mean like y'know. I try and keep myself as diverse as Frank Zappa y'know [AC: Fantastic] I understand the craziness [laughter]

AC: Working in the muffin factory yeah?

AJ: Exactly [inaudible] [laughter] [inaudible]

AC: Yeah that's good. Um, so what factors make it difficult for you to make music in Ab, in Merthyr sorry, in Merthyr?

AJ: In Merthyr, um, y'know I mean I suppose it [inaudible] there's not much choice in regards to the venues um and like to be fair I am actually trying to help Woodfired, the pizza place and a new bar called Hardies has opened [inaudible] they've approached me to ask, y'know for advice on booking music and help to help them get bands y'know so I've, I, I, I [inaudible] I'm booking people [inaudible] so we get more music there y'know [inaudible] my contribution to get more music [inaudible] than just The Crown [AC: Yeah] so I start that in September every Friday in Woodfired and Hardies [inaudible] on a Sunday [inaudible] trying to push that um I suppose then the other difficult thing is like in regards to like um [inaudible] if you go

on a rehearsal or things there's not really a decent ah sort of studio um to rehearse or record in really. Um [inaudible] sometimes the venues don't understand they need to be paid, expenses to ah get people there y'know [AC: Yeah] fund yourselves or y'know [inaudible] all the gear [inaudible] I'll be alright but you realise y'know how much effort you put into y'know this, putting a show on [inaudible] [AC: Absolutely, yeah, yeah]

AC: Do you get paid for the consulting y'know Hardies and Woodfired...

AJ: Well, I, I've said to the guy in Woodfired, I haven't spoken to Hardies yet, I don't mind doing it in the first [inaudible] y'know getting sorting out the first month y'know or whatever um but I [inaudible] if they want me to do more [inaudible] I'll ask them, if it starts picking up I'd y'know like some sort of funding y'know [inaudible] to get bands in there [inaudible] I sorted out with Woodfired [inaudible] in one day y'know I can do that 'cause I know a lot of people so y'know if it's gonna be like that every month [inaudible] can I have some money as well y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: Are you a full time student?

AJ: You what sorry?

AC: Are you a full time student?

AJ: Yeah, yeah I am so I'm in my last, last year now um start back in what about two weeks' time, fourth year, four years playing jazz it's hell isn't it [laughter] [AC: Sounds fantastic] [laughter] so yeah I am full-time yeah so this is my last year now, just starting.

AC: Okay, and the last question is, is there anything you'd like to add?

AJ: Um... I, I covered quite a lot. Um, no not really I mean, I mean what I said [inaudible] we're in the valleys and we got um [inaudible] needs to improve quite a lot I think um I think [inaudible] mainly and funding them, venues, y'know obviously years ago they used [inaudible] y'know um [inaudible] bands quite regularly y'know [inaudible] in the valleys y'know um on Sunday and Saturday and stuff it seems to all have gone now [inaudible] in Merthyr in one place now mainly so, yeah it would be good it means y'know branch out so that's why I'm doing these simple things starting small things [inaudible] um the restaurant place and stuff and there used to be much more, there used to be more open mic nights as well [inaudible] which is a shame so yeah [inaudible] [laughs]

AC: Yeah you're right, yeah absolutely. I'm just gonna stop the recording there for a second.

Interview with Bethan Shearer, 27-07-2019, Woodfired, Merthyr Tydfil @ 1.16 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

BS – Bethan Shearer, Participant

AC: Hi Bethan, how are you doing?

BS: Alright, I'm not too bad thanks, you?

AC: I'm okay thank you very much. Okay, um...just a few questions basically asking you about your musical activities, what you do, where you do it and why you do it. Okay, so, first question, what music do you like?

BS: Everything, it's important [inaudible] everything down [laughs] but basically um, just, I love all the older music um, like Johnny Cash, Fleetwood Mac, The Eagles, Neil Diamond and I also like some modern artists as well like Jake Bugg and Ben Howard and, and I also really like [inaudible] music so...I listen to a lot of like rock and blues, country, folk, Americana rock n roll I just love it [inaudible] to be honest [inaudible] I can't believe [inaudible] different music [laughs]

AC: Is that deliberate or you just come across it and...

BS: Um, sometimes deliberate and sometimes I come across it and I always love being introduced to new music as well and [inaudible] on the circuit on the music circuit you get introduced to so many different types of music, that it's just [inaudible] you can look up and get introduced to new stuff.

AC: So what music do you play? How would you describe your music?

BS: I think my music um, I think, I never want to put a label on it because I think it kinda restricts everything you do, so with my music it used to be kind of country when I first started out but I've always loved country music and now um, I've written a dance song with [inaudible] sort of crossing genres um and mixing folk with dance so, I'm sort of never wanna like just play as one thing because I'm always experimenting with different sound in the studio and always coming up with new things as well so, yeah I think it's a cross between folk, blues, gospel, soul, Americana. A little bit of everything I think [laughs].

AC: Um, so how did you get into music-making?

BS: Well, I've always loved music and but, it sort of didn't become a thing until I was about twelve and when my aunty bought me a guitar um, and at the time I never wanted to learn an instrument [okay] well I'd learnt an instrument in the past but it never stuck so I just thought there's no way I can learn an instrument and 'cause I can't read music I thought, it's just not going to happen for me, um, but then, then she offered me then to have guitar lessons and I thought y'know what I'll give it a go and at the time [inaudible] going through something in school that kinds like wasn't the nicest situation and [inaudible] feeling down and stuff, she sort of offered to give me guitar lessons and that was the highlight of my week, I'd just look forward to, every Saturday I go over my nan's house anyway but it was that [inaudible] guitar lessons, I found [inaudible] passion I didn't know I had and if I'd never tried it I wouldn't be where I am now with it um 'cause it sort of, I developed a sound [inaudible] she taught me the basics and then I sort when on to [inaudible] making videos. Um, yeah it's a musical family and my cousins were in bands and my aunty is a song writer and, and guitarist. Ah my mam sang as well she sings around the

house [inaudible] sings with my aunty sometimes so I just grew up with [inaudible] all of that. I think I just inspired me it was always there to begin with so [inaudible] manifest and my love for it grew [inaudible] guitar [inaudible].

AC: So you're saying that you err you played other instruments when you were a kid and it didn't quite gel for you, without going into detail, you said your circumstances changed so did you see it as a sort of escapism? something to focus on?

BS: Yeah. Um, I think at the time yeah, I thought I need something and I had no passion before that y'know so I think with this it's sort of given me that [inaudible] I needed and it was always [inaudible] and when writing songs with it, there was that self-expression for me and I'm writing, I can write about anything and, and some of the songs I've written [laughs] about dreaming and stuff it just didn't make sense but I think as I got on my writing developed as well and [inaudible] you get more experiences to write about so, I think it helped me so much it was like a form of therapy for me really um, and yeah the other instruments I think it was just I didn't find the passion for them and the piano was always the instrument I wanted to learn but it just never, it never happened, I had one lesson and I just wanted to go home [5:00] so it didn't work out [laughs]. The guitar was so different, it really was.

AC: So, how old were you when you started playing guitar with your aunty when you started taking it seriously?

BS: Twelve

AC: Twelve yeah? How old are you now if you don't mind me asking?

BS: Twenty two

AC: Oh, so it's dead on ten years then

BS: Yeah, I know it's a long time innit.

AC: Was there anyone else involved I mean talking more currently now from the time you learned to now, who else have you drawn on who's important to [inaudible] your development?

BS: Ah, my grandad um, he's a massive music lover, um, and he sort of encouraged me 'cause I, I do suffer with stage fright and anxiety a lot so, um [inaudible] I didn't know what anxiety was so it was mostly nerves I was drawing on but [inaudible] open mic nights I just thought I can't do this, I can't do it, and he'd be like c'mon now, get up there, you do it and it was to make him proud so, I know he supported my aunty with her music as well so, I thought y'know what I'll do it for him um, and also 'cause I loved it, I think it was just the nerves, I was terrified um, and also my mam she was a big supporter as well, all those encouraged me with the music and my step-dad as well so, and he obviously takes me to the gigs so, and he's still doing that now um, so I owe him a lot y'know he's gone really out of his way to do this for me and he knows what I'm going through, so the family have been amazing support to be honest.

AC: Is there anyone outside of the family that [inaudible]?

BS: Um, I think, I think we're gonna just um [inaudible] and the guy from there he um, he sort of encouraged me in the early stages and then I sort of met Amy Wadge from that. That was, that was like a pinnacle really um, and from meeting Amy she, the

first recordings I did were with Amy so that gave me a bit of confidence but obviously in the studio it can be quite daunting and especially if it's your first time so she encouraged me through that and it made my first recordings with her and then I met through Amy the Young Promoters Network and then they're getting me more gigs and stuff like that [inaudible] doing open-mic nights um, and then the gigs come along and it was just from there things just kept growing and growing and more [inaudible] as well, so that was definitely, these people they've helped me so much and I think [inaudible] take the next step definitely.

AC: So where's this Young Promoters Network? [YPN] Is it like, are you still a part of it or is it still going on?

BS: It's still going on, they take on early artists um and they just give them a bit of a push to get to the next um level, um but also from the YPN, Forte Project has come from that and they pick 10 artists each year and um they develop you and they can help you get you recording, recordings done and networking events as well so you can meet different people, yeah it's all stemmed from the YPN, a team of people, they're still doing it now and just [inaudible] the Forte Project and from that things are coming from it y'know, helping younger artists to develop.

AC: So this is part of the same thing then Forte and YPN?

BS: It's slightly different but it all stems from the YPN

AC: Forte comes from that yeah?

BS: Yeah but Forte is more, it's getting more like established now and I was part of the first ten of artists and that really helped my confidence 'cause I had to have interviews in front of a camera and I got my first music video done as well so they gave me that opportunity to branch out a bit more and their focus is so consistent and they're still doing it now, it's like the BBC Horizons just err a different version of that y'know, a start-up of that but um it's doing really well to be honest.

AC: Are they based in Merthyr?

BS: No, they're based in... I think in Cardiff and the Rhondda I think?

AC: Um, can you give me any names of the people involved?

BS: Steve Gresham, he's like the main, like sort of main organiser of it

AC: He's the main guy yeah?

BS: Yeah.

AC: Um, okay so, what responsibilities and roles do you have to be able to, you mention other people but what do you do to move your music career on?

BS: Well, I think I keep pushing myself. From the very beginning I had to push myself kind of out of my comfort zone because I feel [inaudible] the stage, it feels so right when I'm up there but beforehand the nerves that I got were just, it just sort of [inaudible] me, I couldn't sit there, I couldn't... I just felt like I couldn't do it but obviously when I get up there then I know it's what I want to do and I just love it, so, my role really, [inaudible] as hard as it is [laughs] and also just like, y'know I, I, doing different things, different experiences, meeting different people, that's all become like

[inaudible] and going to workshops as well like, just seeing what's out there 'cause you gotta put yourself out there really to find out what is available um, and like I said if I hadn't met Amy I, I wouldn't have known about the YPN or any of these different things y'know. So, now I feel like, that's all being [inaudible] and promoted more and um doing those things helped me to grow and learn and um, try different things y'know, but I think social media is another which I've been working on as well 'cause that's my role to promote myself as much as I can, promoting is kinda as well isn't it? 'Cause it's like... it doesn't feel right [laughs] I'm giggling here...y'know what I mean, it just doesn't feel right [laughs] but I've got much better at it these last few years so um, y'know, hopefully, hopefully it's going alright [laughs].

AC: What are the aims with social media, I mean what...how do you know if you're doing well on social media then? What's the indicators?

BS: Um, I think sort of, if people engage with you that's always the main thing. Now I'm doing vlogging a lot um, I'm doing like the YouTube thing and this is new but it's engaging with people in a different sort of way 'cause obviously of they can't make a gig, they're coming on journey with me over y'know [inaudible] video I'm showing where I'm going what I'm doing um, in these gigs so that's kinda my new way of doing it and I actually really enjoy it and it's a distraction for me and it's also getting used to being in front of a camera and I'm just, I'm so happy finding out who I am as well as an artist that's a big thing as well. Um, but yeah, I think [inaudible] I dunno? [laughs].

AC: Are there any tools you use to, I don't know get more people to know about you [inaudible] certain people or specific things you do, they could be like everyday things really...

BS: Um, well I do post on social media quite a lot and, and obviously the YouTube thing coming in um, yeah, I don't know really yeah I think it's just been consistent with social media and staying on top of things with that. If I, I've got a [inaudible] with that, I update that regularly um, with gig, tour dates and stuff 'cause I am getting a lot busier now so [inaudible] don't fall behind myself but um, yeah, I dunno yeah y'know if you're talking down the [inaudible] just saying what I do really [okay].

AC: Um... so talking about Merthyr specifically now [yeah] and I know you're a solo artist so rehearsal space...is that an issue or not?

BS: Um, it kinda is a bit um, I think where I live it's a quiet neighbourhood

AC: Where do you live?

BS: Troedyrhiw, and um, it's sort of like [inaudible] but my wall, the walls are so thin in the house that I sometimes worry like are they gonna hear? Me, blasting out these tunes and [inaudible] too much like, they can hear it in the street. So I do feel a bit restricted sometimes with that um and obviously Merthyr not much going in Merthyr. I know you can book rooms in Redhouse, again it's quite, I dunno how much, what that costs and because of all the other things I'm paying for, recording time and y'know travelling to gigs and stuff I don't, I can't afford to book extra [inaudible] rehearsal time at the moment um, and that's why I've been looking into funding opportunities to see if there's any, anywhere I could get something and to help with my music to get a bit further with it and get more videos done and that but [inaudible] I don't feel like Merthyr has much, no.

AC: What would you like to see in Merthyr then?

BS: Um, I think just like um, rehearsal space or somewhere you can just go um, y'know just one room and then again I know a lot of people who would be fighting over that probably [laughs] um you can book it in and you can just go then and just, just have a practice and not have to worry about y'know people overhearing you or y'know people complaining about the noise and I think that would be really, really cool if we could, if that was ever possible of happening I, I really don't know if it is [laughs] to be honest, um but I know like some of the closest rehearsal studios are Cardiff based and stuff and obviously I can't really get over there as much as I would like to and it's obviously lugging all your equipment over a swell then um, which I can't, can't do at the moment so, yeah, it's a bit of a struggle.

AC: What sort of places do you play around here, basically I'm asking what resources musically... [yeah] what do you draw upon here [inaudible]...

BS: The New Crown Inn is a popular one, I think it's the most popular in Merthyr to be honest they're always doing events there um and they get like, they get bands, artists, songwriters in and it's a like a bit of everything so [inaudible] getting people together as well in Merthyr um, I think the Redhouse [inaudible] as well, and but yeah it's, no, I do Merthyr Rising that's the big festival here but I mostly find that I'm gigging out of Merthyr, in Cardiff, Newport and places like that so, I feel like now it's starting to be a bit of a little theme going on 'cause I know like in Hardies as well, the pub next to us they've got music in there, live music in there so it is expanding but it's a slow, slow burn [inaudible] it's sometimes hard to know where to go in Merthyr if I'm honest um, yeah... so yeah, [go on sorry...] yeah that's it.

AC: Do you think, you just said there seems to be a scene emerging [yeah] around here, what, y'know what are your ideas on why that might've happened? Has anything happened here or..?

BS: I think big, big bands emerging, I think Merthyr there's more, there's a lot of support for the bands, there's not so many solo artists from Merthyr, I think that's what it is but like Pretty Vicious for example and um Florence Black like they're doing really, really well and they're gigging further afield and stuff so I know that them emerging has got something y'know and interest really for the Merthyr scene and I think there's a lot of artists in Merthyr doing the music [inaudible] breaking through 'cause that's the toughest part and knowing how to break through as well and obviously when I was in London it's like a different world over there compared to Merthyr and it's like everything's just bigger and there's so many more people and stuff and I'm like all...I dunno I feel a bit intimidated with this um, and getting used to that, but um, coming from Merthyr it's hard sometimes just to know...how to approach things really, but yeah [okay].

AC: Um, how often do you play live in Merthyr then?

BS: In the beginning a lot um now, not so much, it might be once every few months 'cause only the Crown Inn now, I play in the Crown Inn and that's about it really. 'Cause I know the Redhouse they do prestigious events and they have like um, some, mostly theatre stuff y'know what I mean so, they do open mic's there as well but um, obviously I'm just focusing on, focusing on doing the song writing, promoting that as much as I can really but yeah.

AC: So it's mostly outside [yeah outside Merthyr now] What's it like when you do play Merthyr? Do you get, what's the reception like y'know? What's it like playing your home town?

BS: Um, it feels good, um I think Merthyr Rising was really, really fun because um I played up the first year I think last year and um, I didn't know what to expect I'm more nervous, I know it's my home town but who's gonna be there? Um [laughs] obviously some family come to support which is really nice and they can obviously make it 'cause it's local um, and it is quite special um, yeah, I do enjoy it, obviously it's rare, it's rare to play a gig in Merthyr y'know so...

AC: So, um, I just wanna go over this, to get your equipment back and forth you rely on your step-dad [yeah] so he's like officially your roadie then? [Laughter] [yeah]. Um and you book the gigs or? Is it through um YPN? Do you still have ties with them or do you...

BS: Um, to be honest I've never booked a gig in my life um never and I think it was [inaudible] for ten years but I've never actually had to ask anyone for a gig. It's because usually I have a gig and something else would come of it usually y'know, someone might ask do you want to gig here? Sort of word of mouth really, it's happened quite naturally um, and yeah I have got a manager now we started working with each other in December and he's really helping me to get more gigs [inaudible] working with him now more London opportunities have come forward and I recently played um, Focus Wales as well which is quite a good festival um [inaudible] it was hard 'cause obviously [inaudible] but um, it was good for my anxiety to conquer that and I felt really good about that um, yeah I think like definitely my manager now is helping me to get ah, a little more exposure um and hopefully we'll be able to get something planned for Canada, get a gig out there soon, that'll be interesting, I've never been abroad so um I need to get a passport [laughter] I'd love to go I really would [who's your manager then?] um, his name is James Lee he's from [inaudible] media um [how do you spell that?] n o r b u [yeah] and then they work in Cornwall as well so, it's a bit far from here but um we're working really well together and yeah things are looking, looking good y'know [how did you meet him?] it's really mad because the producer I was working with at the time um he sort of found a [inaudible] music Dan Bettridge his name is [inaudible] this guy and he liked the sound of his music and he come across my music then and he liked the sound of my music so he's like we'll arrange a meeting. So I met him in Cardiff and um and since then he's acted as a booker and a manager so [inaudible] get a new booker and separate from that 'cause he was doing kinda two jobs at the moment which is difficult y'know but he's been getting in touch with all sorts of venues to see if they'd be interested in booking me and, and so far it's been pretty good 'cause things are rally picking up y'know.

AC: So why Canada? Was it a specific place or was it just...

BS: Um, I think, Canada has got a lot of artists emerging from Canada and they're coming over here. So I think like um, with the British going over there is like a thing as well [inaudible] swap over [laughs] Um, but yeah it's, I think it's just somewhere I'd like to go anyway but it's I feel like it's calling me a bit because [inaudible] and I also met these girls from Canada um, in Newport [inaudible] Bandits and they said if you're ever gigging in, if you're ever in Canada we'll put up a space for you and y'know we can put on a show for you and stuff and I was like that's awesome! So, u, I've met a few people I think from Canada. There's also, James is working, this other women from Canada [inaudible] also her manager so they're kinda, kinda in joint collaboration um, so they're helping to work for me basically, help me get [inaudible] basically, um, see how things go and y'know, yeah...

AC: Um, ooh this is a contentious one do you get paid for your work?

BS: Not always um, it's tough because I think, I, I think it's easy if you're doing covers, if you're doing all covers um, the gigs, give you a booking for two 45 minutes sets and it can be good money in a [inaudible]. But obviously because I'm just doing my own stuff now it's harder to kinda go to venues and they pay you for that um and especially since I don't do two 45 minute sets, 'cause I hardly do any cover anymore I mostly just stick to like an hour at the most um [inaudible] if I'm doing two 45's it takes something away I'm not doing, not happy doing so many covers um, but yeah I think y'know it depends and also some things I do it's for charity so that's, that's fine y'know but I am starting to ask for a fee now even if it's just for travel it's so expensive to get to London and to go to all these different places and, so yeah, it's not too bad but it's not really, not much I don't think I could live solely off that at the moment.

AC: It's interesting you said about covers, is it a better market out there for covers?

BS: I think, I think it sort of is, for song-writers I always ask at venues now what are you looking for exactly if they get in touch with me, 'cause y'know, if they [inaudible] covers, I chuck in one or two to suit the event, and [inaudible] some will say yeah and some will say no, we're looking for a cover artist which is fine but at least I'm checking 'cause if I'm not suitable for them I'm not going to be suitable for the audience and then that's just not gonna [inaudible] is it.

AC: What's it like in Merthyr [inaudible] is it more geared towards covers or more original artists?

BS: Um, in the Crown you get a bit of a mix but I'd say covers are more [inaudible] and it's hard for an audience to hear a song they've never ever heard before [yeah] y'know and I think it's harder as a song-writer kinda get out there [inaudible] um, I've been doing it for so long now I'm kinda used to it and if people don't like it, they don't like it y'know what I mean. Um, I remember before I had a gig and [inaudible] it was in a hotel and I had [inaudible] I was with an agent at the time, it didn't work out in the end but um, I was in this place and [inaudible] I was doing mostly my own stuff and I had this audience [inaudible] came up to me in the middle of my set and said can you play something we know please and I was like oh no, and I just froze, I've never had that happen to me before [inaudible] on stage you're on your own like, you are on your own there's nobody with you unless you're with a band, so I had to deal with that [inaudible] so, I had to do like an upbeat one and an Ed Sheeran one [inaudible] pleasing the crowd which made me unhappy really 'cause like why can't I just do my own thing that I wanna do y'know um, I did that then but I was really upset afterwards like it was so unsettling to go back on again to do another 45 minutes, so...it was a nightmare really but I think all these experiences toughen you up so I'm a lot stronger after dealing with that because [inaudible] I don't count them as bad 'cause it helps me to learn and grow and I'm all about that [laughs] I suppose [laughs].

AC: Okay, um, how serious do you take your music-making?

BS: Very serious, I, I sort of, I've always known what I want to do and nothing else makes sense to me really apart from music and I've tried loads of other different things but it's always been music and, and I was in college, I finished school and went to college and did like a few different things and I was doing psychology not so long ago and um, I think with that it sort of put things in perspective for me that actually I wasn't happy where I was and I was doing things as a back-up plan and not trusting in my music and it was making me so unhappy, I'd just come home and I would be drained, I didn't have any time to focus on music then, it would just be in the nights

gigs and that's it but ever since I finished college I let that go and it, it was a university course, I'm gonna let that go now it's not for me, um I finished the first year and then I left in the second year then, so ever since then it's been [inaudible] my music, I can constantly focus on it and the social media has picked up as well. I got more time to focus on that and, and also the song-writing, just being able to song-write and I got so much more time on my hands to just do what I want to do and it's making me happy y'know, so yeah I'm totally invested in it, I'm in it for the long run [laughs].

AC: Um, so you've probably kinda answered this really but what motivates you to keep going?

BS: I think, my passion for it, and, and 'cause I love it so much I can't go a day without picking up my guitar um, [inaudible] stressful day and I can write about it so like getting upset I channel it into my song-writing and it's kinda like it just means, just means everything to me. 'Cause it's been such a focal point in my family as well music runs in the family I just want it to work for them too 'cause I know they'd want me to keep doing this. Um, and especially my grandad he is ill at the moment, he's ill and obviously him not being, he's been to every gig d'y'know what I mean and been cheering me on, um but obviously he's not going anymore that's affected me a lot but I know I gotta do it 'cause he'd be saying to me go on Beth do it! Um, and that's enough for me y'know [laughs].

AC: Um, so you're talking about your manager um, what's his name again sorry [James Lee] James Lee [yeah] um, how do you keep in contact with him [inaudible]...

BS: It's a regular thing, so basically he might ring me during the week just to [inaudible] festival or something [inaudible] my website and things like that. Um, and he sort of updates me regularly on Facebook, so I got him on Facebook, I've got him on um Messenger and phone as well so we are in quite regular contact really which you need don't you as a manager and I think it's building that trust as well with him which I do, I do kinda, [inaudible] come with me to Focus Wales so I got to see him a bit more and he come to my gig and watched me as well, that's important and just someone who believes in me as well, that's like crucial um, obviously I am in this for the long run and I need someone else to be with me for the long run and I feel like with James he kinda supports what I do so yeah, I'm happy with that [okay].

AC: Um, [mumbling...you've answered that...um...looking at the questions asked already]. So what if anything limits what you do living in Merthyr and being a musician?

BS: I think, if you're from a rural area it can be hard to um, to get out there basically um, and obviously you had to fight for kinda what you want I think more, if you're based in London you're, it's more opportunities I feel but it's still hard, I'm not saying it's not hard 'cause I mean [inaudible] anywhere in London you could still [inaudible] nobody there y'know but I just think yeah it can be hard and I think the travelling as well like [inaudible] Bristol a bit closer again [inaudible] but I think so far it's hard work and you just gotta keep working hard no matter where you come from and it shouldn't stop you from just keeping going when things get really tough y'know and but yeah, if you, if you don't come from an extremely and rich background thing like that so mostly we just have to fund ourselves y'know and, and but my family knows what I want to do and they have kinda supported me the whole way with it so

AC: So it's family really have filled in the gaps?

BS: Yeah [inaudible] yeah, yeah.

AC: And the final question is, is there anything you'd like to add?

BS: Um, well I think the main thing for me playing music I want to help other people because I feel strongly about mental health and I feel that there is just not enough support available at all. Um, as a musician as well I feel like a lot of us [inaudible] anxiety and depression as well and it can be so hard getting up on stage [inaudible] it's easy for them they just get up there y'know they must be totally fine [inaudible] totally fine and that's not true like everyone's dealing with something and then it takes so much to get [inaudible] it's like [inaudible] I think mental health in general, my songs now I'm writing about mental health and I've actually accepted what I do [inaudible] and channelling that into my song-writing now [inaudible] at my gigs and speaking openly about mental health so you don't know who's in that audience to hear that [inaudible] making them realise they're not on their own like there's so many people out there dealing with stuff and that's my goal I want to, my main reason for doing music is 'cause I love it and help other people in any way I can just by expressing myself and basically revealing a huge part of myself it's kinda scary and personal but [inaudible] that song helped me or can you tell me a bit more about that what's your story it might help them, so that's, that's my goal.

AC: Have you passed any of your experiences or knowledge onto other artists? [um..] not a mentor as such...

BS: Yeah, I'm doing it with blogs and [inaudible] I think that's important...

AC: More general then rather than [inaudible]...[yeah, yeah and random...laughs definitely random laughs] That's the end of the interview thank you very much

BS: Thank you so much for asking me...

Interview with Danny Howells, 06-07-2019, Wetherspoons, Aberdare @ 11 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

DH – Danny Howells, Participant

AC: Hi Danny, how're you doing?

DH: Good thank you, how are you?

AC: I'm alright thanks, so I got a few questions for you just about what you do [yeah] where you do it and why you're doing it. So, to start with then what music do you like?

DH: Ah, I like all sorts really, mainly ah Indie, classic rock but uh I'm into obscure things which are sort of like French artists that I'm into but mainly like guitar bands [inaudible].

AC: What's the French influence?

DH: Ah Jacques Dutronc if you know him? [no] He's, is like his guitar sound and like and the way the song is produced [inaudible] I'm a fan of that. I don't think it filters into the, what we do quite yet but [inaudible]...

AC: It might come later?

DH: Yeah, yeah, you never know?

AC: Um, so what music do you play then?

DH: Um, Just, straight up guitar rock really. Um, there's nothing, that'll, reinvent the world, just simple ah, guitar music with relatable lyrics.

AC: Are you all into the same type of music?

DH: Yeah, yeah, um, our drummer likes a bit heavier stuff as well, so ah, but mainly it's all the same.

AC: Okay, so how did you get into music-making?

DH: Um, I start, I started, um I had guitar lessons when I was younger um, I think just seeing bands on the telly and like through YouTube and that, just made me wanna do it and then I went to see ah, a band called Trampoline ah from Swansea, um, and that, it like made me wanna be in a band and like be on stage so...

AC: What was it about the performance that, attracted you?

DH: I think, the, the energy I think, and there wasn't, many people at that gig, I think there was ten maybe? Max, but they were playing as if there was like 10,000 there. I think that, the, the energy [inaudible] just made me wanna be in a band.

AC: So you were already playing guitar before [yeah] the gig...

DH: [inaudible] wanted to be in a band but that was, that like made me go out and I just feel like, see how I go about doing it, stuff like that.

AC: Okay, so how old were you about this time?

DH: I would have been.... ah...probably fifteen, sixteen?

AC: What made you have guitar lessons? What was the impetus for that?

DH: Ah, my, my dad [inaudible] he was very musical, I think he [inaudible] our first guitar, um, so I [inaudible] had lessons just from that um....

AC: In school or?

DH: No, I went to outside lessons, I don't think they did guitar lessons when I was in school? Um, I don't know what, ah, how I ended up having a guitar? But good job that I did!

AC: Okay, um, so who else was involved when you started playing, you said you went to see Trampoline [yeah] was anyone with you who...

DH: Um, I met up with my friend Liam, ah and we were, I think we both liked [inaudible] the same way and we were gonna do a band together but that didn't happen, but so [inaudible] we were both determined like to go start a band.

AC: Who's Liam then?

DH: Ah, I haven't spoken to, I think his second name is Jones? Ah...

AC: Is he in any other bands at the moment?

DH: Not that I, I haven't seen him in ages, I, I, I don't know what he's doing?

AC: Oh so you done it but he didn't?

DH: Yeah, we never, that was one of the last times I'd spoken to him, [inaudible] he just, disappeared [laughs].

AC: Right, okay, so who else is involved in what you do now then?

DH: Um, so we got um, Evan, he's our bassist, Nathan our drummer, um, and then we've got a lot of people like helping out like getting us gigs and stuff, ah...

AC: Who are they then?

DH: We got, y'know Scott Howells? He's gonna be doing our recording actually, but he's always like booking gigs for us and ah [inaudible] the good thing about being in a band you get to meet these sort of type people that like give you recommendations that go to other people it's a good community.

AC: How did you get, get in touch with Scott? How did you meet him?

DH: Ah, I did, I was in err college in where he's one of the tutors ah, so we, I know him through that and we, we've stayed in touch.

AC: Is that at Nantgarw then? [yeah] Okay, okay, and is there anyone else involved, ah maybe behind the scenes as well as directly that help you do the little things?

DH: No, it's just, it's just ah, it's just me trying to do it all, trying to get back to everyone and err...

AC: Do other band members do much or..?

DH: Ah, they do a lot of ah the looking like for gigs and that, to get us gigs but it's mainly me who does like the admin side, I do it. All the fun stuff [laughs].

AC: All the fun stuff [laughs] [moving my chair...] um, right so, tell me a bit about your musical practices and what I mean by that is um, how you write, rehearse, record all the things, the everyday things y'know [yeah] can you tell me a bit more about that?

DH: Um, with the writing like I, I pretty much write a song, on my own, um, and then I'll bring it into the rehearsal room and play it to the boys and err, our drummer is like really good at putting like beats to things, to like instantly come up with something and then nine times out of ten it'll be like spot on first try. Ah, and then ah, sometimes I'll have a bass line in my head and I'll teach it to the bassist, sometimes he comes up with stuff, so it's ah, although, although I write the songs the stuff they contribute as well like, it's not just me going you're gonna do this [inaudible]

AC: You come up with the initial ideas yeah? [yeah] and then they develop that? [yeah]. So what about um, where do the ideas come from?

DH: Um, just from, just from people I know or like friends friend's or um, [inaudible] when we first started writing and they were just songs that didn't really mean anything and but err, but now, um, they're just based on people I know and ah situations that I got, I've been in or like a friend's been in. But even if it's not personal to me it's still relatable to like other people, like everyday things.

AC: So it's kinda like local [yeah]...okay, um, with recording [inaudible] you said Scott Howells, has it always been that set up?

DH: We did when we first um, when we first came out ah we did a recording at the Redhouse in Merthyr, 'cause I knew the people that ran that err and they let us use that studio.

AC: Who was that then?

DH: Um, it was err, Ricky, um, and...Dave, I don't know their second names?

AC: Is that linked with the college?

DH: Yeah, yeah, um so we, we did it through them, um and they got ah the sound engineer Rob to like, to like do it with us, and he sort of taught us as he was going along so we picked up a lot from that to be fair. Um, but these new ones, these new ones are gonna, we're gonna do with Scott and ah...

AC: Is he gonna come to Merthyr or are you...?

DH: No, we're gonna go over to the college and use that studio.

AC: Llwynypia or Nantgarw?

DH: Llwynypia I think yeah?

- AC: So [inaudible] got Merthyr to [inaudible] saying something about the colleges being linked. Um, what about performances and things? So um, ah it might seem like nothing to you but can you just give me an overview of [inaudible] the most bring things if you like...
- DH: I, I'd say it's one of the things that's improved massively from the start to where we are now, um, I, I think at the beginning it was... I think we were all less confident at the beginning, so it was like, you sort of, you're excited but you just wanted it to be over, so you were like just not doing much just like concentrating like head down and, but now it's like, it's almost like second nature so you just see, you can have more fun with it, um, that's definitely something like that we have worked up to improve is the live aspect of it.
- AC: Do you think ah, anything about the relationships between you and the other members of the band [inaudible] you said with Scott, how would you describe those relationships? Have they changed at all?
- DH: They've, they've definitely got better like, yeah, when our, the drummer we got, Nathan ah, when he joined I didn't know him previously, ah, he put like an advert up on Facebook, said that he was looking for a band and then a friend of mine ah, tagged me in it, so, I didn't know him at the, like, before the band ah, and now like he's one of my closest mates probably so, um, it's definitely [inaudible] improved in that sense yeah.
- AC: And, what about promotion and how do you go about promoting and ah sort of, I don't know getting some traction with fan bases...
- DH: Yeah, just trying to get on a, like... as many playlists we can like, um I'm always [inaudible] contacting venues, ah, just saying if you need like a band like here's our details and stuff and that you're commenting on their Facebook posts and like when [inaudible] need, when they're looking for bands... [what venues?] The Moon in Cardiff, a lot of like there's no venues in Merthyr really, you've got the Redhouse but they're like talking about not putting on bands anymore so ah, which leaves The Crown ah, pub is the only venue really [is that the only one?] Yep, yeah, which is alright but um, it's not known for its ah generous paying of the bands [The Crown yeah?] yeah, ah, which, which y'know I don't mind not, not gigging for money but at the end of the day it's it goes on like petrol to get back and like, and then we gotta pay for like our recording room and our rehearsal room, but uh, if the Redhouse starts putting on bands then, that, The Crown would be the only place.
- AC: Is the Redhouse quite prolific in how many gigs it was putting on? Was it quite busy for gigs?
- DH: Yeah, um, but then I think ah, they changed to like the Creative Director or something was? And he's not, he doesn't want to use it for gigs. Ah, so we find most of our gigs in like Aberdare or Cardiff to be fair, um... [Aberdare is kinda of a gig source for you?] Yeah, we've played Jac's more than any other venue I think? [Have you played anywhere else in Aberdare?]... ah, I played... I played a gig in the Rock Inn, is that Aberdare? [yeah] yeah, I've played there but no, I can't [inaudible] [what about The Crown, do you play there?] We, I've, we played The Crown, uh, err, fairly often yeah, um I, I know ah the owner and most of the staff there, uh, so, whenever he's like I got any dates, ah, [inaudible] always like ring me up [what's the owner's name?] Jacob [Jacob] um, it's a Portuguese second name, uh, [don't worry] I'm not gonna even try I think [laughter].

- AC: So, have you got any ideas or thoughts on why things are the way they are in Merthyr, 'cause it used to be a vibrant place [yeah, yeah]...
- DH: Um, I don't, I just don't think people are going out to gigs as much...I, I, um...maybe, there's, I think there's like a big metal scene in Merthyr but there aren't that many metal, sorry Indie bands so I dunno if that, they don't really have an audience to appeal to 'cause everyone out are metal heads [inaudible] yeah, yeah, whenever, we've like, we play gigs [inaudible] to [inaudible] crowd like, people were like hair down to their knees and Slayer T shirts and all like that [inaudible] but I think it's just th... just, I think though like metal bands coming up I think more people would be going out to those gigs but [are you talking about Florence Black and...] Yeah [they're metal aren't they?] yeah, they've uh, yeah exactly, they always pull a crowd whenever although I can't remember the last time they played Merthyr? [inaudible] I'm not sure? I think the last local one, they played in Ponty somewhere? In the Arts Centre I think maybe? I think that's the last local one they did.
- AC: So do you think it's just as metal in Aberdare?
- DH: Um, I'm not, I think, I think in south Wales generally, I know there's a big scene isn't there? Um, but I did, did, there seems, they always seem to be more open to us in Aberdare like, although we did play a gig there and we were like sandwiched between like two really heavy bands and that was quite funny to watch the crowd stay for the first band then we came on and it just emptied out but then the other band came on and everyone came back in [where was this Jac's?] Jac's yeah, I don't know who was in charge of putting that bill together but [laughs] [can you remember the name of the other bands?] I can't, I can't remember [laughs] um, I think, Who Knows Diddly? I think they were playing, I think they're from Pontypool I think? [they weren't local bands?] no, no they were not. That, that, that was a weird one [laughs].
- AC: So, um, going back to promoting [yeah] what, what sort of things do you use to promote yourself? To generate interest and things.
- DH: Err, Facebook's a big one, um... [what do you use on Facebook?] Ah just, just uh like tagging a band name in, on and like other people's posts [inaudible] and, on like, other bands that sound like us going like if you like this you might like us like, check it out, um just to get it to as many places as, as possible and ah, hope then that like the right people see it and then go ahh you're right for our venue.
- AC: So do you pay for any, you know like you can get boosts and things like that on your posts, do you do anything like that?
- DH: I, I haven't done, um, I haven't done, um...[any reason for that?] I'm not I could be wrong but I'm not sure of it actually benefits um, I think it only, um, I, I did look into it but, but I think like the area it would have covered is like where we already have people looking um, but there, it might be something that we do but ah, as of yet, no [it's not up there on your priorities?] no.
- AC: Okay so what do you think is the main ah, [inaudible] for you getting gigs and [inaudible] what is the main thing? You said social media...
- DH: Um, I'd say it's a tie between the social media and in person, um but I quite going to gigs and I like meeting people, um, so, it, the conversation will like always go to music [inaudible] um, [inaudible] know someone who like runs a venue, ah, so we get a lot of gigs that way, um, or sometimes they just say they've seen us somewhere and they want us to play.

- AC: Do you have like any merchandise or...
- DH: We're working on it. We've got ah, we've got T shirts coming in and then um, [when are they due?] they're due...um by the end of this month [so you're gonna put them out when you...] yeah [do you have an online store and those sorts of things?] yeah, we're ah, we're getting, yeah and online store all sorted but um, yeah and obviously at gigs got the stall set.
- AC: Okay, okay, um, so you've kinda touched on this, the responsibilities and roles adopted, is there anything else you can add to that? What your role is and the people directly involved...
- DH: Um...other than like err song-writing and ah the admin side that's...I think that's pretty much all I do um, and then ah and then the other two in the band they do the ah the gig booking, ah, help out with the gig booking um, but other than that I think that's about it.
- AC: How much of your time does it take, the band? Does it take a lot of your time up?
- DH: It does but that's not ah, not in like a like it's not that that's a bad thing like, I choose it to take up like most of my time, it's not like it's like too much [inaudible] with everything else but ah, it does, I'm always, there's like, I'm always doing something related to the band [inaudible] writing the songs ah trying to get a gig, um, trying like ah, like organise the merch and stuff um, see I'd say it's, takes up quite a lot but not [inaudible] like it's a bad thing. I choose to do that.
- AC: What do you do for a living?
- DH: Um, err, I'm in college [still in the same one?] ah, no I'm in Merthyr college doing ah child care [oh really?] yeah [that's interesting] yeah that's the response I get straight away [what's the reason going from music to child care?] um, I just, there was, there was nothing else, err, I was doing music in college for um, err, when I left school I did music in Merthyr but then there wasn't enough people on the course so they cut it after five weeks which is when I transferred over to Scott then ah, but then I, I couldn't stay in that one long because ah I wasn't entitled for a train pass so I was like, the money I was spending getting to Merthyr [I think he means Nantgarw here?] it was like two trains and I, I couldn't keep it up, so I went back to Merthyr to do music and then finished that and ah, I just like working with kids and ah like I got quite a few like you ones like in my family, like cousins and that and I'm always like looking after them so ah, yeah I thought I'd do it [inaudible] something that I enjoy and...
- AC: So the other band members do they work? Or are they in college as well?
- DH: Ah, our bassist he's ah, he's doing the music ah up in Nantgarw and then our drummer has just finished his A Levels [okay] he's a bit younger than us...
- AC: In Merthyr, I mean you talk about stuff outside but I'm focusing on Merthyr, so what resources in Merthyr do you draw upon, what do you use?
- DH: Um, we've got err, there's quite a few practice rooms um in Merthyr um, you can use the one in the Redhouse, they've got three practice rooms, so there's three already there [is it expensive there then?] um, I don't know personally 'cause we use a different one but I, I can't imagine it being any more than um anywhere else um, then there is the one that we use that's NU Studio up in Pant industrial estate um, so

that's what we use um... so... other than the other rehearsal rooms I think that's all we really use from Merthyr because our gigs obviously come from mainly like from outside Merthyr um...

AC: Is there anything that you think would be good to have in Merthyr that's not there already?

DH: A, a proper venue [to play gigs in?] yeah, um I mean at the minute you do have the Redhouse but I'm not sure how much longer that'll be going? But it would be good to have um...

AC: Did that Redhouse y'know when there was lots of gigs going on, did that make a difference to the town? To the music scene?

DH: Um, I think, I think so, I've, I've played a few gigs there and I've been to gigs there and it's, it's rarely been like a bad night. There was a lot of err a lot of people there for like most of them and ah like the college used it like to put on their own gigs and that was good, um but if that does go ah it would be good to get another venue in but I'm not sure, 'cause even like in Cardiff like venues are shutting down so [inaudible] it's just not a good time for local, for local businesses full stop not just for [inaudible] bands.

AC: Was the Redhouse always open for public gigs as well or is it just for, a venue for the college...?

DH: No, it was always open for, for public gigs [inaudible] they, at one point they were getting decent acts in um, but, but then it's, it's used like for comedy acts as well like, it was a, it was a good space that you could, that you could put like ah theatre performances up in that room so [inaudible] stop everything full stop like it seems weird [you said somebody's changed ah roles?] yeah [can you remind me what the name was again, did you say?] ah yeah, I don't know who it is but it, but it was I think it was like the creative director or something? I was, but I can't remember um, but for whatever reason he doesn't wanna put gigs on there. [So, he, it's one person] as far as I'm aware like his input and um, I'm guessing it's a cost thing um, but I could be wrong?

AC: So, I think we touched on this, how often do you play in Merthyr? Y'know is it one a month or random?

DH: We, it's random but we often play ah this thing called you and I radio um [what's that?] it's like a, like a radio station that do gigs in different venues ah we do it on like the last Wednesday of each month and they always get like loads of people to like [inaudible] and they like broadcast it out um, we've played for them a few times ah in Merthyr but ah that's not very often [is that a Merthyr company then?] um, I'm not, I don't think they are from Merthyr? But whenever they come to Merthyr we usually get a call, um but yeah they, I don't know if they come to Aberdare but I know they do some Cardiff venues [is it a Welsh thing?] Yeah, it is yeah um, so yeah that's I think that's like the last time we played in Merthyr um [how long ago was that then?] probably, it would have been um, January [so it's quite a while] yeah [would you like to play in Merthyr more?] yeah, I'd like, I'd play anywhere but like ah I think all of us we just wanna gig as much as possible like our first gig was in a tiny room and we'd like take [inaudible]

AC: Um, how do you get your equipment transported, how do you move it?

- DH: Ah for getting to like gigs and that? [yeah] um, at the minute ah 'cause I'm not driving at the minute um, so I rely on my mother mainly um but she comes to the gigs anyway so like she don't mind she's like, she'd be coming anyway, so it's just using the, using the most out of her [laughs]
- AC: And the other guys well I should imagine one doesn't drive?
- DH: No, and the same like where he gets a lift off his parents who are probably our biggest fans, they're always like the first to like everything like [inaudible] [they're like supporting really] yeah [helping you get around] yeah, yeah, yeah, [are they quite flexible?] yeah they, they, they love it, love it [inaudible] 'cause he'll, he also comes from ah, he travels from up like Pembroke way to get to like rehearsals [so he doesn't live in Merthyr?] No, ah so he travels from Pembroke to get to rehearsals and then from Pembroke to get to gigs so like his, his commitment is, is up there.
- AC: What motivates him to travel that far? What was the thing, the usp if you want?
- DH: Um, I think he...I'm...he just must love it and his parents don't mind and ah [inaudible] I'm glad because he's probably the best musician in the band, like he's, he's, he's a great drummer um, but yeah his commitment levels through are like up there which is ah, which is [laughs] [inaudible]
- AC: Um, right, so how often do you get paid for your musical endeavours?
- DH: It's very rarely, ah some, sometimes we get told we're gonna get paid and then it comes to it and then like ah we haven't taken as much from the door as we would have [inaudible] I'd prefer it if they said you can, you may get paid depending on how much we pay, like we made not just like you're definitely going to get paid and then it comes to it like, we can't pay you ah, the most, we got, I think the last big one we got was we played ah in Dowlais there's a thing called Rock on the Top um, it's like a mini festival thing and we played ah a half hour set there and got 200 for it, um...[how often is this festival on?] ah they do two a year ah in April and oh, I think it's either April or May? Or I think it's they do one on April and then they um, every year, ah so that was probably like the last, most generous ah not last but most generous, um, there's... Cardiff venues [inaudible] paying ah unless they've said otherwise um...[so there's a difference in pay? What you get paid in Aberdare and Merthyr compared to Cardiff?] um, I think it's like it's hard to tell because rarely do they have like a set rate it's more like how well the gig, event does and then, so um, so it's hard to say which pays better than the other because it depends how well the event goes [so that's generally the case how many people they get through the door?] yeah, um and then sometimes depending on the venue they, you can have like some of what they make at the bar as well which is ah, the ones which promise the bar bill is, usually better paid [is that the case in Merthyr then?] I don't think we've ever, oh we [inaudible] have been paid in Merthyr um, but that was just, that was just for the people count not, not the bar um, but The Crown don't never, never paid us and I know that's the case for a lot of bands even like bigger bands sometimes they're very like, tight with their money [laughs] [and they said they're gonna pay but they don't?] they, they, they just don't, which, which is better than saying you are and, then not going through with it I guess [yeah?] maybe? [laughs].
- AC: Um, okay, so how serious do you take your music-making?
- DH: Err, seriously but not like...but not, we don't take ourselves too seriously it's not but, err, we like have a laugh with it but still don't take it seriously [inaudible] get that way, it's not [inaudible] I, I dunno like why, why you wouldn't wanna say that you wanna be

a big band, it's like [inaudible] you wanna be the best like you can go, err, and it's no different with us like [inaudible] be the best band that we can be, um, but we still like have laugh [inaudible].

AC: Any strategies in place, y'know I don't want to say a 5 year plan but that kind of thing in place to get you...

DH: Err, we should have um, our EP recorded err, by the end of this month, early next month and, and I've already got like loads of contacts in radio and music people I can send stuff off to, err, so it's just get the EP sorted ah send it off to as many people as possible, ah gig as much as we can um, and then hope that like something clicks and see where it goes from there.

AC: Okay, so it's the recording [yeah] are you going to do any videos or anything to go with those then?

DH: I've got a few people in ah, I got a few mates who do ah, video [inaudible] at the minute we're just focusing on, on getting these songs recorded 'cause it's, it's been a while um, 'cause err, we just haven't had either the money or err, obviously like our drummer's been doing his exams so we were like, I think this month has been [inaudible] the least active 'cause we were all like you, you do that, you do your exams and we, we'll do the recording [inaudible] and then come back, so ah...

AC: Are the other two guys doing anything to do with music, ah in college and...

DH: Our bassist is, um, um our drummer's not ah he's doing engineering, he wants to do engineering in college so...yeah.

AC: Um, again I think we've kinda touched on this but I'll ask it again anyway. What motivates you to continue making music? What do you get out of it? What are the benefits?

DH: Um...I guess um, the, the gigs themselves like when you see people enjoying like the songs like you've written, ah, that, that like motivates me to carry on, I don't know what it would be for the other two but ah, that's what I'm motivated...you see in other people like what we do and [are there any benefits from being a musician in Merthyr?] err....[long pause] people often think you're way cooler than you actually are [laughter] that's, I get that a lot, and then they speak to you for about 5 minutes and are like, you're just not in the band are you!? [laughs] but err, err, I could, probably the, the meeting of other musicians and meeting just, just other people in general like I, I liked when we played a gig, I like speaking to like people who have seen us and, I, I know some people like to do their gig and just like talk to their circle of friends but I don't mind speaking to like, the old guy who's sat at the back like clapping along I, I just like meeting people, speaking to them and err, and then I get a lot of err, like advice and like tips and what we can improve on and stuff and try and speak to people and stuff, it helps really.

AC: Is there anyone in particular that you've spoken to and they've given you a gem of advice?

DH: Um, we had, when we played, when we played the gig in Jacs once um, someone told us to err, put one of the songs at the beginning of the set, and since we've done that a few people have come up to us and that song it really opens the set-up, it's like ahh, so, so I [inaudible] a good few compliments [inaudible] [and that's complete strangers?] yeah, I dunno, he might have been, I think he was in one of the bands,

just someone there and like ah that song that you played towards the end you should move that up and err, and it's, and it's correct and it stayed there ever since.

AC: Um, how do you keep in touch with others? How often and what keeps you connected with ah your man in Pembroke there?

DH: Yeah, we, we have a group chat we're ah, we're like always talking err, like, just, just, generally like not, sometimes the band stuff, just life and ah [Facebook yeah?] yeah, um, and from like him being in this band and then he's like met a lot of people, like me and our bassist just know, err, for like he's friends with them, so like it's all sort of like connected to like, we're all sort of like, we got mutual friends like now so it's ah [it's a very sociable thing then?] yeah, [a big motivation?] yeah definitely yeah, um, yeah for sure ah, um, I've met, there's, we've played a gig and I've invited like a friend to come down and like and they brought their friend and then so we've met them and then next time they'd be there they'd bring their friend, so it's yeah it is like a sociable thing...yeah.

AC: Do you think it helps, the sociability of it going back to what you were saying about numbers on the doors y'know it, it increases your fan base [yeah] is that a conscious thing to do that or do you think it just comes naturally...?

DH: Um, we're always trying to get like more people to like, to gigs and to bring their friends and that but in the end it's not really anything that we can control like um, we do, we do like everything we can to get as many people [inaudible] um, and... err... I know like the last few ah, the last few gigs we've ah, we've had people bring quite a few people um, I think it depends on what bands are on the bill as well ah which is a good thing about being mates with like, getting mates with these bands and sort of when you have like a headline gig you can have a good support act that you know will bring in ah a decent crowd err so that's always good [okay].

AC: Um [mumbling what questions have already been covered...] um, so just a couple of questions more now really. What if anything limits what you do in Merthyr? Living in Merthyr does that limit what you do with music?

DH: Um, it limits the amount of gigs we get to play in, in Merthyr ahh, but I wouldn't say other than I wouldn't although it is like a big one err, I wouldn't say there's anything else really um, 'cause Merthyr had a lot of creative people in it so we still meet like the people um, I, I don't think, I don't think being based in Merthyr hinders anything more than it would be if we were anywhere else [yeah? Do you think that's because you already know the people or is it social media [inaudible] takes that away?] um, [or is there somewhere in Merthyr people tend to hang out and you can bump into them?] I mean, there's.... I, I, I'm always like out err, and like speaking to people in Merthyr and um, and like trying to plug the band as much as I can um and then they'd ask when the next gig is and, and me personally like most of the time people that I've said [inaudible] if they have been at that gig so err, you can still bring people like from Merthyr to like other places um, and then when we do like gig in Cardiff I know a lot of people in Cardiff anyway so it's like makes up for people who didn't come, come from Merthyr like you've already got some audience in Cardiff [do you hang out in Cardiff?] Err, I'm not, not that often but I, I've got a, I've got quite a few friends there err, some of them in, in Cardiff uni now so it's like, there's quite a few down there so when we have played Cardiff recently it's been, I can always count on there being quite a few people.

AC: Is it through college you met these people?

- DH: Um, some of them are just friends and friends we've just got close I guess and...
- AC: Is there anything else you'd like to add?[Um] About what you do why do you do it and where you do it?
- DH: Err, [it's a hard question] it is! [laughter] I, I'm not sure there is anything else to add? No...
- AC: Okay, that's the end of the interview, thanks very much [thankyou].

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

EJ – Ed Jones, Participant

AC: Hi Ed, how're you doing?

EJ: Hey, I'm good how are you?

AC: I'm alright thank you, um, and you're okay with the consent form? That's all fine, you're consenting to that yeah?

EJ: Yeah it's all good.

AC: Fantastic. Okay, the first question, um is what music do you like?

EJ: Oh, I mean, [inaudible] there's not much I don't really like I mean I like y'know [inaudible] my iTunes playlist is quite varied, I mean [inaudible] old rock and punk and some modern day pop and [inaudible] and stuff.

AC: Okay, so what sort of music do you play then?

EJ: With the band I'm in we try like a mix between Brit Pop [inaudible] like punk, rock music um yeah, [inaudible] it's a cool mix ah it depends on [inaudible] the song, some songs are heavier [inaudible] some songs are more y'know Indie, Brit Poppy.

AC: Okay, so um just tell me a little bit about the ways that you go about making music um, sort of talking about writing if you want to start, tell me a bit about your writing processes?

EJ: [inaudible] there's different ways in the band it's a different writing process to what in personally, like I mean for [inaudible] writing and stuff it's ah, sort of a case of um, it's not really about finding inspiration it's about forcing yourself to be inspired. I never find myself just coming up with an idea on the spot [inaudible] I force myself to sit down it, it's kinda like a muscle sort of like ah, once you got, you're exercising the muscle really. You start off and you're not warmed up enough, nothing's really happening [AC: Yeah] it's [inaudible] writing for me, if I sit down and try to like [inaudible] or something, sit down and start and nothing's really happening but you sort of like get into the zone, sort of warm up to it and then you start [inaudible] stuff sounds better and better and it's a process form there, I mean when it comes to writing lyrics for myself it, it's [inaudible] a game of once you get a general idea of what you wanna write sort of just write things down and it's a case of just editing and editing [inaudible] a better version of what you've done. So you just write down your first track no matter how bad it is and you just keep coming back to it [inaudible] and by the end of it you have, or you want [inaudible] the band it's more like a group sort of thing, you don't have [inaudible] in the band music wise comes mostly from Jarvis [inaudible]

AC: Okay, do you find, you were saying that you get warmed up into it, do you find then when you are warmed up you don't realise how much time has gone past y'know?

EJ: Yeah, it, it's a lot of those things [inaudible] you sort of disconnect from, from the real world sort of thing which kinda like time flies by [inaudible] you're completely in the zone for that [inaudible].

- AC: What sort of things do you write about?
- EJ: Well, it depends what sort of mood I'm in and stuff [inaudible] the usual things like [inaudible] what's going on in your life or like y'know anything like that, it's quite varied, it depends, sometimes you can write what you've read in the news, what's going on in the world and stuff like that.
- AC: Okay, and can you tell me a bit about your rehearsal processes? [EJ: What's that sorry?] ah can you tell me a bit about how you go about rehearsing?
- EJ: Oh, rehearsing, [inaudible] with myself I kinda like [inaudible] force myself to do it like, so I play mostly, the drummer in bands so I'm out sort of schedule myself to practice at least two hours a day and also I play guitar [inaudible] When it comes to song-writing it's more, more of like a [inaudible] working that out, [inaudible] like a muscle getting warmed up, I sort of like [inaudible] inspiration from it, you're not in the mood for it so I force myself to write when I don't want to write, but if I want to write [inaudible] but then with the band then obviously we try and practice as much as possible but then [inaudible] about three to four times a week for like about three hours [inaudible] jamming songs [inaudible] stage craft, all stuff like that.
- AC: Can you tell me a bit more about the stage craft?
- EJ: A bit more about the stage craft yeah? [AC: Yes please yeah] um, so basically when, when you watch a band live you might think they're doing [inaudible] completely choreographed [inaudible] it's stuff that they've just sat down and right how [inaudible] bring energy to this or what sort of vibe do you want to pick for this and it's that conscious sort of what do you want to bring to your show [inaudible] all the bands [inaudible] professional bands think about that stuff [inaudible] lights, production, stage craft, sound [inaudible] the best, easiest on stage are choreographed. I'm not completely choreographed but when you're practising in your personal space or whatever y'know, between songs you decide right this is what we're gonna do, this sort of thing or that sort of thing y'know?
- AC: Yeah, did that change over time then? So when you first started you weren't so concerned with those things and that's more of a new thing?
- EJ: Yeah of course, when you start you're quite naive and thought no, no [inaudible] sort of the fake bands y'know [inaudible] you have a moment and then you realise [inaudible]
- AC: Okay, what about recording then, where, ah y'know who do you record with, why with them and not somewhere else?
- EJ: [Inaudible] Dan Austin, he's a really good guy, he recorded a few bands before, he's recorded [inaudible] he's recorded with um, I can't remember the names of the bands [laughter] he's recorded with quite a few [inaudible] we spoke to him and we just knew from the [inaudible] that he was really like y'know talented but sort of, we like his mind-set and the way he [inaudible] he's very passionate about music and [inaudible] but a lot of producers [inaudible] obviously a job but Dan also sees it as full on [inaudible] projects and, and when we spoke to him he's obviously a massive fan of the music [inaudible] Monnow Valley studios in Monmouth and um, we recorded [inaudible] over, we went 3 separate times over about two weeks at a time so for about six weeks [AC: Okay] and yeah it was a cool process I mean we recorded the album by track [inaudible] which is basically doing drums first, doing bass, doing guitars doing vocals, top end stuff and [inaudible] when we knew exactly

what to do, tried recording the album a few times [inaudible] studio for years and years so we got our routine or our methods down to [inaudible] we just knew what to do and Dan worked his magic, extra ideas we'd put them on top and then [inaudible] make quite a good album.

AC: And Dan Austin you said his name was yeah?

EJ: Yeah, Dan Austin yeah

AC: Okay, okay. Um, so how would you describe what you do in the band dynamic and who else is involved and how do you all stay in touch with each other?

EJ: So how would I describe [inaudible] personally? [AC: Yeah, yeah] Well, obviously I'm the drummer and I think I'm the sort of guy who y'know, not like pushes it but [inaudible] y'know just c'mon guys y'know, this is what we're gonna do, let's do it y'know like

AC: Motivating yeah?

EJ: Yeah, that sort of vibe like y'know um obviously every member of the band is talented and stuff [inaudible] it's just a case of y'know sometimes people see [inaudible] yeah [inaudible] drummer, percussion, backing vocals, um yeah.

AC: Okay, and who else then is directly involved in what you are doing right now

EJ: The lads in the band?

AC: Um, yeah I know but for the recording y'know.

EJ: [inaudible] We 're going through a bit of a thing with our singer, if it's possible can we skip that one? [laughs]

AC: Okay, okay no problem, no problem. How would you describe your relationship with other band members then, how did you meet?

EJ: Yeah we're all like brothers y'know, we met, ah obviously I knew Tom, I knew Tom was in a band with him before this band and [inaudible] for years and [inaudible] and we went yeah, we tried it for a few months and this is really good and after about six months we did our first show and we released Cave Song and from there people were interested [inaudible] thought right that was easy but it's really not easy, we just happened to like, strike gold y'know.

AC: Hmm... so it was quite um, it's quite quick really isn't it and quite smooth [EJ: Yeah, yeah it was very good] why do you think that's the case where other people then struggle or is it a very bumpy ride?

EJ: I mean without trying to sound [inaudible] from a music business standpoint, I mean the industry just want really good songs, I mean, not like [inaudible] I mean from a business standpoint like it doesn't matter [inaudible] who you are or whatever it doesn't matter anything like that, it's industry [inaudible] and they really think this song has potential on radio or onto the charts or whatever [inaudible] it's the simples, it doesn't mean the songs are better than anyone else [inaudible] it's quite a commercial sound [inaudible] it's a case of doing all these great songs but they might not be great commercial songs y'know [inaudible] what happens in [inaudible] radios

gonna play it the pubs are gonna play it. It could be a bad song but from a commercial standpoint it's a great song.

AC: Yeah, yeah, okay. So, and speaking about Merthyr specifically now and I know that you're doing a lot of stuff outside Merthyr now but if we can sort of keep it to Merthyr. What resources do you, did you use in the area?

EJ: So we rehearsed, our first rehearsal unit was, we rehearse in Cardiff now [inaudible] rehearsal space was in a garage unit called NU Studios in ah Merthyr and, it's, it's a tiny thing, it's like [inaudible] run by this guy, I can't, I think his name is Alex or Ian, that's it Ian and yeah and um, yeah that's where we first rehearsed, that's where we first sort of got our sound and stuff and it was really great [inaudible] so the first studio we used was a studio in Ebbw Vale called [inaudible]

AC: What's it called sorry?

EJ: the E V I the Ebbw Vale Institute

AC: Oh alright, right

EJ: Yeah, and we used that recorded our first demos [inaudible] the Cave Song [inaudible]

AC: Okay, how often would you say you've played or are going to be playing Merthyr...live?

EJ: Sorry the call went a bit wonky then...

AC: Oh sorry, how often would you be playing Merthyr live?

EJ: Did we or would we?

AC: Um, it's a tricky one 'cause you're kinda you're, you've gone past that point a bit now really [laughs] um, y'know when you were gigging locally how often would you be playing Merthyr?

EJ: So, bef, bef, before we got signed [inaudible] we only ever played four shows in total the first show we ever did was for GCSE results night up in Penydarren and that was the first one, the second one we did was in, that was in Merthyr, I can't remember where that was now sorry it was somewhere outside [inaudible] but we did two shows in the Redhouse um which industry and agency representatives were coming down to along with like people we knew in Merthyr so we did those two shows and I think after that. I think we've played in Merthyr one other time and that was for Merthyr Rising Festival where we headlined the Friday.

AC: Yeah, um with the Redhouse, was it off the back of the Redhouse gigs that you got sort of industry interest?

EJ: So basically the interest was there before the Redhouse shows, a month before we released the Cave Song, we released the Cave Song in November, early November, the Redhouse gigs were in late December but the interest was there from mid-November [inaudible] record labels come down to see us on that day [inaudible] but the interest was there already before that, it, was the, the sort of cherry on top sort of thing.

AC: Yeah and, and that was from online ah yeah, sort of marketing online doing it yourselves yeah?

EJ: Yeah, we just put up a song the marketing did itself really [inaudible] we didn't expect things to happen the way they did.

AC: Why do you think that sort of reached to, ah via like, I should imagine Facebook is it?

EJ: What's that? The call went a bit funny again.

AC: Sorry, um was that via Facebook when you put the song out?

EJ: So we put the song out on our Soundcloud and um we shared it on Facebook [AC: Yeah] mainly Facebook then [inaudible] but um we put it out on Facebook and people just started sharing it [inaudible] we didn't really push it or put money behind it we just put it out. Ah Dave Owens from um, [inaudible] Adam Walton Radio Wales played it twice on his show um, um Zane Lowe played it on Radio 1 [AC: Okay] and people were just sharing it [inaudible] it just went crazy

AC: So it was a kinda snowball effect really.

EJ: Yeah, exactly once one person picked it up [inaudible] once people started sharing it [inaudible]

AC: Okay, so um are there any other responsibilities and roles that you adopt in the band y'know like booking gigs, finances, promotion that sort of stuff?

EJ: No, basically we have people for that, we got management [inaudible] accounts and stuff, we've never really have to do that [inaudible] obviously we didn't do many shows before [inaudible] was released [inaudible] but once we did then [inaudible] we could hire people on to do [inaudible] in regards to all that.

AC: Okay, so you're just focusing on the music yeah?

EJ: Yeah, we're just completely focused on the music, the stuff we were fortunate enough to have y'know the resources available [inaudible] people worry about that sort of thing.

AC: Yeah, okay um, well, how important is music making to you?

EJ: Well it's my life y'know, it's my earnings and my passion so [inaudible] it's what I've wanted to do since I was a kid [inaudible] look at my old Facebook account, it's been deactivated now so [inaudible] but you can never really fully delete that [AC: Yeah] and um, [inaudible] I was like twelve [inaudible] I just can't see myself doing anything other than music with my life [inaudible] [AC: Yeah, laughs], yeah, yeah it's my passion [inaudible] but at the end of the day I'd rather not be doing anything else...y'know.

AC: Yeah, yeah, what, what motivates you then is it the passion or is there anything else that, that drives you?

EJ: Um, obviously it's the passion but I think it's [inaudible] in that sort of drive to be successful in what I do. If I was in like plumbing, a plumber I would wanna be the best plumber about y'know [laughter] if I was a teacher I'd wanna be the best teacher

about, a musician, song-writer [inaudible] I'm obviously [inaudible] we also try to be y'know the best that you can.

AC: Um, I'm gonna skip these ones, 'cause this next one says how do you find the time to make music but it is your job so forget that one [laughter]

EJ: Yeah

AC: Um, just a couple more now um what factors do you think make it difficult to make music in Merthyr?

EJ: A lot of it is financial, um I wouldn't necessarily say there's resources available 'cause obviously it's not far away from Cardiff at all, so if you can afford it you can just go down to Cardiff or the studio in Ebbw Vale for a call [inaudible] if you're from Merthyr obviously it's not the most economically sound town [AC: Hmm] um, a lot of people are working class and um it's a case of music's expensive y'know it's a case of buying instruments is expensive, learning to play them is expensive, recording is expensive y'know everything like that is expensive and it's a case of I think y'know financially it, it's hard to sort of [inaudible] people who all have enough time and y'know [inaudible] need the resources to learn [inaudible] time and resources to get good gear and instruments and stuff and all the time [inaudible] I'm thinking y'know a lot of people aren't able to do that, or aren't able, aren't willing to do that [inaudible] and it's a case of y'know obviously if you found a rich part of the country more money and stuff you got more time to do all that stuff [inaudible] haven't the resources to do that.

AC: Um, wha, what do you think, y'know do you have any ideas on what could make things easier here for y'know local musicians and youngsters coming through to make music, have you got any ideas?

EJ: I think there, y'know should be more resources put into y'know... in the schools, it could start there [inaudible] when I was in school it was great so more a case of like y'know classical music and play the piano and y'know studying all that sort of stuff there's lesson an emphasis on like y'know pick a specific instrument and try and learn that in school 'cause that takes [inaudible] obviously a kit is expensive and rightfully so y'know [inaudible] to be able to teach people, but it's a case of if the schools [inaudible] choose your own sort of instrument thing and go down that route 'cause people like modern song-writing and that would go a long way y'know what I mean [inaudible] y'know council schemes like and y'know open up more rehearsal units and stuff, put more money into like entertainment, industry in Merthyr like the Redhouse, there's problems with that right now.

AC: I know yeah, it's changed hands hasn't it.

EJ: Yeah, I mean that's the only real proper like musically y'know [inaudible] in Merthyr y'know. There was supposed to be a scene from that but it never appeared which is quite sad but um y'know just more sort of resources for helping people to actually learn an instrument and incentivise people to learn an instrument, there's not much reason for councils to do that [inaudible] instruments y'know.

AC: Yeah, okay thank you, and is there anything else you'd like to add?

EJ: Nah [inaudible]

AC: That's fantastic, I'm just gonna stop the recording for a sec.

Interview with Gareth Mitchell, 30-08-2019, Telephone @ 4.15 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

GM – Gareth Mitchell, Participant

AC: Hi Gareth how're you doing?

GM: Alright, not so bad thank you.

AC: Okay, so the first question is, what music do you like?

GM: Ah, [inaudible] a really wide ranges [laughs] anything from rock music, Foo Fighters, ah, um, Stone Sour and Slipknotty type stuff and Fleetwood Mac then, Bare Naked Ladies and y'know really old stuff Beatles, Lindisfarne I listen to [inaudible] major different styles really [AC: Okay] I don't listen to um, [inaudible] y'know country music old style American country music is the only thing I don't really listen to but I'm open to other styles otherwise.

AC: Okay, so what music do you play?

GM: Um, that's pretty much the same as well um, when I play y'know if I play at home it's anything off my sort of iPad kinda list really I'll play along to or anything I feel, I feel like playing that day. If I'm listening to the Beach Boys I'll go yeah [inaudible] I might listen to something else and think oh that's a cool song and I'll try that later when I get home.

AC: Do you write your own music as well?

GM: No, riffs and chords but not really I never [inaudible] really bothered with that really.

AC: So it's mainly covers you're dealing with then?

GM: Yeah, yeah, I've never really been bothered to y'know I've tried it like but I'm not ah, I'm never sort of gone down the road of being sort of taught properly so I don't really understand the ins and outs really I'm not the type.

AC: Okay, so um, right tell me a bit about your musical practices, where you rehearse, where you record if you do and where you play and things like that?

GM: [inaudible] mainly practicing um [inaudible] homes and garages I play drums and guitar um, sort of play guitar mainly I started learning drums later and [inaudible] brother's drummer so [inaudible] I had a garage room done out so I got the guitars in there really and sort of maybe practice on my own there. [inaudible] with the band or something I'll tend to use the Practice Pad um over in sort of Blackwood um Bargoed area, Merthyr had a couple but they sort of died down at the minute um and I got my own unit as well so if it's in the summer we can practice there but there's no actual heating to [inaudible]

AC: Okay, your own spaces you've paid for that yourself or have you had sort of funding?

GM: No, we always pay it's roughly about between ten and fifteen pound per hour for the Practice Pad and we usually book three hours at a time. When we were in the band, the last band [inaudible] two to three hours every week really [AC: Yeah] we just paid for that then and [inaudible] practice really.

AC: So you pay for your won stuff yourself?

GM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we always have done um, paid for practice, paid for materials [laughs] people think you make a lot of money out of gigging but [inaudible and laughter] buy your equipment, your travelling and practice I think that the last, the last time we were in actually [inaudible] more than we gigged, negative equity like [inaudible] the first three gigs really but y'know [inaudible] you don't do it for money all the time just doing it for fun really.

AC: Yeah, yeah so who else is involved in what you do when you are playing or sort of promoting or whatever, who else is involved?

GM: [inaudible] two bands [inaudible] one band called the Suspects with a couple of lads which I still, still friendly with we did Bowstrong with them lot which is the band, the one I'm in next week um so we've always kept in contact but um, some of them have gone off and done other things like the drummer he does Noughts and Crosses with his brother now um me and the bass player went off and did another band then which [inaudible] a guitarist who I did acoustic with as well Ryan Minney another guy Jim Holmes (I think that's what he said?) and [inaudible] another two guys playing with us then, drums and singing. Um, unusually we sort of promote ourselves really we never gone through agency's or anything just sort of word of mouth really [inaudible] south Wales sometimes.

AC: So how do you know each other, how did you get to know each other?

GM: Um, Ryan and I played rugby together years ago [inaudible] in the band in now. Um, three of the boys [inaudible] played rugby [inaudible] sort of got talking in the rugby club [inaudible] people just sort of joined, the singer we just got talking in The Crown really [inaudible] and ah [inaudible] just sort of took off from there really the last time.

AC: So, it's kinda your hobby spawned relations with other people to do with music and in a particular place as in The Crown yeah?

GM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it just um [inaudible] the pub I go to in Merthyr because it plays live music ah regular um, and sort of, we met people in there I've been [inaudible] since I was sixteen so we started doing acoustic together and then [inaudible] we might start a band again so I said I'd ask one of the other guys from my band and then he'd [inaudible] singer so, it would sort of, sort of be people we knew really local. We have started trying to get the band back up and running now or a band but we're looking at a new singer and a new ah drummer at the minute. We did put an ad out but um something happened with [inaudible] lost his son not so long ago so he's not ready to do anything at the minutes so, we just hang fire with that.

AC: Oh sorry to hear that. Um, so you said you put adverts out for ah band members, do you think, do you think that's gonna yield good results or are there better ways of finding people?

GM: Ah, to be honest we had sort of like a couple of people, two drummers a couple of singers um, it's an easier way of vetting people through Facebook [inaudible] loads of singing guitarists [inaudible] drummers to get hold of really, our style of music [inaudible] get hold of people at different areas

AC: So you say Facebook is one of the key tools you use yeah?

GM: Yeah it's the only one really I would use 'cause I think all the bars and all the venues sort of tend to use that as an advert as well [inaudible] etc... [AC: Okay] and everyone tends to be on there then that plays music [inaudible]

AC: Oh you cut out then sorry my love what did you say at the end there?

GM: I said that's the easiest way to get hold of other musicians really y'know you don't know locally like.

AC: Oh well yeah I used it to find most of my interviews [GM: Yeah] [laughter]. So how would you describe your um, err um roles and responsibilities then?

GM: In, in what, in what context?

AC: Y'know um sort of booking gigs, promoting, finances y'know all the sort of businessy side of things I guess.

GM: [inaudible] to be honest I've always done it as a hobby I never sort of gone into it 100% Um, I know we [inaudible] really gigged once, twice a month maximum when we were younger but even if I do it now it'll be [inaudible] to be honest it's down to the venue [inaudible] promoting yourself um, I think [inaudible] needs to be on board with that um, [inaudible] go by word of mouth really, people tend to book, y'know we done a load of gigs, we get booked and then people don't see us and then [inaudible] other pubs. Um it's quite hard to get in unless you're willing to [inaudible] sort of pub or whatever is quite hard...sort of sell your soul sometimes y'know do it really cheap just [inaudible] see you, give you a chance, 'cause I know a lot of agencies [inaudible] block bookings and prices and they take a cut of it then and so um so I think it's worse off by doing that really because the band [inaudible] like.

AC: Yeah, yeah, um what resources do you use in Merthyr? You mentioned a couple of um practice studios you don't use 'cause they've disappeared [GM: Yeah, yeah] do you use any other places or agen, not agencies or y'know people or businesses in Merthyr to help you...

GM: No, nothing in Merthyr at all 'cause I don't really see it as a business y'know it's [inaudible] we don't really [inaudible] professionally [inaudible] [AC: Yeah] y'know we use the Practice Pad in Bargoed um, and that's it now 'cause the other ones are gone, Steve O used to have a place in Merthyr which we used to hire a bit and um, and we, to be honest [inaudible] the last band we're in was last October um and I had to finish 'cause the two guys [inaudible] spending time with two people who ah [AC: Oh gosh] with people who don't get on [laughter] but yeah.

AC: Um, so would you play then any venues in town when you were gigging?

GM: Yeah, yeah um, regularly play Cefn Rugby Club um, um, [inaudible] sort of Pentrebach Labour, Pentrebach Cricket Club, The Crown, ah, where else? Um, Pantyscallog we used to play a bit, The Mount but that comes in and out with different owners, the Belle Vue is the same. The only one that's stayed sort of constant is The Crown really because um Jacob has been there for quite a while now.

AC: So it's down to the people running it yeah?

GM: Yeah, well Jacob has been there for a while and Jacob is pretty [inaudible] he's had us, well he's had every one of my bands really so once he knows you're up and

running he, he always books us in 'cause he always has been [inaudible] the pub so [inaudible] bring a crowd with us 'cause we know a lot of people so that tends do ah [inaudible].

AC: So did you get paid for many gigs or was it like you said y'know it was just whatever it was just to get your foot in the door?

GM: Well, [inaudible] we did get paid [laughs] um, yeah, um, when we were in our first band ah we got paid quite a bit, there was five of us in the band we'd get up to 800 pound a gig then, that was ten years ago [AC: Fantastic] I think the last one [inaudible] was 250 quid [AC: Hmm] you could ask for a lot more [inaudible] do weddings but we wouldn't do that 'cause I think [inaudible] do big sort of gigs where we would have Monday Bank holidays, New Year's day and things like that um, in the old band [inaudible] I think in town the maximum we had was 350 [inaudible] the other band, and even when we're doing weddings we don't get the chance too much 'cause I think you're robbing people then y'know. I know you are playing but we don't do it as a job, I feel, I feel wrong charging too much if you know what I mean.

AC: Okay, so you've kinda answered this, I was gonna ask how serious you take it, I suppose, well do you... do you wanna develop on that? How serious do you take it?

GM: Oh when I'm playing I take it really serious but, but I don't take it as serious income [inaudible] really. I take it serious as in playing, the time scale what I put into it, like I've got children y'know, I'm married, I've got other, got other commitments as well. Y'know if I didn't have a job then maybe that would be, if that was my only sort of source of income I would probably spend a lot more time on it but y'know, I run my own business I got other employees and...

AC: What's your business? What do you do?

GM: I got a building firm so I [inaudible] career change again so I, I'm just sort of [inaudible] the company [inaudible] two years ago I had eleven people working for me, sort of six vans on the road um, I got one van now [inaudible] people and I'm going back nursing so...

AC: You're going back to nursing you said? [GM: Yeah] oh fantastic well done.

GM: Yeah, I did it um sort of fourteen years ago [inaudible] my job I'm not really getting what I need out of it [AC: Yeah] yeah so, a career change so, doing something I want to do.

AC: So what motivates you to continue y'know with the work you got on, what motivates you to, to continue to play music?

GM: Um just the enjoyment really and the release I get sort of um, it's mainly enjoyment and sort of the de-stressing I have with playing music [inaudible] um, it's the only way I relax, sort of got my little room I keep my guitar in there and I play a couple of songs and I feel great after doing it [AC: It's almost like therapy I suppose?] Yeah, definitely it's like a therapy 'cause if I don't do it I get stressed and I don't feel as relaxed and I yeah sort of it gets me somewhere where I need to be like mentally if you know what I mean, makes my mind to think straight then.

AC: Do you feel stressed, guilty as in you haven't done anything or stressed in a different way?

GM: I get stressed [inaudible] I get annoyed with myself when I'm not playing, I don't go and play live, I don't play in a pub, [inaudible] actually I feel like a jealousy maybe [AC: Yeah] more of a, maybe not a jealousy like [inaudible] I should be doing that why aint I doing it 'cause I used to play [inaudible] I feel like, I always feel guilty spending too much time doing it 'cause my family as well [AC: Yeah] [inaudible] so y'know if doing it wouldn't affect my family I would gig every night of the week I'd y'know going without drinking in a pub doesn't unless there's music on, my music [inaudible] I'll always stay in a pub if there's music on [inaudible] lots of times I plan to go home and then [inaudible] an acoustic singer I sit and watch them and I won't go, my wife will go [laughter] I'll sit there and watch him all night and [AC: ha-ha that's great] yeah it's, I, I do it all the time, I love, I love playing music to be honest, and I'm not just [inaudible] my friend come round and we get our guitars out, acoustic out and just have a little play around that um, yeah sometimes it's not about doing anything too serious as well.

AC: Yeah, so how do you find the time to fit it all in really?

GM: [Laughs] you don't all the time that's the issue um, I haven't had much time that's why I've changed my job at the minute um and hopefully I'll get a lot more time to do the things that I wanna do.

AC: So that's a big part of the job change then to sort of give yourself more time to do stuff for yourself?

GM: Yes, to, to get more free time and to, running your own company is not the easiest [AC: Yeah] they can get you any time of day and [inaudible] not enjoying so it's, it's about getting a better work and life balance as well y'know [inaudible] it would be quarter to nine finishing work um, and I'd be out of the house 7 o'clock in the morning, half past six or y'know it take its toll over time like so I definitely, I find it hard to practice in the band at the time so I'm like well I just haven't got time to carry on doing this stuff then so it's and it might be not sort of gigs as I used to 'cause I, I'm older than I was then but y'know who knows?

AC: That's interesting though that you've taken that step y'know it's quite a big step isn't it to sort of shift your life around to [GM: Yeah, yeah] fit your family and the things y'know the nice hobbies that you do, it's ah, that's great. That's fantastic. Um, so what if anything limits what you do regarding your music-making living in Merthyr as opposed to say a city?

GM: Um, getting to see bands [inaudible] quality bands I would say and I'm not saying like local aren't quality but y'know you get a lot of like student bands which is not something I watch but [inaudible] weekly gigs in the week nights [inaudible] but you don't get it in Cardiff a lot it's [inaudible] we don't get a great deal of live music in Cardiff [inaudible] in cities to be honest [AC: Oh really?] yeah, lots of bands I want to see [inaudible] Brixton and Manchester [inaudible] middle of Cardiff? No. [inaudible] but he's talking about bands not willing to travel to Wales to play] often.

AC: So that's a country wide thing then you're saying really I suppose, rather than just Merthyr it's more of a Welsh thing?

GM: Yeah, I, I think [inaudible] the big cities we don't get [inaudible] I like ah [inaudible] The Spin Doctors, they're coming to the UK and won't play much outside London and Manchester [inaudible] coming to Bristol and Birmingham [inaudible] you got y'know Cardiff stadium a couple of big, big venues but [inaudible] maybe that's why certain

acts won't go to those venues like the O2 arena is taking over in the other cities and O2 haven't done anything in Wales really [AC: No] is it because of that, I dunno?

AC: Hmm, okay um and is there anything else you'd like to add?

GM: No, not really, no I don't think so?

AC: That's fantastic, I'm just gonna stop the recording and just say a few words before we ring off. Thank you for that.

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

GM – Geraint Morgan, Participant

AC: Hiya Geraint, how you doing?

GM: Very good Anne, nice to meet you on this sunny day.

AC: Yes, it is. Um, right, so the first question is what music do you like?

GM: Well, how long have we got I, I, anything since my taste is a massive variety actually, from, from rock guitar to, to Sinatra to classical music really, if it's melodic and it's got good lyrics in it I think y'know I, I go along with. Um, obviously melody is really important and really just an open book, I can't pigeon hole anything I like y'know crazy collection of records

AC: Eclectic?

GM: Eclectic [laughter] mad, yeah.

AC: So what music do you play?

GM: To put it in, then again not in a real pigeon hole I, I think it's melodic, blues, blues rock sort of giving our own spin on it. Um obviously a three piece band with a singer you're limited to what you can actually put out so we tend to give it a twist of y'know our own, our own spin on what the music is but we take things from the sixties to the seventies up to quite more modern stuff y'know like, I dunno, like Joe Bonamassa or something, something like his type of stuff.

AC: Is it covers mainly or is it..?

GM: Mainly covers um, I had been in bands obviously written stuff in the sort of eighties. Actually the band we had called Perfect Stranger won TDK? Battle of the Bands, actually that was a five piece but it had a bit more scope there was five singers, ah, we were doing things right across very similar to the Total Eagles type of thing y'know [AC: Okay] y'know twin guitars, great keyboard player, all original stuff [inaudible] ah sadly, ah sadly um, the main writer in the band was a guy called Martin [inaudible/distraction] ah, he met up with a girl I think it was college, work commitments and everything else and ah I think the main, I would say destructive factor there was the fact that a lot of the bands that time were getting thrown out, there was a punk revolution coming along and anything that could play and hold a melody and had a good sort of hook tended to sort of slung into the bin then y'know and ah bands that I was y'know quite familiar, I know I guy called Ashley Mulford who went on, he was in a band called Sad Café [AC: Okay] they actually supported Sassafras [AC: Alright] on, when Sassafras came back from ah an American tour. Um, a year prior to that I lived in Troedyrhiw and where the school Afon Taf is and there was a knock on the window and I was playing a Marshall as it happened quite loud in the street and there was a knock on the door and two guys, one from Bournemouth and the other from that area asked if they could come in, they both had guitars, and seriously so, there was about forty doors in the street, they came in and we jammed all afternoon really. My mam, she was one of these, typical Welsh lady, she brought in sort of y'know [AC: Sandwiches...] sandwiches and we'd just stay there and [laughter] about a twelve month later I met Dai he's from Merthyr, Dai Shell we're quite good friends and I met him in Swansea and he told me the guy in the

support band knew me and I said where's he from? Birmingham or Manchester. I said I don't know anybody from there and Dave said he described you to a T your guitar where you live and this, I said I don't know anybody. We went in for a sound check in Top Rank? And lo and behold there's Ashley now his hair, it had grown a bit longer he had a beard, this big crazy hat on rushed up and he said y'know it's you like and, and the worse scenario was he said we're not very happy the way it's going do you wanna job with us and I said [laughter] it's true, Sad Café, oh great but I said I've just joined BT I said I'm really happy with the place I'd been there about eight to ten months loved the job and declined the offer and two months later they were on Top of the Pops [inaudible] [Laughter] um, but getting back to that 'cause Ashley we kept in touch then 'cause I think he moved to Canada, he, he met some ah some actress that was involved in some sort of like a neighbours kind of soap over there and um working with BT I often used to give him a ring [inaudible] have a chat, catch up [inaudible] and he was trying to get something sorted about the band tours and they were supposed to be touring with Santana I think it went on actually they done, but then they came home and they dropped them and so their band suddenly sort of pushed out of the way again, their record company and so what chance do the likes of us lot

[All past stuff about famous people not from Merthyr]

AC: What are your current musical practices?

GM: The current, current yeah, we rehearse ah in a friends club, in a, in a social club actually [where's that then?] in Cefn Coed yeah [AC: Alright] we used to rehearse with Steve O Jones up in the Goatmill which was [AC: Was that Mountain Music?] Mountain music yeah [AC: It's closed now?] It's closed now yeah Steve, it was ah and he was great, very trusting guy, he used to give me the key, we'd let ourselves in and out and set the alarm and I think he realised our gear was better than the gear he had in there, you' aint gonna nick any of my stuff he said. Leave some of yours behind [laughter] so ah, but sadly I think they priced him out of the market, the , the landlord was putting the rates up and this that and the other and sadly y'know he was basically ah, he didn't want it but I think 'cause he set a nice little recording part up as well upstairs and ah, but ah [inaudible] fortunately the landlord, landlady from our local pub owns the club as well and she's sort of dropped into it as well. [AC: Do you pay for that then or..?] Yeah, we pay for it I think it's a fiver each [inaudible] y'know it's, it's, it's in and out it's great.

AC: How often do you rehearse then?

GM: Um, well, because we're retired we, we tend to sort of try to get there on a, on a Tuesday most weeks y'know we, we get there about half 10 and finish at half past two so and that's pretty much to the line unless we do quite a lot of gigs like Brecon Jazz a couple of weeks ago, we done Friday, Saturday and Sunday and we had the Monday, Tuesday off after that but ah, we had the Sunday off because the place got flooded [laughs] the Monday we were all looking out and the Golf Club actually the greens are [inaudible] so but it wasn't a bad thing [inaudible] and as far as recording goes believe it or not I have got a studio [AC: At home yeah?] at home, a purpose built studio with a floating floor [AC: Where do you live?] I live in Brecon Rise up in Pant. Ah we built it onto the house [AC: Have you ever lived in Heolgerrig did you?] No, [AC: I was thinking of someone else with a studio...] well this is actually purpose built and with a, with a 9 inch lower floor with a floating, with a raft on it [AC: Fantastic] so it doesn't touch the wall [AC: Yeah] um with a triple sort of glazed ah sound room and basically the last, I would say two years it's been used as a store room, sadly the singer in the band, the original singer he passed on [AC: Sorry to

hear that] yeah, he done a show in Brecon with ah Becky Brindle she's a New York hall of fame so she's quite well known, Van Morrison's drummer Wicksey he was playing and then John the bass player and he was right on form our singer. Ten days later he had a massive stroke and he died a week or two later but his son has actually come into the band now. The boy whose singing with us now is his son [AC: Oh that's really cool] yeah it's taking his legacy and all that but ah...

AC: How long ago was this

GM: It's eighteen months ago [inaudible] 'cause the original band y'know um we were all retired but Jamie obviously he's only forty now like forty, thereabouts but I, he likes the music, his Dad taught him well really [inaudible] putting on all these blues classics and rock stuff so he tended to just go I know most of the stuff anyway he said, my Dad's been playing these to me, so he is y'know definitely the right guy to have yeah.

AC: So how often do you guys play in Merthyr or Aberdare?

GM: Um, Merthyr we, we haven't played in Merthyr for, ooh, about a month six weeks. Um, tend to, 'cause we're well spread out the bass player's from Brecon, drummer from Porth, ah he's from Caerphilly the, the singer so we tend to spread it out around that neck of the woods. But um Merthyr, it, it, it's not a big scene really in Merthyr is it. Y'know they got the pub The Crown and then Merthyr Calling [AC: Yeah] but there's nothing much really happening in Merthyr.

AC: Why do you think that is?

GM: Why? Well I've been around a long, long time in Merthyr and it's, it's straight up I don't really think it's a music town [noise from other customers] you got a small area who are musos very collective then but after that it's never really been y'know what can I say now, someone that's never really been supported [inaudible] you come away with a band and make a name we had a show band years ago ah Malibu the name of the band was and we used to do all the big clubs [AC: Okay] and when we actually came back to Wales into Merthyr Wales then every club was full you couldn't get a gig in Merthyr until you actually made it outside and came back. You come back into it and they all think like wow y'know [inaudible] must be good [inaudible] somewhere else.

AC: It's weird that it's not supported [inaudible]

GM: But the real sort of grass roots stuff y'know ah y'know like take Steve's studio y'know what, why isn't there a place over in the Redhouse that they could perhaps use y'know there are areas that ah, I got some nice kids playing guitar now and they're doing really well but they can't find gigs they can't find places to go, it seems to be y'know a bit of a brick wall really that you hit upon...

AC: What do you think would be beneficial in the town y'know a change of view or some actual change in infrastructure what do you think might..?

GM: Well, y'know it's, well I think they got the infrastructure really there haven't they [inaudible] the place we're sitting opposite now y'know it's got everything in there and [inaudible] I dunno about like-minded people, yourself and I would probably think let's do things, but ah I dunno what it is in Merthyr seems to be either football, rugby or y'know [ac: drinking?] drinking [laughs] while lifting a pint of coke [laughter] [inaudible]

- AC: Um, so, um, how would you describe your relationship with other members of [inaudible]
- GM: The band members, um the bass player and myself have probably played in bands over the last forty years together, we were in a band together many years called Skint and sadly I had to leave the band because we were, at the time, the biggest thing in the band was perhaps having a Chinese on the way home and this that and the other [inaudible] this is true, I was really ill and I don't know what it was, turns out I had an allergy to prawns [irrelevant talking about prawn farming. So, I've known Grahame for over forty years really. Um the drummer, he was in a band called Kimla Taz which were really sort of quite big during the sort of sixties and seventies they used to play in what were Sands which is now the car park, ah the big place at the top of town there, yep that was Adam's Beach The Sands and the Palace for many years and I used to go and watch him in there, he was ah, he was the drummer with Titch Gwilym who was the guitarist, sadly Titch passed on a few years ago and something, it was the, don't know what the hell happened to him, he was in some premises and he got overcome with smoke and all that [inaudible] yeah, yeah [inaudible] that place up b'there, I was quite a few years younger than them, I used to get in there and y'know there was Grahame Williams from, Morty from Racing Cars [inaudible] so we were looking at these idols, I wanna be like them [inaudible]
- AC: That gave you a bit of motivation to do it...
- GM: Oh yeah, yeah, it really did the motivation apprentice in Hoover.... Handmade amp and first guitar, Owen Money asked Geraint to be in a band, Jack Laycock]
- AC: How do you buy and pay for equipment and pay for overheads and things like that? Do you get paid for gigs?
- GM: Yeah, well most of the gear I got really since the sort of sixties and seventies [AC: you collect all the time?] ah yeah, I glad I done a brief [inaudible] I can't even mention how many guitars I got [AC: You can never have enough, never have enough] [inaudible] Ed now the drummer that was with Taz, he's still got his premier kit and ah, which is over forty year old [AC: They're good kits though] and he's still got his [inaudible] y'know the bass player's got an original '62 ah precision and yeah sort of I haven't got my original Strat's I've, I've got rid of so many, '60s and '59s [distraction, inaudible] [AC: You just pick it up as you go along] I, I, I've kept things, I got a Mesa Boogie from 1982 [inaudible] I don't use it y'know it's one of them things [inaudible and some irrelevant stuff here...again!] [Describing the build of an amp] So the gear really to answer that, we've kept it over the years.
- AC: So there's no issues acquiring gear so much?
- GM: The only thing we actually bought was a new PA system which we all sort of chipped in for so when we have a gig when we first started we were all in the position really 'cause we're all retired and got some, some money put aside so we're not in the position that we used then, 'cause when the original bands came we used to sort of just play a gig and then we might have a fiver each and then the rest of it would go in the pot then to actually pay for what then was then the gear really [inaudible] that's the way we done it y'know.
- AC: So are there any responsibilities or roles adopted like in the band? Who books the gigs, who sorts the finances or anything like that or is it, just...as and when?

GM: Um, the guy who actually books the gigs, all of us hate ringing, well cold canvassing but there's a lad who used to be a drummer and sadly over the years he, he's put a little weight on and he's been house bound and he lost his wife and, and he didn't have, he didn't have much going for what was a social life and he loves the band and ah, he, he, [inaudible] he tends to be ringing round [inaudible] a crazy amount of gigs coming then 'cause he was phoning everybody in Wales [inaudible] it caused a bit of friction at home as well [laughs] we were only supposed to work twice a month, we had nine Saturday's consecutively in the end and sort of [inaudible] [AC: So you had to try and balance that out?] We more or less said too much y'know it's like having your favourite meal every day of the week and in the end you get sick of it like, and I think we played, to be honest with you, none of us are trained but we play 'cause we love it. So I think if we were doing what was y'know, what, what can you say a working band, having to earn money y'know we're in a position now that we can just pick and choose I suppose and but yeah, he does the main ringing and all that and yeah that's about it and that [inaudible] and finances, it's not as if we earn much money, we had a couple of quid each, the price of [inaudible] Elixir now y'know you're looking fourteen, fifteen quid for buying, for string money [AC: Yeah] innit y'know I don't think ah we're gonna be in Bond Street [laughter]

AC: Um, so how serious do you take it? You've kinda answered this but if you want to go into a little bit more detail?

GM: Serious? [AC: Hmm] I take my playing serious, in, in the respect that y'know I think you know what you're limits are but on the same hand when you're going out y'know I, I like to think y'know we've given it our best shot y'know I, I y'know you're aspirations are suddenly elevated to the Albert Hall or anything but I think when you do play, lots of the people who come to see us are obviously connected to music themselves, a lot of the pubs you play tend to be musos watching musos so the y'know you don't wanna really let the side down so to speak do you [AC: Yeah] y'know there's a line [inaudible] taking it serious [inaudible] yeah we all take it serious and wanna give it our best shot, it, it's the team really innit y'know innit y'know we all wanna y'know if the drummer suddenly turned up and he wasn't bothered y'know my sticks are wrecked or my skins none of us are like well [inaudible] yeah yeah so...

AC: So, um, do you, you said you done a bit of teaching do you have any, any role in other bands or [interruption – woman sneezing] Do you help out or support any other musicians, you do a bit of teaching, getting them to perform or....

GM: Yeah, um ah, my, my nephew's band they, they're quite well known around here they played with Ocean Colour Scene last week um, Al Moses [AC: Alright, yeah] it's ah, my wife's sister's son in there, Daf [AC: What's his name?] Dafydd... Thomas [AC: That's Al Moses] Yeah he, he's the blonde one, the Leonardo DiCaprio lookalike [AC: I might give him a shout if you wanna give him the heads up] yeah, he's, he's alright Daf, I think he's in, in Mallorca at the moment? [inaudible] He's um, y'know I try to help him along with bits and bobs 'cause he, he, he had one of these, we couldn't work out the semi-acoustic he was using, the Gretsch looked great but it would feel [inaudible] in practice get a Telecaster y'know [inaudible] These youngsters they don't seem to have done the apprenticeship yet they're doing really good gigs y'know down in Cardiff Castle and, and they're doing places in London, Camden and all that so they, they are pushing them y'know [inaudible] original band so ah they probably will break like [inaudible]

AC: Have they got a manager then or?

GM: I believe so I can't 100% answer that one. But um, they are, they are being pushed, being pushed in that way y'know quite a few radio shows, they are writing some good stuff [AC: Okay] yeah.

AC: What motivates you to continue making music?

GM: Ooh, ha-ha, well I think what's really, the pilot light's never gone out y'know and we, such as when I, when I wasn't even playing in bands I bought an acoustic and taught myself to play acoustic [inaudible] accompany it and I think Catrin [his daughter] lifted the buzz, the daughter when she sort of went into these music circles she was meeting people that um really inspired me y'know one harpist she, ???? Isabella Moretti ah watched her playing in the Royal College of Music and I, I, never seen anything like it y'know and I thought god what is she [inaudible] she was on fire this woman, completely away from difference of other players, so I think when I listened to Catrin playing y'know I thought yeah I miss it, I miss that just try to get back into playing that is y'know to a, to a level then and I've got the time, obviously not working, got a bit more time on your hands so um you get into it, so yeah, that's I think watching her in some of the concerts [inaudible] it made me feel y'know you've been given something in life and y'know it, it's what's the saying? Y'know have no talent [inaudible] a sin but not use it is [AC: Yeah, it's even worse isn't it] yeah, so, so I think really that y'know I just think it's just knowing where your limits are innit y'know and how much you want to put in and what you get out but um yeah.

AC: So, what if anything limits what you do regarding your music-making and I'm talking sort of geographically as well as, socially y'know, do you think there's anything about being in this environment not in a city, in a little town do you think that limits anything?

GM: Um, well obviously when, when, take, taking Catrin's view of it, she's in London and she can work seven days a week because of the actual set up and the theatres and there, there's so many different social activities. Merthyr and the valleys, Aberdare, Rhondda it seems to be a weekend thing doesn't it y'know, everything [inaudible] around the weekend and, and I think the drink culture is, is massive in this area and I think a lot of people don't really listen to music, like if, if they've had a shed full of lager, beer and shots y'know you could have Humpty Dumpty up there juggling y'know it, it, it, it, it, it doesn't sort of really be clicking y'know so, so, so I think it y'know, there, there's not the clubs then y'know you go to London now and you like jazz go to see Ronnie Scott's y'know, if you wanna see up the, more, I dunno Camden Palace or something I dunno [inaudible] there's areas you can actually [inaudible] go to in the valleys and they don't seem to have that do they y'know...

AC: Do you think there are any particular venues or y'know no hubs like you were saying like...

GM: Yeah, well there's never really been y'know like when I had the bands from many years ago I'm talking in the seventies, there were halls in Merthyr, you'd have three bands playing and you, we would go on there and thank you very much y'know we'd work from there and then the other band would come on and then we got to know all those bands, swapped around, or we'd like the drummer from that band we'd try and get him in ours and, and that's how bands were formulated. I can remember a Monday night in Merthyr and I watched y'know Glen Hughes from Trapeze y'know Thin Lizzy have played in Tiffany's like y'know, yeah, Lloyd Buchanan [inaudible] Roy Buchanan y'know my sort of Telecaster hero in Tiffany's ah that's the sort of thing, there were venues that, and people would come from miles around Merthyr to watch, to see these guys y'know.

AC: What do you think has changed then [inaudible] that place there y'know [pointing to the Redhouse] we've got a couple of venues, what do you think changed? Why, why aren't they getting the sort of Judas Priest or Elvis Costello coming to play the local...

GM: Well yeah, I met, met Elvis Costello, he stayed in the Castle Hotel [laughter] yeah, and there was, a fella called Clive Langer in there who was, who actually went to support, Clive Langer [inaudible] massive producer ah you might want to check him out, he's right up there like, he done some really, really big things, one of the nicest guys going. I don't really know 'cause the, the support of Merthyr of music, I suppose Cardiff's still got the hub haven't they y'know you will have it down there always but, I, I, I really can't, I wish I knew that, I wish I knew how they could bring [inaudible] you got The Crown now y'know it seems to be the biggest venue in town but, but to me it's an eating house y'know, we played there and thirty or forty people who had a thoroughly good first half, they get up from the tables jump into a mini bus and the place is empty, 'cause, because they were going on a hen do, down to, wherever, Cardiff probably. So, to me I think he needs to make his mind up y'know, is, is it a music venue or is it a eating house ah [AC: Yeah, yeah] so y'know, y'know give him a tap on the back he is giving bands a chance [AC: There's something going on there today isn't there?] yeah it's Crownfest I think something on the weekend, and in fairness to, Jacob y'know he is bringing bands in y'know, seen Bucking Evans there a few months ago, they were superb like y'know but you couldn't see the band, I watched them on a television screen because they're in a little corner, there's no elevated stage [AC: It's not kitted out...] it's not a venue y'know it, it's there, a tenner a ticket and you're watching them on a television screen y'know, so, so it is y'know, the Redhouse got the venue.

AC: Why don't you think they're not doing anything more?

GM: Red tape is it? Yeah, red tape and, and pretty much like y'know obviously the persons running it are not really musos I suppose y'know wherever your sort of feel is...

AC: The Housing Association run it...

GM: Well y'know that says it possibly, yeah, the Housing Association [AC: I'm not sure how that works?] yeah, yeah. But y'know I seen a gig in the college, Amy Wadge was playing there not long ago um, three, four years ago, it might be longer than that, it's a great venue and ah you paid whatever it was to, sat on a nice table, she played some really good stuff, it was a nice little intimate evening, mid-week um, but why they can't do that I dunno? Ah, more often, that's, that's, who knows?

AC: I may find out [laughter] yeah, [GM: Dig into it, dig into it yeah] and lastly is there anything else you'd like to add?

GM: Um...right in, in which way?

AC: Ah anything in which you may want to go into more detail about, how you go about things or anything like that, I mean... [inaudible]

GM: The only thing I can add to it, when, when I was a school age then, I, I, but, today there's so much technology than when I was a kid, you had football and rugby [inaudible] or music, and you could either listen to music, there wasn't a lot of money about so really it, it was a guitar really I had for a Christmas present everybody had one 'cause the Beatles were coming out, the only kid that didn't have it in the street

for Christmas, I had mine in about March [laughs] they sold out of guitars, all the other kids were in the street and I was sort of envious as hell and they had these, but, but there wasn't that line of years ago what, what could have been y'know a huge diff, what can I say, there, there's so much variety these days really innit y'know you, the X boxes they can play multiple games and they got, got skate parks, they got y'know some of my kids I teach guitar they do white water canoeing [inaudible] there's loads of different activities, I didn't have that choice as a kid, the only thing I had was y'know I, I, loved and when I finally had it in March after Christmas time, I, I, felt that it was y'know, it was part of you then, and unlike an athlete guys I was very friendly with played rugby they couldn't really pick it up when they're thirty and forty and play to professional level again y'know, but with music at least, you can always fall back to it, you might not be as fast as you were playing and things but at the end of it you can give a pretty good account of what you're doing and it's, it's y'know music is that y'know it doesn't really hold an age barrier on it y'know. Y'know watching BB King when he was in his late '80s y'know and y'know he wasn't as good as forty but then again y'know it's [AC: amazing to watch] amazing y'know and, that, that really inspired me and this is, the end if this one [inaudible] what's it called? Sophia Gardens [AC: Okay] Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac were playing there and we went down there and when we were walking across the field my mate who is the solicitor now in later life called me rotten 'cause he thought there was a BBC concert thing going like 'cause he could just see BB, [AC: Ah right] and when we get there it wasn't BBC it was BB King [laughter] Fleetwood Mac was supporting BB King and it gets even better 'cause I was sitting on the end of the row and there was three seats empty and during the performance, they were all using these Orange amps, Green had his sort of '59 out of [inaudible] Les Paul [inaudible] full band right. Before that happened in the café, Mick Fleetwood came in, he had beans on toast in the café in Sophia Gardens seriously [laughter] six foot eight whatever he is, eating these beans on toast and [inaudible and goes on about meeting BB King...]

AC: Right I'm gonna stop that there...

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

JD – Jacob Dent, Participant

AC: Hiya Jacob how're you doing?

JD: Fine thank you.

AC: Um thanks for agreeing to the interview as well.

JD: No problem.

AC: Um so I've got a few questions and the first one's quite general, what music do you like?

JD: Well I like all the kind of music as well and when I say all kinds from classic to err I'm not liking thrash metal to be honest [laughs] but uh, but uh y'know a broad range of music to be honest yeah [AC: So there's no particular...] no, no particular [inaudible] y'know, I, I like opera classic like y'know err jazz, blues, rock, rock and roll I go all the ranges [laughs]

AC: Okay, and how would you describe what you do here in The Crown?

JD: Err, in terms of music wise?

AC: Um, yeah that specifically but if there's other stuff that...

JD: Then, well I think to be honest there's in Merthyr um I think I like to consider myself a pioneer err so because everyone knows the local erm live music err not even live music perhaps nowadays everyone [inaudible] band in the corner and they call themselves a live music venue err [inaudible] we call ourselves a pioneer because of that, because we go from opera nights to jazz nights to soul nights erm and we are able to have y'know today [inaudible] a classical singer and then tomorrow we'll have like a hard rock band playing. Err we go from one extreme to the other one and that's not normal to see err especially around this area um and I think that's why we are pioneers because we don't cover just err the local covers bands we help out the ones that are just starting ah we help out the ones that never started so, so that's why y'know I think, yeah I think our word now is pioneer 'cause we actually try to bring something into the town that no-one has ever done before.

AC: And you have music every night of the week yeah?

JD: Um except on a Monday [laughter]

AC: Why not on a Monday? Just having a break yeah?

JD: Staff said they needed a quiet night [laughter]

AC: So is that the main, the main sort of uh part of The Crown it's live music or are there other parts...

JD: Well The Crown, The Crown started err, err y'know the, the idea was becoming a live music venue um and that's again [inaudible] live music venue at the time was having a band on Friday err and that's how we started and then it grows up err because live

music has y'know it costs, put into it, 'cause it's so much easier to have a DJ charges like 40 pound or 50 pound a night and puts some y'know some songs on but even with a juke box people actually pay for their own music um so of course in terms of costs but it was never as I'd seen it err so it started like that which we understood but as the economy changing err we felt that we err the business itself for the three hours of live music a day um is not sustainable because business rates nowadays y'know all the bills have gone up even when y'know I started just myself and my wife we went through all the operators um and as I said y'know [inaudible] the bands err because in the beginning of course err you cannot charge on the valleys for people to come to a pub [AC: Yeah] it was a, was a y'know, a very err big thing so we [inaudible] charges [inaudible] so if we have a band charging two, 250, 300 pound to come and play two 45 minute sets so y'know you're talking about one hour and a half. Half an hour before and half an hour after so three hours at most and um and again you not able to make money nowadays with something just like that um again we increased the live music as we go along but, so even more costs so that you add more staff um...

AC: Why would you do that though? It seems like you're doing the opposite of what you should.

JD: [laughs] yeah because it's like [inaudible] you do it well or you don't do it okay and um and you need to know and you need to show the people that y'know you wanna do it right 'cause and y'know it proves that I think that I done it the right way. People need to see that you put an effort into it err don't get me wrong the bands they could be great and they bring some y'know if you choose the right ones [inaudible] they'll bring their own following to start err but, but then there's always that one more, you wanna do one more and you want more people umm so you need to go and ask the people what they think I always listen to people 'cause I don't know it all you'll never know it all and sometimes y'know these people come in with great ideas um...

AC: Can you think of any experiences where you've had interactions with a particular person and that's sparked an idea?

JD: Um well one of the, that's happening all the time [laughter] that is happening all the time y'know it's like and again it's the only way I can find what, what y'know the customer wants because it doesn't matter what I want y'know um it's interesting what I want, but y'know in the end [inaudible] say If I only like classic music and I decide oh I want to put on classic music even if I have y'know some classic music customers you'll be just a narrow erm side of it so again some people say oh Jacob how about an eighties festival err let's do it and to be honest I because I'm from Portugal erm we don't have the Ska culture like it is on this country erm, put on a ska band... what is that? [laughter] who are they? What do they do? What's their name? [laughter] [inaudible] y'know a big experience for me, alright, okay we'll do it. Then we brought the ska band at the time I think was err Skacasm something like that and err [makes a whooshing sound] was an eye opener, alright, okay this works err...

AC: Was there lots of people there?

JD: Yeah, [inaudible] and then that's why not y'know we, in the area there's a ska based band that never, for me, was very hard 'cause I not even know about ska

AC: You don't know what to look for [JD: Yes] [inaudible] what's there yeah...

JD: So again listen to the customers, it y'know it, it, it pushed me of my limit and go making looking for other things.

AC: Were these people mainly customers or were they musicians or..?

JD: Um, well the thing is um... sometimes I don't know to [inaudible] y'know make the difference between customers and musicians because sometimes the musicians are our customers [AC: Yeah] Err so and sometimes we have nights that y'know all our customers are musicians [laughs] so, so again we have err but [inaudible] musicians and customers but again there is nights that err we do for instance um a jam night on err a Tuesday night [inaudible] becomes very [AC: Oh yeah] popular called stone cold sober that usually 99% of the people on the room on that night are musicians [AC: That's with um isn't it?] yeah, that's with Lloyd yes, yes.

AC: How did you get to know Lloyd?

JD: Well, y'know [AC: Just through...] from here y'know come 'cause Lloyd's involved in like fifty bands [laughter] and then erm he [inaudible] can I have my band playing in here? I said yeah that's fine okay so, on the time was one band and then y'know we just started from there. Then because Lloyd, because Florence Black started in here as well err [AC: That's cool] erm so of course he's the father of Perry the drummer for Florence Black and he was y'know I still remember bringing the kids y'know when they were not even [inaudible] [laughter] and again so then [inaudible] from that time onwards and then become a, again Lloyd's a good friend as well err and then all involved we come to that.

AC: That's cool, so there's a lot of friendship [JD: Yes, yes] rather than necessarily business...

JD: It's as I say we err people, people knows err, err as a person that, how can I say, I like to know the people, how important they are for me y'know, musicians they come in here, some of them I pay, some I don't of course but even the ones that I pay they not working for me they're working with me err and that's the way I treat it everywhere. It's not like, they don't come in here and I go okay guys y'know there's your money, no, we go through when they come in and I say okay do you need anything? Do you need some bottles of water? They're on the stage y'know err, even y'know, we have, we have a thing that most of the bands we give a drink each and even pay them um, we, so it's a thing that shows we, thank you for coming y'know, even we pay them y'know, thank you for coming y'know what can we do for you or how can we help you [inaudible] we don't leave them alone doing like y'know [inaudible] I don't get involved in which music they pick or whatever, I'm not going to them and say that's the music you, I want you to play tonight err, so no, but, but we have that kind of relationship it's not just y'know the owner and the rest y'know we all part of the same team erm, that's how I deal with most other people [inaudible] with me.

AC: So, can you tell me a bit about anybody else that's been crucial for you producing this?

JD: Everyone [laughter] but of course my wife is y'know um my rock as I say err when I need a bollocking she gives me a bollocking [laughter] as well [AC: She's the boss then] [laughter] y'know for a men to be happy we need to know that they are the boss so [laughter]

AC: Is there anyone else sort of um, maybe in the council or any other institutions in Merthyr have they helped at all?

JD: I don't, I don't single people err because I think everyone has their part and I think, from my cleaners to y'know the guy that's expert in the cocktails or for the guy that err comes, the sound engineer that I pay he's great, he's very professional I'm very lucky err Jim Gray err [AC: Jim Gray?] yes err, [AC: Is he from Merthyr as well?] he's from Merthyr but he's a one of the high guys for Midas Consoles err so he's the erm national rep erm and he does y'know he does like gigs for thousands of people and [inaudible] err but I'm lucky just live across the road and err, and he started y'know this started with him one day, we still have a laugh when he said err we were having this chat a couple of weeks ago and he said I remember I come in here one day and you come speak with me with your, with your bad English, because I learn English when I come [inaudible...AC: You're doing a good job...laughter] with your bad English err and y'know telling me what we wanna do and you go out and I think to myself, he, he was saying that I think to myself he won't last three months [laughter]

AC: He's eating his words now [laughter]

JD: Yeah, yeah he's [inaudible] and he said but I don't what actually you are made of and again he's I'm glad having him on my side because for the music side of it it's very important to have someone like him y'know for the sound and making sure that the experience of the musicians it's, it's a high profile as well so and again we are, our capacity used to be like 150 and now it's 300 err and having y'know someone like him giving the musicians the experience of a I, I can say that with him I know it is a prime experience for some musicians so [AC: I should imagine yeah] so when they know that when they come to play in here they will have 'cause my PA it was organised by him so he brings his own stuff so whenever a musician come to play [inaudible] bring a local band and their own stuff but when he's involved I know the experience is high standard err but, but again y'know um I, I am the kind of person that gives importance to everyone that helps so there is not one is better than the other they all have their own um duties and all the duties are important for me.

AC: So without the whole thing working it wouldn't work as well [JD: Yes] if you sort of took over and said right I'm going to do everything [JD: No, no]

JD: Again, I'm not, I'm not that kind of person as I said I don't know it all I will never know it all, always um able to listen from everyone okay. You have some stupid ideas sometimes to be honest but, but y'know there's going to be one that you like that might works y'know and if you are open to it you're more [inaudible] open to success as well.

AC: How did you meet Jim then was it just from here [JD: Who?] Jim Gray?

JD: Jim Gray, yeah um yes it was from here 'cause he used to work in the college err [AC: Okay] um and again just comes [inaudible] one day to help and have a drink and then chatty as I am I just go round everyone everything alright who are you [laughter] what do you do [AC: Their back story] [laughter] what do you do? Err...but he started doing some well I know what it was he was doing is because um the college one day err come around and asked can we do a show with our students in here and then he come along with all the gear and of the time y'know what is a PA [laughter] I know what is a microphone [laughter] then he brings [inaudible] speakers and all the mixing desk on the wheels and I was wow what is all that y'know [laughs]

AC: So it's a learning curve [JD: Yes, yes] for you as well y'know you get to see these people doing their thing.

JD: So, it was the first time and then y'know [inaudible] this might work I think to myself if he does that I might have other kind of acts that y'know and that's how it all started [inaudible] but again me and Jim err we're more than co-workers we are actually again very, very good friends, yes.

AC: Okay and that's evolved over time I suppose

JD: Yes, yes

JD: Err and again me and Jim we always have the idea err 'cause he [inaudible] music as well of doing a festival err and then I don't know if you heard of the Crownload Festival and again the idea of a festival for me, Jim was like oh let's do it in the square in there and all that were like whoa... that might be too much for me but okay let's go wild but then we got to the council and they said no chance we'll not allow you to do it...

AC: Really? What was their reasoning behind that?

JD: [inaudible] y'know safety, health and y'know environment at the time was like, and they don't know who I am basically they said who's this guy is coming to the y'know I...

AC: They should really make it their business....

JD: Yeah but err, but on the time honestly was err the council now it's err y'know again much more proactive than y'know still massive problems with it but they're more, they're better than they were before err and then we said okay let's do it in the Crown and for me a festival on the time runs on the same day [laughter] but that was our festival...

AC: Was it held there? [pointing to the car park behind the Crown]

JD: No it was [AC: In the front yeah?] no just inside of The Crown [AC: Really?] oh yeah we started in there and then err and then we err the first year and then we move it into we have a stage there [pointing to the back where the beer garden is] 'cause this was all open this was beer garden all this [including where the conservatory is now] err and so we had a stage in there that Jim still laughs about it because the first festival we had we had a stage in there and I was with a drill and finishing the stage on a Friday when the festival should starting [laughter] [inaudible] he was bringing the PA and said are you finishing that or what? [laughter] and of course erm the weather was great we hadn't planned for the rain um it starts raining [AC: Oh no] and then are we going to do the, so I go to B and Q buying a big tarpaulin [laughs] over Lloyd, Lloyd was playing on the Saturday it was raining and he was with a broom [laughs] to get the water off, he was playing and he was [laughter] so erm that was our first festival err.

AC: And when was that? How many years ago?

JD: 2013

AC: Oh right so there's a difference compared to this year.

JD: Oh yeah, this year was in, well last year was the first time that then we had some problems because of some neighbours complaining about the noise err when I say neighbours it's people miles from here err because of sound travel err so then y'know

I end up having big problems with the health, the environmental health and all that so they end up stopping me erm to be able to do it. That's why last year the council came to me and said a great idea, how about you do the festival in the square?

AC: Like you initially said?

JD: Yeah [laughs] and me and Jim were like, are you being serious or what? [inaudible] we went okay. The problem is doing a festival in there incurs much more costs [AC: Yeah, yeah] because y'know all the logistics, all the y'know everything does the electrics waters err staging things that in here are on my reach and I don't need to spend money for extra staff, erm, so, so last year err, again the festival was great err this year we done it again even more professional err again very good, year after year is always going erm but expenses go up as well [AC: Yeah, yeah] so...

AC: Do you charge people for coming to the festival then?

JD: Yes, yes [AC: You can recoup some of it then?] recoup, yeah, recoup some but again erm, for what we trying for next year is again we wanna do it better but it comes to, it comes to a stage where it's like I've been doing it all on my own y'know with a few help off some sponsors and things like that erm it comes to a stage now that I really, I wanna go further I need to have some sort of err financial support off the local authority 'cause in the end of the day it's a local festival y'know and they should, they should support it...

AC: Who do you get sponsorship off at the moment and how did you go about it?

JD: It's local businesses and when I say y'know sponsorship it's like erm the guy who does the banners for us y'know they, they [inaudible] all the banners pay some for the other ones. The printing company again err there's no kind of money involved it's in services err basically like that and then y'know we have three or four business, they give us 200 pound or 100 pound there or 500 pound there again I'm very happy because they, I think they don't finance, they don't help the festival so much they help me because they know I put so much effort well not, we all put in so much effort and they wanna help y'know more than anything.

AC: Are they music-based companies then or...?

JD: No, [AC: No links at all?] no, no, because there's no music-based companies around this and then the problem that you, [inaudible] those companies of Merthyr they don't even know what they talking about, where is that? Err, err sometimes I need to relate mention the word Cardiff more than I want err because y'know when I say we're doing a festival in Merthyr okay they say where's that? South Wales you say, where? Err, Cardiff, oh yeah alright okay [AC: Yeah, yeah, we're bunched in with Cardiff] yeah.

AC: So these companies are not from Wales, they're outside of Wales are they or..?

JD: No they're local [AC: Oh alright] yeah just local carpet guy or y'know so [inaudible] the [inaudible] vapour shop [inaudible] local businesses y'know that, y'know wanna help us in some way...

AC: Okay, um, so, you've mentioned quite a few of...what other resources do you draw on in the area to help you do what you do you kinda touched on quite a few already.

- JD: Resources as I said y'know sound engineer again everything here is better more than better now [inaudible] a lighting guy err because as the year goes by I'm lucky enough to be able to put even bigger shows and sometimes shows that you don't see [inaudible] but for that I make a big show that when they come in here we show that we're better than they're expecting [AC: Professional] professionalism on the experience so that's why now we're starting erm now hiring um err a light engineer technician he comes and brings all the nuts and bolts and y'know the flashy stuff as I call it err and then y'know [inaudible] with all these iPad and all that kind of thing making it [inaudible] err so I use all, I, I'm more local based on my stuff I try [inaudible] most of the stuff locally...
- AC: Okay, [inaudible] um, so what motivates you to, keep going? What do you get out of it yourself?
- JD: Well, I always erm think that erm a local, we don't consider it a local pub, we consider ourselves a community pub err so, we sell drinks 'cause they make money and we need to make money to survive err, and I think some days y'know when I see now capacity 300, when I see 300 people um y'know singing along with the band and err with the mobile phones in the air, that's y'know, that makes me very, very happy and yes [AC: You're there...] yes, [inaudible] go there and y'know and I like yeah, that, that's what this is all about.
- AC: Satisfying thing to do isn't it?
- JD: Yes, and, and the thing is um bring people together erm and I think music does that brings people together in a good vibe and atmosphere and because it can have, you can have a local pub where everyone gets drunk and sings along on the karaoke that's great as well or, or the jukebox is on and then someone starts y'know singing Kings of Leon or Stereophonics Dakota um but [inaudible] band and having 300 people y'know all dancing together joining and singing along with the band that's when I think y'know that, that's what I want err...
- AC: And that's what you get out of it?
- JD: Yeah, yeah that's what I get out of it, the satisfaction of seeing people enjoy themselves together on a peaceful way and y'know and knowing that [inaudible] find myself when they come next day and say what an amazing night I had um so that is y'know that is the main, the main thing for us.
- AC: It's almost like um caring for people's wellbeing [JD: Yes, yeah y'know..] I know it's a business and making money but there's an element of wellbeing for the community [JD: Yes, yes]
- JD: For instance most of the shows that I put on y'know I never think and it's not my business mentality err for instance we, the first big show that we had was err Toploader okay err and when the song Dancing in the Moonlight comes on and I seen at the time capacity was 150, 160 it was a big achievement for us to have them playing on a venue like that and then everyone is singing Dancing in the Moonlight and every single one of them with a mobile phone in the air and recording it, it was like my first time that I said no we're going on a good way [AC: Yeah] then we had Doggy err, erm...
- AC: How did you manage to get these bands then?

JD: I, I usually don't expect very well no as an answer [laughing] so err [AC: Persistent] yeah. Sometimes you have to [inaudible] and sometimes being able to take a risk more than anything you may be wrong sometimes it's not always perfect because if it was always perfect that's wonderful I'm not going to say that every single show that I put in here was y'know amazing 'cause y'know it's an error and try thing erm but err, but there is those ones that make it worth err and then more lately Wheatus y'know my generation Teenage Dirtbag [AC: Yeah, yeah, yeah] when we done [inaudible] they opened, they actually opened our [AC: Did they?] yes our thing and again seeing Wheatus because again from my generation seeing them playing in there err and [inaudible] everyone y'know same era basically singing Teenage Dirtbag it's like, like how the hell do I come from that to this? [AC: Yeah, yeah] so...

AC: How did you know who to contact to get hold of these guys?

JD: Oh I just keep looking [laughter]

AC: Do you literally just cold-call people?

JD: Sometimes yes, now I [inaudible] 'cause I'm so busy with something else I have someone who helps me out a lot Carla, [AC: Who's that Carla?] Carla she um my marketing manager err and then sometimes we just go I remember this band can you see if we can get this [laughter] err but sometimes y'know sometimes it happen and that really annoys me when we contact a band and they don't even bother to say we're not interested or we don't want to do it or whatever I think, I think that is for me in this industry that is the worst thing someone can do to you. If someone contacts me and I get, I go I'm really sorry...

AC: Well you contacted me back so that's fine [laughter]

JD: But yeah I always reply and I think that everyone should always reply even saying sorry not interested [AC: Yeah] that's fine err, but now being ignored I think is the worst for me in this business.

AC: Do you go after them more then?

JD: Well, I go until a certain point like err for instance I remember erm it was about that, what was it? [inaudible] to be honest but I know that one of them they go like okay and then they actually ah oh yeah we'll be in touch [inaudible] ok great so we plan a lot in advance, planning are you any of these dates available? Nothing, so you said, you still interested? Nothing, and it comes to a point where I'm like leave them alone [AC: Yeah I guess yeah] err and then [inaudible] y'know that's what actually y'know [AC: Yeah] hits me right inside these people are because it's not as I said I understand it sometimes we go crazy and we have these people y'know they don't know what we are err but for me for instance that's where my business sense comes y'know at least if they told me y'know it's ten thousand pounds and I like woah, that said I'm really sorry not available y'know but at least they should, if they are, if they are, if they're doing business and they have agents [inaudible]

AC: Have you had a lot of interaction with agents?

JD: Ah not anymore because I decided not to [laughs]

AC: Is it like head butting a wall?

- JD: Yeah, and again most of times they don't see the interest of erm the artist itself they see more their own interests. Err but I don't know sometimes it might be the artist that tell them to act that way so but we never know err so, so sometimes I go to the thing, kill the messenger [laughs] you don't kill the messenger but sometimes I wanna kill the messenger [laughter]
- AC: Okay, so um you've kinda answered this one as well, how serious do you take it, it's obvious very seriously.
- JD: Very seriously, this is y'know, I take it to the erm, the professionalism that I put in this place it is the same professionalism that you will find on one of the highest companies err all my staff they need to be well trained y'know it's not just a local [inaudible] turn up and a pint. Err the musicians erm I try to have erm err as I said the, the musicians there's different days and different situations for the ones that they starting and the ones that I take it y'know, I take it to, usually I take it to the next level every time and people say what's next, what can you do next and then suddenly I'm like the Calling are playing in here and they're like, shut up [laughter] not the real Calling, no, no the REAL Calling [laughter] so that's why people go like alright okay I won't ask you anything again [laughs]
- AC: That's saying I'm serious about this and I'm getting serious acts in and it's not as you said just like cover bands [inaudible]
- JD: No, no I think we, loads of people talk about grassroots err music venues erm and again I think we, not, we are recognised lately more than ever if you want to be honest but I think we not recognised the way we should be because we are in Merthyr Tydfil. Because probably if we were in Cardiff or Swansea, or Liverpool or Manchester probably we would be one of the top venues in the UK because the things that we put on y'know on a place like this the way I do put it on and the professionalism they find when they come in here err probably they don't find it in much places. We know this because of the feedback from the musicians itself [inaudible] they say they were not expecting, so I was not expecting like y'know as I said well we does there is nothing offered you can expect because we actually want you guys y'know in a professional way [inaudible]
- AC: I suppose if you're acting more professionally you're more likely to get that kind of [JD: Yes, yes] act in y'know [JD: Yeah] Um, I lost my thread then I was gonna ask you a question um, so how do you err know who to have in and how much to pay them and whether to pay them or not, are you kind of forced 'cause...
- JD: If I know that I'll let you know [laughter]
- AC: Y'know talking to other musicians it seems that tribute acts seem to be dominating the at the moment?
- JD: Well, they are dominating the scene erm because again it's about memories err and the tribute acts again we only book the high profile tribute acts err because if you cannot have the real thing have the best, the next best thing erm and um then when y'know when you got quality erm, people have the experience of the real thing basically, that's why you [inaudible] the budget so popular, it's so popular that quite honestly it's so popular because first they go to a festival and pay thirty pound, forty pound a ticket but 200 pound a ticket like in Glastonbury or whatever err people [inaudible] other times I know that some musicians are going to kill me because of it [inaudible] they like modern music [inaudible] itself [AC: Right, okay yeah, yeah] so someone actually y'know sings Sex on Fire [inaudible] of Kings of Leon they will

enjoy it anyway [AC: Yeah] and if y'know err or Bon Jovi for instance y'know most of, don't get me wrong, most of the people who come to see tribute acts they've gone to see the real ones as well okay, err but again it's all about atmosphere and the [inaudible] in my point of view for instance err because our customer [inaudible] y'know thirty plus so most of our acts are 80s erm 90s err so because we know that the people will come err there again we go for the iconic ones y'know um, Iron Maiden, again [inaudible] it's, it's, y'know we like to mix it up but um, but there are so many tribute acts nowadays you need to be very careful as well because [inaudible] because not just [inaudible] err in terms of gender but err the quality of the tribute act as well...

AC: Is it because there's more there tends to be less quality around?

JD: Yes, yes, so, for instance we always now erm, we have tribute acts that we, we have in here constant well when I say constant it's we give them cap of 16 months to, the same tribute act to come because we don't want to over [inaudible] it, but again if the ones that come are very good quality we have it again, if it's not then y'know we try to go to look for someone who's a better quality but there we give a cap of two years...

AC: Okay, so it's not overkill then?

JD: No it's not overkill and it's like, we had a tribute act we were not lucky or someone recommended them we accept their recommendation we knew sometimes could be a bit y'know erm, not that accurate and then when they do come actually and they perform on live like okay erm, they're not bad because y'know they're in here but they're not as good as we want. So, if we have a tribute, this only happened for us once or twice to be honest but if we have a tribute err one of the ones that happened err I hope this doesn't go public [laughs] [AC: It's all completely confidential you're alright [laughs]] We had, we had a Status Quo tribute erm four years ago err people recommended, I see on Facebook [inaudible] okay looks fine err they come in and, again I'm not a fan of Status, not, not being a fan I don't know Status Quo very well but I know that was not y'know right on there err and then we have some Quo fans that err like they are okay and I said okay they're shit and that's my [laughs]

AC: So they were kinda of confirming what you were thinking anyway?

JD: Yes, so that, we haven't had a Status Quo tribute for about two and a half years err because when we have something like that you need, y'know [inaudible] settle and then. Now luckily enough we had one last year for two nights, everyone even people that not Status Quo fans say that is one of the best tribute acts they have ever seen so, [AC: It's trial and error isn't it] yes, that's what I think it's a lot, yes.

AC: Can I bring you back to what you were saying earlier um about if this venue was in a city like Manchester it would be a different err, different sort of vibe I mean can you go into detail a bit more about what you think....

JD: I'm not saying anything about the town itself because I'm really pleased with the vibe that we have.

AC: Sorry that was the wrong word to use....

JD: Err, because I, don't get me wrong I love my, this is my hometown now err and I love the people and I y'know if it was not for the people I wouldn't be in the position I am at the moment y'know I just think it's um, even the people from the town, we should be recognised more for what we've been doing then because we still under stigma of

the y'know the coal mine and it y'know Merthyr Tydfil y'know err don't go through the valleys because as you know end up with y'know driving with no wheels on your car [AC: Laughs] or something like that [AC: That's so unfair] I know I'm and I think that, what I'm saying is I don't think that y'know I won't change nothing err well we always change something, what I say is I love the people I love our customers, more the customers, most of them err we erm we gone through that thing, they're friends, that's the way, almost everyone knows me when they're coming in here um, and again but lately we have more people travelling from Bristol, Swansea, Newport, Cardiff, Ebbw Vale, Tredegar through the acts that we are putting on so. 'Cause there are nights I look around and I don't know most of these people [laughs] so, but then by the end of the night I know that at least ten of them will know me and they will come back again and things like that erm so I wouldn't change that erm, my, my point of view is in terms of recognition through y'know the general public err not the local public erm people don't see that because of they always see us as y'know, the pub in Merthyr Tydfil [AC: The valleys town] the valleys town so they, and as I say I think in some ways good because when people actually come here they're shocked, and so many times it was I was not expecting this in Merthyr y'know so that's good err but not that good erm so and that's the stigma that we trying to fight at the moment with these but we can do it as well. Okay, we're DOING it as well [inaudible] that most of the big towns y'know we had engineers here to come and fix the boiler or whatever from Bristol and they said woah, if I have something like this in Bristol I'll be there every day [AC: Yeah] and I'm like what there's nothing like this in Bristol? He said no mate and I go around [laughs] [AC: Really?] yeah erm, so that makes me proud in one way but again it shows even more that y'know we should be by y'know by the other people, we should be recognised for it and [AC: There should be some sort of equilibrium between city and town really...] [inaudible] yes, yes, I think but I still think people do that a bit so, and I think music again is very good for it err, but even then the agents, when I contact them, if, if we contact them, not so much now because again we have a bit of a portfolio and people can see what we've been doing and all that but before it was like [inaudible] probably the answer would be we're not going around that way y'know or not even answer erm, err and that they will still tag [inaudible] us y'know by the place where we are even we knowing that we are better probably than y'know just like [inaudible] in Manchester. I don't know if there's a [inaudible] in Manchester or not but, but probably if a guy from Manchester said I wanna put this gig on and... where are you oh Manchester, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, but then me, without them knowing y'know from The Crown in Merthyr Tydfil err...okay or they don't even reply.

AC: So it's like saying, it's Cardiff again isn't it [JD: Yeah] which is terrible you shouldn't have to do that [JD: Yes] Can you think of any other factors that make it difficult around here to do what you do?

JD: Local authority.

AC: In what ways then?

JD: Um, it's um, I, I don't y'know, I think they're doing their job, but sometimes doing their job makes our job harder err for instance err because of the live music side of it if we have someone that complain. So now for instance I need to do all my live music with the doors and windows closed okay [AC: Really?] yes, err that's one of the conditions of the licence because we are y'know a guy that y'know said that it's too much noise coming from The Crown when live music is on. So, we have fifty customers say well actually I was listening I had a nice cup of tea on my beer garden, balcony listening [inaudible] but then you had that guy that said no, it was ten o'clock in the night and the sound coming from there was terrible and that guy was not able to listen to

y'know the television err, erm, so then they had to act, but then all of that, that person [AC: So it's a minority?] yeah, but they take it to the last erm resource [inaudible] and then yes they have measures in, in his house err again and I'm not denying, they have measures in his house y'know and yes y'know when we have Crownload on, measuring it, too much noise coming so [AC: It sounds like you're never gonna err get the right level y'know] no, no, no, no, no, err, and again but now doing the music over there [inaudible] y'know a bit more public awareness err the [inaudible] are telling the people that, we should be shouting at the people at what we're doing we're doing, we're doing it for the town anyway but there's always people selfish and they think of them above everyone else, and about the town itself.

AC: So it's like individuals, maybe deliberately or not they're using the mechanisms of the council [JD: Yes, again] stop you doing certain things...

JD: Yes, again, that's what I think and the other thing is the economy of course we always a big factor erm but y'know it's the two main things that it makes it difficult because and we know that this business y'know it's, it's um a business, it's a risk you don't know how many people who have through the doors y'know today could be like back tomorrow, one people or two people. But I think I am luckily enough, lucky enough to y'know to be busy most of the times err because again I have the support of the local people.

AC: I'm reluctant to bring this up but ah I'm gonna say the B word now [JD: Yeah] [laughter] Hs it had any effect on you?

JD: No, no, it hasn't err I think the worst is the uncertain more than anything err 'cause err I keep telling people it's, it's no point of discussion anymore, just do it or don't do it and then y'know whatever happened deal with it [laughter]

AC: I think most people feel like that now don't they [laughter]

JD: Um, but, but yeah like I said for me it hasn't err it might, the only thing it might see it again because um we come to a point that we have international musicians so the only concern for is, is going like the quality coming but they Americans anyway so not European Union err but err we have um a Portuguese band coming next month they doing it to we have a French band err Holispark err Spanish band erm Polish band so again we, we, we are more international now than ever and we part of the routine or the tour route now across the area, I think that might y'know might difficult the things on that but erm but that's the only thing that I think so,

AC: Okay, and is there anything else you'd like to add?

JD: No [laughter] I think I added plenty [laughter]

AC: I'm going to stop the recording.

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

JS – Janine Smith, Participant

AC: Hiya Janine how're you doing?

JS: I'm okay [laughs]

AC: Thanks for meeting me [inaudible] right and so, we'll start the questions [inaudible] move that a bit closer to you. So, a few general ones to start, um what music do you like?

JS: Anything, I grew up with Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and all of that 'cause my brother was really into them. Um, went through my Wham! Phase in junior school, um a bit of a Louisiana Blues AC: Okay] Seasick Steve, that type of stuff at the minute [laughs] But I'll listen to anything depending on my mood.

AC: Yeah, okay, okay. And do you go to live music events?

JS: Very rarely

AC: Why's that?

JS: Oh, I think...in the local area, I find that live music is so driven by drink, a lot of pub venues um y'know the Merthyr Rising Festival, a lot of drinking on the square, not quite my scene. I like a drink, but I just find the whole, thing, not quite so attractive in this area.

AC: The lager louts and drinking culture...

JS: Yeah, yeah y'know as I say a lot of it is, y'know so that pub venue around here. Um, been to some big concerts when I was younger but, where do you find the time [laughs]

AC: You said you got two children did you say?

JS: Yeah, I mean they're grown-ups now but still my sons moved his girlfriend in so like I've inherited another one now so [laughs] [inaudible and laughter]

AC: So it's kind of a combination of time [JS: Yeah] and like you said that drink culture that seems to be attached to [JS: Yeah] is that with a particular kind of music or is it with most music do you think, live music?

JS: No, I think it is particular and it tends to be that sort of tribute bandy type thing, I'm not into music enough that I'll pay the massive costs of someone really big, sort of y'know Beyonce concerts and all that sort of stuff and that's not the sort of music I really like. So, I won't pay these sort of prices so it tends to be tribute bands, smaller bands, so the, y'know more local stuff and it tends to be those pub venues and it does put me off a bit to be honest.

AC: Okay, have you ever sort of gone, I gotta go to this one regardless of where it is, what was...have you done that?

JS: What was the last one I went to? I went to one in The Crown fairly recently, when I say fairly recently for me that was about eight months ago [laughter] and I can't even remember who they were and I had a great night, I really enjoyed it but, by the end of the evening there were a lot of very drunk people around and I was like oh this is why I don't come [laughs]

AC: That's the main factor for you then [JS: Yeah, yeah] [inaudible]

JS: It's just not me.

AC: Okay, okay. Um, how did you get into doing what you're doing today?

JS: Oh, by default [laughter] um about five years ago libraries, leisure, museum, and park were put out to a trust and, because we'd been local authority before that. So the trust was formed and all the staff were to be [inaudible] across, we'd bleed across in our own roles sort of, I was in libraries I was happy I was in my own little bubble, and as part of that arrangement the new organisation took on Redhouse, as um, as a venue. It came with a massive amount of grant funding, there was a tapering Ffos-y-Fran grant which I think in our first year of operation was somewhere in the 200 and odd thousand pounds worth um, but, but it fell off each year. Um, about a year or so in it sort of became one of those things where you started to branch out a little bit or you're in the library next-door have a look at the building management side of [laughs]

AC: Oh, literally it was because of proximity... [inaudible]

JS: Part of it was the proximity, um library services were doing very well so I had a little bit of capacity and ended up doing a little bit of building management stuff um, so it became just something that I fell into, there was never a plan, it was never my passion, in the way that it is a passion of others um, and it's been a real learning curve [laughs]

AC: Steep, eh?

JS: Yeah, um it's a wonderful venue, Redhouse um, but very much the renovation was done around the college who are the anchor tenant in there um, so it's got some amazing facilities, there's recording studios, rehearsal spaces, the theatre, the atrium, um editing suites, fantastic, but it all belongs to the college...

AC: It belongs to the college?

JS: The majority of equipment belongs to the college. Somewhere in the change-over from Merthyr Housing who originally had the building and did the refurbishment, the list of what belongs to Redhouse itself and what belongs to the college has got lost, um but the overarching feel anyway is that the, the equipment doesn't work without the other so it's sort of a half and half split. Y'know if we own half of it, our half doesn't work unless the college's does, the college's doesn't work unless ours does, so it's a very um sort of piecemeal approach to, to what's in there at the moment. Um, but they've just had a new sound desk in there um and paid an absolute fortune for it.

AC: Who paid for that then?

JS: That was the college [AC: Okay] yeah, yeah

AC: How much did they pay? I'm just being nosey.

JS: I think it was up in the tens of thousands. It's a really, amazing piece of kit. And the building itself is really well-designed um apparently you can live stream from the basement area up into any other rooms um, but it's never been used. I think the last time it was used was on its official opening day.

AC: You're joking?

JS: So, there's a real sort of disconnect from people using the spaces

AC: Yeah, yeah.

JS: Which y'know I was always under the impression that was what the spaces were for but of course with that sort of kit in there the college are very wary of who [inaudible] goes in and is using it, touching it, um yeah it's a difficult one [laughs]

AC: But they're not using as much as they could either

JS: No, no, we're in discussion with the college now about trying to open up some of these spaces um there's been a few changes in staffing both on our side and with the college so we're hoping that'll start a new sort of process of collaboration [laughs] yeah 'cause sometimes it's about personalities as opposed to actual practicalities [laughs]

AC: Who's the point of contact in the college then?

JS: We've got a lady in there called Jo who's our day-to-day point of contact but myself and our interim CEO meet the Vice-Principal and I've met the Principal of the college as well ah just to try and get those links really strong, you need them from the top down um y'know just to make it work. It's a , like I say it's a fantastic building but with limitations as I say it was very much designed around the, the needs of the college at the time but of course even now we're only sort of five years on since we've taken it and the needs of the college are changing [AC: Yeah] the way they deliver their courses is changing, the courses they deliver some are not there anymore um, so there's y'know, there's, there's a lot of work to do about getting really well used.

AC: So it's a long-term sort of process really [JS: Yeah, yeah] I suppose.

JS: And we're in discussion with a national music organisation as well ah [AC: What's that then?] It can't be public until after...

AC: Oh I can't say...when is it going to go public?

JS: It'll probably be at the end of this month now.

AC: This won't be published until 2023 you're alright [laughter] and I can't say anything by law [laughter]

JS: We're speaking to Community Music Wales

AC: Oh I thought they were already involved around here?

JS: They are involved but they're going to become an anchor tenant within the building, so they will be using the spaces then and they've, we've had initial discussions with

them with the college so their projects as a, as a core funded arts council group um, their projects then will help feed onto the use of those spaces more in the community and more by the community and act as a feeder through into the creative arts for the college as well then, so y'know the links are starting to come but it's been a long time coming because we've we had that over reliance on just throwing a few tribute bands in because we had spare cash to do what we liked with.

AC: I see what you're saying yeah

JS: Y'know um there was no long-term sustainable plan for the building but I think we're getting to a point now with Community Music Wales, we've got some visual artists who work in there now and we got um Claire Timbrel who does a lot of um painting classes she does a lot of work in there um, last night we had our first Halloween panto which was a sell-out and it was amazing and everybody was up and singing [laughs] because they were, there was Meatloaf in there [laughter] I'm sure I heard some ELO there was some really weird um wonderful mixes of music which really got people on their feet and they loved it [laughs] so [AC: That's all you want isn't it?] yeah, [AC: it's what you're after?] yeah.

AC: So how did you get um, sorry to keep mentioning this but they won't go out until 2023 anyway, how did you get into talks with Community Music first then, how did that come about, that relationship?

JS: We'd been making contact with the Arts Council for a long time. We've done um a few Arts Council projects mainly based around visual arts and performance [AC: Okay] but we've sort of recognised that there is a sort of a bit lacking 'cause the music space in there is so good [laughs] y'know it does lend itself to music, um the acoustics are fantastic in, in both the atrium and the theatre. So we've been sort of talking to them and it was actually um, Arts Council that mentioned it to us that they had a, a group [laughter and inaudible] that were interested in Merthyr um, but it makes more sense for them as an organisation um, and what is lovely about it is a couple of them are actually from Merthyr [AC: Good] as well, so they, they're not just uh 'cause we were criticised that there was a national arts company, ah a national music company coming and it was like oh! They won't know anything about Merthyr [inaudible] but sometimes you need a bit of fresh blood [AC: A mix is cool?] these have lived and worked in Cardiff [whispered...but they're from Merthyr] they've lived here y'know, they know the people and we've just got a new programmer as well a new freelance programmer Lee Davies from the Gurnos, he's done a lot with 3G [AC: I know Lee I used to teach him guitar] there we are [laughter] and he's got obviously they are doing the space out of the old doctors surgery in the Gurnos, that's becoming a sort of arts, cultural, music ah recording, radio station they're putting in up there, so there's, there's some real nice crossovers then 'cause he's worked with Liz in Soar who also does a lot through the medium of Welsh so there's some real nice links being built at the moment um, just hoping that some of the money will follow it [AC: Yeah] 'cause I think that's the biggest problem [AC: Funding?] funding, y'know these, these things don't, they don't come cheap y'know and y'know you wanna put good bands, you wanna put good singers it's not cheap to do it.

AC: No it's not, so the programmer is that someone who does something techy or puts programmes up?

JS: No, he'll put the programmes together, so he'll be, he liaises with the sort of more local bands, we got Florence Black coming [AC: Okay] um, we've got the Sandinistas coming at the end of the month, another one that I can't remember [laughs]

- AC: I remember the Sandinistas I seen that.
- JS: Yeah, so y'know I think, it's a nice venue, um, expensive to run [AC: I bet yeah] as being that building is um y'know I think our heating, lighting sort or electricity not far short to about ten thousand pounds a month [inaudible] yeah, [AC: That's toe curling isn't it] it is, and it sort of, although the college give us a good rental fee to be in there um it's not [inaudible] it, it covers it but y'know you got that extra then, you got your staffing, cleaning, all of the bits that come along side it every time something goes wrong, it's a listed building so it's expensive to repair y'know it's, it's but we're starting to see a bit of light at the end of the tunnel now I think [AC: Okay] which is great [laughs] [AC: I bet it's a relief is what it is?] yeah [laughter]
- AC: Um, so, a general question again, what factors do you think make it difficult for local popular music-making in Merthyr so, aside from, including, but aside from the Redhouse as well what do you think makes it difficult around here?
- JS: I know having spoken to a lot um one of the guys who works for us up in the park, he's got his own band and a lot of it is around the rehearsal space [AC: Oh right] so it's finding appropriate rehearsal space um like I say that place has those places built in but they're not readily accessible and I think that's what they're finding y'know you gotta trek all your stuff to a place [AC: Yeah] [inaudible] then you gotta take it all away again at the end of the evening um, and it's where do you do that because as funding has been cut over so many years, so many of the community venues have shut down. We're lucky in Merthyr that we've still got a few but not near as many as we need um so I know he himself goes outside of the borough to rehearse [inaudible] yeah [AC: You wanna keep them in really] you do, you want to keep them within [inaudible] um, and I think sometimes there's a, there's an attitude in Merthyr with some people that ah if it's from Merthyr it can't be that good [AC: Yeah] and there's a lack of support sometimes y'know people will pay seventy or eighty pounds to go to ah, to see something in Cardiff in, in, in the Millennium or, or St David's or one of those, but won't pay ten or fifteen pounds to come to a venue within Merthyr. They'd even travel to Aberdare rather than pay it in Merthyr it's very strange [laughter] I've never, I, I, I can't quite get it [AC: It is odd] it is, it's really strange as if it's, can't be good if it's in, it's my town I don't need to...
- AC: Is it almost like they take it for granted?
- JS: I think so, because yeah [inaudible] [AC: It's nuts isn't it?] it is very strange. But I think that's one of the biggest having that those openly accessible spaces for people to use and again I don't know how that's achieved without the appropriate level of funding. Y'know they're cutting music across schools it's, I know, I was looking at the um, the Youth Music provision on the local authority website because that's recently gone from Council and that becomes its own group [AC: Oh right] yeah, it'll no longer be run by the Council they're their own constituted group.
- AC: When did that happen then?
- JS: Last week
- AC: Oh right really recently then
- JS: It went up as an efficiency, it went up as an efficiency last week um...
- AC: What does that mean when you say it's going up as an efficiency then?

JS: Well, because it's been run as part of the local authority, part of the LEA um, there's obviously a cost implication to the local authority, so my understanding of it is having read the report that went up is that they will no longer core-fund that as an activity by the local authority but they will help the lo, the group to set-up as an independent group [AC: Okay] who are constituted and can apply for grants and all of that sort of stuff [sigh] but again essentially that's cutting the, the core funding from music [AC: Yeah, yeah, yeah] so...

AC: Why are they doing that?

JS: There's money...

AC: Is it just to get rid of it so it's one less thing...

JS: I think it's 8.2 million pounds worth of savings that the authority has to make and I think there's that, the arts culture, libraries, leisure, they've always been easy targets.

AC: They're always first aren't they?

JS: Yeah, without considering the wider implications of what the involvement in music will, will do, what an involvement in an arts venue will do for, for individuals. There is, y'know that sort of, less tangible stuff [laughs] isn't measured very well [inaudible]

AC: [inaudible] mentioned well-being, I know it's kind of a, it's bandied about a bit too much I think at the moment well-being but y'know it's a real thing isn't it [JS: Yeah] with music bringing communities together...

JS: Y'know we have the Tenovous Choir that practice in there and y'know you know that being part of that, that group that the singing, it makes them feel better they'll tell you it makes them feel better, there, they do have some core-funding y'know it costs a 100 pounds for the choir master to lead them every time they meet.

AC: [whispered, oh he's expensive... laughter]

JS: But y'know there is that, that core expense because it can't, it can't always be for free [AC: Absolutely] y'know you can't always expect people to give up their time and, and their talent for free but I think within the arts there's still or within the arts in this area we still think if you like doing it do it you must do it for nothing then [laughs]

AC: There was something recently, I think it was in the Senedd they brought this ah, ah pay to play [JS: Yeah] have you heard of Paul Carr? [JS: Yeah, yeah] from the Atrium, I think he was heading it where even now we're still y'know and it's country-wide, nationwide where people just go, what you just said well, just do it for free and there's people who will do it for free so how are you gonna get people to be taken seriously to be paid then y'know [JS: Yeah, yeah] I think that's a real thing y'know [JS: Yeah] Um with the Youth Music then, is, is it perhaps their not pushing them to one side but putting them separate to keep it alive? Almost, 'cause it probably wouldn't survive with the funding they are getting?

JS: It probably wouldn't but I think it's a very short-sighted view that things will survive. You may have, we've seen it across [inaudible] across the country in libraries. You have a core set of volunteers who come in and they're going to do an amazing job for you and then one of them's not well, and then two one them fall out, and then you're left with nothing. It's, it's the succession planning that worries me with putting

everything out to community groups and making everybody these individual constituted groups because all you're doing is creating more competition for the limited funds that are actually there [AC: Yeah, yeah] so, there, y'know there is, I dunno, it's a difficult one because yes they probably will survive a lot longer but they may not [inaudible] y'know there's such an unknown still, it is such an unknown.

AC: So it's the people involved in it then I mean, have they got the right skills for....?

JS: I mean this is it y'know we saw it on a large scale when the trust was formed. Y'know you took a chief executive and a set of managers who'd never worked outside the local authority and said, have fun! [laughter] this is your new company, enjoy! [laughter]. That's literally how it felt and y'know sort of five years down the line we're going, actually we're starting to get there [inaudible...learning curve] it's a long time y'know, it's a long time to be trying to get there and still y'know knowing that there's a lot to be done. Um, and I think, I think that's the problem when we put things out to these groups, that the skills aren't always there um, a lot of the people, I find within the valleys areas especially within Merthyr, um, volunteers are amazing don't get me wrong but you're competing for the same volunteers, you're competing for the people with the skills because there are a lot of people out there that are very willing and very happy to put their time in but don't have the skills to be the people in charge of a group and, and it's a difficult one it is really difficult.

AC: Yeah, no I get that I get it um, okay so, you've touched on a few of these things anyway on what you've been saying but I've been doing a bit of looking around and seeing what the vibe is. There's seems to be a concern amongst local musicians rightly or wrongly I don't know um, that's part of the reason why I'm interviewing you I don't know what's going on um, that ah Save Our Redhouse there seems to be a problem that these... you've just said they will be available but it is a concern that the resources there are not available to the community. You've kinda just touched on this, do you want to tell me a bit more about why they feel this way I suppose?

JS: Yeah, well we know, as I say we knew when we came in that there was this tapering grant because Ffos-y-Fran in their first year were having something like 500 thousand pounds to support activity in Redhouse um it dropped then, it halved, it was 250 so last year the, the amount of money that was going in there to support activity was around forty thousand pounds [AC: That's a significant drop isn't it?] yeah, and now there's nothing. There is not one penny other than what the college give.

AC: And this is because of this tapering...

JS: Tapering grant so it's gone.

AC: Okay.

JS: The grant has gone and because of the level of the grant my understanding of it is that we can't reapply for anything for a period of time from that particular grant. Yeah, so of course there are, there are grants out there. Um, but it's having the people with the right skills to find the grants that could, could sustain it [inaudible] but nobody, but nobody pays for the core costs. Nobody pays, it's all around activity now. All of the grant schemes that we've been able to identify are all around delivering extra activity um, but don't fund the people [AC: Yeah, yeah] and the costs to deliver that activity so it's very strange at the moment, it's very, it's a very difficult situation to try and be doing, so with those tapering costs, with the costs that we have to pay 'cause we rent to Merthyr Housing as well.

AC: Okay, the trust?

JS: Yeah, the trust. Yeah, we as the trust rent to Merthyr Housing for use of the building.

AC: Is that the rent from the college then...?

JS: Yeah, so [inaudible] some of it does, it y'know there's a big strange circle [laughs] And we're also unpicking really weird things where they've put in a PHS contract for hand driers and soap, and that's something like thirty thousand pounds a year and they literally come and refill the soap every month and just check the hand-driers are working BUT there is a set of hand-driers that came with the building brand new unopened in a box in the attic [laughs] and it was a contract signed for something like five years and so, it's bonkers [AC: That doesn't make sense?] but there was so much money. They had that 250 thousand pounds in the first year of operation and it was like oh what shall we do with this now? Oh, we'll have some, a nice contract for somebody to come and do our hand-drier [AC: I can think of better things...] yeah [laughter] y'know we won't refill the soap ourselves [inaudible]

AC: Just go down the pound shop and buy [JS: Yeah] a load of soap y'know.

JS: Y'know honestly, so we're unpicking a lot of that but what that grant sort of did was mask a lot of the issues in there around the sus, the true sustainability of the building. Um there was a lot of staff for a venue of its size [AC: How many were there then?] there were seven at one point [AC: That's quite a lot isn't it?] it's a lot for a venue that size um, y'know we run the museum service over the three buildings with eight [AC: Oh right yeah] so y'know to give you a sort of a level so, so there was a lot of staff in there, we had a full-time technical coordinator um, who spent most of his time working with the Merthyr College tech, so we were paying him and he was doing the work of the college so it was all, and so we had to, to ensure the place didn't do a Muni because we were very, very concerned after the, the stuff came out around the Muni because y'know that was a building that to all outsiders was doing an amazing job [AC: I thought so yeah] it was full all the time, there were loads of people there. I went to a Panto there about three days before it closed [AC: You wouldn't have known probably] wouldn't have known, there were loads of staff there, everybody was smiling, everybody was happy and three days later it shut its doors. Um, and we know having had some sort of conversations with people involved that they were using sort of, money they were taking for tickets for third parties to prop up their cash flow and we knew we couldn't be in that position so we had to take the really difficult decision of pulling back on a lot of the staffing because in any organisation your staffing is your biggest cost. We as an organisation, the minimum cost that we pay for the staff is nine pound an hour, so they take home nine pounds an hour, with our costs it's about twelve for us [AC: Hmm, yeah, yeah] It's a lot of money, [inaudible] y'know, it's great that within sort of Merthyr we're a really good employer in our, our hourly rates and things but it creates its own issues [AC: It's expensive then] yeah y'know when you've got, 'cause a lot of the staff were on significantly more than that um so it ended up we had to put it right back. Um that was seen by... in confidence, the daughter and wife of one of the affected staff set up Save Our Redhouse page [AC: Oh right, I didn't know who set that up by the way] yeah, the Save Our Redhouse and about a year or so ago we also made another staff member redundant and he's also involved in the Save Our Redhouse page [laughs]

AC: Oh, 'cause there's no, I can't find any names to the admin for that [JS: No] site 'cause, I would have interviewed them y'know but that makes sense.

JS: So, it and, [AC: It's a personal thing then?] yeah, um and there's a lot of in-fighting I think within Merthyr. There are certain people who think music is the only art that goes on in Merthyr [laughter] um, but y'know there is that people are very precious about their particular art instead of looking at it as a building that should be providing a range of different arts activities it can't just be music, it can't just be visual art it has to be more. Um even to the point we got a children's craft group in there this morning y'know it's half term they're just, they're literally just colouring in and making a few things [inaudible] they're taking it home they're hanging it up, it's art [AC: Yeah absolutely] it's basic art but it's art.

AC: It should be for all ages?

JS: Yeah, and y'know, so that was where Save Our Redhouse came then um. I know Lee our new programmer has had a conversation with the people involved and said the only way you're gonna hurt the arts in Merthyr is if you continue with this because people won't come to us [AC: There is that y'now...] y'know if you keep being negative, if you keep saying, y'know, and we've tried to be upfront and say we can't afford to run it at a loss, no-one can [AC: Business sense...] because as I say the only, the only income we get is the income from the college, there's no core-funding for that building and there's no support from the local authority for that building. While they support libraries, they give us a management fee for libraries and museum and leisure centres get nothing for arts in Merthyr [AC: That's terrible isn't it] our contract tells us we need to put on five arts events each year [AC: Is that it?] yeah, five arts events.

AC: But then you've got to find the money for five arts events.

JS: And you're thinking what are you classing as an arts event? [AC: Oh yeah] 'cause I can probably say to you that I'm putting on seventy arts events every week, between the colouring, the crafting, the quilting group, the knitting group [AC: Yeah, yeah] the art group who are all meeting in loads of different venues. The Celtic café that's down in the leisure centre, these are all arts events and they want five. You don't want a lot, you don't want a lot for Merthyr if five is what you've come up with for a number of events.

AC: Unless they're thinking big, huge events? [JS: Yeah] but they're not stipulating that either?

JS: No, and y'know it, it, but we don't have, y'know the arts coordinator was given up, so somebody who could've, who had those links and y'know Gus Payne [AC: I know Gus] well Gus was originally the local arts officer [AC: Yes] I when he came over to the trust he was given up as arts officer [AC: What he walked away from it or..?] we kept him, we retained him and he went to work in Redhouse and coordinated the gallery and things there and we've recently moved him now 'cause he's coordinating the Redhouse gallery but he's based in the museum up in Cyfarthfa [AC: Okay] 'cause they got a massive art collection [AC: Yeah, yeah] so y'know we y'know when Eric Malthouse was displaying in Redhouse they got the Eric Malthouse they have as part of the museum collection they got that out on display so we were able to say that y'know come along to Redhouse, if you like Eric Malthouse's work we actually own [laughs] an Eric Malthouse up here, come and look at it! So y'know that, that is where the Save Our Redhouse group came from because we knew we had to pull it right back because virtually every um band that we put in there was making us a loss [AC: Right, do they know this though?] You try and explain it but [sighs] it's one of those things that people see 150 people and go oh it was an amazing night, it was fantastic! Yeah, 150 people they all paid ten pounds, that's 1,500 we paid the band

1,250. We paid the girl to sit on reception nine pound an hour she was there for four. We paid the security guards 250 pounds because it's part of our licence we have to have security so, but there's that disconnect with what is an amazing night um, for the people who've attended and what actually makes money.

AC: Yeah, yeah so they're just seeing it as a fascia then?

JS: Yeah, and I think that's been the biggest thing and when we had that funding it didn't matter so we created, we created the problem in the beginning because we didn't, we, we were using the money as if, like sweets [AC: Yeah] y'know give a few out b'there [laughs]

AC: Do you think that seems to be a kinda curse of small towns or just Merthyr? Where y'know there's all these things in place but they, hopefully not for Redhouse, but they have a short shelf life [JS: Yeah] oh right the money's run our right that's the end of that y'know?

JS: There's massive investment in infrastructure but very little around what happens after you've built it [AC: Okay] once you've built it what do you do with it? Um we seen something similar with Ynys Fach Engine House, which was refurbished um, Heritage Lottery Money about ten, eleven years ago um, and it was run by volunteers so it sat there, the volunteers were going in, occasionally visit sometimes they didn't, it didn't really matter um, Grenfell happened and every, all the public buildings were subject to a new fire risk assessment. So, we've got a four storey building which is absolutely stunning and the firemen came in and went right...yes... you've got one exit, seven people, seven people in this building at any one time over four storey's what do you do about that? [Laughs] What do you do with it then? Y'know and it's, it's that sort of...y'know I know there's a park bid going in from the local authority now to Valley's Regional Parks to do upgrade work up in Cyfarthfa Park and, they're talking about social prescribing and they're talking about health and community spaces and they're talking about all these things but the money is capital money it can only pay for the building changes it doesn't pay for anything after and it's that staffing element that is the most expensive but is the bit that will actually make a difference and, and the funding ah well, no funding that I've found pays for that element of it [AC: It just seems odd...] y'know it, it seems, it seems so short-sighted and, because that is what happens, when the funding goes everything stops now.

AC: This funding then is it, I mean you're looking UK wide I should imagine...

JS: Yeah the Valleys Regional Park has Welsh Government funding ah y'know the Ffos-y-Fran funding the same it, y'know there's no, there's no long-term sustainable approach to arts and art development across the country at the moment [AC: That's really frightening isn't it?] It is, it is because y'know we talk about libraries and libraries have been lucky within Merthyr we've been y'know we were halved about five years ago but we're able to retain a lot by using [inaudible] differently um, but I just don't know how you maintain art any longer because that core-funding is just, just not there.

AC: So there's like funding for activities [JS: Yeah] and funding for doing up places [JS: Yeah] but there's no funding for running places [JS: No]

JS: That's it, that's exactly it.

AC: Has anyone ever said anything y'know?

- JS: Some places are lucky, there's RCT for example um they have a core budget to support the development of art so they have um a theatre manager. They have all, all of those things in place funded by the local authority and while they've had cuts, their cuts haven't been as substantial as they have in other areas [AC: Right] but Merthyr cut all of its arts.
- AC: Heavier than other counties?
- JS: Well, I think there are other counties that don't have anything the way that we don't but y'know to try and then rebuild something after those massive cuts is so difficult.
- AC: I suppose it's smaller you get less money generally the RCT 'cause it's a massive county isn't it [JS: That's it] but, it's gotta service all of that.
- JS: Y'know [inaudible] limitations with Redhouse, the college have it 8am to 5pm every day [AC: Oh right] Monday to Friday um, and that's the, virtually the entire building, there are only three rooms we can use to rent during those times.
- AC: See now the impression I think is it's just empty all day [JS: Yeah] but is it empty are the students using it?
- JS: The students do use it um but again the number of students coming through has dropped um, so I think the college were concerned that might've been around the negative publicity but then when you look at it, there's a nationwide drop-off so it's more likely that these students are just not coming through um because I know when they changed the 6th form provision in Merthyr so you didn't have the 6th form in schools any longer um, my daughter went out of the borough [AC: Where did she go?] She went to Ystrad Mynach 'cause we're down in Quakers Yard [AC: Right yeah] so Ystrad Mynach was a better course for what she wanted to do [inaudible] y'know I now there are a couple of students coming over from Brecon but I also know that down where I live a lot of them are going to St. Johns in Aberdare [AC: Yes] because they've still got a 6th form so they, they're maintaining sort of school education so...
- AC: That's quite sad though isn't it that people are having to leave [JS: Yeah] they're own little nest if you want...
- JS: Oh it is, it is y'know but I think y'know they've got some excellent tutors in there they've got some really good film making that goes on in there um, but again, I don't know if people are seeing the possibilities of what careers they could have, not everybody is going to be Steven Spielberg, not everybody is gonna be Beyonce um and that's what we're hoping the partnership with Community Music Wales will do is provide people with an understanding of what else they can do because they do stuff around song-writing or writing for games y'now sort of animation that sort of thing as well which y'know we're only hoping will help but yeah so that's pretty much where the Redhouse and saving it came from
- AC: It's interesting...
- JS: We weren't trying to kill it [laughs] we were trying to make sure that we could sustain it, and not be the Muni.
- AC: It seems like they're digging their heels in knowing this they still digging their heels in though y'know [JS: Yeah] 'cause from what you've just told me now, I'd go oh! That makes sense? [JS: Yeah]

JS: Yeah, but I, but I think that because of the fact that it's personal they're, they're, big, they were all involved in Redhouse when it first came when all that funding was there, that was all they saw, um, and of course as people have left it's y'know it's the daughter, the wife, it's the best friend it's [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know it's very difficult because although you, you want to try and engage people you know that some of that group are never going to engage again now because [inaudible] in their eyes [AC: Yeah] Dad's been done wrong [laughs] y'know, it's a difficult one [inaudible] and social media can be so dangerous, so dangerous, but [AC: It's handy for looking up stuff?] but it can be, can be an amazing tool as well [AC: It's a double edged sword that one] yeah.

AC: To be honest I can't stand social media but we gotta be part of it [JS: Yeah, well this is it...laughs] Um, so I was gonna say are there any issues with the Redhouse for local popular musicians but I suppose you've kinda touched on that really.

JS: Yeah I think so as I say it's making the spaces more accessible, 'cause it's difficult for us because, although we can control the space, the college actually, y'know it's their stuff.

AC: [inaudible]

JS: It's their stuff we can't, override them but we're hoping Community music Wales college partnership will open it back up [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know.

AC: I mean, would it be a case of like um, the college not, inaudible, the space is allowed to be used by local musicians but perhaps the college don't want them using the equipment. Did they get to that point? [JS: Yeah] they got a room y'know?

JS: Yeah, and it could and that's, and I think if we can work with Community Music Wales now we, because obviously they are an organisation within their own right they got their own public liability, they got their own technicians, they've got skilled people, it's not us, opening up a room and going ooh yeah you carry on [inaudible] I couldn't tell you what to do on a tech deck? Y'know I'm like [laughter] press that, try it?! [laughter] have a go! But it's those little things but y'know working with a group and bringing more of the community through the doors is what we wanna do. 'Cause it was really funny, um, we had an old people's tea in there, organised by the library service because we go out and deliver to people in their home and we brought these elderly ladies [inaudible] and one said to me oh see love I remember it when it was the Town Hall, never been up these steps [AC: Oh bless] [inaudible] we were only allowed to go round the side. 'Cause if you paid your rent you couldn't enter via the main entrance you had to go round the side door [AC: Oh really?] to pay your rent, yeah, and she remembered, she remembers it as the Town Hall and not being able [46:00] to go up the main steps [AC: So that's fantastic for her then isn't it] yeah, y'know she's walking into this building now and she's sat down had her dinner given to her, she loves it! Because she remembers the building being that austere, corporate building y'know and I think, I think it still does struggle with its image as well because I think there are people out there that go, it's a college building, [AC: Yes] College, I won't go in there anyway 'cause it's a college building [AC: There's so much more in there...] yeah and [AC: Even if it's just for a coffee y'know] yeah, it's trying to get this dual use for it as well, so...

AC: Do you think it's like a bit more of a question of changing people's perceptions and their outlook on, on things that would help maybe?

JS: Yes, I think, I think it's a big part of what we've gotta do and as I say because, I go back to the funding all the time because that funding you [inaudible] were bringing in a specific type of person, now we've gotta get it open for everyone. We had a medium there a few, few months ago and the lady came and she went to the [inaudible] and went, what do I do now I've bought my ticket? I said, well just come along tonight? Yeah, I know but what do I do? Because she'd never been to a theatre [AC: Oh you're joking? Really?] 'Cause we'd said to her oh it's up in the theatre yeah, yeah it's just up the stairs b'there. But she went oh but what do I do? Because she had really never been, she didn't have a friend to come with her. 'cause her friend had pulled out at the last minute, but she really wanted to go [AC: Yeah, yeah] but she didn't know what to do. [Inaudible] and you sort of sit in there and think no, this can't be right, but it is, and it's about making sure that everybody is comfortable in there [AC: I guess access as well] but it doesn't become y'know what it was when you had to pay rent around the side [AC: Yeah, yeah] you don't want it like, everybody should be able to go in, so kids can go in and, and they can play in the café y'know they can colour in, they can do that sort of stuff, we can have them painting in the atrium and it won't [inaudible] a problem if they spill it on the floor y'know, it's, it's creating a different atmosphere in there and y'know as I say the Halloween panto we had last night [inaudible] I think felt like a bit of a pivotal moment because it was absolutely rammed in there. [AC: That's what you want isn't it?] and that was brilliant, because there were a lot of people in there that I spoke to said oh I've never been in ya before.

AC: And they're local people?

JS: They're local people.

AC: See that's the thing isn't it, it's people's perceptions of what's in there....

JS: Oh I didn't think it would be like this. Oh I've laughed, and that's what you want, that's what, you really want people to come in and enjoy themselves, whatever they're involved in either singing with the choir or it's y'know it's watching a show, whatever it is they're doing you want them to be, involved. 'Cause we've got um, a Christmas show coming up now, and that's starting to sell quite well, um, so we've got, Osian Llewellyn Edwards who happens to be Rhianwen, who works here, her partner [AC: Oh is it?] [laughter] Yeah so, we trot him out at every opportunity now [laughs]. He's comparing the fireworks on Friday so, [AC: Does he know that yet?] We may have mentioned it, [inaudible] microphone so we don't care, but he's singing, we've got the Tenovous Choir, we've got a new um, ah music teacher in the area approached us, she's got a student who plays clarinet to level, massive high up here? [AC: Who's that?] I can't remember the name, she approached Rhianwen [AC: It's not Vanessa Bryant is it?] I can't remember [inaudible] But um, and her student will be playing now 'cause and what we've arranged then is for her students also to come round get a bit of practice playing ah the foyer [AC: Nice, yeah] every so often, so that there's y'know some live music that's a little bit different going on. Y'know so, trying to ah, create something new in there.

AC: Okay, um, okay, you've kinda answered this as well, how would you describe the Trust's relationship with grass-roots musicians, is there anything else you'd like to add to that? I mean are there some people who are understanding and they get what you're doing and they're kinda on board [JS: Yes] and that?

JS: Yeah, I think there are y'know there are people out there who sort of get it because I think y'know, a lot of these places have been involved in places like the Muni. Um, they've understood the issues around the money um, but there still is a perception

that that place is funded by somebody, somebody pumps a load of money in there [AC: There's sort, a bank of cash round the back there] Yeah, y'know with a big tree [laughs] going pick it off...[AC: Still looking for that tree] [laughter] but I think it's growing and I think with the right people in place like I say with Lee now he's had massive um, involvement in local music so y'know having him involved I think will make a big, a big difference um, y'know I, I think there are some relationships that I don't think will ever be any good um y'know the sort of the issues around the Merthyr Rising [AC: What sort of issues were those then?] Well, we've had um, we had various issues around non-payment of bills [AC: Them paying you or..?] Yeah, they didn't [laughs] [AC: Have they paid now or..?] yeah they have, they have paid up now because well, and that I think we got to the point where we knew we couldn't support it 'cause we were having to pay stuff ourselves but then had to give an ultimatum that if it is not paid we will not open the doors and it doesn't sit well [AC: Yeah] y'know it doesn't sit well um, y'know for that type of thing nut y'know I think there are some relationships that won't get any better but, but I'm hopeful that there are a lot that will [inaudible] and attract perhaps some of our bands who we know are practising elsewhere in [AC: In to Redhouse to practice?] yeah, y'know.

AC: Um, 'cause I know is it Lyn Williams used to run Red, not Redhouse sorry Merthyr Rising [JS: Yeah] but that's changed now other people are involved...

JS: Yeah, he's left I think he left after [AC: The last one?] Yeah the last one, I think it was the last one [AC: He did do the last one?] He did, he was, had involvement right up until a fortnight three weeks before the last one [AC: Okay]

AC: So, the new people involved whoever they may be, do you think there's more scope to...

JS: I don't know, again [inaudible] it could be, it could be y'know I think we just gotta wait and see because I don't know if Merthyr Rising will be what it's been. [AC: Oh really?] I do wonder whether it will ever get to that level again um [AC: Seriously?] Well, again they made a lot of a lot of loss on it [AC: Was it a case of chucking loads of money at it again...] the council have funded I think they wrote off something like 50,000 pounds worth of debt for it. [AC: For this year's one?] I dunno if it was this year's but I know the 50,000 pound was bandied about as being...[AC: I thought it was making good money now?] I think that's the issue isn't it y'know you, you see it from the outside, you see all those tickets being sold at thirty quid but you think about the infrastructure costs, the, the, I know we put marquees on the Pandy field once and it cost us an arm and a leg. Y'know even the clean-ups after, the noise mitigation that's gotta go in, the bar running y'know, we worked it out for our bar that we put in there, for every 500 pounds we take over the bar there's only about 140 pounds worth of profit in that, it's not a lot and it's not a lot y'know for the extra electricity to chill all the beer down it's y'know [AC: Yeah, yeah] there's, I think there's that how do you say perceptions of things being really successful when actually they are just keeping their heads above water in a lot of cases.

AC: That's quite shocking really 'cause I'm good at researching, gotta be...

JS: You would never know [inaudible] you would never know, you would never know, I know the council have been really supportive of the Merthyr Rising um, but to the tune of an awful lot of money.

AC: So they might, next year...

- JS: I wonder whether it will be, I don't know if it will be the two day festival, I don't know if it will be so centred around the bands um whether there will be more political discussion um which is how it started in the beginning that became sort of band and beer led
- AC: Yes, I noticed that with the red flag and all this and then [JS: Yeah]
- JS: And all of a sudden it was a music festival and y'know it, great as a music festival y'know the square is pumping but then you've got Crownload that happens down the bottom so, y'know everybody seems to operate in silos in Merthyr and that's part of it [AC: Yeah] we're very small [laughs] [AC: Well it is one of the smallest counties...] small county, and to operate in silos like that is just not, not going to make the impact, I don't think.
- AC: What would you suggest then, could there be some sort of coming together of y'know Jacob down in the Crown and...
- JS: I think that would be the ideal thing would be if you could, because many years ago there was an arts forum and it was quite a successful forum because here was a lot of collaborative work that went on but it's having again somebody core to it to run it 'cause otherwise you just get the politics of the person [AC: Yeah] y'know you need somebody outside of [AC; Yeah you do need someone separated from it not personal...] Yeah [AC: When was this arts forum about?] That was about 7 years ago, seven, eight years ago now [AC: And money again...] again I think it was just money that y'know there were a few personalities involved, again, and it just sort of fell by the wayside, nobody to lead it therefore it just sort of stopped because everyone I think is afraid of leading it [AC: Okay, they don't want to have the responsibility is it?] yeah, y'know everybody's doing their day job innit y'know it's like how do you, again it's that, people will do things for nothing but it's if [AC: People got the skills?] yeah [AC: To do it well?] yeah, y'know so...
- AC: Um, so I'll just briefly flick through a few of these you've kinda answered these anyway um, ah, what were the reasons for the Trust taking over the Redhouse? Was it that accidental sort of just falling in to it...
- JS: I wasn't party to any of it at the time but I've picked things up as I've sort of tried to get to grips with what actually happened and the original idea was that Chapter arts were going to take it [AC: Oh alright] Chapter arts wanted nothing to do with it because of the limitations with the college [AC: Right, okay] cause they, they suddenly realised that they couldn't make it into Chapter because of the college being in there, without the college in there [inaudible] I don't know if they would've taken it but without the college it was a more attractive prospect [AC: I suppose more freedom of rent and...] yeah. So, from what I can gather our CEO at the time went hmmm... they got all this money coming in and we'll syphon 50,000 pounds of that off a year to make sure that the rest of the Trust is doing okay and it just didn't happen [AC: Didn't work?] Didn't work, so there was that sort of, like I say it was blinkered by funding [inaudible] you see big money and there was no sort of long term idea of what was going to happen then. Y'know we, we in discussion with the Housing Association as well and been very, very honest with them about the limitations and I think they've actually taken to the board that at some point it may end up going back to being just a college building [AC: That would be a right shame...] that would be such a shame and that's what we don't want to happen, it would be the easy option, that's the easy option for us as an organisation it would be the easiest thing in the world to do. Y'know we'd weather the storm of people calling us rotten for a bit but we'd make money on the building [AC: Yeah, yeah] but it

wouldn't be what the building is meant to be [inaudible] [AC: It's location in the middle of town] yeah, y'know you got the square outside and there's such possibility [AC: Yeah, absolutely] but we've gotta get it right and, and that's, that's the bit we're working on at the minute now is trying to get it right [AC: And that doesn't, it's not a quick fix is it?] It's not, it's not [inaudible] patience, time [inaudible] yeah.

AC: Um, so [muttering] we've kinda touched on most of these really um, so you did say a bit about this, are there any plans to include more local popular music in the Redhouse? Is there anything you want to add to what you've already said about that?

JS: No, as I say I think working with Lee now we're looking to sort of bring his expertise because of course he's worked with a lot of bands, projects like Zoom and all that sort of thing as well um and Young Promoters all that sort of thing um, but also linking to places like Soar and trying to get that link to the Gurnos where the radio station is there because there are such crossovers um and it is a bit of a work in progress so we're not quite, we haven't quite got our direction right yet and we've got a lot of work to do to set that out but I think it's the relationships, forming those relationships are the most important part at this time.

AC: And is it all down to you or is there two of you or...?

JS: Well I'm quite lucky I've got Rhianwen our marketing person she's doing quite a bit. Lee is doing quite a bit on his side so, but up until fairly recently it's been an uphill struggle 'cause we're a very small team. The management of the Trust consists of myself and Wendy, we've got an interim CEO who only does six days a month [AC: A month? Sorry?] six days a month and then the accountant who does one day a week.

AC: So it's a kind of skeleton crew there?

JS: It is [AC: Apart from yourself and...] yeah. And obviously we've got all the other venues as well. 'Cause my remit covers the libraries, leisure centre, 'cause after this meeting I got a meeting about resurfacing the whole hall floor [laughs] so y'know it's a wide-ranging role, I'm never bored I always say that [laughter] but I know I think y'know that programmer role Lee y'know having him in the building and out and about working on the other projects he's working on as well I think that could be a real score for us.

AC: Have you got any idea how long the time-scale for things to start taking shape for other people to realise that you are doing...

JS: Well I think, I don't think anything much will happen before Christmas um, although we've got a lot of activity in there before Christmas, I think people will really start to see it when we start putting out a [profitable?] programme, 'cause very often at the minute it's this event is coming, this event is coming, but we're starting work with Soar as well about creating a proper printed brochure [AC: Ah cool] which as silly as it sounds is what is needed, it's having that information in one place because Facebook is great, social media is great for promoting things, but not everybody sees everything, not everybody is on social media, 25% of people in Merthyr don't use it [inaudible] so they're not seeing it, so having that printed brochure we can get out to people which will have um a year-long programme in it, so month-by-month what's happening y'know that's our goal [laughs]

AC: And that will be Soar and...

JS: That will include Soar yeah, it will include everything that we do then.

AC: That's pretty cool so you're linking it all up [JS: Yeah, so trying to] networking of venues really isn't it? [JS: Yeah, trying to push it all yeah] That is the Trust's long-term plan I should imagine what you just said yeah?

JS: Yeah [laughter]

AC: I think that's pretty much it um, anything else you want to add to that?

JS: No I don't think so, I haven't shut up [laughs]

AC: Perfect interview [laughter] I'm going to stop the recording there....

Interview with Justin Brown, 27-09-19, Caffi Soar, Merthyr Tydfil @ 1.35 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

JB – Justin Brown, Participant

AC: Hi Justin, how're you doing? Um so there's only a few questions really 'cause it's more to do with your supporting role, helping other musicians, venues, that sort of thing

JB: Right

AC: So a couple of general questions first. Um what sort of music do you like?

JB: What sort of music do I like personally?

AC: Yeah

JB: Ah, I like sort of everything, you, you collect influences over the years, like my main sort of love is heavy music, extreme music but also I play folk music myself Welsh language [inaudible] like yeah everything weird and wonderful.

AC: How do you like something so different to what you play?

JB: Um, I dunno, I just, I could never do the heavy metal guitar, I ended up playing folky guitar, I don't know how that happened? But um

AC: Too much speed picking... [laughter] Okay, um can you just give me a bit of a description of what you do around here in Merthyr to sort of help and support music?

JB: Right so I've been working with the Welsh language for about twenty years and um through, through my attempts to promote the Welsh language I've used my interest in music um to organise um to promote um, um music and through that promote the Welsh language so that's why I started doing it. Um, I have a Caffi in the Welsh language centre in Merthyr, Theatre Soar and I've used that to showcase local um talent and talent further afield. We got a band from the Pyrenees coming here um, in a couple of weeks. Um and that'll give an opportunity for a local act to support them, play with ah, ah more international band.

AC: So, do you run this place on your own? Or are you part of a bigger team?

JB: I manage the Caffi, the Caffi is my business but it's part of the wider um Soar centre which originally started as the Welsh language centre and then developed into the theatre, the dance studio, um, we have a Welsh bookshop, conference rooms and class, classrooms.

AC: And who else is involved with this centre here?

JB: Um, I think at the moment there's about 8 staff work here upstairs in the offices um, ah there's [hippy?] who runs the shop, there's people who work with the Menter Laith which is Welsh language initiative upstairs and they organise all sorts of events and a lot of that is music related as well. Um, and what we aim to do with the, the music is to bring the Welsh language to a wider audience through the music, 'cause it's music that transcends all those sort of um linguistic barriers and, and it's a nice easy soft way to introduce people to the language.

- AC: So there's only Welsh language music here?
- JB: No, as the Caffi I have Welsh and English music and other languages, we've had Portuguese um, ah Polish um ah we've got French coming now, so, so it's all languages but my love, my labour of love is the Welsh language. Um we have a lot of local acts um young and old playing here. We have Saturday sessions which is a Saturday afternoon, jazz, folk, classical anything, anything outside of the usual indie rock um thing, that's um about once a month on a Saturday. We also have the occasional gig in the evening and we have a heavy metal um DIY night called Trwm, once a month and it just introduced bands to that. The kind of bands we're going for are not the ones who have semi made it on, on that heavy metal scene in south Wales but the new bands who haven't had an opportunity to play yet, maybe they're a bit ropey, maybe they have 4 songs but that's enough for us 'cause it's a full DIY mentality rather than a um money making success thing.
- AC: So there's a different aim for that really then [JB: Yeah] and is that open to all then or a certain...
- JB: Well they can contact, no, no it's open to all yeah, yeah.
- AC: Okay. Um, so who else has, you mentioned [inaudible] has a say on what happens with the music making around here?
- JB: Well, um, well it's just myself really but then some of the officers with the Menter Laith they organise Welsh specific, Welsh language specific gigs now and again as part of their bigger role, um, and I tend to help with that we have a lot of equipment here which bands use um [AC: Where does the equipment come from then?] Ah a lot of it came through grants years ago, a lot of it is very dated now but we still have, we still have um useable PA's um most of the microphones and walkables have disappeared over the years which is a big problem um but, but really now we're self-funding and the equipment I need for the Caffi I pay out of my own pockets [AC: Oh really?] Yeah.
- AC: Is that okay with you or...
- JB: That's okay with me 'cause I'm I mean I got the, I keep, I have the equipment it's not costing me anything and I can sell it on and um, the music does bring people into the Caffi. It's different to a pub because with a pub the money is flowing over the bar and y'know people come to a Caffi and they tend to buy one coffee and maybe a cake. When you go to a pub to see a band people may have three, four, five and more pints so the money does flow and the money is there maybe a little bit more in some pubs than there is in a Caffi so it does make it hard for me to pay bands but I'm straight up with them as soon as they ask to play or I ask them to play, I tell them there's not much money and I can't afford to pay a lot, I can give you something towards your expenses, I can give you a platform um yeah and that's it.
- AC: Okay. What other resources do you draw on in the area to enable yourself to do the things you do with regards to music?
- JB: Um, to be honest I'm not that aware of any resources um, I mean sometimes I work with the Menter Laith upstairs and maybe just receive a small grant to put on a festival or, or a one off gig so I work with them on that um, so there are small grants about now and again um [inaudible] I dunno a few hundred pounds. The Noson [inaudible] the night time schemes are very good for that 'cause it enables us to have um bigger bands or, or bands that um may not usually get paid so we can pay those

bands so the Night Out Scheme is very, very important to us but I do believe Merthyr Council have stopped backing that scheme [inaudible] ten years or however long maybe fifteen years of backing they've pulled the backing for that and therefore that leaves a massive gap in theatre, music, bands the development of bands and I don't think when they're making these cuts they realise what, what that scheme meant to organisations based here, based in the Redhouse, based in other places in Merthyr who can't afford to pay bands [AC: Yeah, yeah]

AC: What were the reasons for cutting the funding?

JB: I think it was just cuts and they saw it as an easy cut, the arts are the first thing to go, Welsh language um anything they see as an add on or a luxury um they tend to cut first.

AC: So it's almost like they don't see it as a valid, no, I don't want to say valid that's not the right word but they don't see it as important as say science or something like that I dunno?

JB: Well I mean they got, they, they've got a tough thing to do, they gotta cope with y'know 10 years of Tory cuts, they got a tough thing to do but they gotta make some say they can't function on the money they're getting and they need to make [inaudible] and say no we won't function and that's it, give us more money or we're pulling the plug but um it is easy to cut the things they see as luxuries. Music making and small scale community music making in, especially in somewhere like Merthyr and the south Wales valleys it isn't just a matter of a bunch of kids having a laugh and playing rock music, it's about mental health, it's creativity, it's about um having an ambition, it's about socialising, it's about not staying in on your own and getting depressed and therefore claiming more and more money off the state, it's all, it's all those things increases people's quality of life and I'm not overstating it by saying that, it is quality of life. Once you cut art once you cut music, once you cut um learning, all these things [inaudible] nosedives, people's ambitions nosedive, the economy nose, nosedives and all those things are linked but Merthyr council and other councils around Wales can't afford to see that um, they need to make a stand and say to the Welsh Government who then say to the English Government, or the Westminster Government um we can't afford to operate on this and we won't.

AC: And, um, what other funding streams are out there that you've drawn upon? Or are they just random ones

JB: I'm not part, I haven't been part of that um sort of [inaudible] so I'm not sure and the Noson [inaudible] The Night Out was one I used a lot when I used to work for organisations promoting the Welsh language um, ah I'm not aware of any other, I mean now and again the, the Welsh Government will offer a small grant. We got a folk festival next weekend um which is a Welsh folk festival which is being funded by a small grant from Welsh Government um so little things like that come along and, and really that fills the gap to some extent left by Night Out. Um, but there isn't an awful lot out there, I'm not aware of anyway, we tend to do everything here on a budget um on a shoestring that's the beauty about it, you can do something um if somebody like myself is willing to buy the equipment, willing to do the leg work to get the bands and to find the musicians and to give them, to, to encourage them to perform live and then you can do something it should be a lot easier and should be a lot um, a lot more ah expansive y'know there should be more funding to support that kind of stuff 'cause it's not just about playing rock music in your garage.

AC: Yeah exactly, so basically you're saying y'know without people like you without individuals this probably wouldn't be happening then without individuals taking it upon themselves to do something.

JB: Um... I wouldn't say, well yeah I think so, it's always been driven by people's urge to create music and, and people are gonna do that whatever but [inaudible] able to do it to the wider community and involve the wider community, are they gonna be able to do it without the y'know the pain and the suffering unless they have backing, unless they have um, y'know they pulled the plug on music lessons in schools [inaudible] orchestras all sorts of things um because music is seen as um a luxury an add on [AC: Frivolous] Friv, yeah there's more important things to spend their money on apparently but, but they don't see the wider picture, the bigger picture to do with um mental health, I mean it's helped my mental health immensely being able to do music over the years.

AC: Hmm... absolutely, so, you've kinda touched on this but what motivates you [inaudible] involved, doing it?

JB: Um, just my love of music, and the love, not just music either but poetry and everything I love seeing people perform, I love seeing people perform first time I love seeing people come from playing their guitar in their bedroom's for years or writing poetry [inaudible] and performing it and sharing it with people for the first time 'cause it's, yeah um it's such a, such an important thing we share what we got with other people and so many for our benefit, for other people's benefit.

[interruption potential customer and I thought Justin needed to serve them but he didn't]

AC: So how serious do you take all of this ah support and, obviously on the face of it it is quite serious [inaudible] do you want to go into a bit more detail? How serious do you take music making?

JB: Um, like I said I don't just see it as an add on I think people need to be supported in being creative and then having a platform to show that creativity, their creations like. I don't think it's a matter of a hobby or something nice to do it's, it's um y'know it enriches your life y'know everyone's lives it enriches our community.

AC: And what factors do you think make it difficult for musicians around Merthyr in particular?

JB: Money

AC: Money yeah?

JB: Money, um transport and the transport connections are absolutely ludicrous and to think our bus services in Merthyr stop at like 6 o'clock at night! How, how is anyone supposed to have a life outside of Merthyr unless they own a private car it's absolutely preposterous. Um [inaudible] the bus services in Cardiff or Rhondda Cynon Taf or somewhere at that time of night there would be an out, outcry um people are told to go down to Cardiff to get jobs and that and they can't get home at night it's absolutely ridiculous and that affects musicians, the transport system, the public transport system is absolutely crap um they have no money y'know where we're talking about a lack of um, ah, a lack of resources um how are they supposed to do it? I remember being in bands when I was like seventeen, eighteen and living up in the Midlands I had to sell y'know I was selling little bits of equipment guitar equipment just so I could survive till the next week. Um, guitar strings I had to, I was

borrowing money from friends, I was borrowing money from wherever I could just to try and do the next gig and I found absolutely no support in that um even the job centre y'know the, the job centre at the time I used to go and they'd say what do you want to do? And I was like I play in a band and I'm a musician and they'd turn their nose up straight away as if it was some kind of hobby or something instead of looking and talking me through, right okay maybe you're not gonna be a pop star but what, have you thought about doing workshops or have you thought about working with young people, have you thought about sharing your music [inaudible] if they did that that conversation with me when I was about eighteen that would have changed my life. As it was it took me until the age of twenty seven to find those things for myself so I think, I think places like the ah job centre, careers um these things are already in place we don't need extra funding for it we just need a change of attitude and also the colleges, why are colleges shutting down y'know they're cutting back on the performing arts courses, cutting back on this and this [inaudible] they see it as an add on rather than something that can change people's lives.

AC: Are they cutting it in Merthyr?

JB: I dunno?

AC: Generally speaking...

JB: Generally yeah.

AC: Um apart from money and transport is there anything else you can think of, and the attitude as well...

JB: Yeah...I mean...

AC: Is there any personal experiences or something you've seen that sort of encapsulates really the...

JB: I think, I think the venues are there to some extent there's y'know there's quite a few pubs in town that put on bands, there's our centre which put on bands and different acts um...so... I think it comes down to finance, it comes down to um guidance on people like careers and the college and that um and transport definitely um...

AC: Okay, we're nearly done, is there anything else you would like to add?

JB: Ah no I think I said it all in the first few sentences but there you go...

AC: I'm just going to stop that.

Interview with Lee Williams, 23-05-2019, Hardies Wine Bar, Merthyr Tydfil @ 11:05 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

LW – Lee Williams, Participant

AC: Hiya Lee, you alright?

LW: Hiya Anne, how are things?

AC: Alright thanks. Thanks for meeting me today.

LW: No worries.

AC: Um, right so I'm just asking you questions basically about your experiences with the music scene in Merthyr.

LW: Yeah.

AC: So can you tell me a little bit about ah, ooh let's get the right one, can you tell me a bit about the music you like?

LW: Oh, I like... I gotta kinda like broad range of music tastes, um, I pretty much like any, any genre for music. Ah but what I like more particularly is punk, reggae that kinda, that kinda vibe. Um, but y'know I can listen to anything from classical to dance to, I like anything, I just love music in general y'know.

AC: Okay, so how did you get involved in music and doing what you do?

LW: Well, my background is in um marketing and...how d'you put it? And digital software [inaudible] so I, I've come from quite a... how can I put it? A... unexpected background of work before I came into running events. I run um, a digital agency doing um, building websites, um, doing digital marketing for, for brands and um small businesses.

AC: Where was that then?

LW: Yeah, so I run it, I run an agency [inaudible] in Merthyr Tydfil but then I went kinda freelance then on my own [inaudible] all around the UK.

AC: Okay...

LW: Um, um and, there was going back in 2000...and fifteen, I was asked to come on board, oh no sorry, 2014, um I was asked to come and support a local [interrupted by waitress serving coffee] a local initiative called um, Merthyr, they were called the ah...We Love Merthyr, you might have seen it, it's a [yeah] it's a local brand which I set up for the business, for the business improvement district scheme. So I was challenged then, they asked me if I would take on basically [inaudible] the brand and setting up events and promoting events in this kind of [inaudible] so, I, I spent ah, a good part of my [inaudible] sort of, I say 50% of my working life for 2014, 2015 was focused on that brand and during that time there were significant changes going on at the time, um, obviously there was infrastructure changes, there was a new square, um, was built in the town. Um, there was some redevelopment of the local college, um, so, and then the other thing was the local arts centre, the Redhouse and all this seemed to, seemed to happen all at the same time. [inaudible] it was an opportunity presented um I thought at the time to utilise the structures there um to, to do kinda promotions for the town centre so um, at that point I come up with a couple of, I

worked with [inaudible] to promote a few events which [inaudible] still running at the moment, things like the Chilli Festival and so on. I done some um, wide reaching visual art campaigns [inaudible] the video [inaudible] a viral following, online and a lot of [inaudible] earned me attention, um and due to that a, at, at that moment in time there was another gentleman called Ian Jenkins who set up um, a small one day event, um... ah...[inaudible] it was a, it was a one day event called Merthyr Rising, um, at the time, which was a, kind of err a mixed sort of um, event of music, politics and um film at the time. So, he run the event um and I was, I was aware of it, there was, I did see posters around at the time but at that time I was deep into doing the marketing for the um initiative in town. After that event I was asked to [inaudible] come and have a look at just come and see the one I helped to support it, based on my experiences and...

AC: What was his name again?

LW: So it was Ian Jenkins, um a guy called Ian Jenkins. And, um, they brought me onboard I kind of instantly...seen a...just seen the potential [inaudible] potential for the town essentially. Because at that time with the, with the square [inaudible] by the Redhouse and Soar, there's lots of venues popping up but also there was an emerging ah sort of music scene in town.

AC: Round about when was this happening?

LW: 2014, 2015 I would say yeah.

AC: And would you say before then there wasn't much going on musically here?

LW: Um, Merthyr's always been a musical town but I, there was a lot of original music, um, there was a lot of stuff um, [inaudible] another success story is the Crown as well. The Crown was another, a local venue which again supported local artists and I think they just seem to have a new kind of vibe [inaudible] it was youngsters essentially, grass roots level, writing music, making music and it was getting a lot of attention and um there was one significant story then with um, ah...a band called Pretty Vicious and I think that kind of, I dunno I just set, it kind of provoked a lot of attention towards Merthyr and sort of highlighted the talent that's here [inaudible]. Ah, um and then it was kinda, the timing of the festival [inaudible] with Merthyr Rising, I said, look, the time is right now to do, to do something. I'm polit, I'm very politically minded as well and I, I [inaudible] challenge the... the way things have been done in Merthyr, I've always kinda challenged that, I've always been kind of...um...I've always, I always [inaudible] ideas driven person and I've always looked at the opportunities that presented [inaudible] to the town and thought of ways y'know we could bet, better the town itself then at that time...

AC: What did you criticise y'know what did you think?

LW: Um, I just think, I just think what [inaudible] I think there's a lot of top down, um push on culture. Um, I think we don't utilise our history and this is before Merthyr Rising, we don't utilise our potential as a town in terms of our landscape and...heritage and all those things. Um, and I just feel that y'know, y'know at that time obviously at a national level y'know with austerity and all those type of things but it seemed that um what austerity done to Merthyr I thought was um... I thought it, it, it might sound bad, sometimes when you cut essential things people step up and do and do stuff and I think that's what it did. [inaudible] being cut, Merthyr's a town that sticks together and I thought [inaudible] bands got together and there was this, grass, grass

roots emergence of people doing stuff because things weren't wasn't given to them on a plate by the state y'know.

AC: So you think that similar to the 80's maybe? [yeah] the austerity thing was the [yeah] catalyst to get a scene going?

LW: I was a child of the 80's and I remember y'know the close-knit communities, um...y'know carnivals [inaudible] and this is what [inaudible] the whole time that Thatcher was...y'know...y'know, pulling the pits down. I had family who were in pits at the time. I remember us all pulling together as family and help support everybody and...local school having free meals for our kids. But it was a time, probably one of the happiest memories I've got 'cause it was a community spirit then. And I know this sounds a bad thing but, sometimes bad things happen that just pulls people together because... I feel we're atomised really and I think, and I think as well Thatcher, Thatcher what she did, she broke, broke up the communities and she pulled industry away, she broke up the communities and people lost its purpose and lost this togetherness and I think y'know Tony Blair at the time, what I witnessed then was somebody, like when, my main job in the beginning I worked in industry, I worked as um, an engineer and I travelled quite a bit 'cause I was a young person. Travelled, worked all over Europe... and um, I come back and [inaudible] where I was in Merthyr I just thought... I set up as a self-employed person when I was about 24 and I just [inaudible] seen the challenge you had as somebody trying to make it on your own, and... I kind of got a different perspective of what was going on there like. I found, what was a lot was going on was kinda was a lot of patra, patronisation by the Government so...

AC: What sort of things?

LW: Things like, you had like...schemes paid for by the Government for...with actually zero outcome for...

AC: Do you mean sort of like um...

LW: Quangos basically.

AC: That young musicians thing I can't remember what it's called?

LW: Um, yeah, you got the, got those kinds of schemes...um...now I've just seen a lot of schemes y'know, I could, I could, I don't really want to be personal [inaudible] but and I just thought what's happening to Merthyr at the time under the [inaudible] money thrown at initiatives wasting money with zero outcomes and y'know I think people are still deluded by the fact that it y'know [inaudible] become political [inaudible] they thought that money was good but actually didn't achieve anything at all. I think we achieved more when we had to pull together.

AC: I see what you're saying yeah.

LW: It's like, like when there's no money there people had to get up off their back sides and do something...

AC: So you think all these initiatives so y'know Tydfil Training and that music stuff going on in there...

LW: [inaudible] Tydfil Training now they've got a, a business initiative which I know is the biggest waste of time and there's millions of pounds, millions of pounds been thrown

into a, an organization which trickles down [yeah] um, y'know, so the people taking their [inaudible] out there...

AC: This is what you referred to as this top down...

LW: Yeah, top down yeah, and this is what goes on around here in these parts of Merthyr. So, what I've seen, the things that do work are bottom up. And it's things where people y'know do it because, there's no money in it, because they love it d'y'know what I mean and there's a different approach to it and I think that's what Merthyr Rising was all about, and that's what being in a band is all about and that's what [inaudible] you love it, you're not doing it for y'know money [inaudible] you're doing it because you love it and that's where you get the success. Don't get me wrong, these, you need to sort of, once you got that passion and everything else it needs to be supported and finance is important. Finance is important bit I feel it has to be done in a, with a different way. Y'know I think it's just been done wrong and is still being done wrong. I think it's y'know we just patronise people with money, just give them a bit of money and everything'll be alright, y'know we got drug schemes and we got, schemes [inaudible] in town and it hasn't fixed anything.

AC: So it's just putting money on, on the problem but not actually like you're saying no outcomes [no outcomes] there's no sustainability to that [no].

LW: And even the, y'know these things just supposed, supposed to be tried and tested for outcomes and it's just bureaucracy it's not actual evidence. Form filling [inaudible] completed this, completed that. I've been witness, I've been tried to, been dragged into this [inaudible] a few times as well [inaudible] schemes and in order for them to get their money I gotta fill a form in and sign something off for them and y'know it's that culture that's been brought into places, well not just places like Merthyr, they become dependent on...on these kinda things and I think where y'know what [inaudible] the one's that will happen...industry and [inaudible] We're living in a free market now innit and having [inaudible] industry in Merthyr is going to be pretty difficult y'know but [inaudible] anywhere y'know in Western countries. But, um, there is opportunities there's, there is culture along with it the landscape and everything else and um, y'know tourism and for event driven stuff and there's hospitality, these are the kinds of things that we gonna sort of utilise now...

AC: Do you think things like tourism and [inaudible] hospitality would, would sustain the um, self-sustained if you want, maybe, the music scene, that would help sustain it do you think or...?

LW: I think, I think maybe music doesn't need y'know much money really [inaudible] it's an organic thing and [inaudible] you can find any ways or means of producing that's...

AC: What about um, so bringing you back here to infrastructure like the Crown and the Redhouse, do you think...

LW: What happened was that ah... there was y'know an immigrant really sitting at the bar, George from down here, the Crown. Y'know he's an immigrant, he set up a bar, supports the local music. He didn't, it didn't take like y'know, it took somebody from a grass roots level [inaudible] with business promote, to promote what was going on, and I think y'know that's, doesn't need y'know Government funding and [inaudible] take it to that next level and I think when it gets there then there's success stories. You sort of invest into something that's worth [inaudible]

AC: [inaudible]

LW: Um...I think you need to... the thing is I think with anything whether it is running a business or running a band and think you gotta allow people to take the first steps on their own 'cause the moment you give them something [inaudible] given something, so I think you gotta let people get to the point where, if you, if you love it enough, if you, and most... most great artists or most great musicians are, they're artists and that's what they are and they do it because they love it, and I think you know that y'know [inaudible] from the beginning, and once you get to a certain point you need to, look at, look at artists that need that help, um, and then invest in [inaudible] 'cause the same [inaudible] business y'know rather than, a business person... take his own step first, take that leap and once he's knows there's support [inaudible] then support them and just at the moment it's just like... I know there's a lot of [inaudible] out there just taking [inaudible] but, it's quite contrived, I don't think there's anything, I think it's contrived in the fact that, there's something in there for...themselves rather than doing it for the artists themselves.

AC: What would you say, bearing in mind none of this goes public anyway so it's...

LW: Yeah I know, I, you can put my name to this it's something, I don't really mind.

AC: Your name won't be attached to your quotations, but things like the um Forte Project, do you think that that is working? Or do you think it's another case of throwing money [no, no] at it?

LW: Because I work with a lot of bands one of [inaudible] was in the Forte Project and um, I think it's [inaudible] they're still in the Forte Project? I think everybody knows they go in and get a couple of quid out of it but...they know, y'know straight into the hands of [inaudible] singled out [inaudible] I think, I think it's a good idea, the idea was good 'cause sometimes you got bands who [inaudible] around for three or four years and they might have had support to create a music video or support to [inaudible] things but um, [inaudible] popped up now and again and I feel it's gotta come from y'know, setting up a musicians provident or something y'know what I mean. Musicians pull together and help support each other that would be far better than having some Government money trickle down y'know some [inaudible] like a racket in some ways. Someone's come up with the idea for that and then [inaudible] make a few quid out of it, and...they'll take a piece of the pie and they leave the rest for everybody else [plates clattering inaudible] the people it's meant for are picking up the scraps [yeah] and that's what I see as happening [inaudible] the same way but um y'know the ide like I said is good it's come from the wrong way it's come from top down again this... y'know you gotta invest in the people from the bottom up, and y'know...I think it's more of a systemic thing really [inaudible] what happens is, because of a [inaudible] they're scrutinising the spending they wanna see the money [inaudible] down rather than y'know actually giving it to somebody who needs it, there's kind of a risky thing to do, so [inaudible] in general.

AC: Do you think then that Merthyr's sort of on the surface gives out a kinda fake situation because from the outside looking in, even though I'm from Merthyr I can see there's lots of money and lots of funding and lots of stuff going on compared to other places in the Valleys [yeah]

LW: It does, I hear that quite a lot [inaudible] there has been money in Merthyr and y'know what I think Merthyr council are pretty good at getting money. Just not very good at spending it [laughs], y'know what I mean, I think that's what it is and I get that

from y'know, I speak to councillors 'oh yeah we have a really good department to find money for us' but that's all well and good but...

AC: There's plenty of money but it's not sustaining what's going on?

LW: Exactly, y'know they do they got a scheme called [inaudible] which is to help business set up, um, I did a business for twenty years maybe? [inaudible] say seventeen years and y'know like I said to you earlier, I had to go [inaudible] and I could see other schemes and [inaudible] set and stuff which is great because then y'know [inaudible] like Merthyr Rising you need volunteers [inaudible] and that thing about people pulling together that's what it's about. But, I think again go back to throwing money at [inaudible] the salaries to run the volunteers, it kinda defeats the object y'know what I mean it's like... Um....going back to that idea, they done another scheme now which is like ah for business start-ups, um, I think [inaudible] cutting, they pick the talented and [inaudible] people to start a business [they purposely picked them?] yeah, oh so there was a guy who's um cooking Caribbean food and the council though it would be great to have a Caribbean restaurant in Merthyr but not understanding the fact [inaudible] the guy has no credentials running a business, he's his mental health, I, I, think will suffer because of it y'know it's difficult running a business and unless you can take that first step on your own and understand how difficult it is, then once [inaudible] you're past that litmus test [inaudible] then right okay we're gonna support you. See what they do they seem to chuck things at [inaudible] a story of how successful it is we, somebody's in their bed [inaudible] suffering with anxiety and stress and they don't see that side of it [no] there's no [inaudible] for it, they just want the results at the end and I think this is the kind of stuff that I think because I've been in it I've seen it [inaudible] that's the type of stuff [inaudible] y'know what I mean, y'know again Tydfil Training [inaudible] the same thing it's only, Tydfil Training are the, well I see them as a [inaudible] organisation [inaudible] but they're um... a proxy for [inaudible] they're not actually a service [inaudible] the people who go there y'know who've [inaudible] educationally y'know and they got a lack of sense they don't really come out at the end for any decent jobs. 'cause essentially years ago these people would be working in the industry [inaudible] gone through the apprenticeship. So now they're putting these schemes there, pots of money in there, it's not going to the people pockets it's going into officers, and this kind of [inaudible] and I just think this is where it's going wrong for the council to be honest with you.

AC: So it's keeping the middle management [yeah] but not actually producing any work after the course has finished?

LW: And this is a repeating cycle 'cause once the scheme ends and that's [inaudible] scheme now and it's like [inaudible]

AC: It's bizarre isn't it, um

LW: People will hate me if they listen to this [laughs] I don't care to be honest with you

AC: Um, so how would you describe what you do your role specifically with music events?

LW: Well, I, all I, all I'm not direct with music I'm just a facilitator for an event.

AC: Is that just Merthyr Rising?

LW: Merthyr Rising yeah, and um, don't get me wrong I've been involved with a lot of musicians and tech people and that now and I've started to see another kind, y'know [inaudible] industry [inaudible] youngsters who wanna get into sound engineering, this kind of stuff. Um, y'know there, there's a demand a need for it y'know the more things that happens the more culture and more often then [inaudible] now. But um...I, I, all I would say is that I'm a facilitator I'm not somebody that um, I, I put on an event every year and um...

AC: What's involved in putting that on then?

LW: A lot [laughter] yeah [inaudible] I've been doing it for five years now, um, I'm taking very little money out of it, very little it, um...

AC: So you're not doing it for a wage then?

LW: For three years I didn't have anything [inaudible] actually I would put I'd say lots of money doing it plus a lot of time, takes up a lot of my life, family life, so [inaudible] so, um...

AC: So who were you most involved with when you were doing the Merthyr Rising? Who were your closest relationships with?

LW: So, this has kinda evolved over the years, um, I kinda been, um, I, I've led the operations [inaudible] of the festival, the media and the marketing 'cause that's my background, um Anthony Bunko is somebody who's looked after like [inaudible] some bands throughout the years so he's sort of organised some of the music um, in terms of like y'know booking bands and that kinda stuff...um...I've had some, a guy called [inaudible] who came in, he comes from a totally different background, he comes from ah, he used to be a promoter for [inaudible] I've known him for some time and I brought him in a few years back [inaudible] to help out, there's no money in there and [inaudible] and help out and...

AC: What's his name again?

LW: Andy Wheeler

AC: Andy Wheeler?

LW: Yeah, I um, y'know you end up, I [inaudible] managed [inaudible] a small wage something to, he was doing something he liked doing. I would say he was like my support for two or three years y'know what I mean anything I needed support on he'd come and help out, and 'en um, over the last couple of years [inaudible] things have gone seriously tougher, I've had a lot of resistance from like local authorities and um, a lot of challenges to get over [inaudible] challenges...

AC: Why do you think all of a sudden there's more resistance? Is it anything in particular?

LW: Um... I don't think it's a personal thing um, I just think, what, with the scale of the festival comes more work for others and I think y'know [inaudible] so I just think [inaudible] y'know, like the police for instance they've, they've kinda scaled [inaudible] even though we haven't had one incident in five years it's like oh, [inaudible] that's gonna be massive, and it's like how are we gonna cope with this sort of thing y'know? And then you got people, people on the council obviously it's more road closures it's more interruptions, as much as you got a lot of, I'd say probably the biggest other than Christmas, probably the biggest economic impact out

into the town, um... we got a bit of disruption as well and with disruption you get complaints, you gotta deal with that, so, but it's very little y'know, we do our homework as well, we go round and ask people. There's very little disruption but um, [inaudible] the other thing as well is like, the gentleman I was talking about earlier runs an event um the guy from the Crown and apparently things went wrong down there and since, since that went wrong down there they're kind of, putting they're kind of um universal, sort of set of rules and a new group, um committee about events.

AC: What went wrong down there then?

LW: Ah, it was nothing, basically he didn't, he put the event on without doing his paperwork and [inaudible] risk assessments and [inaudible] He had no paperwork and he's putting an event on and... there was y'know, which is, at the end of the day you can't [inaudible] a public place [inaudible] without having any [roller shutters rising causing a lot of noise] Yeah so...

AC: So do they do less events and...

LW: Basically, they do one outdoor gig a year and that's what it was an outdoor gig [inaudible] and um, a lot of the councillors go to the pub and so they support the music scene [inaudible] guide them through it so and had a bit of conflict with the council and the officers. Three officers have sort of dug their heels in a bit and, about events going on and we've [inaudible] the brunt of it y'know so, that's the sense, when I had there, I've had it from the horse's mouth really, from a couple of officers in there, about what's happened so, yeah, we've had, we've had [inaudible] environmental health came, got involved saying our sund levels aren't [inaudible]

AC: Right, is that a problem around here?

LW: It's not, it's not a problem they're just, y'know, [inaudible] something they gotta do, I, I, I [inaudible] issues with anyone, they brought new personnel in and it's a totally different sort of [inaudible] I found that the people who actually make the decisions are not actually from the town, so they don't know, y'know. As much as like you can look at hard statistics about the effects on Merthyr... the kind of, sort of, ah, the softer stuff y'know the, the sort of.... Vibe y'know and the...sort of the, the advertising they have from Merthyr Rising y'know in the town, um, people love it. Y'know they found, we got something we can celebrate and it has, it has a cultural impact on this town massively I think. Um, and I think if you're not from Merthyr you won't get that, because [inaudible] understand how important it is to friends or family or things like that. So when you're just throwing things in there which don't really matter to the town but matters to your... criteria...or...something...

AC: So, this personnel, they changed when? when did this change?

LW: Um I'd say about... last year, yeah...

AC: So since then...this is with the council yeah?

LW: Last year [inaudible] there were one or two re-gigs in the personnel [right] in there...

AC: And that's had [inaudible]...

LW: Massive personality difference [inaudible] there's certain individuals, there's none now, totally different to before, y'know what we had in the beginning [inaudible]

y'know this is what was a success of the festival I, I presented some kind of radical things [inaudible] which, even actually putting an event on in the public square was like, there was a lot of people in the beginning like oh we can't do that and then there were people in there who said we're willing to give it a go and y'know we wanna try and support you and that was important those individuals are not there anymore.

AC: Why did they move on? Do you know?

LW: They, they got other jobs but they were key 'cause they were [inaudible] give 'em a go and we done it, we done it properly, we had security properly y'know, insurances, done everything above board, paperwork and [inaudible] we want to put fences around the square now to seal it off, oh no you can't do that but the same individuals say let's give it a go. Every time they give us a go we kept on showing them that we work and can work and work. Then we took over car parks and was like [inaudible] but there's always that little objection but at one point we all, we had a kite level of support somebody thought it was worth, it was worth taking the risks, but now, it seems like everybody seems like they don't want to take that risk anymore. Y'know I think there's a, it's coming around a time as well when you got 100 redundancies going through, council nobody wants to step out of their comfort zone [okay] everybody wants to play it safe, if something goes wrong y'know they're next on the block so...y'know, that's just the way it is innit y'know in that kind of system people don't want to take risks.

AC: It seems odd 'cause considering it's a tried and tested thing, you've proved that it works [yeah] and they're not willing to continue?

LW: Well, it's not just... they're willing to continue but what it is they constantly want more, more and more things to be put in place which it kind of, kinda, comes a point when they're [inaudible] moving the festival out of town.

AC: You think it's unrealistic the things they're asking you to do?

LW: Yeah, totally unrealistic, I, um...even the language and the communication has changed so [inaudible] this week saying whereas before like Hi Lee can I [inaudible] can I come and have a chat? Look forward y'know how the festival went [inaudible] that's the kind of old language [inaudible] used to have [yeah]. The new language is like [while tapping the desk with his finger] it's urgent you attend this meeting on this date if you are not there it will jeopardise the future of this festival, that's a total different language, y'know the tone is different so y'know it can get, y'know the tone has just changed. If you're not here this festival will not go ahead.

AC: So it's lost that personality [yeah] yeah that community thing...

LW: And y'know it's like um, [inaudible] we had a meeting [inaudible] many members of this group, 'cause they are unelected people, not from Merthyr are concerned about the, the location of the festival and thinks that in future the festival is better off moved to Cyfarthfa Park. Now, bearing in mind the historic 1831 rising took place in that actual location and it's got a massive cultural significance, so important to this town that it's never, y'know in nearly 200 years we haven't even celebrated it properly, now we go ahead 200 years later on, it's like, y'know we don't realise what we, y'know I, how pathetic we've been as a town [inaudible] I just thinking [inaudible] to have officers representing this town who are not really interested in that kind of stuff...

AC: They're not from here?

- LW: They're not from here y'know [inaudible] and that's not being somebody [inaudible] and I brought this up to a local AM and I think she was upset a little bit [inaudible] because she's not from here [laughs] and I said it's not about that but, I'm not judging people [inaudible] if you're put in a position where you have to make a decision and you understand the cultural significance of things d'y'know what I mean, you gotta be entwined with what the people want. 'Cause these people are there to represent us, y'know it's, it's that's the bit they need to remember really [inaudible] they work for us.
- AC: Do you think there's a lot of sort of um city, I'll say policy but I mean, like you were saying, tone and the way people present themselves [inaudible] do you think it's like a city Policy that they're just trying to slap on any place? Rather than looking at the place and the context?
- LW: Yeah, exactly, no I think it's um, [inaudible] I don't understand entirely how the council is set up and [inaudible] all I understand with the council [inaudible] they're paid employees who are answerable to elected officials to do, to follow a vision [inaudible] that's why I [inaudible] stand it, I've never understood why, well I think what happened years ago that the councillors just handed the keys over and just said like, y'know, just do what you want and that's what did happen to be honest with you, in all fairness and that was under a Labour, a Labour sort of council [inaudible] I am a member of the Labour Party but I'm not a massive fan of the local Labour Party, um...I just thought like I said that the with the independence and that they are kinda challenging, not, not, y'know we've had ups and downs with them as well, but we try to get them involved as well and say look, something's changed here... and they told us well look [inaudible] answerable to us and they were disgusted by the way we'd been treated and we [inaudible] we like, we want to keep our [inaudible]...
- AC: It's so precarious then? [Yeah] [inaudible] they don't want to upset the apple cart?
- LW: Yeah there's a lot of that that goes on [inaudible] People and [inaudible] I'm not blaming individuals for that it's like that's the, that's the world we live in because [inaudible] we got mortgages, we got, we got debts we got all these things that people want to protect [inaudible] that's the atomisation that's going on y'know, this is what's happened innit [inaudible] we gotta club, protect ourselves and that's what it is, everyone's in, working on an individual level and um, I think it's happening across the board y'know. But um, you see some good things then when Merthyr comes together.
- AC: So what motivates you to keep doing these things like you said you don't get paid...
- LW: No, and um [what's your motivation?] to be honest with you I ask myself that [inaudible] because um I've got some colleagues with me who are very similar, from a very... I, I, I think what's happened to me over the years, I was, I was driven by...success years ago, I was thinking right I need, it's a natural thing where you think right you go up y'know obviously successful the house the car [inaudible] and that was the original thing that [inaudible] point where I don't care for none of those things I just kind of, it's just making a difference really I, y'know, [inaudible] as long as I'm here I just wanna do something that matters.
- AC: Do you think that comes with age maybe?
- LW: Um, I think it built up over time, I don't think it, I don't think it's an age thing, I think I am different to some people...[perhaps an experience thing?] I, I, I tell you what yeah an experience thing for definite, definite experience 'cause I thought seeing all these things and getting angry about it, at one point I got so angry about it right, I got lots of

stories about the things going on around town, I kinda thought right that's it [inaudible] can't be arsed to deal with those no more. I even stayed away from Merthyr 'cause, I was doing business elsewhere [inaudible] family, I love Merthyr [inaudible] place to live in, as I y'know [inaudible] the culture [inaudible] y'know I've had enough. But then um I, I did have a little, I remember that moment I was getting, going back to [inaudible] 2015 there's a moment where... I was reading a book and it was kinda a challenging book about...um...about taking risks it is and ah, and I kinda had [inaudible] I'm not gonna worry about what people think and that has kinda changed me y'know one of the things working with Martin and working with [inaudible] the driving factor [inaudible] 'cause there's no rationale when people buy things or do things the major thing is what people think about them and that's, that goes across politics everything, what group you sit in, where y'know what kinda tribe you wanna hang around with y'know from a biker gang [inaudible] what your own personality like and I got to the point where I said I'm not buying this crap [laughs] I'm gonna do what I'm gonna do so...I think that was a point and I was, gone and done my thing [inaudible] I wanna do it that way and... it comes with consequences and it can be a bit, if I get too focused and driven, I do get driven and focussed on something...

AC: Because you take it seriously I suppose?

LW: Yeah, yeah and I wanna go back to success but I don't think [inaudible] but I do, I wanna make something a success but not to the point where it's like money there I wanna say we've done it and overcome y'know, I, I this year I think probably, if you spoke to me...three months ago I would've said to you we're never pull [inaudible] off...

AC: I did leave this [interview] purposely until after Merthyr Rising 'cause I thought you'd be [laughs]

LW: Yeah it was um...

AC: Did you not think it was actually going to go ahead?

LW: Ah we're up against it massively [inaudible] financially up against it, resistance, from and going back to the local authority, work put on us, and um...yeah it just [inaudible] before some excellent people which have got to, y'know I got a lot of like-minded people around me now that I can trust [inaudible] I know that [inaudible] some people were just different, ethic y'know what I mean? Y'know the way people are now they're, they're kind of in it for the same reasons I was in it for and I understand [inaudible] but um, these people are y'know...they're not driven by [money?] money...

AC: So their motivations are [very similar] very similar to you?

LW: Yeah well we all understand that you can't do anything without it, so you gotta y'know, money is kind of a tool I dunno y'know... it does give you power y'know the power [inaudible] and it takes a lot of anxiety and stress away when you, which y'know this is one of the problems we had [inaudible] gotta have it and gotta make it y'know but it's um, it's not, it's not the end thing that we want, I think it's one thing to sustain things, it's like the...how can I put it? It's the, the food y'know that keeps the baby alive really [laughs] in [inaudible] ways y'know. I don't know what the success story is but we've got kind of ideas 'cause I am goal led I like to set goals and [inaudible] make it international festival, I don't know when that'll be but...

AC: That's you aim yeah?

LW: That's our aim yeah.

AC: And what would that entail then? [inaudible]

LW: We want to link up with...um, partners and international, we want to get speakers, attendees from around the world y'know to share this story of the red flag y'know, which is, [inaudible] a symbol, one of the most powerful symbols on the face of the Earth so, y'know the fact is it's the birth place of it, um, and we're claiming that...

AC: It's not Hirwaun then no? [laughs]

LW: Well, [laughter] that's it [inaudible] what's that the council? It was, I think the calf um, goes back as long [inaudible] there's no actual truth or actual sort of evidence in it, it's all, it's all sort of stories really and every historian that I know locally got a different view on it...

AC: [inaudible agreement]

LW: We start claiming that, claiming and y'know I don't think anybody's having that...

AC: Do you think that sort of cultural element, the sort of heritage of the town is more key to it than finances?

LW: [inaudible] like I said money is important, you, you can't do anything without it yeah. To be honest with you on a political level I care more about economics than anything else, 'cause without money you can't do anything y'know, um, y'know you gonna, you're gonna, there's a debate about y'know identity politics, all these different variations on politics [inaudible] down to [inaudible] quality level is money because people, no matter who you are, race, gender, y'know, people don't mind if you can't do anything I think there needs to be, ah I dunno, I'm not, I, talking my personal political again I'm a socialist I'm not y'know I'm not a, I'm not a wacky communist kind of person, I believe in y'know, y'know entrepreneurship everybody should be sort of um, [inaudible] driven to create things that y'know, meaningful things [inaudible] world and should be rewarded and I think that's important but at the same time I think there should be a level of quality an economical quality and I think it starts there y'know. If you don't achieve that then all your [inaudible] goes out the window because... y'know...

AC: Would you say um, one of the limitations of doing stuff in Merthyr on a musical level is what you were saying about that ah top down element with money?

LW: Um...there's no limitations in terms of money-wise I think we [inaudible] affordable festival [inaudible] where we get um... we make it as affordable as possible so we don't make money like other festivals do but at the same time we get support from, trade unions and [inaudible] we got sponsorship. We did have a grant, it's another, well [inaudible] top down, we won a grant [inaudible]

AC: Where did you get that from?

LW: Ah, [Welsh Government?] Yes Welsh Government yeah. Right what happened with the grant it had to go through the council and [inaudible] taking bits of the grant before it could get to us, that's another story between us [inaudible] with the council b'there.

- AC: So by the time it reached you it wasn't the same grant [yeah] you originally thought [yeah]
- LW: Yeah, so like, um, grant [inaudible] was spent over two years and it paid for staging and, they were taking money out of the grant for things that we didn't want, and like, were making sure certain venues again paid money, and again we wouldn't want to use them 'cause [inaudible] you gotta give that to bands like. Again it was an authoritarian approach to it, I don't...[from the council again?] yeah, yeah [and that's at Merthyr level?] yeah, [inaudible] y'know we had to put flags up [inaudible] opened into a group um, a marketing group for tourism and I went over [inaudible] how did it go [inaudible] 30 odd people around a table and like just talk. You can't get nothing done if [inaudible] around the table as far as I'm concerned. But um, they were talking about um, banners put around the square for marketing purposes and events and I was opposed to it purely for the fact is that organised aesthetic, visual thing for town to get a bit of sort um, vibrance to the town rather than advertising. They, because it wasn't functional [inaudible] and coming from the background I got I can say I can tell you now it's not gonna work. So, but they, they went ahead with it and at the same time they took three and a half thousand pounds out of our money to pay for banners to go on there and it's like well, we needed that money, oh yeah but you gotta have banners, we haven't gotta have them, no you gotta have them, you gotta have them [and that's it?] and that's it. I say it's that kind of thing, I'm kind of kind of rebellious I don't like being told what to do [inaudible] [laughter] you don't, since a kid in school so, I think I do ruffle some feathers [inaudible] [laughter]
- AC: Um, so, we covered, ah just wrapping it up really, we covered what you do [yeah] and some of the...problems that you encountered like [inaudible] and this top down thing, um...and...the key people who would you say for you are Anthony Bunko?
- LW: I'd, I'd say now I dunno what these, these people sort of help me along [inaudible] but now there's one guy Grant Miller [Grant Miller?] yeah, I gotta say these guys... and Stephen Williams...
- AC: Is that Steve the guitar teacher? [yeah] I know Steve yeah.
- LW: Stephen is fantastic he's added another, to be honest we're very politically aligned and we've y'know we're on the same wave [inaudible] Stephen's come in this year, well he came in last year [inaudible] that political part of the festival, one of the directors, he can have his own agenda a bit and caused a lot of problems. Big problems actually, so, [inaudible] and I had this void that I couldn't heal myself and Stephen stepped in, um and since then he's become y'know a kinda big part of it and y'know he's very, we got as much as we got very similar and Grant as well in terms of our [inaudible] our goals and our, our views on the festival but very different in terms of skills [inaudible] so, I'm kinda a broad minded sort of vision everything's more detail...
- AC: So you goy people covering all [inaudible]
- LW: Yeah, I think, I think the future's looking a lot better for that, if you, y'know I don't I struggle to look at the...very...fine details...I am a procrastinator [laughs] I'm kinda like, like I do think big and I do big things but then the little things at the bottom I just think [inaudible] I forget about [that's where Stephen comes in?] yeah, yeah I think y'know, I think that's what you need, you need a wide, y'know...range of people and then you got Grant then who's just, [inaudible] a machine he just gets stuff done.

AC: What does, what's his role then?

LW: He's a, um an engineer [okay] and um just does, he'll basically do anything he helped me build this place [Hardies, the interview venue] and not, purely, he wasn't just, come in and just, help, that's the kinda guy he is, I think he um, [inaudible] the amount of stuff he does for the community [inaudible] in the limelight and I just think he [inaudible] and he just loves the festival. He needs to be rewarded a lot more as well, he's somebody that um, his heart is in, is in a very good place and ah, y'know I think he's...

AC: How did you two meet then? How do you know him?

LW: I've known Grant since I was a kid, 'cause we were in school together [inaudible] we were on the alter together y'know that Catholic, both Catholics, we're not practicing Catholics now, but at the time I was like, how, actual put on the alter 'cause ah, a naughty boy on school [laughter] so I got... and Grant as well, so I've known him since I was a kid and I've known him [inaudible] family [inaudible] but I was never that close to him but um, what had happened again was like social media what it does, it's [inaudible], the thing with social media everyone airs their views, you start to find out people got similar y'know views to you have, and um, what a, what has happened that there's a lot of online groups and stuff and Stephen was um, a member of Welsh Labour Grass Roots which I was a member of [inaudible] I didn't know Stephen in the past [inaudible] and 'en y'know they kind of seeing what I was doing with the festival [inaudible] just see the power and the significance the festival can have on politics locally, and on another level so...

AC: So it's politically driven more than music really?

LW: Yeah, yeah [inaudible] but music and politics I just, we've had a lot of debates about music and politics in, the festival, y'know I [inaudible] y'know, y'know it's um, it's just an expression of what's going on [inaudible] I think...

AC: Well, from what you were saying as well about the, if you just give money, politics to some extent dictates whether that money goes in or out. You were saying if too much money's given people don't do anything [yeah, yeah] so politics in that respect has a direct effect on what people are doing or not doing.

LW: Of course it is its massive y'know. Politics is everything innit y'know, as much as like we're all to [inaudible] all the crap on telly y'know, this nonsense now like, I think that's another thing you need to focus more what's on your doorstep 'cause it's [inaudible] that I, I think um, I noticed this with a lot of people and y'know including colleagues as well, can get so caught up and frustrated and angry for what happens um, um, around the world y'know [inaudible] Palestine and everything else y'know. The problem is you can't do anything about it, you can't, literally can't. You can have an opinion on it and you can, y'know take to the streets when they [inaudible] but you can do certain things around your local town and that, if everyone done that the world would be, a totally different place y'know what I mean. And I think, I think that's what we [inaudible] I think it's a case of people stop caring what y'know, y'know much as I'm, big supporter of Jeremy Corbyn, y'know at the end of the day I, I can't there's not much I can do about it [inaudible] that level, I can't do much what bloody goes on in [inaudible] in Merthyr [laughs] y'know what I mean though...

AC: Do you think it's more of a, we should be more concerned with localism rather than globalism?

LW: Definitely, definitely, totally agree with that [inaudible] achievable [inaudible] civic pride like, pride, you can't never have [inaudible] pride in your town, never cared what [inaudible] um, we gotta start [inaudible] isn't it, and not just at, surprising how much you can achieve y'know [inaudible] going into that we've achieved quite a lot but, but ah, what y'know [inaudible] an that's y'know it's we've got a say we've got a voice um, because there's a lot of people [inaudible] that gives us a voice and, it also gives us a voice 'cause [inaudible] anything else so y'know it's kind of important that, y'know as much as we can have conflict with the council I think they're also treading carefully and that's, I'll put that on record and say that as well, they know that, they're not just facing the festival they're facing the people who like it and go there, and that's what democracy is y'know and I think that's what democracy should be about [inaudible] and um, a bit more of that and [inaudible] stuff that people care about isn't it.

AC: Um, is there anything else you would like to add?

LW: No, it's alright [inaudible]

AC: I'm going to stop the recording, thanks very much Lee.

LW: No worries.

Interview with Lisa Jones, 03-09-19, Telephone @ 11.01 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

LJ – Lisa Jones, Participant

AC: Um, hi Lisa how're you doing?

LJ: Yeah, I'm great thanks

AC: And you're happy with all the consent forms and you're happy to go ahead yeah?

LJ: Yeah.

AC: Lovely, okay so the first question then is what music do you like?

LJ: Um, I like a mixture of every sort of music really, uh I think the main thing would probably be pop but I like everything from rock music to classical music a bit of everything really.

AC: Can you give me some examples?

LJ: Um, I like Lady Gaga, Queen, Prince...err, a bit of everything really.

AC: Okay, so what music do you perform then? You did mention just now do you want to go into more detail?

LJ: I'm a multi tribute artist so I do vocal impersonations of different people, mainly pop stars, there, the main ones that I, I impersonate are Lady Gaga um, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Arianna Grande um, Ellie Goulding then I also impersonate Katherine Jenkins, which is very different from the pop ones.

AC: Yeah, yeah that's different [LJ: Yeah] so how do you go about um rehearsing for these gigs then?

LJ: Um, when I was younger I just, naturally could fake, different artists, and it was just ah, joke with my friends, just used to [inaudible] as Britney or [laughter] Celine Dion or someone [laughter] and then I just feel like I could imitate people quite easily if I decided to, find a different bunch of voices and see if I, could, change my voice to different genres and different styles. Just listen to the artist and then just pick up different habits, vocal habits that they do and then try and imitate them myself.

AC: Okay, and do you rehearse at home then or do you have a, a particular place you go to, to practice?

LJ: No, usually at home.

AC: And that, is there any problems with that, I mean neighbours or family members or is it okay?

LJ: Usually [inaudible] I think, probably, I think everyone would prefer if I didn't practice at home [laughter]

AC: Have you thought of going to a studio space or anything?

LJ: I have done in the past but I just prefer to, I don't really rehearse as such I just listen and, I think when I'm on stage doing a show that's when I really, can, feel, if things

are working or not [AC: Alright, it's like...] I think it's hard to see if things are working out until you're on a, on a stage in an environment with an audience and...

AC: Yeah, yeah, so you kind of almost as you're doing it, that's your rehearsal that's [LJ: Yeah] testing it out like? [LJ: Yeah] Do you do any recordings? Have you recorded yourself?

LJ: Yeah, um, I've been to [inaudible] Studios they got things on YouTube and I've written a few of my own songs... [AC: Okay] I don't get a lot of time to record my own stuff... [AC: What sort of...] with gigs and...

AC: Yeah, I bet with the tribute acts especially [LJ: Yeah] they're quite popular now as well aren't they [LJ: Yeah] What's your own music like? The stuff that you write?

LJ: Um, again it's a mixture, I think it's mainly pop.

AC: Yeah? And how do you go about writing that then y'know um, what's your process?

LJ: Um, usually I'll just have the melody and then, the lyrics usually aren't the, I prefer writing the melody to the lyrics [AC: Yeah] I just, I write it all together and then and probably change the lyrics, sometimes I'll play some chords on the piano and then go into the studio and put it all together with drums and other instruments to make it a full song.

AC: So you play piano as well then yeah?

LJ: Yeah.

AC: And who are the other musicians that you would call upon to help you out sort of drums or do you play everything yourself and record it?

LJ: No, um usually the producer in the studio will just pay everything else [AC: Who's that?] and base the track around the melody then [AC: And who's that then?] Um, Zack [inaudible] the producer [AC: Zack Lloyd?] yeah.

AC: And what studio does he ah work from then?

LJ: Um, they're based in L.A. so...

AC: [Laughs] not local then?

LJ: [Laughs] he is local now and he's [inaudible] in Newport at the moment.

AC: Alright, right, so it's no-one in Merthyr necessarily then? No?

LJ: No.

AC: Is there anybody or any places in Merthyr that you um rely upon y'know that are important for you doing what you do?

LJ: No, I haven't found anyone in Merthyr unfortunately [AC: Have you looked or you just know...] Yeah, yeah, I have, I have looked I just think it's hard to find, 'cause a lot of people are unreliable [AC: Okay] and sometimes I think when you know somebody's good you'll stick to the... that person or that studio.

AC: Okay, so you, you sort of find someone who fits the bill and stick with them yeah?

LJ: Yeah, I've worked with a lot of producers and some of them just don't do, do what I want to do with a song, I think it's hard to explain 'cause I know what I want it to sound like in my head [AC: Yeah] obviously they don't 'cause, it's hard to explain.

AC: What, how would you describe your relationship with Zack, how did you meet him and how do you say your working relationship is like?

LJ: Um, very, very relaxed, and.... I think he just knows exactly what I want um, and if he doesn't he's easy to change things if it's what I want.

AC: And how did you meet him then?

LJ: Ah, online.

AC: Via Facebook is it? [LJ: Yeah] Okay, was you looking for someone? Did you put an ad out or is it just through a friend or...

LJ: Um, I can't remember? I don't think I put an ad out I think I just stumbled across on Facebook.

AC: Okay, so how often do you play live?

LJ: Um, in August I think I've had about two days off [laughs]

AC: That's fantastic, well done [laughter] Um, how often would you say you play live in Merthyr?

LJ: Oh, I don't do any local things, unfortunately most of my, most of my gigs are either abroad or up North or South England.

AC: Why do you think that is, is there any particular reason?

LJ: Um, I dunno whether [inaudible] tribute, I don't think it's as [inaudible] Merthyr, it seems to be other places especially abroad, it's really taken off. I do a lot of festivals and....that are based on tribute acts.

AC: Ah right I see, so you think like playing down The Crown down in Merthyr or something, it's not really an appropriate venue for, for your show then really.

LJ: No, I have done um, in the past but [inaudible] these festivals I do the, outside of Wales and Merthyr, there, specifically, set up for tribute acts [AC: Yeah] so then the audience are, coming to see impersonators and tribute acts and I think if in a different environment if, if you're not really, that keen on tribute acts it's not gonna be as well received as it would be in a festival specifically for that, type of thing [10:00]

AC: So, there's lots of tribute acts playing in like Jacs in Aberdare and in The Crown and [LJ: Yeah] um, why do you think other acts, tribute acts are getting work or getting received well whereas your show might not be received in those situations and better in others?

LJ: Um, I think some of my shows work better... if there's a stage and lighting and [AC: Okay] it's more a theatre kind of show... than a pub environment where you're close to, closer to the audience.

AC: So it's more, more of you said a sort of theatre aspect to it rather than...

LJ: Yeah, yeah a lot of my shows have um, costume changes and video projection and in those places there's not really ah, there's not a facility that I can do those costume changes or put the video screen on. Whereas in the other places it's already there and it's sort of set out, for that.

AC: Okay, so um, so how do you get your equipment and certain things, transported, do you, are you the sole sort of driver or do you do all the driving or is there anyone else you rely on?

LJ: Um, I have a manager but a lot of the time the, the PA system is already in the venue so I don't need to bring anything other than my costumes and wigs [laughs]

AC: That's cool though isn't it [LJ: Yeah] [laughter] um, I'm assuming you get paid for most [LJ: Yeah] if not all your gigs yeah? [LJ: Yeah, all of them yeah] so who, what and who is critical in enabling you to do what you do, you said you had a manager and you mentioned Zack [LJ: Yeah] can you go into a bit more detail about your manager or anyone else it could be your mum your dad anyone really.

LJ: Um, I've always had support, great support from family, my parents [inaudible] really supportive um I think that's definitely helped [inaudible] this [inaudible] me getting there. Um a nine to five office job or something like that. My manager is very supportive as well in getting me certain gigs um, better gigs, which are um, um more money gigs and abroad, abroad where [inaudible] a mini holiday as well. I think I push myself a lot, I think it's a combination of everything really and the support from my family my [inaudible] drivers I got myself [inaudible] better gigs and taking things to the next level wherever that may be.

AC: Okay, and how long have you been with your current manager?

LJ: Um, two years, coming up to two years.

AC: Was there a reason why you changed or why you sought out a manager were things picking up or was y'know something happening?

LJ: Um, I didn't have a manager I used to work for different agencies and then I did a show in Dubai that my manager had organised and then he just asked me if, if I wanted to come on board um, and then I just haven't, I haven't gone back to agencies then because I've had regular work at least three gigs a week from him and the money's a lot better than what I was doing before [AC: Yeah] and I wanted to do more abroad work and um, bigger venues and cruise ships and things so it's just worked out better to stay with him really.

AC: Okay, and has he got many artists on his books or..?

LJ: No, which is good because he only has three managed acts [AC: So, he can focus on you then] yeah.

AC: And where's he based then your manager?

LJ: Um, he's based in the Midlands.

- AC: Okay, so it's nothing at all in Merthyr apart from friends and family then? [LJ: Yeah] so, um really, I just want your opinions on this next one, so what factors do you think make it difficult to make music in Merthyr generally what, what's your opinion on that?
- LJ: I think err sometimes 'cause there's so many people doing the same thing sometimes it's hard to stand out from everybody else and also, a lot of people do it because they enjoy it not for the money aspect so I think that's something else that people come up against people that are just doing it for the enjoyment and not charging any fees I think it's hard for somebody to make a living out of it then when [AC: Hmm] when doing the same thing and charging money for it [AC: So they're not treating it as a business you mean?] yeah, yeah, [AC: Do you think...] I think that's where, difficult thing and I think 'cause there aren't that many venues [inaudible] pubs in Merthyr but then [inaudible] prefer to listen to older music and sometimes I think you have to adapt for whatever they want and a lot of people not that they can't do it, they think they don't want to change from their type of music [AC: Okay] I think sometimes that's another factor that affects things.
- AC: And how important is making music to you?
- LJ: It's all I do really, I don't think I could do anything else.
- AC: So, so that's your long term plan yeah?
- LJ: Yeah, yeah.
- AC: How old are you if you don't mind me asking? [LJ: twenty nine] twenty nine, and when did you start doing the circuits? [LJ: Oh, when I was twelve] Wow [laughter] right so yeah you, you know your way around it you know what you're doing.
- LJ: Yeah, I've done a lot of different things, I've done working men's pubs and clubs completely different to what I do now. [AC: In what way? What would you say?] um, everything is kinda set out for [inaudible] two 45 minutes and the first half would be a cabaret set sing a lot of older um types of music [AC: Hmmm] for the age group of the audience and the second half would be like a dance, a dance set so it's the same thing with the age group as well but also when I started it was a lot busier to what it is now, I think, y'know pubs are closing, sometimes.... You'd go out on a Saturday and there wouldn't be hardly any, sometimes there'd only be fifteen people in a room that holds 200 people [AC: Hmm, yeah] whereas the festivals I do, I did one it had 5000 people there [AC: Fabulous, and where was...] [inaudible] at the front in Aberystwyth [AC: Oh you done...] the Big Tribute Festival [AC: Yeah, is it Lego Man...] Yeah Lego Man was there on the Saturday and I did the Sunday but it's a three day, three day festival [AC: Sounds great that] yeah, completely different [AC: Yeah] I think that's why I stopped doing the, solo things 'cause you find it disheartening when you go there and there's hardly anyone there, you can't really, 'cause you feed off the audience you can't...really get a buzz from hardly anyone being there [AC: Yeah, yeah] it's quite disheartening.
- AC: Why do you think there's a decline in ah, like you're saying in the audience numbers and also the closure of pubs and clubs [LJ: Yeah] why do you think?
- LJ: I think, I think some of it's to.....ah people don't go out as much as they did years ago just because there's so many more things to do at home now, there's Netflix and things like that whereas in the '60s I don't think, there was only three channels on the television [laughter] that's one factor and a lot of, a lot of places I don't think they

encourage young people to...to come to these venues, I think they, everyone sort of knows each other and they're kinda set in their ways with what they like which doesn't encourage young people to go there because... I think younger people wouldn't really want to listen to older music hall all night [AC: Hmm, yeah] and everything's set, they do the same thing every week [inaudible] a lot of the time they leave after the bingo and then there's hardly anyone there for the second, second half of the [inaudible] set.

AC: Okay, and lastly is there anything else you'd like to add?

LJ: Um, no, I don't think so, I think, I think it's great that Merthyr's music scene is on the up with The Crown and y'know there's a festival recently and Merthyr Rising and... I think if everyone... all the valleys areas did something like that then I think there wouldn't be such a [inaudible] problem with the clubs closing 'cause they wouldn't rely on those clubs...as much.

AC: So, would you say it's kind of um, a Governmental sort of thing that needs to be done or is it something the people themselves need to do themselves?

LJ: I think the people just need to support the...like The Crown for example there's always something going on, even if there's a [inaudible] Jacob is putting on um, Soul nights and things, there's always something going on and, even if it's not music based I think the environment is a bet, is a nicer environment to be around just because it's more welcoming than, other places.

AC: What like working man's clubs with fifteen people in it [LJ: Yeah]

LJ: Yeah it's not as appealing.

AC: Okay.

LJ: I think if everybody did that...just as... even if um, well Jacob started off the, not everyone thought of [inaudible] original [inaudible] but now seems that everyone is [inaudible] what he's doing and...supporting what, what he's doing, 'cause it's better for Merthyr and the surrounding areas of Merthyr.

AC: Okay, that's it I'm just going to stop the recording for a second Lisa.

LJ: Yeah.

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

LD – Lloyd Davies, AD – Aled Davey, Participants

AC: Um, right so, question number one, what music do you like?

LD: Abba [laughter]

AD: I'd say, it's probably easier to say what music I don't like and probably Lloyd as well um, [LD: he don't like me that's what it is laughs] yeah, yeah, yeah [laughter] I was lucky, my father loved music and rock n roll, my father's born in the forties so I grew up listening to The Beatles, The Who, Rolling Stones, y'know that kind of stuff, Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, so it was mainly guitar based music and then when I was fourteen I started [inaudible] it was mainly guitar music but that can go from Simon and Garfunkel to Slayer...

LD: Exactly the same as me really anything from Dylan to Anthrax...

AD: I always think Lloyd has a cooler take on the music than I do [LD: Do you think?] Yeah, I'm a bit more mainstream [AC: What he [Lloyd] is more mainstream or..?] No, I'm more mainstream [okay] 'cause Lloyd'll pick obscure Blues bands and punk bands that I would never have heard of either.

AC: Do you seek them out or...

LD: I just find them don't I [AD: yeah] I just ah, I dunno yeah, I suppose people I knock around with, different bands and different musicians and, and we, we share stuff like y'know, they say have a listen to him, I'll say have a listen to her, yeah that kinda vibe really.

AC: So what music do you play?

AD: Well, um, we've been in bands for years, I'm in three bands now um, [AC: three? What are they called?] yeah, they're, they're called Good 'Ole Boys, which is an acoustic trio, um playing covers. A band called Reverend Groove which is the same rhythm section and lead singer as the Good 'Ole Boys all covers, um but the main band is the Philo Beddoe band which is originals [AC: Okay, what sort of music is that then?]....

LD: Southern rock, ah Blues yeah [AD: Country] country, yeah a bit of driving rock innit so y'know covers a few bases that does yeah.

AC: Um, do you play any other kinds of music then or [inaudible] that's three bands it's quite a lot [laughs].

LD: I play with like seven bands [laughter] [AC: Are they all originals or are they covers?] The only originals band is Philo Beddoe band but I play in a funk band, um I play in, what else do I play in [inaudible] I play with Celtic Pride, heavy rock. I play with um... the Cupid Stunts [laughter] and ass like, that's a funny, it's just like a, a jam band basically but, but we get away with it [laughter] but it's all cool stuff....

AD: I always feel like I'm just getting away with it though [laughter] [inaudible] how did we pull that off now? [AC: Yeah we all have that I think yeah] they haven't twigged yet...keep going [laughter].

AC: So how did you both get into music, I mean you touched upon your father's musical taste...

AD: Yeah, my father had a, when he was fifteen or fourteen I think he had a guitar on his birthday, Skiffle was a big thing then and my father [inaudible] Lonnie Donegan and [inaudible] so he had an acoustic guitar, that was always around the house when I was a kid y'know [inaudible] when I was about four, five, six and I remember just lying on the, on the landing putting the guitar, putting my head on it and hitting the bottom string, waiting for it to go and then doing it again, so I always just liked the guitar y'know, but it wasn't until I was about fourteen um, I started getting into y'know proper sort of rock music which come out of The Who I suppose, that heavier side. Um, and, and my father said if you like that let's go and get strings for your guitar and ah, and at what he did and [was you living in Merthyr?] yeah up in Pant [so did you get your strings from the shop there or...] yes, [yeah?] yeah, set of strings and a couple of tuning pegs 'cause they snapped off it, y'know this guitar was 1956, it's not, it's not a [inaudible] um, so we had to do it up so he bought this book called uh The Complete Guitar Player, it came with a floppy disc and we used to put them on, I don't mean the [uses hand gestures to explain the floppy disc] and put it on the record player and that showed you how to tune it in and then it was just, 'cause I can't read music really, it was just, just put your fingers here and an arrow [inaudible] and an arrow [inaudible] and I just learnt from that [LD: He's half way through it now [laughter] I'm nearly on book two [laughter] and there was this fella who used to come round um, mobile video vans in those days [yeah] sort of mid-eighties and he saw me with a guitar one day and this fella with the video tapes said oh I play a bit of guitar he said, he said um how do you work out new songs y'know? So, he showed me a way of put the record on and [inaudible] with the bottom string till it sounded the same as whatever [inaudible] the band was playing y'know Iron Maiden, um, and as soon as he showed me that I was able to teach myself, but I'm not self-taught from scratch if you know what I mean I had [inaudible] [AC: Yeah] but there didn't seem to be anyone else [inaudible] to play that I knew and about a year later my brother started playing as well my brother is two years [older?] than me. I remember in school I thought I was the only one, I tried to put a band together and there was just no-one doing it [really in Pant?] In, in Pen-y-Dre [high school] One of my friends played keyboard in the church and he and I got together and [inaudible] get gigs and that and I said you got a keyboard y'know some Deep Purple and that but he wasn't, he wasn't really into that. He was into God [inaudible] and that [AC: like Stryper?] He was I think! [laughter] He was into Stryper, listen to this, he'd say Davey listen to this, sounds like a poor-man's Iron Maiden to me...

AC: What about yourself Lloyd how did you get into...

LD: Ah, I don't know really? I started talking to Sean Williams in school [inaudible] Iron Maiden tape, him and Robert Beecher remember them? [AC: Yeah, I do laughs] and ah covers see innit yeah and I saw, we got chatting and said they're starting a band and were looking for a drummer and a singer so I went over, went home in front of the mirror wasn't very good at singing [laughter] so I said to the old man can I have a drum kit for my birthday? He bought me one...I made loads of sawdust after that [laughter] and that's basically it really [inaudible] I gave up for a little bit 'cause y'know between sixteen and seventeen and twenty and picked it back up when I was twenty one [inaudible] really, joined a band and, with Sidewinder for eighteen months then I met up with Aled, his brother Ian we, we [inaudible] One Hot Puppet and that's really

when I started getting out and enjoying it. [AC: What was the impetus to get back into it then? 'cause you said you stopped] [muttering...Perry weren't round then...um, well we used to have a jam session in Troedyrhiw like now and again on a Sunday in the Belle Vue, Carl Pullman who I was friends with at the time, he was a drummer and my parents really used to nag him to nag, to get onto me to play and I'd be like oi, oi, I'm nervous, I'm nervous, so the one day he just said listen I've had enough of your old man now coming onto me [laughter] next jam you're up. He said I'll come up the house with a guitar and we'll run through some songs so we did that and I, I got up and that was basically it [inaudible] it was ages ago, 'cause before that I wasn't really gigging, I was in a band with Sean and Robert we were writing songs and y'know playing in the back room of the youth centre and stuff and that was about it. Yeah, so that fizzled out and then I started properly then a couple of years later.

AC: Um, so who else would you say is key to your involvement and getting into music? Who else is key now to your music-making?

AD: Um, for me it wasn't so much a who as a what, it was the Pantyscallog Pub up in Pant [AC: Okay] um, every Saturday they'd have a singer there usually, usually a bloke they didn't always y'know, playing acoustic guitar or keyboard and somebody singing and uh, I used to go down with my parents y'know I'd say thirteen, fourteen and just be, in awe of whoever it was doing, and it used to be Neil Diamond tunes, y'know Barbara Streisand and um, of course after about 6 months of playing myself they, they, they say they asked me to get up play didn't they, which I didn't bloody want to but I ended up doing it and I think, I think it was blanket on the ground or something like that um, and then it just became it was like a bit of a scene although it was a very small village and to me, this guy called Dai Pierre who was a local [inaudible] and he was the compare for the night, he'd just get up, y'know ladies and gentlemen we've got some fantastic people here tonight as if he's in, he's in y'know [laughs] Las Vegas or something and all the way from Dallas [Dowlais] Top we've got this fella, so he would call the people up and just make you feel good, so that's how I suppose what really helped me and I, and I, I miss those days in a way and I, I even though I know the scene is much bigger than it was then [inaudible] that informal little I suppose it was like a jam night [inaudible] Lloyd has been instrumental in getting jam nights going in the Crown and [inaudible] gives people a chance who perhaps can't afford a PA or amp [inaudible] just come along and get up and do it. [LD: young kids starting] yeah people starting off I mean they're not always young kids there's people in their forties and fifties who've never played before, especially kids 'cause they can't afford it can they. So yeah, that, that's what we need, it helped me of course later on they, me and my brother [inaudible] put a set together they gave us a gig [AC: In that pub?] Yeah, yeah, yeah and we became like a little sort of resident act there then for...about eighteen months [AC: So, it was a natural place for you ...inaudible] yeah, yeah it was.

LD: Same with me really with the jam days in the Belle and y'know I used to go and watch bands with Carl and stuff and Carl was a big push for me, Carl Pullman he was a big uh y'know influence in my, on me playing and getting out there, if it wasn't for him I probably wouldn't [AC: Is he still around?] Yeah he's still around yeah, he comes to the jam nights he's been in numerous bands over the years himself [AC: and the Belle you say...] Belle Vue Troedyrhiw [AC: In Troedyrhiw not the one...] no [okay].

AC: Um, so, this is kinda a very general question, tell me about your musical practices, so the activities involved, all the mundane things that you have to do, like you're instrumental in the jam nights in The Crown, all those day-to-day things that you have

to do to be able to carry on playing...just a small, short answer for that then [laughter].

AD: It's probably the biggest question on there 'cause... I mean it ranges from everything from where do you keep your stuff when you're not using it if you don't have space for it obviously. You gotta be able to transport it and...there's not many people who play in bands haven't got transport but you know, I know a few and it's hard, you tend to need some kind of transport [AC: Would you say it's because where we live? Or of this was Cardiff would transport be as important?] Yeah [LD: Yeah] yeah [LD: You gotta get your gear from A to B] A drum set you [LD: You can't jump on a train] AC: Taxi? [LD: I have on a bus].

AC: So I'm talking about how you promote yourselves and rehearsing and y'know where do you do these things and why do you do them there?

LD: Well, I've got a rehearsal room on the side of my mother's house which was there when I started at twelve or thirteen, so that's still active today very much with us. We got a PA set up in there, we got a drum-kit set up in there, there's a bass amp in there as well, guitar cabs in ehh. You just turn up, plug in, and go for it [AC: Are you paying rent or anything like that?] No [AC: and you had that since you were...] twelve, thirteen?

AD: I said once in, in [LD: You may have been there in the past?] [AC: Have I?] [LD: I dunno, you probably have? Laughter] I think I said Lloyd in your father's funeral that Lloyd's parents should have had some kind of Queen's award for music y'know 'cause they've helped so many bands [LD: Yeah, that's right] to, to, if you're in a band you need, obviously a drummer yeah but you need somewhere to practice dun you [inaudible] get together, and the first time you get together and you're gonna think it's all going horribly wrong whereas that's what it actually sounds like when you're on the stage. The first time I played I was like I can't hear the guitar but that's normal that's what it sounds like.

AC: I have noted that there is not that many places to rehearse in Merthyr, anywhere really...

LD: The trouble with rehearsal rooms they open up and then close down quite a lot [AD: Yeah] People take 'em on and then there's not, they don't earn enough to keep going so they end up closing and... [AD: like on the industrial estate you mean?] yeah, them kinda vibes but [AD: It's quite a high turnover innit] I, I've, we've had um, like the Fox and Hounds in Troedryhiw it's a pub they had a room upstairs which they, they didn't use, so we set gear up and we were up there when I was in Average Welsh Band um, yeah we kept our stuff up there, we'd just go back and forth there whenever we wanted to [AC: Did you have to pay for that then? No, no, no we'd just do a gig now and again...

AD: Is there rehearsal space in the Old Town Hall? Is there space in there?

AC: There is space in there but I don't know actually the costs [AD: Yeah you have to pay for it] Whether it's just for the college or something I'm not sure? It's linked to the college [AD: Yeah, yeah] Um, y'know sort of um, what would you say is lacking in Merthyr then, really to help new and existing musicians?

AD: I can tell you what, I've been thinking about this [LD: Funding is it?] yeah I've been thinking about this a few months ago right It's not even, it's not even just Merthyr, it's a Welsh thing, where, where you go probably, especially when you're doing covers a

lot of the [inaudible] and clubs, most clubs round here are [inaudible] clubs then working men's clubs and yet my, my day job, I work in the Council in the HR department and we've got and I dunno whether they're still part of because Merthyr [inaudible] Merthyr Leisure Trust but they always had Sports Development Officers and I'm thinking that's the last thing, you don't need any sports development you got loads of rugby clubs, players y'know [inaudible] why isn't there an Arts Development Officer Council or music whatever [AC: There used to be] We don't need, I'm not knocking rugby or sport and south Wales is known for it innit [inaudible] why do you need funding any more than the arts? Where there's a complete vacuum when it comes to funding in local musicians and artists of any kind y'know whatever [AC: Do you think though even if they do get funding it's necessarily spent in the best ways?] [inaudible] I don't know where it's coming from where it's going, I don't know who would be in control of it or how you would invest it, it would need to be deemed to be important [inaudible] Welsh national [inaudible] before they would change any of funding arrangements I dunno. We're not winning enough rugby as it is so keep, keep funding that rugby is obviously an international game innit, and so is music. I feel that, that there is an opportunity there but if it doesn't happen I was lucky I had that pub that helped me and most players would come up with a similar story but it's never been pulled together [AC: So it's just little pockets of [inaudible] independent help you'd say yeah? Do you want to say anything more to that? [LD: No, I think he's covered it all].

AC: Um, I forgot what I was going to say now? I'll move onto another question and... So how often do you guys play in Merthyr town and the surrounding villages?

AD: I would say that every gig is within a thirty mile radius really innit [LD: Yeah] these days. Didn't always [inaudible] when we had a record deal [inaudible] London, yeah it's um, we were in Cardiff last Friday weren't we [what about in town?] In town, [LD: Well it's only the...] The Crown really that's all that's all [LD: Pubs don't have bands now] [AC: They don't have them?] [LD: Well, some of them have closed] The Labour Club... you couldn't go along to the Labour Club on a bog standard Friday or Saturday and watch a band [LD: No] they wouldn't be there would they [AC: They used to put bands on didn't they?] [LD: Yeah] [AC: What's changed?] Committee [LD: Yeah] again it depends on well, Andrew, Andrew Roberts passed away, when he was on the committee there he was doing a lot of bands d'y'know what I mean.

LD: You're fighting, fighting against them all the time, they, they, they won't put anything into, Andrew suggested doing ah um, a band day on a Sunday, once every fortnight I think it was? And they, they started doing it and then it's quiet the, the committee say then right we're not gonna pay for this anymore now you're not put, like Andrew would say y'know it's been two, two nights it's, it's y'know it's one, one month you can't base it on that you need to build it. But then they're scared to take the risks. Fine, fine, finance it is innit.

AD: It's short-term innit [inaudible] if that venue was being encouraged to perhaps subsidise to pay for live music [LD: Yeah] they might take a chance then [AC: Possibly yeah?].

LD: That's what it is with the pubs and clubs it's [inaudible] it's the money innit..

AC: And that I suppose goes back to Tory austerity and [inaudible]

AD: Yeah, because the arts are way down there aren't they. You look at where arts and music and drama are on any school curriculum it's way down the pecking order because you'll never get a job doing that that's what I was told in school. If you said

to the careers guy I'm gonna be a guitarist he'd say [inaudible] come back and give me another answer, they would wouldn't they! [LD: Yeah] y'know that, so, it's way down the pecking order, so it's not important in anyone's eyes really, if you want to make it in [inaudible] you have to make it yourself and you get people interested and... it's [inaudible] supported I suppose?

AC: Um, so what roles and responsibilities do you guys take in, your music business then... what are your individual roles?

LD: We don't have set things I suppose don't we, but yeah I get a lot of the gigs, but for most of the bands I'm in [AD: Yeah, yeah] Aled writes the songs along with Phil in Philo Beddoe um... [AC: How do you go about getting the gigs?]

AD: He just knows everyone don't he [laughs]

LD: I've been around a bit know a lot of people [laughter] [AC: It is literally just going about...] Yeah and y'know getting in with landlords, promoters, y'know uh, over the years and yeah, just, so when something's happening, anything happening? Yeah, I'll give you three dates for the year and then I'll ring the next place, is there anything happening there? three dates from here and...

AD: Lloyd's very good at making friends and is much more sociable than I am [laughter...]

LD: Look at Mel's face {Mel is Lloyd's wife who is sitting on a nearby table during the interview} M: Is that recording... I don't see him... [laughter], that's how our marriage works, we're like passing ships...[laughter].

AC: Um, okay so, how serious do you take your music-making? [LD: How what?] How serious do you take your music-making?

AD: I think, I think the music itself we take seriously but not maybe...the whole process of... being in a band then y'know. If I remember one [inaudible] we did um, this was 2000 this was, nearly twenty years ago, we did, we did this battle of the bands didn't we and um, the first heat was, was in Newport and there was three of us in the band and uh, one of the other bands were, we went to the toilet and they were in there doing high kicks weren't they and slapping themselves [LD: Slapping their face and...] press ups, we just thought what a bunch of knobs like, we don't take it that seriously in that sense y'know what I mean [laughs].

LD: So they went on, we smoked a joint and wen on after [inaudible] and blew them away [laughter] [AD: Basically] yeah [inaudible]

AD: It is the truth... what were they called now? 'Cause I remember I'd seen them on other, on other gigs right and I really tried to get on, couldn't get on... Revolva [LD: Yeah] it's like with a, with an A I think? And they were playing like the Big Weekend and Cardiff with the Stereophonics and things, I'd think how did they get that an en the first round they were there, I though ah shit, we're gonna [inaudible] [LD: That was the end of that] Yeah and that was the end of that, they went out and we stayed in.... so, I mean, like it's, in one way it's a hobby but it's more than that really...without sounding too [inaudible] it does become a way of like don't it [inaudible] you've gotta commit to it, you write off most weekends you [inaudible] nights in the week and otherwise you just [inaudible] do it, play the guitar in the house and there's nothing wrong with that [LD: and you gotta enjoy it as well like] yeah you gotta enjoy it [LD: you gotta make it fun like, sometimes it can be stressful but most of the time you just do it with a smile on your face and...] in an average bog

standard gig is like a 6 o'clock shift really. At 6 o'clock you're getting ready for it, loading the van whatever, and tend to get back in about half one, two, so that's eight hours for an hour and a half on stage [inaudible] and probably most bands will [AC: the rehearsing] plus the writing of the songs and rehearsing, soldering cables, y'know changing guitar strings [inaudible] speakers, getting MOT for the van [LD: Yeah] there's quite a bit to keep it going.

AC: Um, in another interview one of the participants said that there's a couple of bands sort of um, have come through recently and this upsurge... Florence Black, Pretty Vicious [LD: Yeah they're rubbish Florence Black [laughter]. A few people have said this has created [inaudible] created an upsurge, made the scene a little bit stronger, would you agree or do you think that's...

LD: Um, I don't know about the scene?

AD: I don't know I think, I think, not knocking them or any other band, I think it naturally just fluctuates anyway [LD: Yeah] so, I, I, I don't see it as being on some kinda big projectory in uh, y'know [AC: I think they meant it's piqued people's interest a bit more...] from time to time. Y'know the next six months [AC: Okay]

LD: Easy forgotten isn't it [AD: Yeah, y'know I mean as good as it is we're not...finding the cure for cancer are we, you play rock n roll music...]

AC: Um, I think we kinda touched on this, what motivates you to continue making music and what do you get out of it, what are the benefits?

LD: I really dislike my wife so I need to get out of the house more {M: Yep, that's about it! Laughter} [AC: That's on record now [laughter] Can we rewind that! [Laughter] It was a joke, it was a joke [laughter] {M: he don't know he's born!}]

AD: Without being corny about it, it is the, the love of the music and I like playing and it doesn't matter if there's no-one there watching I play my guitar in the house so... [AC: Is it a personal thing to you and the instrument, is there a bond there...?] For me it's a bit, what I, I noticed recently right, the things I like in my life, I thought ah there's a bit of a thread there all about escaping a bit and that, obviously the guitar and music anyway is that but certainly playing it, it just feels like I've gone off somewhere for a minute and then come back...and that could be from a book or a Digi game or could be a ride on a motorbike or whatever it is they tend to be uh, solitary experiences for me then. But then doing it in a band just makes, makes it 100 times better somehow 'cause it's like uh, [LD: Yeah it's always a craic isn't it] yeah [LD: You meet different characters, you meet some divs y'know um, just take the mick out of them and yeah it's all, it's just all...keeping it fun innit!] And I, [LD: Having a laugh] I've noticed that the idea of THE band has been in our lives since I was about fifteen, sixteen but, but the band itself has changed, but it's still a fixed thing y'know The band is... and I, I was thinking if I didn't do that now where would I, where would I go for the jokes and the camaraderie and the getting out of the house and away from the [inaudible] [LD: I'd be carrying shopping bags around town like] yeah, [laughter] so, it, it's turned into this other thing now which I kind of dunno what I'm gonna do when it's gone y'know. [AC: It's not going to go though is it?] Well y'know as long as, as long as I can keep on doing it and I enjoy it y'know. There are times you think I can't be arsed with this tonight, if the gig is rubbish or whatever or some div like Lloyd said [inaudible] but straight away I'm thinking next Friday we're in so and so gig and it's great there [LD: Yeah] [LD: You gotta do at one to get to at one] and y'know the number of times I've said [inaudible] we still gone back over to play music with your friends innit. Instead of sitting in the house watching EastEnders.

AC: So um, how do you keep in touch, how do you [inaudible] with others in the music scene and the wider scene?

AD: He's the one to ask in he! [pointing at Lloyd] [AC: You're the main node of the network are you?] He's got a big Filofax... [LD: I dunno have I? yeah I dunno I, I, yeah, phone calls I suppose innit, um, messaging and][AC: social media and stuff?]
[LD: Yeah, social media] We use WhatsApp with the band don't we [LD: Yeah WhatsApp with each other] yeah can we all do this gig and, or here's a new song or [AC: Are you doing that a lot? Do you find it [inaudible] a lot?]

LD: I don't do so much of that. Joe does a bit of that doesn't he with [AD: Ai but you keep in touch with him don't you] oh yeah, yeah but [AD: Is that what you mean just getting in touch like to book or...][AC: Socially as well] Yeah, yeah, yeah, [Inaudible] Just the organisation of can we do this gig? Yes. Whereas before you'd be ringing round wouldn't you. 'Cause we can all respond, [inaudible] Joe can't do it, there's no point asking anyone else then.

AC: Okay, how do you find the time to make music? What do you do for a living?

AD: I work for the council

LD: I'm a groundworks supervisor [inaudible] both full time jobs.

AD: But the kids are grown up now so, that, that makes it easier. Um, last winter [inaudible] in to a log cabin, if you can't have a band rehearsal at [inaudible] house I tend to get the boys up there, lock us up in the cabin and hook it up to an eight track [inaudible] in the past it was just used at home [inaudible] I'd sing it in the voice recorder um, so yeah, back to your question it's um, we got more time now really than whenever the kids were young really.

AC: Kids, yeah that's right

LD: Yeah, and a good wife behind you] A good wife aye, [laughter].

AC: So, what if anything limits your music making, it could be anything, being in Merthyr, living in Merthyr, this part of the country.

LD: Does it limit us making music living in Merthyr? I don't suppose so?

AD: I don't think it limits making the music but it might limit how far that music goes.

LD: Yeah, years ago maybe but now [AD: with the internet] yeah.

AD: I mean I'm a bit of a, I said to Lloyd, I haven't got Facebook, right I don't, I don't. Boys say this is on there, I just, I dunno, I've never even been on it, but at the same time I'm thinking that probably sounds a bit good...way of promoting music [LD: That's all I use it for really] you can put it on there and other people can see it [LD: And seeing what else is going on round the place, I'll have a look at that] I think the stuff you done with Philo Beddoe has been well received [inaudible] and people have said, look boys go and do this and it's been promoted as I say by that local network um, and some of that has come about from, from seeing it online...

AC: And finally, is there anything else you'd like to add?

LD: Another pint [laughter]

AD: I think it seems to be, I was just thinking back about being in school when I said I couldn't find anyone else, who was playing and that doesn't, I dunno? My daughter, my youngest is 16 and, she says there's quite a lot of people in school who have guitars and amps and, you've only gotta look in music shops to see, there's a lot of entry level stuff, beginner, where when I started playing there wasn't so many, you had to, either save up or you didn't have a guitar, you borrowed one or whatever. From that I'm guessing the band market is bigger than it used to be and that can only be a good thing can't it? Making it easier for people.

AC: In that sense there's more of a reason to pick up a guitar [AD: Yeah] there's more opportunity.

AD: And you don't have to put Iron Maiden albums on and listen to what chord he's playing you can get the what's it called Tab, can't you?

AC: With the tape

AD: Yeah, or you'd put the single on 33 to slow it down, what's Eddie Van Halen playing b'there? Still can't [inaudible] I don't know what I was saying, I don't know what the point was really, no, no I think it's easier now [inaudible]

LD: I'm glad he came [laughter]

Interview with Logan Jones, 27-08-2019, Wetherspoons, Merthyr Tydfil @ 5.10 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

LJ – Logan Jones, Participant

AC: Hiya Logan.

LJ: Hello Anne, alright?

AC: I'll leave that b'there [LJ: Yeah alright] So the first question is what music do you like?

LJ: What music do I like? Oh that's a tricky question [inaudible and laughing] I mean I love all music really just music is my life, it has been since I was really young, so I grew up listening to Motown music, my Dad singing um, my grandfather listening to old stuff like Elvis Presley or the crooners and stuff like the Rat pack and things, so that's what I grew up listening to and then my brothers influenced me then so listening to stuff like Radiohead and loads of grunge and Nirvana, Pearl Jam all rock things um and then I discovered Led Zeppelin then when I was about thirteen and it changed my life [laughs] as they do. I just got into playing guitar and everything so from there and I just love all music now, just, that's just it's my life so, to put it on the one thing is quite tricky [laughs].

AC: So, what music do you play then?

LJ: Um, well, I play, myself, my actual act is Lego Man which is the nickname I've had since a teenager and that's kinda Indie, Pop I suppose, is the genre I'd put it in, Indie rock I suppose. Um, that's the music I find easiest to write. I've tried over the years writing like, I was in a funk band with a saxophone player so used to love writing stuff like that all intricate riffs and syncopated stuff, tricky stops and things, which was great, loads of fun to play live but, to actually get people involved in it is quite difficult 'cause it's quite a niche kinda avenue. And it was like I said the Indie stuff I like 'cause it can still be a like classical song writer in the terms of country singer, songwriter like actually tell stories but it's more up-tempo and poppy and people tend to respond really well to that. The stuff I play, I also play in a covers band as well and that's just all popular music really, all chart things um, and we used to do [inaudible] to please the crowd.

AC: Who lese is in the cover band?

LJ: Oh, it's just the two of us, it's my brother and I yeah so, we have Noughts and Crosses and that's what we played last night in The Crown um and so we just play like I said whatever works in the pub crowd really. Last night we played new artists like Gerry Cinnamon so we were playing some of his acoustic stuff and then Mumford and Sons, Stereophonics, The Killers.

AC: Do you changes your set list quite a lot?

LJ: Um, we do a lot of, we do a lot of corporate things, we do lots of weddings so really we keep our set quite similar because we play so many different places for so many different crowds you know what works y'know we can just set up, these are the crowd pleasers we know it works, it's tried and tested, it's served us well the last couple of years, we'll always add things to it, and like you said if there is a request and people want us to change something we send a set list to, if it's a wedding to the

bride and groom, so this is our set, these are like fifty extra songs we know as well do you want any of those in there and nine times out of ten they just want the set, just happy with it. Some brides are like we don't really like music, [inaudible] [laughs] I know it's an alien concept yeah. They've said things like I really don't like music but we know all our friends love you guys so you can play whatever you want. So they're a good gig [laughs].

AC: Um, so your solo stuff [LJ: Yeah] it's all originals yeah? [LJ: Yeah] can you tell me a bit, you said earlier about um, trying to get people involved and [LJ: Yeah] it's difficult, so why did you choose to do it on your own? Is it because of that difficulty?

LJ: Yeah, 'cause of that difficulty and 'cause of the time pressures as well. Like I found, my brother and I with the duo are so lucky because we can just say oh we're going to try this song tonight, I'll learn it on guitar, I'll learn to sing it, he sings as well, we just run through it in soundcheck, and, not to blow our own trumpet, it sounds pretty decent all ready, like his wife says that, you're better off winging it boys there's no point you practicing 'cause when we just busk it and have a laugh the energy that comes from us that's what people like, it's not about being that polished. Oh, my god you had the solo in this bar wrong or something or you hit the wrong, no-one cares about that. Like I broke a string half way through the set last night and I just said crack on and just kept hitting it [laughs] I just carried on but. For my solo stuff I was like, I got two young children to actually find the time then, full-time job, gigging on the weekend to actually think I need another full band with it, it, it's seemed like too much pressure on time as well. So, it was great for me, once the kids are in bed I go up to the attic and just sort of write some music and, and it's really quick as well, so I thought yes, this is something I want to start doing again, 'cause like I said I've written music in the past [AC: Did you have a break then?] Yeah, yeah, yeah, quite a long break actually after university so probably, probably from about 23 to 29? I didn't write any music really, it was just all gigging covers, focusing on the family and stuff and [AC: You were still doing music then?] Still doing, still doing music but actually not writing so I missed it a lot and when I got back into it again I thought alright, I've actually got a bit more to say now rather than just writing these off the cuff silly songs which didn't mean anything just singing was kinda like a um barrier to me really, I could write all the music guitar wise [inaudible] songs, but you gotta sing now. I remember being in the studio when I was about twenty one and just making it up on the spot and the engineer would be like sing that again, play back what I did [laughs] and I'd just freestyle and make it up so the lyrics didn't mean anything to me but I found this doing this I actually spend a lot more time thinking about what story am I gonna write about, scenarios and that's how people connect to you more now, so I've found.

AC: What sort of things are you writing about?

LJ: Um, oh, nothing, nothing too intense [laughs] just, yeah, just um, just being in love, just being happy, being, ah, out with your friends. I wrote a song called Sunday Club just about going out in Merthyr, drinking on Sunday and about not letting your Monday ruin your Sunday, so that was the whole cusp of it, I heard somebody say in a pub, I wasn't drinking on that particular day, c'mon now Lego, don't let your Monday ruin your Sunday, have a few pints and I was like I'm having that, that is a song ready to go and it was and as soon as I wrote that, I did like a video shoot and just everyone loves that now, people hash tag it all the time saying yes, we're out. They're like tagging me in it saying look we're not letting our Monday ruin our Sunday so, it's caught on, like I said there's nothing, whatever strikes me really, if there's a particular [inaudible].

- AC: Is that local then, 'cause that was quite a local...
- LJ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah definitely local. Coming from Merthyr and coming from this place it's kinda like stories are told all the time, like when you're in a pub when you're little everyone's telling stories and if, if you can tell stories and make people laugh you are the kind of go to person then, so y'know what I mean, enjoy your company, so, I just find doing that in songs as well people just relate to it much more. Like I've written a song about the walk of shame you do in the morning when you're like hung over and you're at somebody's house and walking back to your own house you're like oh my God! What'll we do, and there's people going oh my God, we love that, like how many times do you do that. Especially as you get a little bit older as well you kinda feel a little bit naughty then don't you [AC: The shame] Exactly! Like oh my God! [inaudible] the sun is out why am I, why are we doing this at this time in the morning at our age, but yeah, like I said it's totally inspired by just living here really, just the people.
- AC: So would you say that would be as significant in your writing if you lived in, Cardiff say, a city?
- LJ: Um, I dunno? I lived in Cardiff for a couple of years and as much as I loved it 'cause it's such a melting pot of all different cultures and things it's not... I kinda lost my identity living down there, I don't know what I wanted to be, I didn't know what kind of path I wanted to take in my life and you just roll with it. You haven't really gotta figure that out at that age, at that time you're living there twenty one, twenty two but actually pulling influences from places is quite chaotic. Whereas with this I know everyone here, it's, the actual culture I understand and like, like yesterday I played in The Crown, in Crownload a four day festival. We had a real laugh with the audience, everyone was loving it, people came to watch us, y'know you got that history with them, you've share, shared growing up in this area so, I suppose it's much easier for connecting people that is, so...
- AC: You mentioned earlier, a young family, full-time job, and you said you kinda adjusted didn't you [LJ: Yeah] doing what you do now fits in [LJ: Yeah, exactly] I mean is there anything else that restrains your time [inaudible] work or anything else, how do you get around it y'know?
- LJ: Um, I'm quite lucky with work, um, because it's part of my job I do things like music therapy um, and art therapy in work. So, like today I got a bit of free time, I got a guitar in my classroom [laughs] so I was playing my guitar for like, I had an idea for a song so I was writing something earlier um, don't tell my boss that [laughter] but he yeah, I get to do a lot of music stuff in work, so actually being creative is just, it's kinda like um, part of that and the, the college encourages me to do it. I run like music clubs and do just like singing so actually it's just a nice kind of outlet for me as well. Um, in terms of other barriers um, like I said it's the time thing, I dunno, I dunno how we've got to this stage now where we seem to be so time poor, when you speak to people they just think oh I haven't got time for this, I haven't got time for that. [inaudible] focus on you gotta eat right, you gotta go to the gym, you gotta look after, y'know what I mean, y'know what I mean, you're actual dependents [inaudible] you need to look after, then you gotta look after yourself and the actual those little pleasures you take in life, they become so, not even secondary, they kind of y'know what I mean [inaudible] on your list then and that's where you kinda lose a lot of your happiness I suppose you just can't do the things that actually make you happy, the things you should be doing are things you're meant to be doing so, I'm glad I have found those little pockets of time [inaudible].

AC: It's almost, it's good for your mental health...

LJ: Yeah, exactly 100% yeah, it was, writing about things like that just seemed in playing electric guitar again, like 'cause I spent so many years playing acoustic guitar, doing functions and I just [inaudible] trudging through that I'm thinking oh my God I'm playing flipping Snow Patrol again [laughs] Like I don't even like half the music I play but we're getting paid good money to do it and you kinda grit your teeth and sing the songs um, but actually then thinking yes, I love standing on stage y'know what I mean, flipping Gibson SG through an Orange amp rocking out thinking oh my God this sounds amazing like, feel like a Rockstar, this is what I enjoy doing, so yeah, so that's just, it just lifts your mood so much just being able to do those things, so yeah, if you can find the time to do what makes you happy, then 100% [inaudible].

AC: Um, so tell me a bit about your musical practices so, you have touched on some of it, so where you rehearse what you use when you rehearse, where you play [LJ: Yeah] can you...

LJ: Yeah, of course I can, actually in Merthyr we use as a rehearsal space is up in Pant, um there was one up in Dowlais, up on Goatmill Road as well [AC: Mountain music?] yeah, yeah, yeah so that's, that's unfortunately shut um, but yeah in terms of rehearsal space we use those [AC: Is it NU Studios?] I think, yeah, yeah Nu Studios in Pant and, um we use...there's the Practice Pad over in Aberbargoed and Green Rooms in Treforest, so those are the kind of areas we use, we're lucky we got so many actually, it's a short distance and but, in terms of my own thing it's generally, it's the house like I'm lucky I got an attic that I've converted so I got a, a decent kind of recording kinda space as well so. I use Pro Tools, I got a nice condenser mic, I can just kinda rock up there. [AC: You're self-sufficient?] Yeah, yeah pretty much yeah, I can do everything from upstairs, I film everything on my iPhone so, but I do little videos, I do everything totally unedited, I'll try and go live if I can as well. I'm just trying to say, Look, this is my new song, I got this have a little chat beforehand just play it and I like that, instant connection then, so it's all through social media. Um, in terms of gigs then I go to The Crown a lot if it's original material, I'll always go down there, they have a jam night, every kinda first Tuesday of the month, the Stone, Cold Sober Jam, yeah so rock up there, do a couple of my own songs which is great and jam with some of the musicians as well. Um, I played in Hardies which is the bar just down the road from where we are now. I played there last Sunday [AC: Is that originals?] Yeah originals, yeah, I said look I wanna do my own material, big gig the Friday just gone in Aberystwyth in the Big Tribute Festival, yeah so, that was a big gig so I don't want to go there unprepared. I wanna try some of the new material I got first to a crowd and the support you get in Merthyr is second to none, it really is, like even now playing your own material in a cocktail bar you think oh my God! [Laughs] Are they even here to watch me or do they want to drink their [inaudible] star Martini's? Let's crack on with it like, they all give a really good reception so that was another good buzz then, I thought great the music's not totally rubbish [laughs] these people like it and I had lots of friends come along as well so, um, other venues I think, trying to think, we play lots of actual wedding venues so for the Noughts and Crosses thing so there's lots of different places in Merthyr, the Redhouse across the road we did weddings in there um, [AC: Do they do weddings now?] Not really, unfortunately, I think it's gone by the, by the wayside, the, the actual trust that's been running it, there's lots of different things going on with that. We were doing quite a lot 2016...17? So, [AC: So it's changed since they changed hands for you it's affected?] Yeah [AC: It's use..] Oh definitely, massively 'cause at 2016 we had like a double page spread in their wedding magazines, a good band to have, recommend vendor [inaudible] getting lots of work and then they pulled out then [inaudible] no, we are the vendor sorry. Once the trust changed hands, they had a big injection of money

but questions are being asked now about where the money's been spent, so it is quite a big thing for the town 'cause there was a lot of stuff on, like I said 2016, 17 great since then [inaudible] dropped off.

AC: Why do you think, I mean y'know it's gotta cater for a lot of different people but what is it, why is it not um busy then?

LJ: Yeah, one of my friends Gavin he used to work there, he was one of the managers and he was excellent, so passionate about it, he worked about 2014 to 2017 and in that period of time it built up so much, they had loads of good bands there. They had really big travelling bands um, [inaudible] like Jeff Lynn's ELO and a full band with a whole lighting spectacle d'y'know what I mean so there's a really good draw for the town and all of a sudden, so when that Trust went um, all the Leisure Trust took over more, they lost lots of staff like that and now they've lost one of the main people and, and I can't remember his surname but Paul used to run like the, like the Vespa like bike kinda show there, they had like drummers on Penderyn Square outside the front here, all that was through Paul and Gavin and people like that [AC: What's their surnames Paul and Gavin?] Ah, Gavin is Gavin Lloyd and Paul, I can get it for you I'm friends with him on Facebook so I will be able to tell you [inaudible] yeah, and but yeah like you said there was such a good driving force but now they've lost those, not through them wanting to leave but being pushed out so, like I said it's sad thing for the town really [AC: Yeah...] no, no it is, it's totally silly, we're lucky we got, we got The Crown at the bottom of town and that's music every night so you can go to The Crown any day of the week there'll always be music on, on the weekends, they'll be on in the afternoons, in the evenings, they're the same they have really big bands coming through. Like last night we supported a Bob Marley tribute band and they were excellent, they were so, so, so, so cool as in totally different music to what you'd hear up here. They were so tight to this Reggae thing, as soon as they started like, wow, that's so different to anything you'd hear in Merthyr but it, but it was incredible people loved it. It was a Monday and it was still packed [laughs] so it was good, yeah.

AC: Um, so, we kinda touched on a few of these so I'm just trying to...[inaudible] yeah sure...Um, so we were talking about you being self-sufficient um, so, I'm assuming you get paid for most of the gigs you do 'cause they're corporate [LJ: Yeah of course, yeah, yeah, yeah] is there um anything, around here, it could be people things everything that are absolutely crucial for you to do what you do or are you like well, as long as I got me [LJ: Yeah] I'm okay like y'know?

LJ: I think like the actual like social network side of things obviously it's all internet based but you are friends with people from Merthyr so that in terms of keeping in contact with people [inaudible] that's a key force for me, but yeah like The Crown is such a good place to go um [AC: Just to be in you mean?] Yeah, just to be in, just to be in and meeting people and just seeing people there and seeing what other, like I said the jam nights are great to see different musicians to chat to, if you wanna promote anything. Ah Jacob who works at The Crown there, say look I got a single I wanna promote can I come down for a night put a big band on. He's really good at [inaudible] little support slots, so obviously then it opens up to a whole new audience who might be seeing like a bigger band that's coming to the area, um but we are really lucky that we've built up this following over a long time now so, like I said when I played in Hardies which is not known for the music yet I got a really good, I got a really good crowd there as well, all promoted over social media [AC: all online?] Yeah all online yeah and, we are, my brother and I with the Noughts and Crosses stuff we've just built up this network over the years where we get so many gigs now we

can be quite selective with it so, we are quite, we are really lucky now we're in a position to do that so...

AC: It's good, that's good. Um so what roles do you and your brother, and you on your own, what y'know, sort of finances [LJ: Yeah] what sort of roles do you take on?

LJ: Um...we try and split it really. I mean we use um Facebook page and we have our mobile numbers on there so if somebody contacts him he'll deal with the booking, he'll deal with everything, or if I take the booking we try and split it like that. Whoever sees it first just deals with it, we have shared calendars, Google calendars and things so we know exactly what's going on, we know when each other's free, so that's the beauty about being just a duo [laughs] there's only two of us and we're brothers so um, if anything comes up like alright actually can we do this? We'll have a quick chat over the phone um, or if it's something big or could we shift things around, we're gonna do, um just have a chat in person so. We're quite lucky like I said a small operation so it's quite easy to run, to manage and, and it's worked touch wood, yeah so far, it's wor, working [laughs].

AC: Um, so how serious do you take this?

LJ: Um, oh that's a good question [laughs] um, when we play, very seriously like that's the thing, you never wanna, I never wanna do a bad show ever, that's never [inaudible] on Saturday we played in Aberystwyth, for Noughts and Crosses The Big Tribute Festival, we've played there for the last couple of years, we got such a good following, we play the end of Saturday night, 11.30 till 1 in the morning and it's a great slot and we're the last band on and there's about 5, 6000 people rammed into a tent to watch us and they'll love us and we feel like rock stars down there 'cause as we go down there we got oh my God! Noughts and Crosses shwmae! And they're just, they're just mad, but even then I'm still nervous before going on, I know they come to see us, I know they got big expectations so [inaudible] yeah exactly more pressure then but it's the same like if you do a wedding you just think oh my God! You got all this pressure on this is this bride and groom's, bride's, bride's and groom's, groom's whatever it is, it's their one day, a special event you don't want to mess that up, so those gigs we take very seriously, the actual rehearsal side of things we don't take very seriously at all [laughs] because like we said we're very lucky we can wing it a lot and just like yes, we trust, we trust each other we got that trust there. Um and for my solo stuff as well, I think that's even harder to rehearse for 'cause you just feel like an idiot singing my own songs in the house or I go to a practice room singing on my own, you just feel a bit of vanity like oh, I just go and do it and think right [inaudible] in this performance and you're literally just pinning all your hopes on just not messing up [laughter].

AC: Um, so what motivates you to keep making music? What do you get out of it? Apart from like financial...

LJ: Yeah, oh I just love performing live, performing live has always been the biggest buzz ever. Um, I just couldn't imagine my life without doing it, I don't, even though I said I had that break of like writing um, actually still able to play live with my brother doing those gigs just kept me going even though I'm a Dad at a really young age thinking oh my God! You lose so much of your identity, you get worried about that, to actually still go on stage and say yes, I can still be crazy Lego Man, still jump around like a lunatic and just get that buzz [AC: Yeah] so even if...I couldn't do anything else, as long as I can do that I'll be happy so that's just, that's the buzz for me and like the writing side of things now I love getting that, like, it's so [inaudible] social media, because you'll write songs and I'll do it all live, I'll do it [inaudible] this is a song, bosh,

listen to it now and then you get that instant feedback, oh my God this is really cool I love this bit, I love this lyric, I love that lyric and you say great, I'm gonna perform it live now. In a gig, right guys do you want to listen to this song, I'll be here come and watch me and then y'know what I mean you see people singing your own song back as well that's just another, another whole level of just craziness, it's just that, that gratification and that just, oh my God! This is mad, this is what I've wanted to do all my life and if I could do this constantly and just play the gigs every night and do my own material that's what I'd love to do but I'm not quite there yet [laughs] not yet anyway.

AC: Um, we done that....okay what if anything limits what you do regarding your music-making, you touched on....

LJ: Yeah, yeah [AC: Anything else you can think of?] I suppose just um, again the audience there as well, like to do your own stuff that's, that's the graft really to get people out to watch your own material then it'll be perform on a Tuesday, perform on a Monday, even a Sunday slot, that's probably one of the better slots you can get and even that's a tricky one 'cause I got work on the Monday [AC: Don't let your Monday...] Yeah! Don't let your Monday ruin your Sunday Come on! [Laughter] but even with the draw of that it's still like oh we'll pop along for a little bit [AC: Yeah] um, so the prime slots on a Friday and Saturday night, they don't kinda really exist much anymore and it's more covers in the area, like when I was, when I was younger yeah, when I was younger Friday nights in the studio bar, they used to be on the square there, we used to play there we would pack it out, played with my old band Cornerstone and we used to just have a great time, We, like RM's and stuff we were really young and the original material, that's what the thing was on a Friday and Saturday night, that's the shift y'know. It is definitely more covers on a Friday and Saturday, original material through the week, so it's getting that audience kind of round to that idea of listening to original material, that's the difference.

AC: Do you think there's more original stuff around than there was or do you think....

LJ: Um, I think, it's probably just as many bands but it's just the frequency of gigs, I think that's sort of disappeared a bit, because the bands' are still there but what they'll do is sometimes, oh alright we're just going to do this as a covers band tonight. Like for example a local band Philo Beddoe like they played yesterday with us in The Crown, they played a really early slot about 2 o'clock all original material. Where usually they can play Saturday night in The Crown to loads of people playing covers [AC: Yeah] so that's the, you can see already the disparity, well y'know if you want original stuff we'll chuck you 2 o'clock on a Monday but if you want to do covers we'll put you on 8 o'clock on a Saturday [laughs] you like oh alright, okay so, so that's the difference I think and it's not really like you said years ago when we had the Studio Bar that's, it was only original material you wouldn't play covers on a Friday night or a Saturday night in there. It would just be everyone doing original stuff, original bands so that's the difference I've seen over the years but I suppose venues gotta earn a crust as well and they gotta bring the money in so, it's supply and demand I suppose? I'm not sure?

AC: Um, and finally [LJ: Yeah laughs] is there anything else you'd like to add? [Laughter]

LJ: Um, well just about Merthyr in general y'know I just think it's an amazing place to live as a musician um, there's loads of support here, there's loads of lovely people. Like people are the salt of the Earth in Merthyr so if you need any help with things people will always be on hand to help you and it's just like you said it's just a nice place to play, it's a really friendly atmosphere, it's not so daunting and I just love it [laughs].

AC: That's fair enough [laughter] I'm going to stop the recording.

LJ: Yeah stop it it's fine yeah.

AC: Thank you very much.

Interview with Phillip Williams, Grant Miller, and Kirsty Jones, 08-11-2019, Woodfired, Merthyr Tydfil @ 12.03 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

PW – Phillip Williams, GM – Grant Miller, KJ – Kirsty Jones, Participants

AC: Hello guys how're you doing?

PW/GM/KJ: Hello, hello, alright...

AC: Thanks for meeting me. Um I'm just going to ask you a few general questions first, just to, get the lay of the land so to speak. So what's your own involvement with the music scene in Merthyr? It doesn't have to be full on...[laughter]

PW: My involvement personally, I'm a musician and drummer in a band, I have been since a kid and I was the technical manager in Redhouse. My passion is bands, music obviously it's been my life.

AC: Quite in-depth, a passion?

PW: Yeah, yeah.

GM: Um, also a musician, also a drummer although some might argue if that's technically a musician [laughter] um, I'm a massive advocate of local music and live bands and I have done the Merthyr Rising festival every year. [waitress brings drinks over to the table...laughter]

GM: I'm done yeah, so that's me finished...

KJ: And then me, um oh where do I start? I more in the theatrical side of music um, I got a drama degree at Aberystwyth Uni, I've worked in theatres, I've done tours and things like that um, stage wise, um music wise my dad is Phillip [PW] so I've had, grown up with a drummer in the house, always out playing. My husband's a drummer and he was in bands based in Merthyr as well.

AC: Who's that then?

KJ: My husband's name is John Jones, he's a carpenter now so he's given it all up [laughs] he still tries to play [laughs]. Um he was around the sort of time of um, I can't remember the name of the band, it'll come to me...

PW: Blackout?

KJ: Yeah, yeah all around that sort of time, that sort of era he is um, and my involvement I was a, I was based in a theatre company that had a residency at Redhouse um earlier last year and um my involvement with the music scene is that I was a member of the Scooter Club as well and we'd put on rallies and things and get bands booked in and things like that um, but I'm sort of coming at it from an art perspective that sort of thing oh and I'm a singer as well [laughs] [inaudible] got a little bit of an idea yeah [laughter] little bit of an idea about music...

AC: So how did you all get into doing what you're doing?

- PW: Ah me personally through, through music um, I got a job in the Coliseum in Aberdare that's how I got into the theatre side of it, so I learnt my trade in the Coliseum in Aberdare and then applied for a job in Redhouse that's what I've done really.
- AC: How did you find out about that sort of work anyway?
- PW: Ah [laughter] it's a funny one this is ah I used to be in the second-hand business buy and sell furniture and I was delivering um a set one day to the Coliseum somebody hired me to ah to Frank, Frank Vickery, delivering a new set for him and that's how I got into the Coliseum, I just delivered sets to the theatre.
- KJ: The real reason Frank hired him was because my mother went up, approached him in an auction once and she said, just let you know my daughter's an actress and she's going to be in one of your plays one day [laughter] and she was right I was in one of his plays [laughter] she was, but that sort of kicked everything off for you really, got to know Frank [inaudible]
- PW: I was the technical manager over there it started off one day a week and then it ended up 7 days a week [laughs]
- AC: What about yourself Grant?
- GM: I've been involved in the music scene in Merthyr for quite a while, booking bands and um organising small events um, and that's just got bigger and bigger to the point where I was asked to help out with the Rising which is a very big event um, and, we use the Redhouse for that and that's um, and I think, if um... my mind's gone blank now [laughter] [inaudible] I've just been involved in bands a lot, an awful lot, and you just, start small and things get bigger, some people ask you to do more things and then um, y'know your toolbox gets bigger because you have to do y'know slightly different things every time and before you know it you're y'know you're running a big festival running around like a headless chicken for months on end before it starts, so that's where I am at the moment.
- AC: Did you do last year's Rising?
- GM: Yeah, yeah, I did the last three, I've been involved in the last three years.
- AC: [inaudible] oh sorry, I just want to ask um, there's rumours flying around there's gonna be a lot more, ah limited, ah next year?
- GM: Well the problem is with the Rising specifically is that it's a very, very small team that manage it, we're all volunteers, nobody gets paid and personally I've had to take three months off work to get it through, that's how big it is, that's how much organisation it is, because I was running the site ah as well as organising some of the bands, but it's a big site y'know there's lots of ah health and safety issues as well so y'know generators, fence units, it's a massive, massive monster and you can't do it justice if we don't apply yourself for three months so, I don't mind volunteering, I don't mind giving myself to the arts but I think three months, this year, was too much, y'know I lost, I'm a self-employed I'm an engineer, I lost an enormous amount of work and um I don't think people realise the efforts that are required to put something of that scale on in this town y'know, maybe, I always said we should do a documentary y'know um, behind the scenes, people don't realise for any art event really y'know you go to a pub and watch a band, that was great, enjoyed that, people have no idea what's involved in putting something, even just a simple y'know, three bands y'know

headline, two supports, it's a massive effort requiring lots of people you don't get to see they're behind the scenes um, so, I'm just opening that world up to people a bit and say look do you realise what goes on, the efforts that are required for this to go on y'know. The good will of many, many people which is given to these things y'know, art is important to everybody, watch some bands or some guys show or whatever, but um, it's so important to some people to give up a lot of time, I'm not being a martyr here but everybody does it, y'know to certain extents y'know whether you say I'll help out or I'll lift the gear for the band for you y'know so, I think it's interesting.

PW: I, I agree with Grant 'cause what he's saying there is the truth, it's the same whatever event you put on, the technician or the organisers are the first ones there and they're the last ones to leave, always, on any show, like I say it's the same if it's an acoustic night you're the first one there and the last one to leave, so there's massive organisation behind a project like that.

AC: So do you think that can be sustained then? Because it does, it must take its toll?

GM: It depends, because you gotta look at what your motives are for doing something like that. For me I want the Rising and all of the smaller events I want them to go ahead 'cause y'know Merthyr can be a vibrant cultured town. But when things change, when the motivation changes or y'know the reason for doing something changes y'know I'm, I'm finding it very difficult to work with the Redhouse now right, so, it, I have to organise next year's Rising and I have to put on political talks and, and y'know these sort of things traditionally they were at the Redhouse, I don't think we can do that next year. I don't think I have the relationship with them any longer to work with them y'know after they've completely reneged on everything they agreed to before every festival and Friday morning we set up and everything was out of kilter y'know we had to run around with contingency plans for every single thing we had to do with the Redhouse and, it's just good will from people like me and others y'know who do the Rising that's gone really once that disappears the desire to do those things then is much, much less.

AC: Is that because of relationships breaking down?

GM: Relationships with the Redhouse, yeah and I think it's deliberate

KJ: Yeah

GM: I genuinely think it's deliberate with the Redhouse.

AC: Hold that thought there on Redhouse. I just wanted to ask you how you got into...

KJ: I started off in theatre when I was, I think twelve I come from my primary school and my parents were told that I was far too shy far too reserved I wouldn't amount to anything unless something was done to boost my confidence, that's what I was lacking massively was confidence. So, um, my parents being the wonderful ones that they are sort of helped, pushed me a little bit. I was taken to karate even though I didn't want to go I was taken to karate [laughs] I was taken to um, after school drama classes and theatre groups and things like that. I joined the school choir in, in Cyfarthfa and that was the starting point really, I felt really confident when I was singing and especially when one teacher said to me, you got a lovely little voice, oh I am good I'm good at something, I can do that. So, um that sort of boosted my confidence and the more confidence boosting I was getting the more I was loving it, I fell in love with being on stage. So I started, school choir was the first thing in year seven and then I got the lead role in the school play, um, and it sort of went on from

there really 'cause um, the teachers were excellent and they just recognised that I had a passion for it and they, they nurtured it, um, so I was really lucky to go to America twice with the school and um, perform like on an exchange programme over there, um, and then it went on from there, I went to Uni and studied drama in Uni. I, as soon as I finished Uni I had a part in one of Frank's plays um, so I done two with Frank, um, but I was out of job while I was waiting for the two plays to kick off. I was volunteering over the Coliseum in Aberdare um,

AC: Is that through your father?

KJ: Through my Dad yeah, and, um, I was quite good at backstage stuff and one day I went, I can do backstage, I can stage manage, I done a bit of that in Uni. I hadn't I lied [laughs] I needed to 'cause I really wanted to get in so um I volunteered for stage managing a panto so with Colstars who are the amateur group over there and day to day I was terrified because [laughing] it could have gone wrong, um but it taught me a lot about, it takes a lot to out on a show, especially a panto, it's so much. Um, so I did a lot of stage management after that point, so it worked really for me. Um, I taught, I was, I got a job at the Coliseum then, I was duty manager at the Coliseum, I was box office, box office manager. Um, I worked in the Muni [laughs] before that went! Um, I then, 'cause I was covering maternity leave for a lot of things and also they came back to work, I found myself with less hours and I was having to travel over there, and it just wasn't working out. I then went one day, again with you [PW] I can't remember why we went over; we went over to Merthyr college? And, it was, so, it was for something we had a meeting over there, just explaining to someone oh I done this, that and the other, so we are looking for somebody at the moment who can teach improvisation, well I said I haven't got a teacher's degree, I haven't, I'm not trained, oh that's fine we can support you and we can do this that and the other, I said I did a few hours teaching on the Btec as well, which was just amazing. Um, and there was a learning coach there as well, so had a few sorts of different jobs, then I had my baby, my first baby and I sort of stepped away from work a bit. I got married in 2011, made all my own stationary, that's the type of creative person I am anyway, made all my own stationary and then went into the wedding industry, so, [laughs] um, so that's been my job since 2012, um, I got my own business now but I was lacking, I needed the arts back, thing again, I needed, I'd been off stage for so long I had [inaudible] my old drama teacher who had taken me to America walked in to Redhouse one day, met my Dad, oh Phillip what you doing here? I'd love to set up a theatre company in this place. He showed her around, this is a lovely place, would Kirsty be interested, oh yeah, she'd be interested, for sure she'd be interested. Joined that and eventually became the resident theatre company at Redhouse, which was great, until our performance when we had I won't say lack of support, there was zero support, so we are now out of there, um, and, yeah

AC: Where are you based now?

KJ: We're in Soar at the moment yeah, thank goodness! [laughs]

AC: Right, one more question before we get onto Redhouse and um, this will feed nicely into it, what factors do you think make it difficult for local musicians to make music around here?

GM: I think it comes down to, specifically in Merthyr it comes down to venues

PW/KJ: Yeah, yeah

GM: Um if you're starting off as a musician, um, let's just take an average band. Y'know you're in a band you're very young, um, there aren't anywhere great venues for musicians to play, you, you got the Crown. The Crown, ah, stopped booking local artists, they just book artists from outside, bigger artists.

AC: Do they?

GM: Yeah

PW: Yeah

GM: They, they, very, very few local artists get on which is a bit ah 'cause Jorge is trying his best to push The Crown, not Merthyr, it's, it's I mean he's a business man, I get it y'know and fair play to him y'know it's not a, y'know it's not a criticism of it really I'm just aware of the fact that his priorities are not with mine or what yours are, so y'know that's fair but unfortunately because of the success of The Crown um, it's become ah a sort of South Wales um, hop on the tour y'know for bands on tours. You do get some big names down there, but I don't think it does very much for local music, so that's not really a viable venue for local people. Um, who are starting in a band, there are a few pubs local that are dotted here and there but those sorts of gigs and those sorts of venues are sporadic there's no real sort of band night y'know. There's no, I mean, Christ, when I was younger you had the Belle Vue, they used to have bands in the Belle Vue every weekend y'know. You wouldn't have to see who's there you'd know there would be a band there, you'd go out and you'd see a band and half the buggers getting there would be going who are these then? Y'know and that's what music um, sort of well, should be about. It should be about let's introduce each other to new ideas, new things especially new music

KJ: Yeah

GM: Music is universal after all

KJ: Yeah

GM: Unfortunately Merthyr is now in a position where we have bigger names coming in and playing in The Crown, that sort of talent, or art or whatever you want to call it, it doesn't filter down, there's no trickle down from that talent down now, so there's no, what you'd call old fashioned mentorship. Y'know when you get young kids and they bother with older guys

KJ: Yeah

GM: I was twelve, thirteen when I went to Donnington for the first time and the reason I went to Donnington was because my Dad used to drink in the Crown, the old Crown and it was a metal pub there so all rockers in there and they were all older than me, but I used to go on a Saturday and have pop and crisps, and they said to my Dad, hey listen he loves his music can he come to Donnington with us? And so that was sort of like an ad hoc mentorship which has made some wonderful friendships, I've had for the rest of my life. It's very sad this is not happening now.

KJ: I got a theory about it, my theory stretches back years and years. We used to have, Merthyr used to be vibrant arts town so we had rooms in the YMCA I'm talking, talking years and years and years ago, we had the Theatre Royal, we had the Castle Theatre, we had multiple cinemas and we had multiple nightclubs, we had all these things going on and one by one they all started to close because, they did, they all

started to close, and as they started to close all of our creatives, who were making music, making theatre, making art in Merthyr suddenly didn't have anywhere to go, so we started venturing out, I mean my generation of people, everybody was either going to Aberdare or going over to Blackwood and they were going where they can see theatres, Cwmaman and the Institute, it's a happy place for you to go to 'cause you didn't have anything here, and because we got nothing here, all out creatives went oh we can't do anything there so they either leave [inaudible] they're just gone, so then we're left with people haven't really got a clue what theatre and arts and what not and what music is. I see the art world as high art, classic and elite

PW/GM: Yeah

KJ: They see it as a money spinner then rather than a, something that people need to do.

GM: And also, I think specifically with certain places when you see analogies of the Redhouse all over the country right um these third sector places and they have an SLA to provide arts and culture or they have a rough overview of what it is they must deliver, part of that includes parks and culture. The problem is you are entrusting the arts and culture for that whole place, they become invariably the only place in the town that is supposed to be providing this, they are run by people who are not involved with the arts and have never been involved in the arts. We currently have a guy running the Redhouse who is a lifeguard and I don't mean he used to work in the leisure centre I mean he was an actual life guard, he was a life guard, this is where we are, right, so it's all part of the same set up so like we get the Leisure Trust is down there and someone down here is saying oh I can run that! I've done a bit down the leisure centre

AC: Who's the lifeguard?

GM/PW: Mark Williams.

PW: He's actually, actually the premises manager...

AC: I don't think I know him?

GM: This is the problem we see this up and down the country. It's specifically bad here, the Redhouse is, there was a league table, put it this way I think they'd be bottom but it's because we have third sector um, Trusts and things like this who have been given the role of delivering arts when they have no idea what arts are and they have no experience in what people want and so what they do is a tick box exercise. They'll say right, you'll have a, have a fine arts show in the gallery

PW: That's ticked

GM: That's January done. Y'know, and this is, this is where we are. I mean, look, the last twelve months what the Redhouse has put out there, you can see it, we'll put out ah, arts there, then July we'll have a, oh I don't know we'll have a sing song and a carol we'll do that in August and in their minds they're providing the arts, they're delivering the arts. So, it's, y'know yourself as someone involved in the arts, arts is not top down right. The pyramid system does not work for the arts. You can't deliver it from the top and have it trickle down, it is grass-roots, always from underneath y'know it's all of us, y'know Phillip do you wanna jam one night y'know yeah? Let's do this and before long you'll be playing in a back room in a pub somewhere. It's always underneath coming up and the moment that people try and turn it round and try to

deliver it from the top in a very structured and organised way while failing completely and utterly to deliver the things they are supposed to be delivering, it's over, it's finished.

PW: I, I find, sorry Gar, I find Redhouse, my experience with the Redhouse is that it's being run, and this is no disrespect like a WI like a women's institute [laughter] right, so, you've got one person, for instance she, she stood down now, the chair-person of the trust was Jan Morgan. Her vision of an arts centre is to run an afternoon tea session for the old age pensioners which is great in its way but is that the right, is an arts centre the right place to do that? Surely that's a leisure centre or it's clearly a community centre, it's nothing to do with the arts really. A cup of tea and a bit of cake is great, lovely, y'know what I mean can't fault it but it's not the place to do it and then I agree with what Grant is saying they put people in positions that shouldn't be in those positions, they're inexperienced, they know nothing about the arts whatsoever

AC: Why are they doing that then?

PW: I don't know?

GM: Because specifically with the Trust here in Merthyr, um they're responsible for the Redhouse, the libraries, the leisure centre and because they are third sector and publicly funded, they don't really have the option of getting rid of people who shouldn't be in their roles

PW: Yep

GM: They can't really sack anybody, not in the council or anything like that, it's too difficult so what they do is they promote, promote people away from problem areas, you get promoted for bad performance. This happens up and down the country in all councils right. So if somebody, for instance take an example, Mark Williams, is performing really bad in the leisure centre right, and, and nobody wants to work with him and it's becoming an issue for the management in the leisure centre. They will promote him out of that job and that's what's happened, they've promoted him out of that job in the leisure centre into the role of looking after the Redhouse with no previous experience they've just moved the problem aside and it's now someone else's problem.

PW: Yeah

AC: Is that legal?

GM: Yes.

PW: Mark, Mark Williams's attitude right, it stinks, right, sorry but

GM: No it's right

PW: Um, my experience with Mark um, no experience in the arts not interested in the arts more interested in how many cans of lager he can have at the end of the night okay, and then for him to go to senior managers and say to them in my opinion music isn't right for Redhouse

AC: Did he say that?

PW: Absolutely said that.

AC: There's a theatre, recording studios...

GM: The problem is and I...

PW: I'd stand up say, he said it to me and to other work colleagues...

GM: The problem with Mark specifically is right is that he has gone on record to say that he doesn't want to work weekends, so we counted this when we booked the Redhouse, it was not available right, evenings, not available, he clocks out at five o'clock, gone. Doesn't work Saturday or Sunday. So, when they, when he first took over and there were a few previously booked events in the evenings and weekends, one of the problems he wouldn't book enough people on the bar or whatever, they phoned him up, don't phone me at home, I don't work in the evenings, don't phone me on weekends and he slammed the phone down on them. So what has happened is 'cause Mark doesn't like being bothered on the weekends and evenings, nothing's really booked in on evenings and weekends.

PW: That's what an arts centre is.

GM: Right. So what they've done now they've given, they've given that role to someone else, um, it's an ad hoc sort of freelance job to Lee Davies who's a councillor because basically Mark doesn't want to do any work on the weekends so what's happened is, he's managed to sack everyone involved in making music and the arts, the techs and everyone else.

AC: How has he managed to do that?

GM: Because he said it's not viable, oh it's not viable to have any bands there, once you've paid the tickets...he's made the case that it's not viable. So then they sacked all the technicians based on that decision that he made, right, so now people are saying where are our bands now? Where are our arts? They're all [inaudible] Save The Redhouse was, was massively y'know was intrinsic in that pressure, putting pressure back on. So what they did was oh okay then we'll do it again, we'll try it again we'll have Lee to do it. Lee fair play to him, bless him, he's doing his best, he's not right for the role but he'll put a few things on and to be honest it's quite um a political decision to a point he's a councillor and lots of the negative comments and pressure was coming from the council, that's now gone away because one of their own is now running some of the, right, so this is where we are. Um, but by all accounts, you can put a band in there and make money.

PW: Oh absolutely, he was wrong, absolutely wrong on that.

AC: Have you all done the figures and stuff?

[inaudible]

PW: Let me tell what we had last year right [inaudible] I'm the chairman of the Scooter Club in Merthyr, so we had the scooter rally in the day, and we put a band on in the night and next year is our fifth year. So, past, past three years uh prior to this year just gone the Trust used to pay for the band, used to pay for the band, take the ticket money and used to get a good band in. In a meeting for this year just gone Mark Williams has said to me we can't afford to pay you for the band for the scooter rally this year, and I said why not? He said you don't make enough money. I said if you break even, I said that's great, you got your bar-take anyway he said to me would you put your money into it? And I went yeah, I would actually.

AC: What an odd question anyway?

PW: Yeah, so this year we paid for the band we might have made 200 quid if we were lucky.

AC: So you did make money?

PW: We did make money on it, but they took 1250 quid behind the bar, yet you get total negativity off this guy and his senior managers every time I suggested stuff to put on up there. He doesn't want it, he doesn't want it.

KJ: But it's not just him it's the senior management, the board, the Trust there should be eleven trustees there's now I think five or six. The majority of them have left because either they've disagreed with the um opinions of, they asked too many questions they have to go.

AC: Is that straight up yeah?

GM/PW: Yeah, yeah.

KJ: With regards to money. So they are now at the moment operating on a huge loss and they are operating insolvency so their books and everything is available of companies house so that's all available to see so that's fine. I spoke with the chair um the interim CEO of the Leisure Trust Sally Church

AC: Sally that's it

KJ: I met with her, chance meeting, Sally would you mind having a little q and a, oh yeah what about? I said I just want to confirm the way things are going, we'd heard well obviously I had heard that they were reducing staff numbers from seven to three and I really am concerned, I don't think you can run an arts centre with three people. She said well look you've got to realise you need to go back to basics and I said basics in an arts centre isn't three people I said basics for an arts centre is arts managers and arts policy, is um box office staff, is an audience development manager, is, is a technical manager it's all the marketing manager it's all these things you need to have as basics and three staff is not good enough.

AC: Saying, saying that they haven't got any money, so if they've got no money, I mean being Devil's advocate.

KJ: Oh yeah, definitely if they haven't got any money, what can you do but unfortunately what is happening is the events were being cancelled constantly, so what they were doing was cancelling events, we had one event up there um which was ah Stone Roses tribute gig and they sold I think fifty or sixty tickets and then

PW: A month before

KJ: A month before they decided to cancel it

GM: No two weeks before they cancelled it

KJ: Two weeks before they decided to cancel it because there was a lack of support and the actual reason they gave online was lack of support from the community.

GM: Most people walk up and go in like that.

KJ: Nobody buys tickets online, well some people do but you've gotta rely on that walk up too and that was completely sort of, so that was the starting point really, that was.

AC: So you're saying that they have got money problems but rather than just saying they got money problems they're dressing it up as if...

KJ: Yeah

AC: The community are not giving them any support.

KJ: What they're saying is that Redhouse are losing them the money but it's not. It's not Redhouse that's losing their money it's other venues that's losing them money

GM: The leisure centre is haemorrhaging money

KJ: Haemorrhaging money. The libraries, they don't make money [laughs] so the places they sort of...

AC: Focused on the wrong places?

GM: It's not just that, the Redhouse is unique in that they get a lot of funding from the college and they don't really want to employ anybody to do any extra stuff, like events, like actually have an arts centre can you imagine that. Um, so what they do is they, they get huge amounts of money from the college and that's 9 to 5 and a Saturday morning that's all they really want to do. The college...

PW: Sorry Gar, the college paid them 205,000 pounds a year in rent and the council actually give them 2 and a half million pounds a year to run.

AC: Regardless?

PW: They give them two and a half million pounds to run the Trust, the, the

GM: Trust

PW: Sorry butt

GM: No, no it's fine

AC: Where's the money going then? Are they putting money here

KJ: Laughs

AC: In one venue over others?

GM: No, because the Trust is homogeneous so that just goes into the big pot and that might be spent on the Leisure Trust and things like that. So, if you took the Redhouse away from the Trust it would be very, very lucrative.

KJ/PW: Yeah

GM: Because the money's been taken out of that and pushed into other areas of the Trust 'cause it's all one Trust.

AC: So it's almost like they've taken the Redhouse on board and...

GM: It's a cash cow

KJ: It's a cash cow that could be milked to kill and just drop it...

PW: The previous CEO before Sally Church actually said it in a meeting, if he were in charge when they took Redhouse on he wouldn't have taken it on, he wouldn't want it, 'cause they have no experience running an arts centre so going back to that same thing every time, too little experience.

AC: They don't really want it as an arts centre? What do they want to do with it then?

KJ: They just want to keep it as a library or um

PW: And for the college

KJ: The college

PW: The college rent keeps...

KJ: Mark told me, and this is now based in, based in college business. They take their rent from the college, they've got the um iMac suite at the back um they got the drama students using the theatre, studio downstairs, 9 to 5 Saturday morning shut the doors don't want to employ anyone to run any arts centre, and the only people that suffer is everyone

PW: Yeah, laughs

AC: If it's open anyway...?

GM: Yeah

KJ: When college went in there I was working for the college for, so working [inaudible] [PW: the creative community innit?] yeah. So, the idea of going into an arts centre, I mean the college put a lot of ideas into that place as well I mean there's the technical side, they consulted with them as well. Um, and we had sort of access issues we needed to discuss as well, the students 'cause there wasn't a lot of detail gone in with Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association (MTHA) the owners of the building, so we had all these meetings back and forth and the idea was that it would be a vibrant arts centre that would have music, would have theatre, that would have dance, that would have all of these things going on every single day. So the students who are based there immersed not only in the arts but they were also meeting people and, we know in this industry the main thing is who you know, so you need to know these people you need to get to know people but it's under new management and it's not seen as that in fact the college are seen as a problem.

AC: I have found that the numbers of music students has dropped

KJ: Yeah

AC: And I'm, I don't know but I'm just wondering how much of the equipment is actually being used in the Redhouse? Like mixing desks and how often?

- PW: Well I can say something on that for you so, I think it was either this year or last year we had, we had, it was Merthyr Rising last year we had um err debates and discussions and the Musicians Union were invited to come in to give a talk. I had a chat with them after that, there was also the education person there for Welsh music in schools and they were there. And I said do you know about the facilities in the Redhouse for schools? They said what do you mean? And I took them down to the recording studio and I took them down to the rehearsal rooms and showed them the theatre and the space. They had no clue that any of that was available. They said do the local schools know about this? I said they should do it's through the college, the schools don't know it. *[This example highlights the lack of communication between different institutions and bodies and also the lack of advertising of Redhouse]*
- AC: There's nothing I can find about the recording facilities, it says on the website there's a theatre, I can't find a picture nothing?
- KJ: I think the recording facilities if I'm right? I might be wrong were, are actually owned by the college
- PW: Yeah, they are owned by the college yeah
- KJ: So the equipment is paid for by the college so that space you can't hire out. You used to be able to hire rehearsal rooms for five pound an hour.
- PW: The deal they had to, it would have to be under supervision of the college technician
- KJ: Yes, yes
- AC: So it's a barrier after barrier?
- PW: Yes...
- KJ: There's a lot of red tape and a lot of people, yeah barrier after barrier to get in touch with to be able to and that's what we've been finding in this as one of the people behind the Save Our Redhouse table...that's what we've been finding is trying to find out who is in charge of this, who's responsible, who's accountable, who are they accountable to, and when do they go under scrutiny and why aren't they under scrutiny? It's all of these things and no one seems to know the answer, so it's constantly sort of brick wall [laughs]
- AC: I've found it really hard to find info on it that's why I needed to speak to people, you guys 'cause you can't find anything other than threads on Facebook and odd conversations...
- PW: It's crazy isn't it [inaudible]
- GM: *It's deliberate sabotage*, that's what this is, that's what it looks like, 'cause that's what it is. They don't want any sort of local music ah, where people come to play music together, a scene they don't want the event to be used for ah, not used for those sorts of events. Because it would require them to work evenings and weekends.
- AC: Do you think there's a stigma attached to, y'know we don't want them using our equipment, they might break it or...
- PW: No, no like I say I was the technician up there, the lad who just left was Rob Whitehead who was the college technician and we worked together on events and

we'd always help each other out, we, we y'know I'd help him do things, he'd help us do things so we worked together as a team, that was never a problem.

AC: So they weren't worried about musicians using their stuff?

PW: No, no

KJ: And the thing is Rob is a musician as well isn't he

PW: Yeah

KJ: He understood

PW: He understood it totally got it

KJ: Totally got the industry.

AC: So, who's stopping the public from using, if they wanted to the recording equipment in the Redhouse?

PW: I'd say Mark Williams is one of the main people as, as premises manager he has the final say, 'cause if you want to go and hire the place it's him you have to speak to

AC: And he decides basically?

PW: Yeah.

GM: Yeah but he's not interested in arts or culture, he's told me himself I don't understand any of that old shit [laughs]

AC: But he's in the job?

GM: Exactly [laughter] 'cause he was a problem elsewhere they've moved the problem. This is...

KJ: It's coming sort of top down isn't it, like I spoke to Sally, I can only go on the conversations I've had with Sally and she said to me well what do we do then? How do we solve this issue of people not using the place? I said for one you open more often, you have a café that's fully functioning, and she said oh I know I do realise but that doesn't help, I do realise, and I said yeah, I know but it's not open today, and she said but that's a staffing issue. I said so you're idea of solving a staffing issue is to get rid of staff? Totally insane.

PW: But the mentality of them is absolutely incredible right so, like I say go back through my experience again. We got a gig, we got a gig in, we got a bar downstairs which is far too small and understaffed so you've got queues of people waiting to get a drink, they don't, they don't wait and go to Wetherspoons so my suggestion was let's put a bar upstairs and a bar downstairs so it relieves the pressure off the bar plus you take extra money. The answer I had back again off Mark Williams, can't afford to pay for staff.

AC: Have they got issues with core funding or anything like that?

KJ: Last year what happened was um there was, the blame was placed on funding from Ffos Yr Fran 'cause they had a lot of funding from that. So they said the reason, the

reason they're having so much problems is because we've lost our Ffos Yr Fran funding. It wasn't as if they didn't know they were losing it, it was on a graduated every year, yeah, every year it would be, would be reduced. So, they knew, they knew for five years that it was going to get to that point, and they wouldn't have any more funding from Ffos Yr Ffran.

AC: So you're arguing that they should have put something in place

KJ: Should have put something in place

[inaudible]

GM: It's utter lack of planning.

KJ: So like I said, so Sally said so what do we do? And I said well look you need to 1 open the place and meet, meet with the people in Merthyr who know the industry, there's plenty of us. I said I'm not just talking about y'know I'm not blowing my own trumpet, but I know about these things and I know loads of other people who know far more than me who are willing to help. She said can you set up a meeting for me, I said of course I can. Do me a favour she said don't put anything on Facebook. I said right, I won't out anything publicly on Facebook, but I am going to have to speak to people

AC: Yeah

KJ: To get them to come to this meeting. Okay, that's fine she said um, err, I'll pencil you in. I said can you give me a date? Yeah, yeah, so she gave me the date I think it was the 12th of April, fabulous

AC: Just gone yeah?

KJ: Just gone, I said I'll get people together and set up a Facebook page the arts, creative people in Merthyr. I said this is what, why I've done it um, and y'know I've been, she wanted to meet with us, she said she's got absolutely no experience of the arts industry, her background is in leisure and I said oh I, I respect that she said that but it terrifies me because obviously they got the people in charge so I said we need help so this is the date can everybody, can anybody make it? Yeah. Yeah, yeah loads of replies yeah, I think I had forty odd people in the group at that point so, um, and that was just on people that was someone else knew and such and such knew so there were quite a good few people. I approached her and said right Sally I just want to make sure that you're ready for the meeting, I reached out to her on Twitter because nobody would give me her email address, nobody would give me her contact details and I couldn't go through him [PW] 'cause it was looking too, too [inaudible] yeah, and at the time we were going through the job issues and things like that, so I didn't want him involved, it was just me. Um, she messaged back and said what is, what is this meeting? I said, the one you agreed to, to work out what we thought is going on. Oh no, no we've taken advice on this and we'll get in touch with Redhouse consultants that's it.

AC: What happened? What did she know to change her mind?

KJ: Apparently pays lip service, more and more people have spoken to her about this, oh I've spoke to her about that, and she said she'd do that, and nothing ever happened.

PW: She said it to me, she said it to me, in the job. We had, we had a meeting um on a day, and she said absolutely we want to do music here she said, we want to keep this going, we want to develop it as a music venue and I said look we got some great ideas we can do this, this and the other. Yeah, no problem. The day after I bumped in to Mark Williams and said we had a positive meeting yesterday I said, with Sally to put bands on, ah it's not going to work mate, this is the manager, I say well Sally had a different opinion to you yesterday so then I collared her [Sally] and said just talking to Mark I've had a negative attitude off him again about music and this building. Absolutely want to do bands she said it has to be better than The Crown. I went hang on a sec. I said we have theatre space, a state of the arts sound system, state of the art lighting system and you're comparing us, no disrespects, to a pub

AC: A pub yeah

PW: So how much better can we make it to be better than The Crown, I said I don't understand where you're coming from?

AC: So, putting unrealistic goals

PW: Yes

AC: It'll never be good enough

PW: They don't want it. I'm convinced they don't want it.

GM: Mark, um made it very clear to all the other managers that music doesn't work in the Redhouse

PW: Yep

GM: The numbers don't add up, it doesn't stack up and I'm convinced it's all to do with the fact that he doesn't want to work weekends and evenings

PW: He's got a caravan in Tenby

GM: That's it, he's down the caravan, don't bother me, hang up.

AC: So it's one man disrupting everything?

GM: Yes

PW: Yeah

PW: To be honest I hold him totally responsible for the demise of that building.

AC: That's terrible, who's closely linked then? Who's this Sally?

KJ: Sally was brought in, to be honest I hold her responsible [laughs] um Sally was brought in when their last CEO I don't know what happened there but she's an interim CEO, so how she was brought in as a, 'cause she was brought in as a consultant. It was her and someone else who was brought in to consult

AC: On the arts?

KJ: On the Trust as a whole, I think she was brought in by the Leisure Services. Um, she was paid a consultant fee and it was because at the time they were in serious financial dire straits, so it was a time when they were going oh probably gonna have to move staff, so they went cap in hand again to the Council, the Council bailed them out

AC: So they are getting money then?

KJ: They're getting money...

GM: They're mismanaging every single year, they're running it at a loss every single year um, and this is not specifically Redhouse this is the Trust in general is run at a loss every year. Um, they go cap in hand to the council who behind pink papers, which means it's not for public knowledge and give them an average between um, the last one was 220 thousand, the year before was 280 thousand but it's those sorts of figures every year, so that's their operating loss now that is [inaudible] the problem with this year is that the Council have to make 440 million pounds worth of cuts, so there is no money in the pot for them this year. So, I'm really genuinely worried how they're going to sign off on this loss, they're already now insolvent, now

AC: The Trust yeah?

GM: Yeah.

AC: Would it be possible to get another company to come in and take over from them or have they got too much of a grip on it?

GM: Well it depends the SNA is probably quite strong [inaudible] to provide leisure, libraries

KJ: I think it's only leisure and libraries I'm not sure about arts and culture?

GM: Arts and culture

KJ: I'm not sure?

AC: Are the museums involved with that then?

GM: With the museum in Cyfarthfa Park that's coming back into council ownership, that's being taken off the Trust.

KJ: It's the Cyfarthfa Park package, so you got parks, a castle, the park has always been council

PW: Yeah

[inaudible]

KJ: So it would be the Castle, um Joseph Parry's cottage and Felin Fach Engine House which is, that's the package that's going back to the Council because they had a great summer, can't remember the figures but a great summer funding to regenerate the castle itself and if they want to make it a world heritage site...

GM: To be honest they don't trust the Trust to do it there's no trust in the Trust, that's why they had to take it back to control where the money's going [inaudible] Redhouse [inaudible] sort of thing.

AC: Is Gus working up in the, Gus Payne?

GM: Yeah

AC: Is he working in the museum?

KJ: Gus was working in Redhouse

AC: That's what I was thinking yeah?

KJ: So during this sort of changing around of jobs and reshuffling. They were saying it was a reshuffle rather than a, but they were asking people, do you want to take voluntary redundancy. The whole redundancy issue with my Dad was completely...

AC: Is he still working there?

KJ: No, nothing they made him redundant

GM: Lost his job

AC: Oh right when was that? Sorry I assumed you still worked there?

KJ: No, they made him redundant, that was um, actually [inaudible] on garden leave so

AC: Garden leave?

KJ: Garden leave yeah.

GM: That's when you pay someone a full wage, but they don't have to go to work.

KJ: Yeah, don't want you here now [inaudible]

GM: Like I said this goes back to the sabotage of the events, they didn't want any events being run, so you're paying for a technician who you don't want on site? They say oh we can't out that on we haven't got a technician. I thought yeah.

KJ: And of course because he was so vocal in the [inaudible] I'll tell you for a fact what he did. What he did was go look I don't want so and so to lose his job because of me, I should be in this pool of jobs on my own, I shouldn't be running, going for a job for operations assistant or a caretaker, 'cause that's what they're called now, a caretaker. I shouldn't be going for that job, I'm a technician I'm a different bracket I shouldn't be in this pool. So Gus was in a pool of one, so he got the arts coordinator job. My father should have been in a pool of one as well because he was the only technician for the entire Trust, he should have been the only one in the pool, but they put him into a pool with all the others, and one of the guys there was going to lose his job because he would have been [inaudible] how about he said cut my hours, you still have me as a technician and it means he, the other guy still gets to keep his job [50:01] eventually, no we don't want that

AC: Any reasons for not wanting to keep his job?

- KJ: We're not having events we're obviously not going to be an arts centre
- AC: They categorially said...
- KJ: Oh [inaudible] business managers said it's not going to be an arts centre. We will do some arts we'll having colouring in for the kids to do [laughter] I wish I was making this up [laughs] it's so depressing. The thing is again, they don't understand the definition of arts at all um...
- AC: Can't they cater, I mean colouring by all means but can't they have something that accommodates for all ages and all of the arts.
- KJ: Well this was the kicking off of the letter thing, so as soon as he [PW] lost his job and he is well known and to be honest a lot of people thought Phillip was the manager at Redhouse because he was booking in a lot of events he was doing this that and the other even though he was the technician, he was doing, he was going about, he won't blow his own trumpet but I'll do it for him he was going above and beyond and it's been 9 months of stress for my Dad to be honest, it's been horrible there because he so desperately wanted to [inaudible] one of the first members of staff and painted the walls and everything y'know [inaudible] doing this that and the other y'know you had the drum festival, the drum show and he's been organising for drumming, it was originally Redhouse Scooter rally involved and then it wasn't. It's been really stressful for him 'cause it's seeing your baby really, dying [inaudible]
- AC: That sounds like the difference between the people we're discussing really, people like yourselves Phillip, you tend to find that they do more.
- GM: 'Cause we wanted to work, that's what we've put into it y'know, we've all put in hours we're not paid for 'cause we want things to work, and when you withdraw your services then, when you withdraw what you're willing to do for nothing because your motivation's changed because [inaudible] and you're getting no support and every day you're fighting people to get stuff done that's when it all collapses. The whole system relies on good will from everybody, bottom up.
- AC: It reminds me of another interview I did in Merthyr and they were saying about trickle down and bottom up, saying that there is a tendency in Merthyr get a load of cash chuck it at something and there's no sustainability....
- KJ: It's sustainability in the end and that's the issue [inaudible]
- GM: The most amazing thing I find in Merthyr is despite and in spite of all of these problems that we've got there's an absolutely massive music culture in this town. The amount of bands currently being made in Merthyr. When we were doing the Merthyr Rising looking at bands on a second stage, we wanted to put some local talent on. So we said right, Saturday morning only Merthyr bands we going to be supporting, we had something like 50 or 60 bands apply, this is amazing right! Because this isn't something expected from a town which has at every opportunity closed all their venues stopped all their funding and stopped giving them a place to practice really, stopped every part of who they are. Despite all of that [inaudible] that is amazing really, bloody hell y'know
- AC: Yeah, yeah
- GM: And then I got annoyed y'know imagine what it could be like?

KJ: Yeah

GM: Y'know, so that was a double edged sword that was, yes, in spite of it all there's a massive uprising of music. Can you imagine if it was harnessed, can you imagine, y'know if there was a way to get everyone to work together, some venues and support and...

AC: Another interview actually someone mentioned having a, I don't know if you've already tried this but having a sort of committee?

KJ: This was what was sort of suggested um putting together some sort of arts forum, 'cause I know there was an arts forum at some point where I think Gus was heading up on that

PW: It was

KJ: It was a while ago though wasn't it. But again it's um, it's reaching all of these people, I mean, just...there's no support.

AC: Was it just certain individuals pushing things [inaudible]

GM: I think so, we're at the point where apathy is very strong. I mean I, to be honest I don't even want to do the Rising next year, that's where I am because for all of my efforts for all of the massive financial hit it made on me because I had to move a lot of work there was nothing coming back from the Redhouse, I was fighting with them every day, you know this Phillip [See page 3 about motivation waning]

PW: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely

GM: The plan didn't survive from the first ten minutes when we opened on the Friday to the first talk. I went in now and right we got this guy speaking y'know from this union and we wanted a camera set up 'cause this guy in France wanted a live stream to I think it was a guy from France and his union and his union in France wanted to see the live stream, the thing is because [inaudible] from my experiences this is where we are [inaudible] this is the last time I'm doing this...

KJ: Yeah, 'cause there's only so much your mental health can take as well because you, you, because you're hitting hurdles and hitting brick walls every step of the way, fighting and fighting and fighting and then you just go huhh...

PW: This is how bad the management, this is how bad the senior management are right regarding Merthyr Rising last year. I was booked in to do a PA in the courtyard [inaudible] with the guys right 'cause musicians had turned up and they needed stuff miked up and

GM: Oh that was the World music, so we had musicians from all over the world

PW: That's right, yeah so, I done an event up in the theatre and come down from the theatre, I did have a meeting with senior managers, they turned up and I said I can't come to [inaudible] today I'm inundated with work here. I said I've got an event that's just finished upstairs and I've got to set up an event up in the courtyard, for these people who are paying me [inaudible] senior management said we need you in the meeting now. So I said are you saying to me you want me to drop everything and come to your meeting and leave all these people in the lurch? Yes.

AC: It sounds like again, sabotage [inaudible] what you were saying [inaudible]

PW/GM: Yeah, yeah.

KJ: Another event that was supposed to have happened, do you want to know, the college ah Unified gig. Every year the college do [inaudible] the Unified gig, so they were they had that [inaudible] on the, that was on the Saturday night or a Friday night Unified?

PW: I think it would have been on the, I don't know I think it was the Friday

KJ: I think it was the Friday night so would have had all these college students filling up and they take a bar take every year and they mainly sell tickets on the night and um, there's always a bar there and a band on, great gig. Every year I think they raise about two or three hundred pound for charities which is great right. It's got all these musicians giving their time for free all this, that and the other, great. This was on the Friday, on the Thursday, they went right we're not having a bar tomorrow we haven't got an alcohol licence anymore. Like whoa, whoa, whoa ,whoa, whoa, what do you mean anymore? We haven't, can't do it. They did have an alcohol licence, they had a DPS there, Janine Smith was their DPS, designated premises supervisor.

PW: Still is.

KJ: She still is? All she needed to do was say, you can work on the bar, you can work on the bar and you can work on the bar. 6 months previous to this staff had been approached by their then manager, who's gone now Damien [inaudible] he had gone, right Janine wants everybody to do alcohol training and they were like oh right okay, it's not [inaudible] right, when they [inaudible] yeah alcohol and bar training

AC: Oh.

KJ: It's compulsory! [inaudible] yeah bar training is it compulsory? No it's not compulsory you don't have to do it, oh right okay well do [inaudible] the ones who had looked into it and went, hang on a minute this isn't bar training this is training to become like a DPS or a licence holder, I don't want to be a licence holder for this place because the licence holder Janine didn't want to be the licence holder when she realised

AC: She was trying to get rid of it?

KJ: She was trying to get rid of it because it creates problems when it becomes a Designated Premises Supervisor and if somebody's served under age or anything like that you're the one that's in trouble so um, I asked do I have to do it? No, a female member of staff went to them and said do I need to do it, no wait until all the boys have done it then you can do it. I thought that doesn't make sense in itself so this, this

PW: Can't write this can you?

KJ: This is the day before and none of the staff bothered to do training so um

PW: You won't have a bar

KJ: You can't have a bar.

PW: The college evening was ruined because they stuck their foot in the ground, stubborn...

KJ: And what's happened is a text went out to all the people who are going there's no bar here!

PW: So nobody turned up

KJ: Nobody turned up

AC: Great

KJ: The 2,300 pound they normally make for charity they didn't make

PW: They lost money actually

AC: The bar [inaudible] open and could have all gone ahead yeah?

KJ: It's still perfectly legal...

GM: It's active sabotage, it's not accidental... it's active...

PW: Instead of making money for the charity they lost to pay the headlining band, they were [inaudible]

AC: So did they use that experience then oh we're not going to go, do that ever again because we lost money on...

KJ: I don't think the college, I don't think the college will do it...

PW: I know for a fact that they wouldn't use Redhouse again to a Unified gig next time they do it they'll do...

GM: The last time they had a gig, a Beatles Mania gig with all different college musicians taking it in turns playing Beatles tracks, that was two weeks ago in The Crown, that's where I saw them...

AC: And that would have normally been in Redhouse?

GM: Redhouse.

PW: They completely destroyed it. They have absolutely destroyed it as a music venue [inaudible] it's an arts venue, that's what it's for [laughs]

AC: So what do you think the Trust and Redhouse can, something that can fix this. If you lived in an ideal world and could change it all...

PW: This sounds awful, the Trust need to go

GM: Yeah

PW: It needs to be dismantled

KJ: It's just not working, it just doesn't work

PW: Perhaps the Trust is a good idea, but the manager's they got in place just don't know how to run it.

GM: The thing is I realise the need for councils to put things into Trust. As a Trust what you can do is you can apply for funding which you couldn't as a council

KJ: Yes

GM: So it makes sense to have the Leisure centre, the libraries, museums

PW: Yeah, yeah [inaudible]

GM: They can apply for funding and grants [inaudible and laughing] but that only, that's great but because the council effectively hand control over they got no control over what is delivered and relying on people as we know are completely unqualified to deliver the very thing you've charged them with delivering

PW: Yep

GM: They don't deliver any leisure the leisure centre is on the verge of just falling down it's ridiculous.

AC: I've heard people saying they've pulled their kids out of their classes [inaudible]

GM: It was very shocking, you've got um, the rest of the Trust y'know is falling on its knees because there's no money to go around, it's completely, completely mismanaged.

KJ: They got core principles, they got seven core principles uh within the Trust, one of them is, sort of, be open, honest and engage with its users, its service users. So when the letter, our open letter went out, that's what we were mainly calling for, one what's your [inaudible] policy? Because [inaudible] policy and who are you accountable to? And, um, what's the plan basically y'know let's have a bit of open, transparency, let's have it, let's have this discussion that you promised us, took away from us [inaudible] a couple of days before, we [inaudible] the people [laughs] let's have a discussion about it. Every step of the way it's been ignore, ignore they'll go away, they'll go away. *[It seems that the core principles are not being met, in particular transparency and engagement with service users and it appears ignorance is the chosen approach]*

PW: The chief executive actually said that to me one evening, these people on the internet if you ignore them for long enough they go away.

AC: Well that solves everything doesn't it.

KJ: Yeah.

PW: That's their attitude.

GM: I've got a good friend who is one of the elected councillors in Merthyr and she's tried to get them under the scrutiny panel scrutinised their spending, scrutinised what they're doing and delivering things they're supposed to be delivering and they have blocked every single attempt. Then they came in finally [inaudible] came in and then they decided they weren't going to have any discussion with the public gallery, so the public were thrown out of that meeting, and behind closed doors they said we only

got half an hour but we got a little presentation first that took twenty five minutes and y'know the councillor said this is not scrutiny, this is not going to go down on record as being part of the scrutiny you will have to come back, and so far they haven't been back. [inaudible] It's a quasi-sort of um sort of self-entity it doesn't really exist in the hierarchy of local um politics.

AC: It seems to be a law unto itself...

GM: Well it's based on trust you trust a bunch of random people to look after and put interest for some of the buildings arts, culture and leisure whatever and you got no control over it because the, the directors change continually

AC: I noticed that when I looked at companies house

GM: Yeah, it just changes continually...

KJ: We had, in the past...the past six months so we had Jan, then we had Leanne and now they haven't got a chairperson, four trustees and they haven't got a chairperson

PW: They haven't got one have they?

KJ: No

GM: They have to it's law

PW: To run it yeah, yeah

GM: So it's a race to the bottom at the moment and I think the only way to save the Redhouse and save the arts, [inaudible] took back by the council

AC: Which is what I was going to say

GM: Which is a vastly better option than where we are now, I don't think it's the ideal option, I think the most ideal option is to have a cooperative

AC: Cooperative

GM: And in that way it can be exactly managed from underneath

AC: Yeah, yeah

GM: Give a John Lewis product y'know, everyone is involved, everyone is a stake holder and that's when things fly

KJ: Yeah

GM: If you feel part of it, this is my Redhouse y'know that's where things will fly. Every time it's done it works.

PW: People become complacent when they know that they got their wages every month. [

AC: I think that's what this person was on about when I touched on the trickle down [inaudible] just chucking money and nobody cares.

PW: Nobody cares.

GM: That's right, there's no outcomes, measurable outcomes.

PW: It's very easy to spend other people's money isn't it.

AC: There's a lot of middle management that get paid and they move [inaudible] the people who are service users don't tend to [inaudible].

KJ: The managers they had in the Trust itself, they had um, the same... two at least isn't it, they had those 2 jobs, they've been changing jobs, so one, one was head of libraries, then she was head of culture, then she was head of Redhouse then she was back head of culture

AC: Was this Sally?

PW/KJ/GM: Janine Smith

KJ: Um, Wendy who was, y'know, what was she, she was something to do with the leisure centre...

PW: Life guard then she became something with the [inaudible] finance manager [laughter] business development manager

KJ: Back then as head of culture? [inaudible]

PW: It's nuts absolutely nuts.

KJ: On the same lines I said to you earlier, on the same model I did a forward roll, amazing at it so now I'm in charge of gymnastics for the entire area d'y'know [laughter]

GM: Right, what strikes me most about the um the jobs [inaudible] is that people are not even interested. Mark has got a record of saying I couldn't give a shit about this art stuff, I don't understand any of it, y'know, this is the man that's been put in charge of our only arts and culture centre in Merthyr.

AC: Can they promote him somewhere else [laughter]

GM: Oh yeah, they will he's one of the council so they will [laughter]

PW: We had a de-brief after a pantomime right, they booked a pantomime in and the pantomime they booked in was absolutely dreadful right, artistically it was, it was rubbish [inaudible] it was rubbish. So, we had a de-brief after and I was like give my opinion with my experience told them what I thought of it and um, asked Mark what his opinion was I haven't really got an opinion, I don't, it don't really bother me, right, I said in front of his line manager, Mark can you tell me what does really interest you? Janine Smith being his line manager, said cans and anything with four legs that's what he likes. Meaning he likes to walk his dog and he likes to drink his cans of lager [laughs] [inaudible]

AC: Struggling to get jobs...[inaudible]

KJ: This is what's really been cutting and hurt and there's people, a hell of a lot of people in Merthyr who are really good or are trained. If they haven't done their three years,

four years, five a year of university training will do what [inaudible] they done ground sort of training

AC: Yeah

GM: Absolutely

KJ: And we're cut off completely, no-one will listen to us and it feels like and I say just...

GM: There dare not have anyone in the Redhouse who knows anything about what the Redhouse is supposed to look like because they will highlight their failings. They want [inaudible] it's group-think they don't any outside influence that, that goes against what they think is right. It's like a little cult

KJ: Yeah

GM: Right, oh we can't have him in, he knows what he's doing, get him out, we'll have, we'll have a couple of life guards [laughter]

KJ: Couple of librarians

GM: We make a joke of it, but this is where we are.

[Inaudible]

KJ: And you know they're operating, like I said under insolvency at such a major loss, their CEO is still getting fifteen hundred pounds a week! Doing three days...

AC: I was going to ask how much are these people getting paid?

KJ: [inaudible] we know she's on 500 pound a day

GM: It's big money

KJ: But they can't afford to put ah bar staff on, and they can't afford to send their staff on training. Basic, basic training like food hygiene training, fire training things that really need to be done to look after that building, to look after the people that are using it as well. It's a serious health and safety issue.

AC: They must have core funding because they are being paid right? Themselves, I mean is there any way around it? Could they take a cut and there'd be more free money y'know...

PW: Well that would be the sensible thing to do innit really?

AC: I know I'm probably pointing the obvious out...

PW: Because it's failing okay, we need to look at this and instead of cutting form the bottom [inaudible]

GM: Put some new middle management in [inaudible] last year and it was just before the end of the financial year so they were submitting their books, not the books but um a generalised book [inaudible] to the council um in the chamber and the person running the scrutiny and said now look in this report you've given us you want to put 6 other um 6 new roles when you're telling us you're losing money, these 6 new roles

come to something like 400 million a year right, this is middle and upper management right. We are not happy giving you money because you are running at a loss, again like they do every year, while you are still, which it looks like from the outside, feathering your own nest and putting people in, in big jobs. They had their solicitor there and they called for a recess and he demanded to speak to the leader of the department of the council, the leader of the department of the council told the head of scrutiny she must withdraw that question because although this is scrutiny they are not to tell the Trust how to run their business. So, they had to give the money and I think the jobs were given, the jobs were made.

KJ: Yeah, and of course all of those jobs that were made, were um [inaudible]

GM: What do they term it? Cash generating jobs [KJ: Yeah] so they pay for themselves, right, so, that's what happened last year, and their legal team went absolutely crazy when in scrutiny they were asked why they are spending money that nobody could see any sense in why they're still begging in a bowl for money from the council to bail them out.

KJ: The job descriptions themselves, when he went through the job descriptions, the majority of them were copied and pasted from other places. So their marketing manager

GM: This is hilarious, listen to this

KJ: Um, the marketing manager had to act as brand guardian ensuring all communications created for w@m, wellbeing @ Merthyr are dear to the brand supporting w@m overarching marketing initiatives contributing to projects across as brand manager, messaging blah, blah all nonsense, because it's copied and pasted directly from the Barbican in London and copied and pasted so badly...

GM: But sometimes the Barbican can appear in the job...

KJ: It does the one that appears constantly is...

GM: They just need to take it out, all...

KJ: This is so...

AC: It's incompetent isn't it?

KJ: This is for the um, one of the jobs here was for the, the park, in Cyfarthfa Park, I think it was the, somebody was a, park manager or something like that so you need work with the premises, health and safety managers to ensure all aspects of health and safety of Margam Park

AC: Oh dear! [laughter]

KJ: The emphasis on accreditation in the OHSAS 2000 [inaudible] for a start that doesn't exist the OHSAS 2000 standard doesn't exist. You also had to look after the animals in Margam Park [laughter]

AC: Just... I don't know what to say...

KJ: But when they're pulled up on it it's ignored

GM: Yeah it's completely ignored...

AC: That's really showing, if I wrote anything like that in my paper I would fail my doctorate that's it you just can't get away with stuff like that. I just can't get my head around that they are getting away with that.

GM: They exist without any scrutiny. The way the Trust has been set up, and this is the fault of the old Labour council who put them in Trust, they didn't really tie them down enough in the contract, so part of the SLA that they had, it was so opened ended that it didn't allow direct scrutiny of the Trust from the council

AC: Can that ever get revised?

GM: Well I don't know when the SLA is up and then you can look at it again. [*Enabling a lack of transparency?*]

AC: It depends on this SLA then...

GM: Yeah, the [inaudible] put that in, that's where it came from it was the um it was the administration at the time who put together the SLA with the Trust, they just had no idea. I guess why would you? Y'know they had no idea just how bad things could be.

AC: When was this, when was this SLA?

KJ: 2015? 2014? It was around that time yeah.

AC: Is it reviewed every five years, ten years?

KJ: Not sure? When I spoke with Sally I said about, about the Redhouse [inaudible] because the Redhouse is different because it's owned by Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, it's not leased from them, it's not leased from the council. When I spoke to her, she said we're tied into this place for thirty-five years and if we want to get out of it, we gotta buy the place and we can't afford to buy it. I said who signs a contract like that? You don't sign a thirty five year lease! That's insane, and she said well that's what it is I can show you the proof.

GM: I think that's the Trust's agreement with Merthyr Tydfil Housing [KJ: Yeah] not the SLA with the council.

KJ: Merthyr Tydfil Housing when you speak to them, they go we, it's not thirty-five years but I can't tell you what it is but it's not thirty-five years.

AC: They can't tell you what it is?

KJ: Yeah [laughter and inaudible]

GM: Don't forget though Merthyr Tydfil Housing is ah is a public body they look after all the council houses in the borough. The Trust is a public body that spend public money and the council is directly elected for us all. All of those should be transparent, all, all of those should be pulled into scrutiny and asked questions, not just by the council but by the public. There should be public y'know meetings raised

KJ: Oh yeah

GM: Now none of this happens and the SLA doesn't require that any of these things happen so we're kinda stuffed, we can't even do a FOIA on anything on the Trust

KJ: That's right

GM: Freedom of information act...

KJ: We tried and tried and tried, I've spoken to, I've personally spoken to the CEO of the Trust, have spoken to the CEO of the Housing Association, I've spoken to our AM. I have spoken to numerous councillors and all of them are sort of going... don't really like to say [laughs]

AC: I did find out of the minutes of meetings, I did find some online, but they were all blacked out

KJ: Yeah, yeah

AC: So I mean is that the norm?

GM: Yeah, yeah, they don't have to give any information away.

AC: Or there was a meeting, just...

GM: There was a meeting yeah, and nothing specific...

KJ: [inaudible] papered then so they are going don't tell anybody...

AC: I mean for something like the arts it's not like it's um about victims of trauma

GM: No, no

AC: Y'know it's not a sensitive issue.

GM: What is it they're protecting?

AC: Yeah

GM: What is it they need to hide behind I don't know a wall of information. There's, there's definitely a wall where, where they exist behind it. We kind of get fed little bits every now and again but nothing else behind that wall.

KJ: You can't help but think then, you sort of go [inaudible] then...

AC: Mistrust really

KJ: Yeah and like I said the mental health side of it, it's not good for your mental health, the amount of sleep that you lose over this, trying to work out exactly what's gone on. I think that's why people then go d'y'know what I give up, I just give up [inaudible] like, ruin it [laughs] then you get a kick then, no, no [inaudible]...

AC: I have heard that they are going to put some bands on, Florence Black?

GM: What's happened is because now from massive pressure due to the

KJ: Because of the letter!

GM: So what they've done they've employed one of the councillors Lee to be ah freelance events manager. Ah and he's putting some events on and I've no doubt they'll be successful and make money, completely disproving their earlier y'know words on this so... I don't think he's the best man for the role but I'm glad that someone is doing something for it because what it will do is prove that it can work as an arts centre

AC: So it's contradicting what they've been saying

GM: Exactly [inaudible] the problem is as soon as they employed um, err, Lee they though all scrutiny of them would go away from the council 'cause the council have been very critical of the Redhouse but of course by employing Lee they've kinda side-lined that, they're not going to criticise one of their own right? But what they haven't banked on is that Lee's probably going to make a success of this [inaudible] y'know what you could have been doing this years ago, what's wrong with you? I hope he makes a success of it, he's not the right man for the role but I think he'll have a go of it, and I think y'know it could work, um, and it needs to work because we haven't got anything.

AC: Yeah, I mean is this gig going ahead because Lee is available on weekends

GM: Yes, exactly, that's the difference, that's all it is... they just found someone freelance a couple of hours of weekends and Mark can turn his phone off and be down the caravan with his cans and that's literally what is going on.

AC: Absolutely insane, um lastly then is there anything else you'd like to add, anything you think I could use or tie in?

KJ: Laughs

AC: An article at some point I can feel it [laughter] [inaudible] is there anything you can add to that y'know about relationships or musicians, council, Trust, Redhouse...

GM: I think it's important that councils realise that they cannot throw money at the arts and expect art to happen right, and creativity to happen. It must come from the bottom, all great art comes from the bottom, people through experiences become great painters, poets, musicians, you've just gotta provide a base for them to show their art, whatever that art is. So, the role of local government and, and local venues is just to give people a space, that's, so a place where they can go to display their art that's not going to cost them an arm and a leg and they get support if they want to put an event on. That's all, we're not throwing money at anything y'know not pretend to have this y'know creative 2020 and we put a million pound in it gets eaten up by middle management nothing trickles down it makes no difference to anybody at all. Just build it and they will come, it's as simple as that. *[The open letter from Save Our Redhouse appears to have pressured the Trust to employ someone to organise gigs and events on evenings and weekends. The person they drafted in is a councillor and the participants note that it's odd now that 'one of their own' is working there that the negative attitude of Redhouse from the council and others has stopped. It is reiterated that throwing money at the arts is unhelpful. Councils should provide spaces for creatives and it should be a bottom up approach instead of all the funding being eaten up by middle management]*

KJ: It's that support thing as well

GM: Yeah

KJ: If you're gonna have all these middle managers, great okay that's the way it is but for god sake turn up, turn up to these events, come and have a look at what you're actually doing, what we do here. I don't know how many things we've put on and there's been zero, zero support from any of the trustees

PW: No

KJ: And don't forget the trustees are volunteers at the end of the day. They're doing it 'cause apparently they are involved or are passionate about that, they're not even bothering to turn up. Then I question why they're there? [Laughs]

PW: It's an absolute us and them situation, that's the problem.

AC: It seems like...

PW: Yeah us and them, it's nothing to do with us we don't want to be bothered y'know. There's no support, there's no support there, it's horrible, horrible. [*Lack of support*]

KJ: And I think that passion side of things they don't [inaudible] creative, they don't, yeah, we are creative, and we are creative in a lot of ways as well, so if we want our voice heard we'll make it heard, in very creative ways [laughs]

GM: Yeah

[Laughter]

AC: Can I stop the recording?

GM: Yeah that's good...

Interview with Rachel Clements and Sean Williams, 27-08-2019, participants' home, Merthyr Tydfil @6.30 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

RC – Rachel Clements, SW – Sean Williams, Participants

AC: Right so, the first question um, and feel free to speak whenever you want to speak it's fine, ah, what music do you like?

RC: Ooh that's really difficult [laughter]

AC: Yeah, it is really difficult.

RC: Mostly anything but country, I'm not a, I'm not a country lover um, but I like music that's got good singers, 'cause I sing [okay] if the music doesn't include somebody with a good vocal it doesn't interest me much [you don't like instrumental music?] not particularly, but I do like a bit of the old classical from years ago when I was a kid type of thing but no, it's mostly, my favourite would probably be rock music [okay] yeah.

AC: Okay, what about you Sean?

SW: Um, again it's difficult isn't it but um [it's a hard one] again m, mainly based in rock music but um obviously I like, I'm saying obvious but it's not obvious is it [laughter] um, but um, y'know I listened to a lot of classical music when I was younger and I still appreciate classical music but I don't listen to it that often anymore. But lately I'm having a kind of, probably a middle age crisis and I'm listening to a lot of mid to late 80s um, metal so I'm going back, back I think lately [like a renaissance] yeah, yeah, [inaudible] I love, like certain um, progressive rock bands like Yes, I don't like other progressive rock bands like Genesis or Marillion but I like Yes, I appreciate like good ah, good song writing, um, good musicality, I'm not really into all the sort of although I appreciate it, all the guitar hero stuff y'know the sort of y'know um the ah the, the amazing solos, I'm more into structures and songs and, and, and things like that really but, mainly rock, really, for me, yeah.

AC: So what sort of music um, when you were performing as well [RC is currently not in a band] um, what sort of music were you playing? Are you? Were?

RC: Oh my god [SW- you talk] okay. I mean when I started it was cabaret [okay] um, you were second fiddle to the bingo player, um, but it was literally um, old standards, the big ballads and whatever you could manage to do that was in the charts [okay] in bands initially, then solo when things changed, then I went to backing tracks I gave up the solo stuff then but um, last couple of bands have been sort of rocky but not heavy rock so there'd be a lot of synthy stuff involved [is that covers then or...] all covers, I've never done anything original [okay] which is a shame I never put pen to paper, never in my life [yet I suppose...] well yeah but I've always had one of those big voices so I did used to do big songs which toned down a little bit in bands because it's about everybody but still um, yeah, ah, yeah even like the Whitney Houston things and all I used to do and ended up in the last band I was in singing The Who and Led Zeppelin [ah okay] so it ranges that much y'know.

AC: Okay, what about you Sean?

SW: Um, shall I just do it chronologically? Is it? Is that better? Or do you just want to know what I do now? [what you do now yeah] well, I, I'm cover, mainly covers now um, it's ah heavy rock band [is that Celtic Pride?] yeah Celtic Pride more metal um they previous to me they released a couple of albums um, there's no record deal they funded it themselves and they sell them themselves y'know um, so there are original numbers in there um, but it's mainly sort of the pub circuit [do you play the originals?] yeah, we drop a few in each gig um, we got a couple of dates coming up November and probably early next year, spring next year with supports with bands in bigger venues but which have to be all original so, y'know we'll play their album for that [okay]

RC: Supporting Saxon...

AC: Oh are you?

SW: In March, yeah, yeah [where's that?] Patti Pavilion... in Swansea [oh yeah that's re-opened yeah] I'll give you the nod if you want to go to that Anne? [I wouldn't mind yeah, I'd like to see you guys...I won't go on now, but yeah] Okay [laughter][inaudible] it started out obviously, originally doing original stuff never wanted to do covers trying to get famous when you're a kid innit y'know and um with Lloyd obviously um, that was a thrash metal band

AC: What was that called again?

SW: I can't remember [laughter] that's how long ago it is um, but y'know we're twelve y'know and, I wanted to play guitar and 'en we met in the class in school and. And we said right what shall we do then, Lloyd said, I'll get, I'll get drums for Christmas and Robert Beecher said I'll get a bass for Christmas 'cause I already had an acoustic guitar, I said I'll get electric for Christmas and that's how we started the band. So um, so that was the first ever band and that was all originals that was all sort of y'know Slayer, Anthrax that kind of thrashy, late 80s thrash metal couldn't get a gig anywhere too young [yeah] heavy metal people hated us and the punks hated us 'cause we were in the middle [laughter] so we didn't play around here anyway. In Los Angeles but not here [laughter] and um, so that didn't y'know, it fizzles out dun it [inaudible] then I went to Liverpool and then gave up guitar got fed up with it um and um formed a techno ambient dance band playing keyboards, yeah in Liverpool, kinda like Aphex Twin [inaudible] that sort of thing [inaudible] and then I came back someone wanted me to join a band I said I'm not playing guitar anymore and they said oh right okay and I said I wouldn't mind having a go at bass uh 'cause I was fed up of guitar, I've played bass ever since, so yeah.

AC: Okay, so you'd say it's more covers than originals [Now, yeah] now.

SW: Oh yeah, totally for the last, before this band probably for the last eighteen years probably.

AC: Would you say that's, that's kinda the thing round here then, people want covers rather than originals round Merthyr?

SW: I, I, I, I think you'd get, it's always been the same really, when I came back from uni sort of twenty, twenty one and switched to bass [yeah] formed a band with my friend playing originals um, it's probably the late 90s at this point now, ah it was y'know originals we just didn't, you didn't get paid for doing them y'know. Y'know you'd go down to Clwb Ifor Bach or Metros as it was or you'd do show cases in London, there's no money in it [hmm] and they expect you to bring a crowd so, so the crowd

would pay on the door and pay at the bar so everyone's making money but you, you're not. Yeah so, to fund our demos and things we'd do the odd covers gig but it was only the odd covers gig, mainly we did it and didn't get paid. So um, so after that since I was about twenty-six, twenty-seven then when that stopped, we sort of had enough [yeah] played in, played in covers bands ever since then, and, and that's in pubs for a couple of hundred quid job y'know.

RC: I think it's very difficult for originals around here in Merthyr because people just want to hear the same repeated stuff over and over again [there's no money in it really] there isn't, I mean Sean even put together the most awesome Beatles tribute [yes...I remember that?] yeah, and to a point where he took every time, every little detail and they, they performed it exactly like that but even then without being a pro you couldn't get that up and running on the road properly 'cause there's not the venues locally, everybody's working y'know so when you're working I think it's difficult to push original stuff even if it is really good because I think the people in the valleys particularly just wanna hear, well the saying goes play something we know.

SW: I, I, I think though it's a lot, this is how difficult it was, 'cause it's still very difficult but it's a lot easier now than when I was a youngster in the mid to late 90s because now you can self-promote because you got the tools now, y'know internet, y'know all manner of things yeah social media [inaudible] yeah, yeah you spend two thousand pounds and you got a home studio y'know back in, in the 90s you, that, that just didn't exist, you had to go to a studio and pay a few hundred quid for a day and you could only afford a couple of days in a studio and um, and there was no self-promotion really, it was all word of mouth as you know and, and um, it was a gig, from where we were gigging on the unsigned circuit in Wales and a little bit further um, and you' get the odd showcase that'll take you to London or whatever put on with other Welsh acts or whatever, um, but apart from that, it was a massive, the step was, seemed like a cliff face really to get from where you were to just get in front of someone who could make a decision whether you were good enough to have a record contract or not you just couldn't, you just couldn't get to them, but it's easier now but still, in those days impossible, it was all, it felt like all luck 'cause we were the same sort of [inaudible] as the Stereophonics [yeah] and they had a great, y'know ignoring the talent for a minute but they had a great series of events that all came together at the same time and all of a sudden they got a record deal [yeah] the rest is history y'know. And there were lots of other bands just as good as them, some I would class personally a lot better um, um y'know, working in factories and offices now, they don't even play half of them anymore, instruments y'know.

AC: I mean do you think one of the limitations of like making music um, let's just stick to Merthyr for the time being um, is y'know like you said a lack of venues and lack of funding or money, people having money in their pockets and things y'know. What do you think of the, the limitations, for doing original music as well y'know?

RC: Yeah [SW: I, I oh go on sorry] I think originals is really difficult, we know a couple of local bands, Lee's in one of them, Philo Beddoe they doing a southern rock type of thing, um, y'know they might fill, fill a venue maybe once or twice a year but that would be it, d'y'know what I mean and their, their [SW: And they'd be putting that on, the band would put it on themselves] yeah, yeah [SW: so it wouldn't be...] [AC: Oh right so it wouldn't be related to anything...] [SW: No, no, no] [AC: No funding [SW,RC: No]] [SW: They get a hall and hope to sell tickets a lot of the time, I'm not saying [inaudible] but that's, that's what kinda happens with a lot of originals acts round here.

AC: So, [yeah] I suppose you're saying that um, they're, they're more autonomous than tribute or cover acts then really?

SW: Oh yeah definitely, [inaudible] 'cause you have to be, you're forced, you're forced to do it 'cause you can't, I can't think of any original venue in, round here, there might, there might be the odd one or two in Cardiff still these days but not, there is, there's nothing in Merthyr, you might be able to get into a venue for, for a night and that night maybe the night, because you put it on, y'know the band themselves will put it on [RC: Or they're supporting another act [SW: Yeah] Who's established just to get your face in front of their audience, but I think a lot of the time it's got...]

SW: There isn't an original venue, I can't think of one anyway...

AC: The Crown, they put originals on? Or is it...

RC: It, It, I would say 95% is covers.

AC: Really?

RC/SW: Oh yeah.

RC: They're doing a lot of tribute acts lately [right] they're bringing back a lot of, um, bands from back in the day basically that are now sort of still touring but not able to command that big theatre venue or whatever.

AC: Hue and Cry I think they were...

RC: Over in Jacs, yeah, exactly like that, I think The Crown are encouraging those sorts of things 'cause they're selling them out.

SW: Yeah, they've had a few names in The Crown [RC: Yeah] um but as Rachel said it's kinda like, they're on the, they're on the down slope then y'know, so they might've been, what's the guy that replaced Dickenson in Maiden? From Wolfbane, the singer.

AC: Oh god I know his face but I can't...

RC: Was it beginning with a B?

SW: Blaze Bailey, [RC: Blaze Bailey...] So he's been there, so obviously he's played [inaudible] he would've played stadiums, and he's in The Crown singing, so there's a couple...

RC: The guy from It Bites, what's his name?

SW: Oh yeah I can't remember his name [inaudible] so they got a couple, a couple of those y'know that have, they've had their big career and now they're just sort of doing smaller venues, but it's mainly, covers bands and tributes in The Crown [RC: Yeah], yeah.

AC: Okay, so, tell me a little bit about your um, your musical practices, I mean chip in either of you, or, um so y'know, where you rehearse, how you go about it, where you write um, [laughter in the background] I'm looking forward to this answer now [laughs] Where you perform and things, just everything mundane musical practices.

SW: Go on then...

RC: Oh, never mundane [laughter] musical practice is great because it lets you do things you'd never do in front of an audience and throw things around, if you'd seen us on occasion when we were Minnie's Chuff um, doing the brass parts with our vocals... what song was it? [SW: I can't remember? It might've been Shaft?] It was Shaft, yeah [SW: Shaft it was [laughs] Um, but it would normally be, we'd set up, we used to have a room in a pub which was great, downstairs in a pub [AC: What pub was that?] In the Royal in Treharris [AC: Oh so it wasn't in Merthyr then?] No, just outside [AC: Okay] Um, so we'd rehearse downstairs in there, they'd let us have the room, we used to leave our gear there so you always had a set-up it would be quick, you'd be in and I'd always end up driving, they'd um, all drink and, and this, that and the other [laughing in the background] but, no, but we would always come out of there with something good and that was the standard practice all facing each other in a circle knocking ideas about, y'know putting little medley's together, everybody had ideas for songs, they don't always work and they don't always work when you take them out there and then they get dumped. We might think they're great but y'know what I mean and that was the standard sort of practice for us but me currently it's every Wednesday night with the choir in a, in a hall, Beauford Male Voice Choir's ah place in, in Ebbw Vale [AC: Okay] and we try and keep order but it doesn't always happen but that's a lot of fun rehearsing with that. But you now [talking to SW] are now rehearsing in Lee's side room.

SW: Again yeah, so back to when I was twelve [AC: This place is next to his parent's house?] It's his parent's side room, so imagine this is his parent's house it would be that room there [pointing to the room the other side of the house] So, his mother, they've always put up with it haven't they so y'know since we were twelve we were in there, but we're only doing that now 'cause we need to learn, me and Lloyd in particular, learn their [Celtic Pride] album for these original, these, these supports but we don't rehearse ever, apart from that.

AC: Is that why you were laughing? [SW: Yeah, yeah] yeah.

SW: There's no rehearsals, when I first joined the band two years ago which is, that wasn't the plan, I was gonna have time off the same as Rachel but the boys said you should join, so I joined 'cause I knew we were finishing in this band [Minnie's Chuff] and um, I just y'know what, what's the set y'know what, what are you playing? I know some of the stuff, I've seen you a couple of times obviously and they were mates of ours y'know so he just, the guitar player just gave me a list and it's YouTube and just sitting in b'there and just listening to the song on YouTube which you may know but you don't know to play [Inaudible] They're all songs that you'd know but not necessarily to play. So I'd just sit in there, right that's the verse that's the chorus great, and I, and I went through the set and we played it and just went on and did a gig with them y'know but that's what we tend to do, just throw a song, what about this song boys? Yeah okay, right and, the problem we got is that they'll do, first of all they're tuned to E flat [laughs] so, y'know it's like ah y'know and it' like ah, you got your bass tuned to E flat and I go and try to learn a song on YouTube and it's in, it's in concert pitch y'know so [laughter] that's a bit annoying, but um, and they may do different versions, so they'll do certain Deep Purple numbers and it's like, we didn't have a keyboard player so instead of trying to do something else rather than ditch that entire section and not tell me, so I'll learn the song as, as was on the Deep Purple album and then we're playing it live and then whoa, hang on [laughs] what's this, oh we're not doing that verse we forgot to tell you! And I go ahh y'know so that happens on occasion but in general that's what I do, I, I, don't practice It's, I'm just lazy Anne [laughter] I don't practice, I never get my bass out, my bass is always in its case upstairs.

- RC: I mean I gotta say when we were doing, with Minnie's Chuff we'd get, we'd try and get things right, we'd do a lot of harmonies and we would spend hours, I mean how long did it tell, take us to learn Carry on my Wayward Son? I don't know how many rehearsals but [inaudible] when we got it right [AC: get those harmonies right...] yeah, it's, it's great then so it's worth, I love taking the time and effort and he needs things right 'cause he [inaudible]
- SW: But I hate rehearsing dun I [RC: Yeah] I hate that, I got band, I gotta go Monday again, ah I got band practice Monday, I dunno what it is I just hate rehearsing, I hate band, I just y'know, I like the... the end product but I don't like necessarily getting there [AC: Yeah] I dunno if I, I think it's because of doing it so young like, like yourself y'know I tend to, that element...my...traditional music ah experience having learnt things by ear and y'know stop start on the cassette or on the vinyl um, yeah with the trouble with the degree y'know um, I generally kinda pick things up quicker than most [RC: Yes, yes] the other people I'm in a band with, so I get bored really quickly and I just, that's what I hate I think y'know, just, it's done now but it's not done for everybody else so it, it's frustrating, so I don't like rehearsing [Laughter].
- AC: Um, [SW: And I'm lazy [laughter]] So, apart from The Crown and Lee's side, Lee's parent's side room is there any other resources in y'know places that you use in Merthyr for any of your musical activities?
- SW: Not, not from my perspective, it may be different for youngsters who are doing original stuff they may, y'know I'm not in that scene so I don't know but for just covers bands especially of bands of my age then no not really.
- RC: There's the Belle Vue, one pub in town they may have bands in once a month I think [AC: That's on Glebeland Street?] Yeah [SW: Yeah] on Glebeland Street, um Hardies the new place is opened it's got like a cellar in there and they've started having small bands they haven't got a big room but they got enough for maybe a three or four piece in there. Um, trying to think somewhere else where they do [inaudible] the odd little festival as well y'know [SW: There are a few pubs that'll have now and again-ers, so The Anchor, like Lloyd has done that with the, that acoustic band he, y'know him Alyn and Thomas [RC: Oh yeah] small little y'know 2 tops and everything is plugged in quiet, little pubs so there'd be the odd but nothing regular I don't think [RC: No] there's no...
- RC: Like Cefn Rugby Club used to have one once a month I think that's gone by the wayside.
- AC: Why do you think that has sort of diminished really that's sort of y'know want to get bands in?
- RC: I think, I think like Dowlais Rugby Club exactly the same, I think the, I know it sounds daft but staying in is the new going out for older people I think [AC: Yeah] 'cause I honestly believe that apart from the handful of pubs in Merthyr they don't cater for older people so for instance they have Rock at the Top which is a bank holiday thing they have twice a year in Dowlais Rugby Club [AC: Okay] with a line-up of maybe 5 bands on there it's full of youngsters and come 8 o'clock they're gone leaving a handful of the older people left for the rest of the evening um, and I, I just think that even if it's just 250 quid, 300 quid the venue doesn't find it sustainable they, they can't afford it, they make so little on a pint of beer, charge people to go in they've gotta guarantee then um, maybe at least a hundred people paying three quid a head to cover the band and then make some profit behind the bar and I think it did come to

a point in Merthyr where there were loads of places doing it, all at the same time without communicating with each other and saying well okay you put something on there four o'clock on a Sunday and we'll start ours at half past seven on a Sunday [AC: Hmm] so we can share the amount of people that's out there and I think they went wrong with that a little bit [SW: We used to say that all the time didn't we, why don't they talk to each other these landlords, they could say I'll do a Friday, I'll do a Wednesday, do a Saturday 'cause you're all getting, otherwise you're competing against each other for the same amount of people, the same audience, 'cause we used to do it with bands, the bands we used to know we'd, we'd say right they're over there this, on this Saturday right we, we won't, won't steal off each other if we could wouldn't we y'know what I mean, audience members y'know [inaudible] different week or whatever...

AC: You're saying a lack of communication between [RC: Venues themselves] actual venues yeah? [RC/SW: Yeah, yeah] okay.

RC: I think that contributed a lot to it to be honest with you...

SW: Now there's not really, like I was saying I can rattle off, it's really The Crown, you say the Belle but that's few and far between...

AC: What about the Redhouse, what's happening with that now?

SW: I dunno...

RC: [Intake of breath] It's struggling I think. I don't think their marketing did very well um...

SW: I don't think it's run very well from what I, I can...

AC: It's changed hands recently yeah...

RC: I think it has, that's all I'm seeing is that it's struggling I mean there's been things on there that I didn't know about until after the fact that I might've gone to [AC/SW: Yeah] But I do think as well though the way that they've done it out, it's just, it lacks any atmosphere, it's just four brick walls for that main part [AC: Okay] where they could've used the area maybe to create an atmosphere maybe a bit more intimate d'y'know what I mean instead of just a block stage...

SW: It, it is difficult 'cause the brief they'd, they'd walked into meant that that, the whole building thing had to be sort of multi-purpose so that central area there has to cater for a number of different things y'know it's not, if it was just that's the venue part of the building [AC: Yeah] they could've done a better job of that couldn't they 'cause it isn't really a good venue part of the building but it's not just used for a venue, it's used, a music venue y'know, so I think they've tried to do too much I think they could've, maybe they couldn't have, it's y'know, what they, what they've tried to do as well but, it doesn't, things like that don't normally work out very well when you're trying to do too much with the one thing.

RC: That happened with the Muni in Ponty [inaudible] an absolutely fabulous place for viewing and seeing everybody and that, and it just, haven't been able to keep it up. 'Cause you were supposed to be there later this year [SW: Um, October] yeah, it's closed. Again, another for original bands as well y'know [AC/SW: Yeah] um, 'cause they wouldn't necessarily have any cover bands in there, they'd be originals and things but, yeah I think it's...

- SW: I, I would say if you haven't got the audience then, then d'y'know what I mean it's supply and demand innit y'know if the audience isn't there the, the venues aren't gonna, either put things on or aren't gonna do anything at all, y'know they're just gonna stop doing it, and I think that because there were so many doing it, it kinda... fifteen years ago, it was like, nothing was happening, there were no bands round here, there was nothing, all of a sudden there's loads of venues and loads of bands but, and then it's come, there's still loads of bands but all the venues have gone y'know, so it kind, when I started, we started going to jam sessions back fifteen, eighteen years ago when I came back and like, I was the only bass player, now you go to jam sessions and there's about twenty five bass players y'know it's like and it is [laughs] d'y'know what I mean y'know so, so...[inaudible] it's great like but that's how it's changed y'know...
- RC: Live acts in the Cooler, 'cause we used to do Cooler on a Wednesday night they'd have a live band there and it would be full. I don't know what it's like now. No idea at all but um, and they'd book decent acts on the weekend but now it's simply a guy with CDs [AC: That's a shame isn't it] It's an awful shame.
- SW: Going on about the Redhouse um, speak to somebody of a younger generation in younger bands, they may have a completely different take on that. It's, it's not something that, is that okay, it's not just, it doesn't cater for what I do put it that way, but it might be supportive of, I don't know I'm, I'm not in that circle so I dunno...
- AC: It's whatever, your experiences y'know what I mean, we're all individual I guess y'know but [SW: Yeah]...
- SW: A good example of how it is would be both Celtic Pride I'm in now and Minnie's Chuff before that, um, probably played, played Merthyr twice a year, three times, three times a year maybe [AC: Yeah?] every other gig I did with Minnie's Chuff, I did with Celtic Pride is, is, could be all over the place y'know but very little in Merthyr.
- AC: Okay, so um, do you take on any responsibilities or roles, do you have sort of individual roles y'know when you're in bands like the Celtic Pride or whatever, y'know sort of um, booking, finances, I dunno are there any specific roles or do you just...
- SW: In Celtic Pride, yeah, I should imagine, yeah I should say, ah the guitar player Don does most of the bookings [AC: Okay] Um, not saying it won't come on, it could come on to any one of us and say can they do a date or whatever but mainly you'd be doing the booking, it's just the fact that he's, the band's been going a long time, he's a founding member, so he y'know people will talk to him basically yeah, he is Celtic Pride really Don...um, um me and Lloyd will handle sort of finances between us um, I'll keep a note, record of what we're doing um, [RC: Spreadsheet...] yeah I got a spreadsheet yeah [laughs] [AC: Are you showing off?] Yeah, [laughter] and y'know we put, we put a little bit of money away after every gig for, in the kitty for y'know [inaudible] we got a van and so, we, that'll go towards insurances and.. [AC: It's a band van?] yeah, yeah, [AC: Okay] so um, mainly so we can all drink but ah [laughter] yeah, so we, so we'll do that every gig we'll put some money away to, to pay for that [AC: Yeah] um, [RC: Pay for T shirts...] yeah, we got T shirts and things now and again.
- AC: You guys fund it all yourself don't you?
- SW: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah just from, from either from gig money that we put by or from our own pocket [AC: Really, and it's always been like that?] yeah.

- AC: Okay, um, how serious do you take your music making?
- RC: I used to take it in a band very seriously [AC: Yeah? Why's that?] oh yeah, I wanted to the best.
- AC: So you're practicing would be fastidious...[RC: Yeah, yeah].
- RC: I know we'd all have a lot of fun doing it but it would be fastidious to be right and the sound would have to be right, the performance would have to be right, I wouldn't beat myself up about it but I'm a bit of a perfectionist [AC: Okay] but, but I've always, for me it would have to be the best it could be, the best I could possibly do.
- AC: Would that just mean sort of y'know over and over driving that practice to get it perfect or...
- RC: Yeah, well we were pretty lucky in that 'cause we did so many different venues we had a batch of about twenty five songs that lasted us for years, we put the odd new ones in now and again but y'know we did have them down pat didn't we and I think, um, it wasn't as, as well as the music having to be good the performance had to be good 'cause it comes hand in hand together. You can be the best musicians in the world but id nobody wants to look at you then you could, may as well put a record on y'know [inaudible] that's how I looked at it, as a performance.
- SW: That's one of things with Minnie's Chuff because Rachel was the front person we could, they could, she'd do the visuals, we could just get, the music right and concentrate on the, we were a four piece just bass drums, vocals and guitar um but we wanted to do songs that, um, at face value you think no we can't do that 'cause there's only a guitar and bass doing the, the um y'know... the notes basically yeah of a song, so we'd try and work, set, no we will have a go at that we'll try and do it, and some days it works and doesn't work for instance we'll do a Yes number, there's no keyboard player in our band and we like Kansas when there's twelve or more on stage and however y'know so we, we'd, so we'd try and work out a way to do it so me and the guitar player were really busy, so it would be good she'd be out front giving it all the nonsense and everyone would look at her and we could con, so nobody looked at us really y'know too busy on pedals and [laughter] just trying to work out...
- RC: It was an attempt to do something different as well. Something maybe more challenging than a lot of the bands around the place doing covers, the songs are very throw away [AC: Hmm] they're songs where you can just sit down together in a room knock it up in two minutes [AC: Hmm] but we didn't want to do that, so we didn't do that, we did things... [AC: inaudible....a conscious choice?] Yes, very much so [SW: Yeah] and different songs y'know what I mean. There's nobody round here that would open up with Crosby, Stills and Nash y'know what I mean but we would do that and then we'd do Yes song and then we might do a Who medley and do something by Fleetwood Mac.
- AC: How did these go down locally? [RC: Brilliantly]
- SW: Surprisingly, when we, when we first started rehearsing these, I don't know, now this isn't y'know, 'cause we, 'cause we'd all been in lots of covers bands previously we didn't wanna come in and just do the standard stuff y'know, y'know the same thing everyone was doing before which was, which was y'know Mustang Sally and all the rest of that stuff, not that there's anything wrong with that, we just didn't want to do any of that, and then as we were starting to do it, a lot of bands started, you wouldn't

be able to walk into a pub without hearing Sex on Fire by a band or someone right, or, or something by Coldplay or something or whatever, or Muse. Noth, again nothing wrong with that but we thought no, we wanna do something different um, but we were rehearsing and [inaudible] how is this gonna go down y'know what I mean, we're doing, we're doing Carry on my Wayward Son here like y'know...in a pub! How is this gonna go down, or Yes like y'know.

RC: Kashmir [SW: Kashmir Led Zeppelin]

SW: Y'know so, how is this gonna go down but, it was really weird 'cause it did really go down well, all of a sudden you see these bands that we know would be in the same place we would've seen them and we'd know them or whatever they'd, you'd see them dropping in odd songs, you'd think ah [RC: It's a compliment] yeah, not maybe [inaudible] the songs we were doing but, in the same kinda [inaudible] vain, yeah, yeah, so, which was good, it was a compliment but ah, but yeah, it was, it wasn't at first like y'know [inaudible].

AC: So what happened to Minnie's Chuff? Why did it end?

RC: Um, [sighs] it's a complicated story... [SW: Musical differences] [laughter] ultimately, ultimately the guitarist threw a full wobbly, toys right out of the pram and said that I don't want to do this anymore right in the middle of a gig because, of, our complaints about the sound [SW: He also did the sound, 'cause he's, that's his, that's his career...] so, the PA grew but nobody could hear me [SW: and his guitar grew and he miked up as well] so it was really y'know very difficult, I mean we had a great run, 7 years is a great run for any band [AC/SW: Yeah, Yeah] He did throw a wobbly um, and the drummer then who had, I know it sounds daft, had a new girlfriend and he was so loved up he just wanted to be with her all the time, smash his face in [chuckles] um, so it went a bit like that. I coulda put it back together because I know there would've been lots of people that would've loved to have joined it, even though it was just me and Sean, but y'know, after what you were saying, getting bookings, looking for gigs, [SW: She did everything see for that] yeah [SW: She was the main person booking, marketing everything] I did everything, and, I got to a point where I thought no I need a break, because it can be all consuming, 'cause I'd sit in front of the key, computer looking for opportunities for gigs, for hours on end y'know I'd ring, I'd ring them up on a Saturday afternoon say, can you do tonight? I've got us a gig. That type of thing. So um, yeah it was just, maybe it had just run its course Anne I dunno?

SW: I find they tend to don't they, there's always like a life span of a band y'know [AC/RC: Yeah, yeah] it's always seven, eight years max innit y'know [RC: Yeah].

AC: Unless you're The Stones [SW: Yeah, or Celtic Pride, or Fleetwood Mac, they just keep changing members. [Laughter] Y'know [RC: Very much so].

AC: Um, so, we kinda touched on this but, y'know, what motivates you to continue doing this, you said y'know not necessarily making any money out of it so it's not a financial [SW: No] benefit really.

SW: I probably, not so much now but in Minnie's Chuff I'd spend more behind the bar than I would earn [laughter] which is, I don't know what that says about me [RC: That's completely true] but, but, yeah, but um, Celtic Pride not so much even though they're known as the big drinking band, y'know they're puppy dogs compared to Minnie's Chuff but um, but still it's, it's not, you don't earn any money y'know it's, it's just...

AC: What's the motivation then?

SW: Um, I love playing music, I love playing with other people, um, and, and I like, I like the live thing because you, you can, anything can happen and some, sometimes it, something happens is amazing, and sometimes you do something and then it's like it's awful but I like that, I like the fact that you could, you're playing the songs, you're playing old standards whatever it is but you can do something different with it you can bring something of yourself to them even though they're covers and sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't, but when it works it's like, it's like a drug so [inaudible] I don't like rehearsing but I don't, that doesn't mean I don't wanna play when people aren't watching me, I, I don't care if the pub's empty I just like playing in a, in a, in a live environment. The thing about rehearsing is, I find it boring 'cause you just go over the same things all the time for about three hours so, yeah, it's about that. It's about making music, playing with other people um, and, bouncing off each other as well y'know, so I may bounce, I may bounce off the guitarist who'd do something and y'know we'd have a bit of a laugh and it might be different the next time then y'know so that's what I like about it.

RC: I mean it's so much fun, I just like to sing, I just would love to sing all the time. I miss the performance side of it though, very much so, because um, the more you give, the more you get, and to see an audience in the palm of your hand basically, just, y'know sort of hanging on to every word you say, when you try and be a bit funny like I always used to do, um, I miss that very much and I just like the [inaudible] joined the choir just to keep singing, just to keep singing [AC: That's cool]

SW: We used to laugh in Minnie's Chuff because um, our guitar player had been in, no offence, being a lead guitar player [laughter]

AC: I'm a classical guitar player [laughter]

SW: So you can imagine what, well you will know, more than anyone else what I mean by lead guitar players [laughter] he thought every, everyone's here to see me especially the women, and um, and what was really funny was all the women were stood in front of Rachel like that and we'd have all the anoraks, blokes straight in front of us going what's that pedal you using there butt? What, what, what lead, what leads do you use and like oh it's a long one with a rubber coating and two metal bits, remember? Every, so we'd have all the anoraks and she'd have all the women, it was really funny we used to laugh so much about that.

RC: We did laugh, but, but like y'know what I think it is, they all wanted to be me [AC: Yeah, yeah] nothing, y'know I wasn't anything brilliant I just a singer in a band but the fact that I got the balls to go up there and do it, they all wanted to be me y'know and after the gig, oh I wish I could be like that, wish I could sing, I wish I could this, so many people would love to do it and I just think I'm really lucky, being able to do it and have a talent.

SW: Whereas I get, oh what strings are you using butt, what gauge and I'm like oh [inaudible] yeah long silver ones butt, it's the shiny ones see b'there [laughter].

AC: Um, so where do you find the time to make music y'know, I think you're working for the council, so that's full time yeah? [SW: Yeah] and [RC: I also work full time] in the council as well? [RC: No, no I work in ground works and civils company me and my son run] Okay, is that with Lee? [RC: No, no]

SW: He does the same thing though, similar thing.

AC: Ah right, okay.

RC: But we own it, well my son owns it [laughter] so groundworks and civils but I still work, work four days a week now.

AC: Okay, so how do you work your music around that? 'cause y'know it's full time work isn't it.

SW: I, I well because they're covers gigs they normally happen on weekends ah Friday night, Saturday night or Sunday night [AC: And you don't rehearse so...] don't rehearse, so I just turn up, so the van just stops there and it's get in so ah and we do it and they drop me off at the end [laughter] no and so, it's y'know it's, Friday's can be, [RC: Fridays can be tight] sometimes 'cause y'know you finish work especially if you gotta, the gig is a fair distance away um, then y'know you're in and you're out but generally it's weekends y'know so it doesn't really [AC: It doesn't matter?] It doesn't matter. It, the only thing that mattered to me was, the, if it, if it was y'know if the gig dates were heavy then sort of y'know you work all week and you'll have a gig Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday and you're back to work on Monday, that was, after a while that took its toll, but at the moment, what I'm doing at the moment it's no, it's sort of 3 or 4 a month, so y'know I got two weekends off now so, with nothing, so, it suits me now, [AC: That's good] y'know.

RC: It's a night out playing music basically.

SW: [inaudible] I don't go out, I don't go out. My going out is, going to a gig, a couple of pints we'd have a laugh with our mates we'd be playing, so I don't tend to go out, do we?

AC: I'm the same, unless I'm gonna see a band I don't really go anywhere.

RC: It's gotta be about music, just to go and sit in a pub does nothing for me at all [inaudible].

AC: Absolutely. Um, so what of anything limits what you guys do, ah regarding doing music around here? If anything, there might not...

RC: Tricky one for me, I, I do think um, the band we were in together, Minnie's Chuff um, the price we charged limited us because we would sort of it's not a lot of money, we'd go out for a minimum of about £300 a night. Whereas there's lots of other bands around here who are doing one fifty, 200 pound, so there were only a certain amount of venues that we knew we could call upon because they knew we'd bring a crowd in and they'd pay us the money, but other than that, I don't think we were limited at all were we?

SW: That, that, sit, situation was um kinda natural really in as much as the, the, the, the landlord of the pub or venue, they guy that's running the venue or whatever maybe, um, it's not that they didn't recon, recognise value, so for instance there'd be new bands starting out, they may be young, they may be our age but they started out and a bit ropey and they, they go out for 150, 150 quid. We'd been going for a number of years, we were all established musicians before we were going so y'know um, and we felt that we were better, maybe better quality than certain bands [RC: Yeah] um, the, it's not they didn't notice that some maybe not noticed it but most, that wasn't in that equation when it came to [AC: Right, yeah, yeah] booking bands. If they could see like we'll have that band or I can have that band for half the price, I'll go with that

band half price. Value didn't come into it, or quality didn't come into it, I don't think it's in the equation that hurts then, so we were, we were trying to say to people no now don't go out, don't market yourselves 'cause what you're doing is affecting everybody else by going out for 150 quid. Now, none of us can go out for, y'know [coughing] twenty years ago we were getting two, three hundred quid a gig and we're still getting two, three hundred quid a gig now twenty years later. So, um if everybody [AC: Sorry go on...] if everybody did y'know, if people didn't try and [inaudible] bands to get, especially if you're new, you have to try and get your foot in the door, I'll undercut, we'll go on for nothing basically, 'cause it affects us 'cause the landlord [inaudible] I'm not paying you 300 quid, why? Because that band's... even landlords doing the old thing today which happened back in the day, ah the thing is y'know you're only a three piece, y'know I paid 300 quid for a five piece last week, I'm not paying 300 quid for a three piece. I'm like it's got nothing to do with how many members are in the band mate, [laughs] but they still do that y'know so, um we've had that recently but um, so I, I think it's because of course they're taking a risk as well you gotta appreciate what the landlord's doing they're taking a risk, what if nobody turns up. I'd rather fork out 150 quid [AC: Hmm] than 300 quid, y'know so, and that still happens.

RC: [Coughing] excuse me...

AC: Do you dictate to a certain extent how much bands, sorry venues pay you or do you kinda just have to go with whatever?

RC: I think, I got to know over the years exactly what every venue would pay, or what their limit was, and the type of band they wanted. Like Minnie's Chuff or Celtic Pride wouldn't suit every venue, 'cause a lot of the time they want to keep the kids in there so they'd want the younger stuff, they want the Killers, they want that sort of repertoire and we didn't do that, so we probably in the end started gigging less because of that reason [AC: More selectively?] yeah, yeah we didn't have a great deal of choice but we wouldn't want to go, we'd go to some venues and you be just y'know it would be the wrong place for us and we simply wouldn't go there again [AC: Okay] y'know that really didn't suit us and probably didn't suit the audience so we wouldn't go there again, we got our regular venues then, that we knew they'd have a good night and they'd appreciate what we were trying to do I suppose to being just a bit I dunno, throw away.

SW: Yeah, you probably got like ten. It's the same with the band I'm in now you had ten to fifteen venues that you know that's in the bag, so all you can do is get in touch with them, you know, you've played a gig here before, you go down well, you know they pay you what you want to pay and so you might get two or three dates off them a year, throughout the year and then the rest you make up with ones you [inaudible] you might not have done before and you try that one or they'll, they wanna try you y'know so yeah you do have your regulars that you kind of keep doing every year y'know [RC: Yeah] and they'll book you two or three times, but it could be either, it could be um [inaudible] what normally happens is you try it on with a venue first and y'know shout a figure out and they like oh and you meet, you meet somewhere on the middle y'know [AC: like a haggle kinda thing] Yeah it can be, can be, yeah. Um venues only pay you what they, what they wanna pay um, but as Rachel said the venues that you got in your bag you go to every year you know what they're gonna pay and it's just [RC: Yeah] you don't even talk money any more you just say can you give me, give me three dates and then we look in our diary and are these three dates alright y'know.

RC: And not necessarily in Merthyr you get places like a little pub in Taff's Well Fagin's, It's tiny [AC: Yeah] Do you know Fagin's [AC: Yeah] it's not much bigger than these

three rooms put together and we probably take a bit less in there 'cause we knew when we went in there it was gonna be magic because they loved the band, and that, y'know that influences a lot in where we played 'cause y'know it's nice to have a great night and know you're gonna have a great night, and they know they're gonna have a great night and that's the difference we liked those sort of places don't we [SW: Yeah]

SW: Yeah, but the same as the pubs not, they've got their ceiling price, we've got our bottom price as well as a band we won't go out for y'know 'cause [RC: Yeah] there's no point it's a five, this particularly is a five piece, we got a van um, to run so y'know there's a certain price that, nah we won't do that [AC: There's overheads...] yeah, yeah.

RC: Saying about work coming in the way, Celtic pride had a regular venue in Bargoed on a Sunday evening but they decided they wanted to put it on later on the Sunday evening and when you got a singer coming from Swansea that needs to get a lift and he's not gonna get in till 2, 3 o'clock in the morning, they've had to drop those gigs now 'cause they're simply too late on a Sunday night [AC: Yeah, yeah] y'know. It's all sorts of things interfere.

SW: [Inaudible] the thing I'm doing now, it's a hobby not a job y'know it is a hobby that you get a couple of quid for y'know um, but so it's y'know it's not life or death [AC: Yeah] it is frustrating, it is disappointing when things like that happen but then y'know you'll have some good ones as well so it's swings and roundabouts really.

AC: Okay, and last but not least [RC: Ooh] is there anything else you'd like to add?

SW: Don't give her that opportunity! [Laughter] she'll bang on about Brexit now you watch [laughter] [RC: Have a couple of drinks here and stay here all night] crack the vodka open now 'en.

RC: No, thank you for including us [SW: Ah yeah thank you]

AC: Thank you.

SW: It's nice to see you.

Interview with Rich Newsom, 30-08-2019, Telephone @ 1 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

RN – Rich Newsom, Participant

AC: Hi Rich, how're you doing?

RN: Not too bad, how are you?

AC: I'm alright thanks. Um, so the first question is what music do you like?

RN: I like a wide variety, there's no right or wrong genre for me. I, I don't like heavy stuff, I don't like heavy metal but um, yeah, anything that's got a good melody, um, I'm happy to listen to it.

AC: Okay, so what music do you play?

RN: Um, when I was in a band, um, we played, I wanna say pop but we sort of fell towards ska as well. Um, but I, I, I play [inaudible] as well so, a wide range really, pop, ska [inaudible] rock.

AC: So um, before I put the recorder on we were just sort of briefly saying that as well as an artist you're a promoter and you do lots of other things as well. Can you give me a bit more information on that?

RN: Well, yeah so basically, I, I helped out um, the Merthyr Rising Festival this year, so I was responsible for um, organising [inaudible] the stage, booking the bands um, making sure everything run smoothly over the weekend. Um, I'm looking now forward to putting my own gigs on under my own brand so yeah.

AC: And what's that called then?

RN: Um, I've not decided yet um, I'm not too sure?

AC: Ah cool, and where would you be looking at putting these things on in Merthyr?

RN: Ah there's many venues so, um The Crown is a good un, um, Merthyr Football Club would be... although you'd have to install a sound system. Um, [inaudible] I don't know to be honest with you there, there's loads of opportunities, there's loads of options so, just depends what it is and what fits really.

AC: And who else is involved with what you're doing at the moment?

RN: It's just me, I'm a lone soldier. It's, I mean well, I work full-time, ah outside of what I do. What I do outside of work is just a hobby at the moment but I'm trying to make it a, a career really, so, yeah.

AC: Um, do you rely on anyone else for sort of things um, that you can't do yourself maybe?

RN: As in..? Expand on that a little for me.

- AC: Um, wuh, it could be anything sort of, some promotion or just helping out with the mundane things like paperwork or finances and things like that.
- RN: To be honest with you, the only big promotion I done was when I helped out Merthyr Rising Festival this year so, um I didn't really do any paperwork. Um, my job was literally just sort of arranging the bands y'know speaking to the, the crew and the stage guys to out it all in place so I've never been in the position at the moment where I need to do all the paperwork. Um, it, it... fingers crossed be coming soon and ah who knows, maybe I'll need someone?
- AC: So what was your motivation for starting this and getting involved in this side of music?
- RN: Well, I was in a band called Upbeat Sneakers um and I got to the age of 24, and this, this is personal opinion, there's no right or wrong answer, um, but, but we got as far as we could in my opinion. We ended up playing with Madness in Cyfarthfa Castle, ah, we played with um, um Bad Manners twice, we played with The Beat twice I believe. Um we played Boomtown festival twice which is a major festival. Um, but for me at, at 24 I thought there was no way of us sort of progressing and getting to where I wanted to be in, in my career so I decided to [inaudible] the industry my knowledge and experience to um, help others really, that, that, [inaudible] opinion, younger and got more time to develop, to get them into a position where they can um, get to a better place.
- AC: Okay, so how do you stay in touch with artists, how do you um, sort of let them know what you're doing so you can help them out?
- RN: To be honest with you I'm only working with one band at the moment um, so I'm focusing on one band um, [AC: Who's that then?] Um, they're called The Now. Um so they're going really well. Um, they've just been offered a publishing deal actually, ahm for their latest single that's just come out so, um at the moment my priority is, is just, just the one band, but I am looking to expand but at the moment I'm thinking if I just focus on one, I get that cracked um, and things will get easier.
- AC: What sort of things do you do for the band?
- RN: What do I do? [AC: Yeah] Um, so I do um, bookings, negotiating fees for the boys um, and just sort of general admin. I look after the page, 'cause I do video as well um, I produce content for them. Um, I, I do live sound um, so I do some live sessions with them. I take photos for the band so... I'm responsible, everything, that's all I want the band to do is just be a band, go out on stage, rock and play really cool songs and be the best you can be y'know and I'll do everything else so. I'm responsible for posting on their page, make sure their content is up to date, make sure everything's fresh, everything's updated um, and the, and the boys [inaudible] can just be a band.
- AC: Do you think that like the role you've taken on, do you think that, doing those jobs for a band themselves can sometimes either make or break them?
- RN: To be honest with you I was, um, well there was two or three of us when I was in a band and I found that I was doing it for, for my band, um, it can make or break them but what you'll find is, if, if you're in a band um and you're doing it yourself you're not focusing on the music, it's detrimental to make sure that you, you're producing content otherwise if you're not fresh people aren't interested. Um, so yeah, it, it is detrimental at the moment.

AC: And that, you're saying online really yeah?

RN: Yeah, so I mean content is all online, that's where you're gonna sort of build your audience. Ah, secure fans in a, in a one way, you see there's really cool tools nowadays with Facebook adverts and um [inaudible] push to crowds potentially interested in you to get them to come to a gig.

AC: Okay, what sort of res, resources sorry do you use in the area? You mentioned The Crown, and, and things like that, is there any other resources that you draw on?

RN: Resources, yeah [inaudible] to be honest with you, there's not, um, we've, we've played the Redhouse um once which was pretty cool, the boys have played The Crown, um but that's just another day in the office. I mean in terms of resources anything we sort of need or rely on is [inaudible] equipment I have, the live sound I get from my amp and um [inaudible]

AC: How did you get all the equipment was it just gathered over time since you've been gigging or did you go out and get funding for it and buy it all in one go?

RN: I, I'm, I'm just one of these people who if I see something and I like it I'll buy it [laughter] all the equipment I got all the cameras, the sound desk and stuff I just bought it out of my own money.

AC: Okay, okay, um, okay. How serious, I mean you've already kinda answered this but how serious do you take this and what motivates you to keep going?

RN: Um, to be honest with you I'm, I haven't really focused on it, the moment with The Now guys I'm [inaudible] I'm in the negative in terms of mun, 'cause I put into to the boys to y'know to develop and, but fingers crossed we can be in a position within the next couple of months to be in a positive. Ah what motivates, I, I just get motivated by winning, I'm the type of guy that um, success is, is, is [inaudible] so y'know I, if I, I put my mind to something or if I'm committed to something um, what motivates me is winning really and coming out on top, that's, that's the honest answer.

AC: Um, so what's your definition of success in the music business then?

RN: Um.... For me, it would be getting the boys on a major record label and a , a major publishing deal. And for the boys I would want is them to be able to go any location in the UK and play to two, three, four thousand fans and have the words sang back to them, that would be success.

AC: Okay, and saying what motivates you, so financially you're not really getting any out of it at the moment what other things do you get out of it?

RN: Not, not yet it's a long haul um, but y'know I believe in the boys y'know I believe in the investment and only time will tell.

AC: So what other things do you get out of it other than money?

RN: A buzz, when the boys play a show and, and the crowd react to them. Um, I, I'd have a good crack with the boys as well. Um, but yeah, it, money is, ultimately when it becomes a, a business that's what it comes down to like, just like anything else you gotta invest in the start of something to let it develop so, it's a long haul game when you're working with bands.

AC: Yeah, and you said you're working as well, what do you do for a living at the moment?

RN: Um, I work for EE call centre, um I work in the retention department so I've been doing that for quite some time.

AC: Okay, so how do you find the time to do what you do as well as, y'know a full-time job isn't it.

RN: Yeah, I took a sabbatical going back, July last year. Um, it gave me the opportunity to build [inaudible] and get everything sort of running, I've just gone back part-time so it allows me, now everything's running, the time when I'm not there I, I can make sure things keep going. Um, and the time that I am there [inaudible].

AC: Okay, okay and what if anything limits what you do regarding aspects of music-making living in Merthyr?

RN: Sorry, can you repeat that question please?

AC: Sorry, yeah um so living in Merthyr working in Merthyr what limits you if anything?

RN: Nothing.

AC: Nothing at all?

RN: Nothing stops me [laughter] if someone comes onto this interview and says they're limited by something, well, I take that back, the only thing that may limit someone is the ability to travel, to, to play a show and having the, the funds to get there, however, anyone can learn to be smart enough to hustle and be able to play locally to get the funds and then travel it just about being smart to be honest with you as long as you're head's screwed on there's no limitations.

AC: Is there um, problems with like getting paid, so I've spoken to a few other local musicians....

RN: Sorry, you're breaking up a little...can you repeat that question please?

AC: Sorry Rich can you hear me?

RN: I can now yeah.

AC: Um, some other musicians have mentioned the lack of being paid especially for original music so it would be difficult to generate income locally, so have you got any thoughts on that?

RN: Everyone should be paid. [AC: Yeah] Everyone should be paid, um I, I think it's important, I think if someone comes up and provides a service and everyone should be paid. Whether it's an agreement with a band and they first starting outers and they coming to get a couple of drinks. It's like anything else when you first do something you gotta go out and show the world why they should pay you. Um, but once you done that then, then there's no reason not to be paid.

AC: So do you think, why do you think the pubs and venues locally only pay, or prefer to pay cover bands rather than original artists?

RN: Because the town which we live in unfortunately in, in terms of the music scene they're only interested in the big bands and the songs that they know. If you travel down the road to Cardiff um, which is, which is a great example or Bristol then there's sort of musos for a better word that um, uh like myself will, will pay five pound to go to a music venue just to hear a new band and hear something new. [inaudible] I'm keen to hear new music that I haven't heard before there's nothing worse for me going into a venue and hearing a band playing Sex on Fire [laughter] [inaudible] but y'know each to their own y'know, if that's what they like that's fine I just, in the town that we live in that, that may be a restriction for original bands who want to just spread their wings a little bit [inaudible] play what you want [inaudible]

AC: Yeah, why do you think that there's a difference between cities and little towns like Merthyr y'know?

RN: It's just different, if, if you, if you travel to Cardiff, have you ever been to Cardiff yourself? [AC: Yeah, yeah] Yeah so when you go to Cardiff you, you just feel it, soak it up the culture's different. Um, it, it it's just the way it is really um, the honest answer is I don't know why it, it's um, why it is that way? Um, but it is um but if you go into a city um and you go into a town, it's completely different, culture's different, um so my advice to original bands is play where you wanna be heard not where um you can get a gig really. It's pointless playing a show somewhere if no-one is listening. [inaudible]

AC: That's it yeah [laughs] Um is there anything else you'd like to add?

RN: Nothing really, I mean, I, I suppose my sort of take on things is um, there's opportunities for everyone, anyone can do what they want to do they just gotta [inaudible] how they're gonna do it, um, and that's everything really, that's my advice.

AC: That's great I'm just going to stop the recorder a second.

RN: That's no worries.

Interview with Rory Knight, 20-08-2019, Telephone @ 1 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

RK – Rory Knight, Participant

AC: Hiya Rory, how're you doing?

RK: I'm alright Anne

AC: Um, so you're first question then is what music do you like?

RK: I'm ah, ah I'm mostly to be honest with you I've not really been listening for the last few years listening to, there's only certain bands I've been listening to, modern bands really, music I've been into like sort of um, Bob Dylan, ah The Kinks, The Who, ah anything sort of old school, I've been more into the Beach Boys, um, [inaudible] there's only a couple of bands that I've really been into the last few years like [inaudible] new bands, well [inaudible] Catfish and the Bottle Men, other than that it's all a bit old school y'know.

AC: Okay, so what music, 'cause you play as well don't you, you're an artist...

RK: Um, yeah I, I have played, yeah um, I haven't played for the last few years down to like I was saying before it's ah work um, working away a lot and work commitments but yeah I've recently was playing in a band um, called the Oratorios which was a local band and after about 3 years then [inaudible] and started playing on my own, so I gave that a crack for a few years and obviously with work and everything that kinda took over so I had to sort of put the guitar down for a bit like but I am hopefully been ah, start picking it up a little bit more and y'know getting back to enjoying playing again y'know.

AC: Yeah, so you find work is quite limiting for your musical activities?

RK: Yeah, it has 'cause obviously ah, we, ah we don't really, how can I say it, it was, I was getting support off my Dad in like he was providing me with like sort of y'know money to get to gigs, transport, and he, y'know it's hard like sort when you're an unsigned musician to get along in the, y'know get along in the game really because y'know, you're not, you're not making any money out of it, not that I'm saying that's the point of doing it obviously the point of doing music is 'cause you love it but at the end of the day you gotta try and make ends meet as well haven't you, so [yeah] it's down to work which really why I stopped playing like.

AC: So, I spoke before I put the recorder on about you helping other bands out can you sort of go into detail about this, give me a bit of information...

RK: Ah yeah I can do, basically as far as helping other people out was um, my mate's Dad who was Tom McCarthy the guitarist from Pretty Vicious, um, when I playing, when I was playing a lot, I recorded over the EVI, do you know it in Ebbw Vale? [I've heard of it..] [inaudible] I was recording over there with a guy called Julian Gardener and um, when I was playing and obviously Pretty Vicious had just started a few, a few years ago now and um Tom's Dad Mark was um, he was just after a place for them to record so, with them it was just like sort of linking them up with, with the, with the studio in Ebbw Vale and like I can't really, y'know like I'm not like trying to ah, take any credit for what they done but it was my contacts that got them into a studio

where they recorded Cave Song and basically the rest is history for them b'there [yeah] um, [inaudible] The Idea it was, I just tried to help them out with some equipment and done the same with them, got them into the studio and sort of, helped them get along as well as they could and obviously they went on to the Forte Project, they had sort of financial funding and stuff and they're not in a bad place right now so, to be honest with you, they're a band I, really highly rate like [yeah] so I think they could do good things y'know. Um, it's just been down to... really it's down to who you know sometimes because someone can always help someone out if they're willing y'know like, like what you will find is that a lot of people are a bit like, I'm not helping this band out or I'm not helping that band out but if everyone helps each other out en it's, it's no issue like, y'know what I mean.

AC: Yeah, yeah, what was your motivation then, 'cause it's a very altruistic thing to do isn't it to just...[what's my motivation for helping people out?] yeah, yeah.

RK: Um, I've got no, ah it's, to me it's a no brainer, I mean like if you see, if you see talent, like I, like first saw The Idea over in Ebbw Vale, ah not Ebbw Vale over in Hirwaun actually, it was one of their Farmageddon sort of set ups and um, I heard from one of my mates, like yet again it's word of mouth about this band and y'know it was like y'know he said look you'll like 'em y'know, have a listen to them and see what you think and as soon as I listened to 'em they blew me away like and this was, ah today they're a lot better than they were now, they were rough around the edges but, I think if you, if you see something you like, you enjoy what you're doing then, there's no reason why you can't like, like I said, it's not really a motivation for me, it's a no-brainer it's like, I didn't understand like, why people are sceptical about helping people out when y'know if, if you've got the means to do it, then do it like it's, it's always been like that for me. If I had the time and the sort of, sort of, and y'know the, how can I say like, I've had the means to do it, then I'll do it like [yeah] It's, It's, It's a no-brainer, it's not really a motivation for me to be honest with you it's just like a, a y'know it's never been an issue like.

AC: Yeah, would you say that most people in the music scene in Merthyr are like that or like you said...

RK: No, I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say...what, what do you mean as in like a lot of people don't like help each other out?

AC: No, there's more people wanting to help each other out than not...

RK: Oh yeah, I'd say yeah definitely because like, like for example when I, when I first joined the band, um there's only like, there's only like us and another band in Merthyr like y'know but like now, you've, I've noticed all these bands have just sprung up from everywhere, there's a lot of bands in Merthyr now and they're all, they're all good like, they all play to a high standard, not that that matters but it's, it's y'know they're all seem to be part of y'know, they all seem to be part of like a sort of well, call it a scene if you want, everyone knows each other y'know, like you, you, you'll go to, you'll go into any sort of boozier in Merthyr like [inaudible, laughs] and all the kids are there and they're all together all the kids from different bands y'know, you can't go anywhere without bumping in to anyone from a band like y'know what I mean so they, in all fairness they all help each other out, d'y'know what I mean like it's [yeah] they're all pretty good in all fairness to them like and that's the best way to be like d'y'know what I mean.

AC: Absolutely, absolutely, why do think there's, there's been a sort of, a rise in the number of bands in Merthyr then?

RK: [Inaudible] Um...part of me wants to, part of me wants to believe like y'know it's, there's actually more kids getting into and y'know people are sort of, it's actually good to see the kids are picking up instruments and everything but a big part of me does believe that because of what happened with sort of, I think with, I don't like to say really but I think a part of me does believe that because Pretty Vicious got a bit of a deal and they got signed, I think, I think a lot of people probably thought well y'know it give them the belief whereas before probably a bit like oh my god y'know oh this might never happen or whatever, I think it gave people the belief as well like y'know what I mean and perhaps inspired then to think well if they can do it we can do it sort of thing, not that like y'know it, it is a difficult game and like I said it, to me the whole band thing is not driven by me wanting to get signed but ultimately it's like that is, that is what, what we were aiming to do really isn't d'y'know what I mean [hmm...] without trying to say we doing it for the love of it which I hope they are [yeah] but ultimately a band needs, a band wants to get something out of it don't they. 'Cause I think that opened up the door as in, I think people just started, at least they started to believing in they could do something with it like y'know what I mean [yeah, yeah] that's, that's what I think like, but um, like I said if that doesn't, if that not y'know, I don't think that's the ultimate, I don't think that's the main reason why these kids started playing guitar, I, I, like you said, it's good to see that they are picking up these, these instruments and doing it because for a while y'know kids weren't picking up and playing instruments and stuff y'know [yeah] so it's good to um, it's good to see like.

AC: Do you think anything's happened in Merthyr other than Pretty Vicious and other bands sort of getting somewhere, do you think anything's changed in Merthyr that's enabled people to...

RK: Yeah, yeah I do actually, come, yeah I do because obviously y'know [coughs] there's more... until recently there was like, there's been more organisation there were places to play like say like for example The Crown, The Crown has a band on every night d'y'know what I mean [yeah] why isn't [inaudible] fighting for places to play and also like you got like within the last few years you've had the Redhouse open up properly even though at the moment they've got their issues there [inaudible] I dunno they, they've had to cut people down and [yeah] um, but I think like, there's been more like you got Merthyr Rising, you, you've just got more going on now haven't you d'y'know what I mean it's opened, like you said it's opened up the door as in, and there's more interest in it, there's more interest in, in the bands y'know, there's more, there's more people into it, there's more, they're getting more publicity as well I think d'y'know what I mean [yeah, yeah] so I'd say that, that's been a lot of things as well and also you've got, you've got funding, y'know bands are getting funding and stuff now as well in a y'know like, like through projects like for example Forte Project and, which is enabling them to do more with it like while it's, y'know it's not cheap to buy like a decent guitar or decent amp or decent equipment y'know and stuff like that has opened up the door for them.

AC: So you see it as a financial benefit then, these things.

RK: Well, well, like I'd say like the Forte, I'd say the Forte, like Forte Project is a financial benefit yeah because like, like I said it's, y'know you speak to...speak to any of these bands and y'know some of, some, some of them the kids are in college and stuff y'know like for example like Fin from The Idea, Fin's only about eighteen, nineteen [yeah] y'know he's in college like so, y'know every, every little helps really innit y'know.

AC: Yeah, um, okay what do, do you think there's any limitations making music in Merthyr y'know considering it's not a city...[inaudible]

RK: It's not a city, well, the limit, limitations is probably, I can't really think off the top of my head is there's no, there's nowhere to record like I know there is equipment in the Redhouse but that's only open to college students [yeah] which I find is a bit ridiculous really, considering you got all that equipment [yeah] and, and they, they're not allowed to go in there and use it um...I think also there's as well there's a limitation of where to practice in Merthyr, there's only, there's only one [coughs] there's only one real um practice room I think, and I'm not sure if it's still open at's um, oh that's the guy from... ah what's the band, his Dad owns it, sorry I can't remember the name of the unit [is it NU Studios?] I think that, that's a limitation, um, yeah, just, just stuff like that y'know where things could be like sort of y'know opened up to people as in like, you've got the Soar Chapel that, that's, that's rarely used, like that used to be a bit of a music venue but I know people who've tried to put on gigs and stuff there, there's always been a struggle d'y'know what I mean [inaudible] it's stuff like that [inaudible] like you like.

AC: What's the difficulties with Soar then?

RK: Well, it's, it's like the money they wanna charge you don't they and all as well like I, like from what I've heard it's um, they're only, they're a bit like obviously it's a bit of a, it's run by more sort of Welsh speaking not that's, this is what I've heard like [yeah] y'know so they struggle with sort of paying for y'know they want this, they want that, y'know money for sound guy they want y'know what I mean, it's it's like all that sort of thing like.

AC: Yeah, what um, when you were playing and gigging and things, what did you do with regards to the lack of rehearsal space, what did you do instead?

RK: Well what, well basically 'cause when I was playing eventually I was on my own so I could write, I could practice to a certain degree, I used to drive my neighbours wild a bit sometimes but [laughter] I, I, could practice to a certain degree in the house but I was playing at the time, um I was playing acoustic guitar with a kick drum and harmonica [okay] so like of I could go, I used to go over to Ebbw Vale to practice [so you'd take it, take it outside of Merthyr?] yeah, yeah, so like obviously I told you earlier about the guys Julian who I, is um [coughs] the guy Julian who I was recording with [yeah] but, but [inaudible] go to Ebbw Vale, travel to Ebbw Vale I'd have to pay then for rehearsal space in Ebbw Vale and everything d'y'know what I mean so it wasn't ideal like, so, so like um...y'know for me you could just about get away sometimes with writing and playing in the house, a band isn't gonna do it are they, a lot, I know a lot of bands who've had to take it out of Merthyr, like you said there is, there is some practice space but there isn't a lot like [hmm, yeah] 'cause we, basically my Dad, me and my Dad um, my uncle had a spare unit down in, they made um sort of sound proofing unit, um, that's a few years ago, so like y'know you can speak to The Idea about it, so a couple of bands were going in air and practising like d'y'know what I mean [yeah] but rehearsal space is [coughs] is a bit of a nightmare to be honest with you.

AC: Was you thinking about NU Studios, was that the one?

RK: Yeah, that's the one Ian's place, I'm not sure of that's still open mind? [I think it is? But I don't know...for how long] [laughter] yeah, I don't think it, yeah that's it, that's I don't think it's going to be open much longer is it like, so that's what I mean it's [inaudible] place bites the dust with them like 'cause I remember when I was in a

band like we used to go up like Merthyr Football Club to practice in but then like some nights you'd be able to do it, some nights [inaudible] then you'd be like calling round pubs and phoning around everywhere trying, just find y'know just a room to practice in like it's, y'know it's hard like [yeah] 'cause like obviously you got places sort of like y'know professional places like Matchbox in Cardiff {this is MusicBox Studios} Is it Matchbox in Cardiff? And places like that [yeah] and again that's in Cardiff and then you've gotta drive all the way to Cardiff, you got to hire, you gotta pay then to keep all your gear there, pay for this, pay for that y'know, it's not ideal for them is it really.

AC: It's again, it comes down to money again doesn't it.

RK: Well, yeah that is yeah and like I said and to like really in my opinion like a lack of rehearsal space around here like.

AC: Why do you think there's a quick turnover of rehearsal and studio space, they seem to pop up and then and disappear quite often.

RK: I well, that, that's a bit like, that's a bit bemusing really judging by the amount of bands that are around now like, but I mean, I don't know like I mean, I don't know what their overheads are d'y'know what I mean [yeah] I, I'm not sure, what, what, what they, I don't really know because I now there was a place in up in the Goat Mill Road, I'm not sure if you know where the Goat Mill Road is in Merthyr?

AC: Oh, is it Mountain Music?

RK: [laughter] I got, I dunno I never went there, I, I never went there like but, perhaps, perhaps it is because [inaudible] it's a bit like sort of, perhaps it is because people are not using them I dunno, which I find funny 'cause since there is a lack of rehearsal space but I dunno, y'know it would have been good if there was some kind of, how can I explain it, it's like some kind of y'know like a, like a band union sort of thing so people could come together [yeah] or go to someone who's like in say like a representative from the council, all the bands come together, go to someone who can represent them and say like y'know look this is what we need in Merthyr [yeah] y'know we could keep it going, get y'know get, a certain amount of bands in whatever, and sort something out like, but they don't, I know they've had problems with Merthyr Rising with the council it's like as if they don't, any, like in my opinion, anything good with these council led anything that happens in Merthyr it goes to, it goes to shit like [yeah] d'y'know what I mean? That's how, that's how I feel about it, like, and like you said y'know they, they wasting their money on shitty things and, when they could be y'know, you got, you got kids then who are y'know creative kids talented kids who really do something with themselves and I think they are left hanging out to dry like d'y'know what I mean [yeah] like, like you said if you could find, find a representative from y'know like, like, like the council to try and sort out some rehearsal space and recording time and whatever for these guys then, y'know I don't see the harm in it like.

AC: That's a really good idea having some sort of, committee or union...

RK: Yeah some sort of committee, it's not hard for a couple of bands to get together but just someone in Merthyr council like a representative from, from their side and meet with the bands and say well y'know can we do this, can we do that? Can this be sorted out and y'know go from there like [yeah, yeah].

AC: Um, lastly is there anything else you'd like to add?

RK: Um, no not off the top of my head [inaudible] nah not off the top of my head, let's hope that um, it's encouraging I think to see like how many like I said how many kids have got into it over the last few years and to be honest with you, how, how good they are y'know, it's like, it's like to me like it's um, it's really encouraging to see how good they are, how talented they are y'know, yeah it's um, it's encouraging like, so I, I hope that nothing, like I said there's nothing which is like ah. Y'know [inaudible] not stand in their way like [yeah] like, like the simple thing of like having a little rehearsal room for um, and just like things just to keep them gigging and stuff y'know.

AC: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah. Um, that's fantastic thank you so much for that.

RK: Yeah no worries

Interview with Sam Gregory, 24-08-2019, Wetherspoons, Merthyr Tydfil @ 11 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

SG – Sam Gregory, Participant

AC: Hiya Sam how're you doing?

SG: Hello, I'm well, how are you?

AC: I'm alright thanks, just a few about what you do basically, so the first one is what music do you like?

SG: What music do I like? Ah, alternative rock, probably the earlier, the earliest rock I like is Black Sabbath, Black Sabbath are definitely our main influence and um Nirvana ah from the '90s that's where my um, where my influences come from, they're my favourite bands.

AC: What sort of music do you play then?

SG: We, we play alternative rock um Brit rock, Indie sort of, probably in the same category as the Manic Street Preachers and Stereophonics and stuff like that. Feeder very influenced by early Manic's definitely.

AC: Okay, so there's a Welsh link there as well then.

SG: Of course [AC: Yeah?] [inaudible] they opened the doors for us all so, definitely [AC: Okay, do they inspire you to..] ah, ah Nirvana, Kurt Cobain inspired me to start with, definitely, my uncle was a musician as well [inaudible] he got me into Black Sabbath, which got me into guitar. Nirvana and Black Sabbath got me into guitar and then as I got into the Manic's then as I was older, I think ah James's guitar playing definitely, 100% influenced me [AC: Yeah?] he's a great guitarist, probably the greatest Welsh guitarist...ever [laughter] without a doubt. I can only say my stuff [inaudible] [laughter]

AC: Have you met him?

SG: Of course, of course [inaudible] many times [inaudible] [laughter] definitely not he's a good guy.

AC: Um, okay so tell me about your musical practices and what I mean about this is, how you go about writing ah rehearsing, recording all the mundane things if you like.

SG: Okay, all the songs we've released so far, recorded on the EP's we've done I took the lead in um writing the songs. So what I do, I come up with a demo, so I record the demo's then in the [inaudible] a studio not far from me called ah Unit 13 every Friday I'll [inaudible] demo the basic idea is for the guitar tracks and just put a couple of lyrics to it, to just get the melodies and everything [inaudible] with the chorus um and sort of wing it for the verses. I program the drums and the bass in then and then I send, it's sent on a WhatsApp group to the boys they put their touch on it and it sounds completely different then, and then practice it for a few weeks go in and record them four songs at a time, that's what we do. We practice mainly for like two weeks before we got a gig so we got, we got a gig lined up next week Saturday now so for the last two weeks that's all we do is practice so.

- AC: How many nights a week do you practice then?
- SG: Whu, if we, if we got a gig coming up we'll practice like four, five nights a week then [AC: Okay] three, four hours non-stop no breaks just straight through, repeat the set, what we do, we, we do two songs in a row then we'll repeat them twice or three times go over the next two do the same and then we'll go through the whole set for two hours, three hours straight through.
- AC: Where's this Unit 13 then?
- SG: Unit 13 is in Tredegar.
- AC: Okay, is that pretty new or has it been around for a while?
- SG: Ah, I dunno, [inaudible] we started the band about eighteen months ago and that, that's when I started going there and so I'm not too sure about [inaudible] I know, I know the other boys in the band I'm sure it's been there about two or three years. It's just a small, a small studio, rehearsal space then, it's [inaudible] it's, it's a great place and it's local of course.
- AC: So, so it's quite a young band then really?
- SG: Yeah, yeah absolutely, yeah, yeah, we um, about eighteen months ago we had y'know we had a change of line up then because one of the boys playing guitar Jay his ah, his partner had a baby and he just couldn't commit [inaudible] when you have a new baby y'know it's hard to commit to other stuff other than that so, we changed the line-up, we changed our drummer and ah bass player so now the line-up we got now um Darran from Funeral for a Friend he's on guitar with us now 'cause he was managing us ah he's a great guitarist so as soon as the position come up I asked Darran if he wanted to join the band and he, he, he was up for it, y'know he's a great musician, great guy so, the band is strong.
- AC: So the other, all the other members of the band you knew each other personally anyway or..?
- SG: Yeah, we needed, we needed to get a new drummer um [AC: What was the problem with the other guy?] ah, um...y'know... musicians have disputes y'know, you stick it out or you don't y'know and, and he didn't and um so we had to audition a few drummers, so Lewis who's on drums now was already in a band um, I don't think they had the commitment that he wanted so he joined us because y'know we're twenty four hour rock stars [laughter] [inaudible] so he joined us and when, when the guitarist left then our old guitarist um like is aid I asked Darran 'cause he was managing us at the time and he said I'll bring my friend on bass as well which is Nathan so and that's it. It's all, it's all, it's all good, we just recorded, it's nearly done, an EP now four songs [AC: Is that your first one yeah?] Well, yeah fully EP I suppose we released like three singles, four, four singles we, y'know we put an EP out but because of the change of line-up I thought y'know we, we'll and of course our sound is, a bit different to what it was, ah it's much stronger than it was, it's more melodic, it's just better that's all. It was kind of, the stuff that I wrote when I started the band was just like, I wrote about six like, indie anthems y'know ah sing-along songs just to ah, get us started but now, the songs that we've done now ah y'know they, they're way, up there y'know miles, miles better y'know stronger so looking forward to [inaudible] yeah, looking forward to getting these out now and um like I said they needed to be done. I went over to Unit 13 last [inaudible] and ah, to record the final track for it which will just be a stripped back acoustic track, one acoustic, one take,

one vocal one take [inaudible] [laughter] it sounds raw but, good raw so [AC: Yeah] so that's gonna go on the end of it. We're just mixing the other ones now so we'll be ready then to be released.

AC: So what sort of, you said it's taken a different um, direction y'know could you give me a little more detail on that?

SG: Yeah, definitely, like um, the, the, the first stuff is like... verse, chorus, verse two guitars, like I said um anthems, sing-along songs. This one then we wanted to go a bit I dunno just push it a bit sort of get the musicians out of us y'know rather than sort of just keeping the basic, so, y'know. Obviously Darran was in Funeral for a Friend so he can bring something different as well um, in the way he plays, so it just, it, it's just, it's playing [inaudible] our playing compliments each other, created a different sound obviously we still keep the anthems [inaudible] and then ah it's more guitar based now y'know what I mean, it's more...y'know what I mean [laughter] as opposed to that [mimes a guitarist] now we are [AC: A bit heavier would you say?] not so much heavier, more guitar based but definitely not heavier um y'know 'cause we had like...one of our songs was, was heavier than normal anyway [inaudible] on the anthem type thing y'know still sing along [inaudible] quite heavier but, no definitely not heavier, definitely not just better, just, y'know, just showing what musicians are I suppose, just, just showing the better side of us I think.

AC: Okay, so um how do you stay in touch with each other [inaudible]?

SG: We have got a non-stop, 24 hour WhatsApp group that's the most annoying thing in the world, that's how we stay in contact [laughter]

AC: Everything's in there then?

SG: Everything, the eight-day conversation about T shirts being printed every single thing is on that WhatsApp group, and of course we do phone each other from time to time [laughter] yeah, the WhatsApp group is...

AC: So, you mentioned Unit 13 and are there any other resources as in the structure you use specifically in Merthyr?

SG: Um, in terms of rehearsals and stuff like that?

AC: Rehearsals, recording, performing...

SG: We, we, we performed down in the uh down The Crown in there, not sure, who's that, it was not so long ago, that's a good venue. They got something going on there today that's like [inaudible] the prime, ah the prime venue over here now I think, so we enjoyed that, definitely wanna come back and play that, um in terms of recording we've only recorded up there really and we've recorded down with um in Stomp Box down in Pontypridd, which ain't too far from here so that's a good studio as well.

AC: It's just literally somewhere to perform in Merthyr rather than any other...

SG: Yeah, definitely like I would have thought they'd have studios over yuh to be honest with you y'know. It's quite a musical town, ah I've got friends on bands over here that are doing well as well and y'know we always come over here and they played the other week [inaudible] Redhouse?

AC: That place there? [pointing to Redhouse]

SG: Oh it's there!? I was drunk man, that's it!? [Laughter] seriously?

AC: Yeah, there's Soar up the road as well as...

SG: I don't know how drunk I was then? I can't remember [inaudible] is there a back to it?

AC: No, I don't think so [laughs]

SG: I always thought it was on that side of the road? Christ that's drunk, that's rock and roll innit! [laughter] I thought the building was on the other side of the road [laughter] That's Redhouse, it was in there [inaudible and laughter] I remember that kebab shop up b'there 'cause I went in that but I thought I walked down the road to that kebab shop. Terrible state to be in [AC: That's the Merthyr, the Merthyr vibe] yeah, yeah, yeah [laughter]

AC: So how often would you say you play live around here?

SG: We don't have, we don't have, we had a few months when we were playing every weekend y'know and that kinda gets boring for people y'know 'cause you kinda find yourself targeting the same places so now we've y'know I think it's in our interests now to sort of cherry pick. Ah great venues [inaudible] and the gigs like every, we, we're playing now next Saturday after that we got one middle of September and the beginning of October but y'know they done right y'know the support bands were right, the venues were right, the timing was right as opposed to any of that being a random pub over here on a Wednesday night when nobody's gonna come see the band which is a shame because back in the '90s when I went to watch bands everywhere would be rammed. I dunno what happened to that, it's sad to see y'know I dunno if it's like lack of support from promoters, venues, I dunno? I can remember like being sixteen you could see a band, signed bands every day, like in the Newport centre and [inaudible] y'know. It's sad to see, brilliant times y'know, absolutely brilliant times and the people you'd meet y'know [inaudible] brilliant. They need to bring that back I don't know how to bring it back, there's enough bands out there to bring it back.

AC: Do you feel like there's um, less places to play generally?

SG: Oh yeah, I suppose so, I suppose so, and I think less people go out to gigs now.

AC: Why do you think that is?

SG: All the bands are shit [laughter] no I shouldn't say that [laughter] nah back in the '90s you had Nirvana you had Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains. Christ you had the Britpop then you, you had Blur, Oasis, Manic's, Feeder, Stereophonics, 60 Foot Dolls Super Furry Animals everything was, was buzzing y'know. And of course, when, when Kurt killed himself then y'know everyone wanted to be the next Nirvana, so many bands around and I think that was a generation where people went to gigs y'know like y'know you had Knebworth with Oasis, three nights in a row was it? Something like a million people there, I don't know if that ever happened again. I'd like to think it happened again, nah I don't think, it's a shame.

AC: Um, so, how do you transport stuff, what's your sort of uh equipment transporting regime?

SG: Back of the car, back of the van.

AC: You haven't got a shared vehicle or anything?

SG: God no we got a shared WhatsApp group that's bad enough [laughing] [inaudible] no, I know a lot of bands do it y'know, we could do it I suppose but with like a lot of the venues now [inaudible] you, you don't really need it and if you're headlining y'know you bring your own equipment and stuff like that, then maybe we'd need it but y'know, we'd, we do go separate most of the time, and then we'd, our friends who come to see the band they'll jump in the cars with us as well so, y'know, it's good.

AC: Do you get paid for many gigs?

SG: Yeah, yeah we get paid yeah. Some you don't y'know like if you jump on for support you don't but y'know that's part of it.

AC: And what do you all do for a living?

SG: I'm a director of a mobile phone company [laughs] so, um, but this is what I wanna do y'know, I'd quit that. I've had a mobile phone company for a few years and uh that's built up and at the level it needs to be but, I'd sacrifice that for rock and roll y'know 100%. Um, you got Darran then who's a, was, was in band management, ah Lewis is an electrician and Darran {I think he meant Nathan} is, a trucker or van hire? [AC: Okay] so yeah we all work y'know work full time jobs [AC: So you're all doing full-time and this in your spare time I suppose?] Well this is like my full-time job as well y'know 'cause y'know you could walk into the gym at 6 o'clock in the morning you'll see me in a Nirvana T shirt and a pair of sunglasses on or whatever the weather's like so [laughs] I will do this rock and roll 24 hours a day so, so it's a full-time job as well [laughing]

AC: So, between you in the band are there any responsibilities and specific roles adopted, like who books the gigs, who sorts the money out that kind of thing?

SG: Um, yeah, it's a touchy subject at the minute [laughs] but yeah we do we um [AC: It's completely anonymous on here so...] [laughs] [inaudible] the WhatsApp group this morning. Um, we, we, me, me and Darran take most control um, y'know, because he's sort of been there and done it in a band, and like I got a business [inaudible] so me and him take control of that really [inaudible] promoting and all the gig booking [15:00] all the schedules y'know it's left to us two really. I, I don't mind that y'know I'm, I'm confident in doing that so y'know I prefer to take that pressure off the other two anyway [inaudible].

AC: So, so is it fair to say it's like a second business for you?

SG: Absolutely, it's the music business isn't it, it's an industry y'know and that, that y'know don't look at it from a business point of view um in terms of y'know just doing it for money but you have gotta look at it especially these days as a business y'know because y'know if your online content aint up to scratch, I don't think you're gonna get anywhere y'know. Your online content has got to be as good as the online content of major companies y'know, Coca Cola still advertise, people still buy Coca Cola y'know. Coca Cola does a good advertising campaign so you gotta put yourself out there and, and it's definitely business without a shadow of a doubt...

AC: Do, do you do most of the promoting or do you and Darran jointly...

- SG: Yeah, y'know I, I run our social medias so, and yeah Darran wants to do stuff in the background like with the gigs and the management so, 'cause he still manages us in the band [inaudible]
- AC: Okay, and, well, you've kinda answered this, how serious do you take it?
- SG: We live and die for this [laughs] definitely like I said if my business did well I'd quit tomorrow without a doubt I've got no problem living off five pound a day travelling around the country and every other country on the planet to get my band [inaudible] that's the way it is.
- AC: What's your ultimate sort of aim?
- SG: Ultimate aim? To be the biggest band in the world, it's always been that without a doubt y'know what I mean, you don't want, don't want to be a small band.
- AC: Have you got any particular record companies you'd like to hook up with?
- SG: Yeah, there's a, there's a problem involved with [inaudible] I was such a Nirvana fan my, my, my thing is like oh we need to go with Sub Pop for the first one [inaudible] why [laughter] Nirvana went with Sub Pop we're gonna have to sign with Sub Pop [inaudible] it don't work like that. Then we'd sign to a major like Geffen to put out Nevermind y'know like, then we'll bring Steve Albini in for our third album 'cause that's what Kurt done...
- AC: Nobody hurt themselves after the album though if that's alright [laughter]
- SG: Yeah, I recorded, I recorded yesterday and um and I was doing um, I noticed on your profile you're a, you're finger picking [AC: Classical guitar] Classical guitar so I'm not a great finger, finger picker I love, [inaudible] learn how to finger pick to the level I finger pick which I'm very good ah because of Randy Rhoads Ozzy's guitarist [AC: Ah my hero!] my hero just the greatest of all time [AC: That's why I took up classical guitar because of him] So I learned how to play Dee, yeah [AC: Yeah] of Blizzard ah, good, but not [inaudible] I use three fingers where you'd probably [AC: I mean we don't use that little finger it's only...] ah so, I was um, when we recorded a track yesterday I was finger picking and it was a couple of ah noises on there and I was like, Kurt would have left that on there [laughing] [inaudible]
- AC: See Steve Albini definitely....
- SG: Steve Albini definitely would have left that on there [laughing] it was funny when we were recording, one of the boys left [inaudible] 'cause he was vaping it was recording, done a perfect take and he was vaping in the background and you can hear him go [makes sound of vaping] it sounded great, he was like shall we leave it on, I was like, it's somebody vaping y'know, it did sound like, it sounded really good but [laughing]
- AC: So do you have a polished sound or are you after more of a gritty sound 'cause it seems like you're conflicted a bit I suppose?
- SG: Yeah, that, absolutely, I understand um, I understand that the masses need to hear that polished anthem sound y'know, but then, I listen to Nevermind and In Utero and I think, and morning glory as well by Oasis and it's such a good sound. But, for the stuff that we got for the minute I think it does need to be quite polished be, be, because it's, I'll play it for you in a bit, it's very guitar based and very like singing so I

don't think the Nirvana sound would sound good on that. You'll probably hear me say Nirvana about three thousand times [inaudible] that's, that's the way it is but yeah, so, y'know I, I understand what, what it has to sound like as opposed to what I would at this point I'm not in a position to say. Get Steve Albini in boys and [inaudible] we'll have the album y'know [laughing] so....

AC: Um, you've kinda uh, you've kinda answered this as well but if you want to go into a bit more detail [SG: Yeah of course] don't mind shouting [laughing] um, um, what motivates you to continue making music? What do you get out of it?

SG: Do you know what it's a kind of weird one, because I've been into music for so long and I always found that music was your [inaudible] escape y'know [inaudible] it's just always played a part y'know since like finding out having my first daughter y'know it's like a Smashing Pumpkins song on in the background like. The Smashing Pumpkins was on in the background when I found out I was having my second daughter as well um, funnily enough, so what's always been a [inaudible] even at the worst points in my life y'know you've always been like come on chuck on a record it'll help [inaudible] y'know, that, that, that's the thing [inaudible].

AC: So it's almost like a life soundtrack?

SG: Yeah, yeah it's like a soundtrack adds reason I suppose, it's like a, I dunno? One of the things that helps me live or die...I suppose [laughs]

AC: Do you find you're um sort of torn between business and passion then? 'Cause it sound like you're talking about two...

SG: Nah, definitely, the, the passion y'know, I'm more passionate about it than I am business minded about it because I think, you gotta be business minded about it y'know we'd all be like, we'd all be dressing like in leather head to toe sexy suits wouldn't we [laughing] [inaudible] a pair of vans and ripped jeans, but, but I understand that, that the business thing about it, it has to, y'know it has to be okay, w, w, with a business the main thing is to make a profit and obviously you wanna do that but, but y'know we're not under the [inaudible] y'know business, things where y'know you gotta be in at 9 o'clock and clock off at half past five so [inaudible] we do know, y'know, it's not, nobody's gonna come and knock on your door y'know and offer you a record contract [inaudible] [AC: You gotta work at it] gotta work at it yeah definitely, definitely.

AC: So, how do you find the time to make music? We've kinda touched on this but if you want to go into a bit more detail. Do you have to sort of, certain things have to fall by the wayside for you to be able to do what....

SG: Um, there's 24 hours in a day innit y'know what I mean so, I just set my alarm every morning twenty to five I get up, I dunno why twenty to five instead of five but I set my alarm at twenty to five every morning y'know and I get up go to the gym and... you just make time y'know cancel dates, don't go on dates concentrate on the music simple innit? Stop uploading and filtering selfies for two hours and write a song y'know it's plenty of time you just gotta make it. As with anything y'know if, if you want anything to work a relationship you gotta, you gotta find the time, the time is there you just gotta make the effort, find the time, but I don't find it an effort [AC: No?] Nah, nah, I just, I just walk around the house with a guitar strapped to me near enough every spare minute, if the bath is running I got a guitar on my shoulder, that's, that's the truth [laughs] I've got a guitar at the side of my bed, got a guitar in my bedroom, my conservatory, my front room it's just, and, it's just [AC: An easy grab yeah?] it's, it

is a grab [c: yeah, yeah] you know, you know yourself you're a musician right and, you, you've obviously composed your own music and sometimes you can be sat there and, and an advert will come on, about anything y'know and you just think, wow! This idea will just come in your head and you pick up a guitar and just write something, that's how I write. Domino's advert will come on [laughing] I think I want one of them and I'll just pick up the guitar and write a song [laughs] not about Domino's [laughter] but y'know it just, it just comes innit, it, it just comes to you, I, y'know they're there just waiting to be, it's a weird thing so, yeah, and you just make time for it, you gotta make time for it.

AC: So what would you say if anything, limits what you wanna do with music living in this area um y'know [inaudible] other people involved is anything that limits what you do?

SG: Um, [AC: It could be work, friends, family...] Nah, I don't think there are any limits around here, like I said it, it's, y'know I'm friends with loads of people in bands, there's some really good bands around here, I think, I think the only thing that limits is I dunno if it's a [inaudible] a lack of people who got that interest or, that generation has gone now y'know people who go religiously to gigs y'know so, but yeah y'know it be good if we had um, if we got bigger bands in, in terms of the names y'know to these venues y'know. Like look what TJ's done [AC: Hmm...] y'know what I mean it was, people were going to TJ's just 'cause it was TJ's didn't give a shit who's in there y'know what I mean 'cause it was such a cool place 'cause of the history of it, so, y'know...

AC: Do you think there should be like a place where, say The Crown or Jacs in Aberdare or something where a history could be formed, a scene to be made...

SG: Absolutely, the Welsh scene right is here, it's happening right but is, I dunno there's an element missing from it, the bands are great, the bands that we've played with, the bands that we go and see y'know I, I can name a pile of them I learnt it all from great bands and literally signed bands but not as good as them but it's like something's waiting to blow y'know it's like, listen, like in, in the early '90s y'know what the Manic's done for Welsh music and before you knew that everyone was getting signed 'cause they were Welsh, there were Welsh bands getting signed and they were rubbish but they were successful 'cause they were Welsh bands, 'cause the Welsh scene was there. The Stereophonics come along as well, blew it up again y'know but, but the Welsh thing is here, all the bands like I said we've played with are more than capable of bringing it alive again, it, it's just not happening and I don't know why?

AC: Do you think it's uh, a few people have said y'know the Stereophonics y'know popping up sort of triggered something or the, Pretty Vicious round here or something like that, would you say there's any truth in that or..?

SG: The Stereophonics were great yuh, y'know still a great band and a massive band y'know but I, but I think they touched on, they definitely touched on something that was missing which was people y'know [AC: Can you expand on that?] y'know people wanna speak about what it was like growing up in the Welsh valleys so you kind of, y'know kind of embarrassed about, the Stereophonics wrote an album which is, one of the greatest albums of all time were stories about growing up in Cwmaman which is absolutely incredible, to, to this day that album is from start to finish, it's not, there's not many debut albums that'll, beat that y'know. Bleach by Nirvana obviously will, Black Sabbath by Black Sabbath obviously will and Generation Terrorist by the Manic's obviously will [laughing] but apart from that it's [inaudible]

AC: So do you think that Welsh narrative adds something to the music um, would you say the Manic's do that, Pretty Vicious or..?

SG: I'm not really a fan of Pretty Vicious, it's not, it's not like I dislike them but [inaudible] I know they had a few problems, I think they got like signed twice, something happened didn't it, their singer was ill, something y'know which is sad, I briefly listened to their album 'cause they released the album, I didn't know they were releasing it the other week and it's a great album, it's a shame, if they, if they can get back together 'cause y'know any Welsh band making it opens it up for the rest of the Welsh bands y'know like it always does, but um, yeah it's a good album y'know but yeah, yeah y'know the Welsh narrative, yeah Kelly Jones touched on that [inaudible] I think the Manic's to a certain extent y'know maybe a bit more deeper y'know they, they are brilliant musicians, brilliant lyricists y'know Nicky Wire is the lyricist for them now but they, they had Richie who was, probably the greatest lyricist of all time y'know he disappeared but yeah, yeah definitely.

AC: And lastly is there anything else you'd like to add?

SG: [Laughs] can we talk about Nirvana? [laughter] No, nah, nah it's good I am, whose your influences then? Apart from you spoke about Randy Rhoads obviously.

AC: Ah Randy Rhoads is number one, he's right up there...um oh shall I stop this?

SG: Yeah cool.

AC: Thanks for the interview I'll just knock...

Interview with Steve Gresham, 03-10-2019, Telephone @ 11:33 am

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

SG – Steve Gresham, Participant

AC: Hiya Steve, How're you doing?

SG: Good morning Anne, very well thank you.

AC: Um and you're happy with the consent form, you're happy to go along with the interview yeah?

SG: Yes, I am more than happy.

AC: That's fantastic. Okay so question number one is um, what music do you like?

SG: Oh that's a good question. Um, I have um, my sort of y'know when I was younger I really didn't like beer and I was convinced I'd never like beer and many other things but as you go on like your taste buds mature don't they and uh and then you start to like things you never dreamed of liking so that's a good sort of analogy for my musical taste the things that I, when I was younger I was very into certain genres and um I couldn't have dreamt loving anything other than the genre of heavy metal or y'know of rock and as I've gone on I've started to appreciate that music is an incredible sort of broad spectrum of uh of all sorts of things and therefore it's a long winded answer to saying I like a lot of music and I'm currently really interested in electronic music ah, I'm really interested in some um thoughtful pop music and I'm also still a big fan of ah y'know my sort of musical forefathers I call them so it's y'know Neil Young, Bob Dylan, David Bowie, Prince y'know they, they're always gonna be, I like Leonard Cohen [inaudible] but I'm always open to new music and I really go searching for new music and sometimes that's a, somebody tells me, somebody tips me off about somebody or sends me something to listen to, to get y'know to get my thoughts on it and um and that's the beauty of it, it'll always be a discovery a journey and I'm always excited by all, by new music, so um yeah.

AC: Okay, okay, how would you describe what you do at the moment with Forte and other things?

SG: My title, my job title is Youth Music Development Officer and I think ah it kinda umbrellas everything I do um I do music which I work within music that supports young people and I try to develop ideas or initiations or projects that are there to support their well-being and the opportunity and good practice for young people to hopefully to pursue a career in live, in music one way or another and, and actually the wider creative industry so all our work is sort of geared towards that um, and the work that I have been fortunate to carry out has allowed me to do, create initiatives like the Promoters Network in, in south Wales and the work, that work has led into the Forte Project which is across south Wales. So, we're blessed a little bit in, in that I work for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and within that local authority we have an Arts Development Department which is now the Arts and Creative Industries Department and then a little bit deeper into that department we have a, we have an organisation called Sonig Youth Music Industry and that's where I sit, I kinda sit right in the middle of that and that allows me then to sort of [inaudible] musical youth music development officer. It's a unique job, it's like there's no other person I've come across that has the same job in the UK, and every time I tell somebody what I

do it's almost like y'know they, they quizzically ask me really? [laughter] so it's like um, so we have to be, I have to be very um grateful and, and it's always based on funding and I have to make sure we, we're doing what we say we do and we're reaching the people that we, we aim to reach so...

AC: And who else is involved in that then? Ooh hello? [connection was lost, and I phoned Steve back]

SG: Hello Anne can you hear me now?

AC: Yeah. You cut off all of a sudden [laughs]

SG: I know, I know, I know I did fear that might happen but um okay so what do you need to do?

AC: Um, so I was gonna ask you um who else is involved in what you're doing with Sonig and Forte and...

SG: Yeah, okay. So um, within Sonig there sits myself, and two other colleagues okay um and that's our sort of role to work with um family first um funding and like I said enabled [inaudible] we do to reach the people targeted, the work we do to reach the young people [inaudible] those needs really so um so I have, Forte has split apart from that 'cause it's funded differently, it's funded by the Arts Council, the PRS Foundation and it's also funded by five local authorities so it has a different remit than the general work that Sonig does um which sets it apart um I have different targets I have different criteria to meet and I work [inaudible] across south Wales because five local authorities have bought in to Forte the idea. Those local authorities are Merthyr ah Leisure Trust, Caerphilly County Borough Council, the Vale of Glamorgan, County Borough Council, ah Bridgend which is actually Arwen Trust in Bridgend and the fifth one is Rhondda Cynon Taf. So, yeah the, it gives me much a little bit more flexibility and allows the project to unfold. Now within my team at Forte are two project coordinators and they also work part-time Ed Townend is involved in the logistical side ah he dealt, he deals with the day-to-day, the nuts and bolts of the project and then my other colleague Sian Adler she is the sort of creative force in, in the project so everything you see, the content, the support we give the artist is driven by her expertise so there's three of us that manage Forte day-to-day.

AC: Okay, how would you describe your relationships with fellow workers.

SG: Ah like any other team, you need to be very ah y'know you need to communicate and we communicate very well and we trust each other and we have great rapport and the thing is that they're younger than me but yet they have great skills that I don't have and you always have to acknowledge that and allow them to have that freedom to, y'know to have the confidence to push the project as well and I'm, I'm as much y'know supporting them as they're supporting me sometimes so we're always working together and um yeah we believe in it which drives the project, we all believe in what we're doing we don't do it for financial gain, profit, we're much more of a sort of social entrepreneurs y'know we have that idea that we're putting something that we believe is good into the community, we're helping people and we're providing solutions and I think um that's really important for us. We always have that, that um space to explore and that ownership and that responsibility to carry the project forward.

AC: And how did you get into doing what you're doing now?

SG: [laughs] um, when I was, I come from an arts background so maybe that sort of explains slightly my creative um skillset if that's really the word but um, my creative, my creative impulse really so I'm always really interested in creating things and trying to solve things by being creatively minded and um, rewinding the clock a little bit before that I. I was really young when I started to enjoy what music could offer and the effect, the positive effect it had on people and when I was really young probably around thirteen, fourteen I used to go to a pub on the edge of Cwmaman called the Bonke and I used to sit outside on the weekends and they'd have live music and me and a friend would sit on the, on the windowsill and, and listen to the music inside 'cause we were too young to get in and every time someone came out we'd poke our heads inside the door to see what kind of bands were playing and how, what they looked like and like y'know [inaudible] the experience was in y'know was within that four walls we were getting a little glimpse of it every now and again 'cause people were coming out to have a fag or y'know just leaving the venue and I really was enchanted by that so at fourteen I decided that I wanted to do something similar um, so I called the ven, the pub and I just took a punt and I said that I was eighteen and I wanted to put on live music and it was my birthday so would they accommodate my birthday in the venue if I brought some bands along ah the landlord said yeah because he didn't see me I did all my correspondence on the phone and ah I y'know arranged all the bands they were all friends and then we got it, working, the gig happened I wore an eighteenth birthday badge and I was only fourteen and, and the whole venue was kitted out for my eighteenth by the landlord and ah I managed to sort of like start, ah start my career as a promoter I guess and when my eighteenth birthday came about and it really was my eighteenth [inaudible] the landlord was quite ah quite surprised to say the least [laughter] that I had been frequenting the establishment for at least four years before, but um, ah yeah, I guess it's just ah, that, that ah sort of um desire to do things, to make things happen and when I, I went to uni on Cardiff and I sort of re, reignited that passion to make things happen and a few of my students are friends, colleagues we got together and created a few, I guess they were quite um leftfield events y'know they were all very thematic they were really exciting and they don't have a reputation of being sort of um ringleaders for putting on these really flamboyant gigs around Cardiff and from that I sort of got head hunted to run a venue called Barfly in Cardiff and I worked there for maybe far too long. And then I [inaudible] experience [inaudible] day-to-day running of a venue and an early encounter with that and I had encounters with some major musicians anyone from the Scissor Sisters, Amy Winehouse, Supergrass, the Yeah, Yeah, Yeah's, Calvin Harris y'know really bands who were cutting their teeth on the UK circuit [inaudible] and I, I then got asked to run another venue called The Point which is in Cardiff Bay and I learnt a hell of a lot from managing that venue. It was a short-lived career 'cause, not career, experience because I was then confronted with the fact that there were sound complaints, noise complaints, we had a noise abatement order and we really went through the thick of that which unfortunately we didn't come out of it too well ah and then the venue closed, so it was a landmark case in terms of that of issues regarding sound and noise complaints and live music. So at that point I really needed to be sort of like ah gather my thoughts and work out what I was gonna do and I got asked to be a youth music development officer, the appointment was maternity cover and at the very same time I decided to go back into university and I did an MA in arts management and at the very same time I got asked [inaudible] Cardiff Arts Institute which is on Park Place and so I did three jobs at once and I um, I was burning the candle at both ends but I was loving it 'cause everything was new and exciting and I was learning and I uh I really always appreciate that idea of learning and I really value it and then I enjoy it so I was learning through doing and I was learning new concepts about management within the arts from doing my MA in the Royal Welsh College so there was a lot going on and [inaudible] I finished my MA and I, the venue, I decided maybe I should step away from the venue and I didn't I

just focused on my new role as youth music development officer and ah I've been in post now for a good number of years, I think it's about five, six, seven years um and uh yeah and I, I've got an amazing team and my management are incredibly supportive and they, they allow me to explore new ideas and I guess Forte was born out of that, a chance to just test something and see if it would work, we had a feeling it would anyway so we need to build, to build upon that good feeling.

AC: What motivates you to keep involved what do you get out of it, what are the benefits?

SG: Um, I, I used that word earlier of social entrepreneur and um I didn't really know the idea until recently and it sort of chimes with what we do and particularly what I, it's all about like um, the work I do reminds me of when I sat on the windowsill outside that venue in, in Cwmaman, the Bonke and it's about like how do I allow young people that age to feel the benefits of what was going on in that pub y'know and not necessarily getting y'know, not, not, not everything that comes with it but just like enjoying the experience, uniting, connecting and being able to express themselves on stage and to learn to be able to maybe build a career from it and to learn some [inaudible] life skills and some skills that are gonna carry you on in life so it's about me going back to that moment and me trying to give, to change that a little bit and to allow those [inaudible] safe spaces and to create spaces where young people are allowed to express themselves and to create something that is going to y'know hopefully to, to bring people together and um that's the power of music. So I always really, I always have to remind myself of that and that's probably one of the main reasons as why I do it. It's a chance to, I'm in a role where I have the chance to do that. I'm in a role where the responsibility where I can make a change, can make a difference I, I can maybe make people's lives a bit better and um coming from the valleys y'know that's always been a big thing for me.

AC: What do you think um, 'cause my study in particular is looking at Aberdare and Merthyr...

SG: Yeah

AC: what do you think about um you mentioned the valleys there, the sort of state of y'know the facilities, resources, generally in the two towns, what's your opinions on those?

SG: Um, I can't speak first hand of, of experiencing too much of the, the facilities, I go back occasionally sometimes I'm there to see music and sometimes not I'm just there to see family and friends but um I just see progress and I see a lot of energy and passion on, online and I follow a lot of the Facebook threads that people are doing and things and there's some great y'know some great people from those valleys that y'know really sticking their neck out and trying to do things and trying to bring some goodness back to the valleys and I've always, I really, really believe that y'know there's always talent there lurking and it just needs the right ah care, support and infrastructure to make talent come through that and get out and, and becomes [inaudible] becomes the potential there has so, live music is, is at the end of the day it's, Aberdare y'know um, it's a place that sort of [hamstrung?] by transport links, it isn't a major city in, no disrespect but it isn't but uh there is um y'know I suppose there is a legacy of music coming from the valleys and people still passionately cherish that are loyal to that and I think that can only be a good thing and obviously we have some great examples of bands coming up [inaudible] the valleys who've gone on to some amazing things and y'know that, that's great y'know they become role models and young people look up to them and they think well if they did it why can't I so it sounds good to have those role models but I also think it's really good to

have those ambassadors um, who are on the ground who are championing music, making things [inaudible] making their voice heard for the right reasons but doing things y'know with all the good intention there y'know it's very difficult and also it's difficult for the venues to, to rely on music y'know to keep those venues open, so I think it, people in the village and in the town need to recognise it and support it and enjoy it and cherish it and hopefully it will continue but it's not easy and um right now ah yesterday there was a debate in the Senedd about music venues in and around Wales y'know that, that debate is still open and it's good because it's open and um we're still there's still a lot of work to be done, a lot of exploration into the small places and, and it's meant to [inaudible] people in those communities and what they need and also listening to the young people coming through so it's about connecting those conversations and maybe a place like Aberdare will need a different support mechanism than a place like Swansea or places like Wrexham or Bangor y'know they, they are all very different they might look similar but if you dig a bit diff, deeper they're all quite different um, so we have to think of that and be quite intelligent about it and provide something that fits and suits that place at this particular time so um, that's, that's the challenge.

AC: Could you go into a bit more detail about what you think the differences are say between Merthyr and Aberdare just on the face of it y'know.

SG: I think um, y'know ooh

AC: It's a tricky one

SG: Well I would say one of the things is like the geography and that's an obvious thing to say but if you look at the town centre the geography the mapping the town, the map of the town is different y'know there, there's sort of there, there's a lot of energy on, on [inaudible] in Merthyr on the High Street [inaudible] from the top all the way down to the bottom, ah down to The Crown and y'know you can go out and have a night maybe sat in each of those bars and what the bars have to offer you don't really need to go off the beaten track but in Aberdare it's a little different 'cause you have an energy which is, which is like ah shining in Cwmfest this weekend y'know an energy that you [inaudible] the far corner of, of the postcode and then you have the town centre sort of different ah reaction and ownership of live music so we have to look at that y'know one straight off the bat and then secondly you have to think about the people. It's always about the people and the people who y'know what they believe in and some of those people that are championing live music how can we support them, how can we listen to them how can we sort of like work with their ambition but yet y'know make it in-keeping with the ambition of the town and their, and the culture of the town so, um, the, the, they are y'know there's slight differences in Merthyr and Aberdare and I think if you live in that village you gotta, two towns sorry you would probably recognise the differences more so. Um, I worked in Merthyr in the Redhouse for a short period and that y'know I, I was doing my best to try and thrive off that energy and enthusiasm [inaudible] my role was there to support not only the local talent so y'know the space fundamentally was meant to support local talent but it was also about being a little bit ambitious and bringing in some music that catered for all your age groups so we, I, I had sort of a big task there with a very small budget um and I know the places in Aberdare like Jacs and, and, and some of the pubs y'know they're on a micro budget y'know it's driven by bar, beer sales, driven by covering the door y'know so it's, they've not had that flexibility but they're doing some miraculous things in Jacs and um really y'know um, and really feelgood for that and I know the people who are putting a lot of energy in releasing that and whether it needs to be a bit more formulised I think there needs to be some debate within those town centres to get that even more stronger so there are obviously other

bigger venues in Aberdare where you have the Coliseum so you have y'know the council run venue providing even bigger elements.. bigger venues so it needs to bring some bigger names in and it's doing that really well and I think it's going through a definite upward curve now [inaudible] for many years it was sort of like not ah fulfilling but now it really is sort of like trying to get more and more things like uh, um more ambition and um and people are enjoying the, the programme there so. The coliseum is a big place lots of bums on seats and um but [inaudible] a lot of audiences so it can't be one thing it needs to be, anything [AC: Yeah] and um [inaudible] the Park and Dare now those are the two council run venues in RCT and again this venue in Treorchy has challenges as well, programming challenges so [inaudible] other venue [inaudible] so um, I don't [inaudible] off in any sort of um golden [inaudible] I never have that but um I think it's about sort of understanding the intrinsic things and the incremental changes that made it y'know it's not like overnight it becomes something different [inaudible] incrementally change over maybe y'know a respectable amount of time I mean so those changes are radical and they're learning from the small changes within the organisation or the, the programme and [inaudible] they're learning, sort of changing and the programmes changing and the audience is changing and finding ways to [inaudible] reach those audiences so an endless exciting and yet challenging game to play. Um, I, I love it, but I know it can be a high risk game y'know I, you, you sometimes think you're on a winner and then sometimes y'know it, it doesn't work in your favour but when it works it works, so, yeah, tricky.

AC: Um, and what factors make it difficult to do what you do?

SG: Um, I think we are um... I think one of the things is that ambition and yes, I'm always um, keen to explore ambition and we're always reflecting on how we're doing and we're always reflecting on, on things that maybe needs a bit of changing or maybe need more of and less of y'know we're always trying, but within it y'know we are governed by our funding and our resources and our manpower. I explained to you how small a team we have and how unfortunately, how small a sort of um, amount of people we can take on and provide them with the information that we feel y'know is [inaudible] so I would love to reach people, more young people, I would love to bring in more young creatives and I would love the Forte Project to have a ripple effect ah all around and people can get confidence [inaudible] and skills and gain experience um at a real critical point in their career so, I think, it's really good that the conversation is going on the one in the Senedd yesterday and the other conversations surrounding live music and a lot of people are speaking a lot of sense and I, I think y'know [inaudible] good time for us, to, to fly the flag a bit and to, and to show what we do and also to be yeah, to hopefully provide some hope as well. So in think funding is the, is one of the things funding and good support and good people willing to champion what we do, it's what we need.

AC: Okay, and lastly is there anything else you'd like to add?

SG: Um... I think if there's anything, it, there's a responsibility, now I feel responsible in my role and I think that y'know I've tried to keep on learning to, to understand things a bit better and I try to understand y'know everything from mental wellbeing to um the art of mentoring and um obviously the industry which is always incredibly fast paced and moving um I always need to be on y'know, I need to keep on top of that and um and so do my team and that allows us then to give good advice, sound advice and good support. Now if anyone else is in that role and there are many people who are similar y'now and I just feel like y'know that, that's [inaudible] instead and people need to [inaudible] um to me responsible so they are doing, doing good work and continue to do good work um because sometimes bad advice is given um and also

not only bad advice that sort of... a lack of support in terms of not allowing a person to gain confidence and... have the y'know assurance or reassurance that they are on a journey and y'know things might go off track a little bit so it's about y'know having that responsibility to not jump in and, and pretend you know it all or sometimes jump in and give the wrong advice, it's important.

AC: Okay, I'm just gonna stop the recorder there um...

SG: Okay.

Interview with Steve Jackson, 27-08-2019, Telephone @ 1.05 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

SJ – Steve Jackson, Participant

AC: Hi Steve, How're you doing?

SJ: Very good.

AC: So, the first question is um, is what music do you like?

SJ: [Laughs] um, it's a very wide-ranging question but I suppose the main sort of influence um, that's been on me over the last sort of two decades it's mainly around ah, ah Americana so you'd be sort of roots music or, country um, country blues um, anything from the south of America really, um, and yeah, so, sort of everything that's come [inaudible] 'cause I think that... a lot of rock and roll and everything sort of comes from that anyway, so as, they're all, they're all sort of ah, all sort of related in some way or another, but um, yeah, sort, sort of the more southern side of rock music and then the more sort of rootsier side of um, of rock and roll really, yeah. It seems like a long answer to a simple question [laughs].

AC: No, no that's fine the more detail the, the better thanks [laughs] [okay] um, so what music do you play?.....Hello?

SJ: So, yes [inaudible] can you hear me okay? [Yeah fine thanks] yeah, so I, so I mean, um, yeah it really ranges from singer-songwriter to more um, sort of southern, southern sort of style um, rock music, retro, ah country rock and roll really.

AC: Is that what you play yeah?

SJ: Yes.

AC: Right okay, what's the name of your band, or what bands are you in?

SJ: So, the band is called Steve Jackson and the Hotel Radio, so what that's been is [phone rings on participants side...inaudible.... bad signal] I couldn't call you back in two seconds, could I? Will that be okay?

AC: Yeah, no problem okay thank you

AC: So this is ah Steve Jackson interview continued, um, so we got as far as what music you play [yeah] so the next question is really if you can go into detail as much as you can about all the, all the things you do to make music, the practices involved, the writing, rehearsing, recording, getting hold of equipment and relying on people, all that sort of stuff y'know.

SJ: Okay, um, so I suppose the pro, the process really [inaudible] talking about it from the start to finish would be, be the time I spend sort of looking at, spend looking at ah songs that, writing different songs that really, um that's the basic [inaudible] one time I may have four or five song ideas um, in my head and then working through each of those together, so if I can then I try and pick up the guitar as much as I can each day and then take, take things off some of them, add things and then from that process then it would be a case of um, ah putting a band together so, over, over the years there's been different members in the band um but [inaudible] the last couple of

years, three probably it's the same musicians which were in all the other bands as well um, and then from there then it would be putting a set together um, of, of old songs of mine and perhaps new songs and then um, getting into the studio creating a, creating a record and from there then plugging that record to ah radio stations and then hopefully playing as, playing the record out as much as possible really and getting as much exposure as possible, and also creating video content, share on social media, the records and the rehearsals [inaudible] generating a profile.

AC: Okay, um, who else is involved in the writing, rehearsing, recording that you're doing y'know currently?

SJ: What, you wanna know their names or just der....what they play, what, what sort of information do you want?

AC: All of that, as much as you can [laughter].

SJ: Okay, okay so um, I suppose it's very organic the way it works in, in this town, um, so, so, so the guitar player um, is a guy called Jim Gray, he's also the sound engineer and um he [inaudible] professional engineer and ah, [inaudible] tannoy so he's got experience. Um, the um bass player, plays, plays in a couple of bands um from Merthyr, a band called Belle Mellor and ah [inaudible] Bloom, um and he plays in the Moon Birds and they're all friends of mine and then the, the, the, the drummer is a, is a guitarist in a band called [inaudible] Bloom and he ah, he, he plays in this band and he plays in a band, the Sam Andrews band so lots of bands and lots of people who are in very sim, in very similar bands and then the piano player who's Anthony Jenkins who's doing a degree in the Royal College of Music [Cardiff] in jazz, he, he, he, he plays a lot on different tracks as well as playing with the Moon Birds um, and a few other bands and then his girlfriend then um, [inaudible] she, she, she sings backing vocals [okay] so, so, so these people I know anyway um from a lot of us going to the same, same venue um, on a weekly basis to see other bands, so then each person has played with each other, in each other's band y'know. Ah, in terms of the writing so the relationship I have with these people is very much [inaudible] how I'd write a song and then I would tell them what I sort of had in mind and they would then do their parts on top, on the record then, that's how it works [are they in the same room as you when you doing that then or do you send that out separately digitally or something?] I'd write the song first, I'd send it to them on my phone I'd record it just on my phone on the kitchen table and then they'd get a chance to listen to the song and when we get, we get to rehearsal then they would um, they would give their feel, what they want to put on there y'know

AC: Yeah

SJ: and then we feel that around then a little bit. I mean sometimes then I'd be in the studio as well with a guy I work with from Llanelli, a studio called Sonic 1 [inaudible] and because he can, he's a guitarist, plays drums and bass so um, [inaudible] I might just go down there on my own and then, and then, and then I'll record the record down there then with him, I'll just do it and then I'll give it to them y'know and they just play their parts [inaudible].

AC: Okay, you mentioned earlier that you all met at a venue, where you went to go and see bands, where was that?

SJ: Yeah, so it's The Crown isn't it, The Crown, [inaudible] I think I strange thing has happened in, in Merthyr because um, I'm forty years old now, when I was, when I started playing original music which would have been um, nearly 2000 which is the

better part of twenty years ago um, there were, there were no original bands then, but it seems within the last ah, ten years there's been a kind of resurgence of a lot of original bands playing original material y'know it seemed like, particularly, I think social media played a big part in this as well y'know locally people were just playing in cover bands y'know blues rock which y'know was getting a bit tired um, the same set of covers [yeah] there's a lot of younger bands more interested in playing their own material y'know which is what I always wanted to do.

AC: Why do you think that's the case, why things have changed?

SJ: It's a good question [inaudible] it could be down to a lot of things, I think it's um, y'know there's more encouragement for that and I think the BBC New Horizons and Forte where they, where they're trying to push on social media y'know [inaudible] and I think as well y'know social media plays a big part and I can't stand [inaudible] myself y'know the power it's had is, 'cause I mean if you were in the town just give you, talking about a [inaudible] when I was learning to play guitar y'know, I'd have to take my guitar to someone's house and they'd have to show me something y'know, when I, all of a sudden people are learning, they just click onto YouTube and type it in [inaudible] and it's there and the same [inaudible] with a lot of original material [inaudible] when I was starting out y'know bands around us that were sort of playing [inaudible] covers you thought that's what you do y'know, they start up and you, you learn your covers and you put some original material in there, and I, I always thought that was stupid [yeah] y'know I did that for a while and then but now I think bands don't think of that at all, I think young bands I came across just think well I just want to play my own songs, that's what they do. But of course they, they, around that time sort of 2000's we're, you're in a bubble [inaudible] in this part of the world so y'know there weren't a lot of bands looking to play original material there wasn't anything happening much so everyone stays that way, but now, I suppose the bubble is bigger because of social media everyone can see what everyone else is doing can't you, all over the country, all over the world [yeah] anyone can pick up a guitar and play it and your song can be all around the world which is great, um, so I think that's that" made a big difference y'know but in terms of in Merthyr as well I think a lot of emphasis is on The Crown 'cause, it was a very, not so much now but a few years ago, a very creative place, all these musicians from different bands you're talking about a hundred or so bands are all drinking in the same place, all sharing ideas, talking and again y'know I think it makes, makes a big difference doesn't it.

AC: It does, so do you think having that, that sort of communal place where people can meet is crucial for a scene to develop?

SJ: Yeah, I think you can see that from, from, mostly you've seen it, [inaudible] across the world it'd be New York CBGB or y'know in, in Liverpool or then y'know ah, y'know in London it just, something tends to happen in those areas I mean some amazing bands come out of this town in the last ah four, five months, four, five years y'know like the Moon Birds, like Pretty Vicious, Florence Black [hmmm] like ? Fear y'know, ah Pitchforks all, all, all those kind of bands y'know and it's, it's a very small place innit [laughs] [yeah, yeah].

AC: Um, so how often do you rehearse ah with the band then?

SJ: Well to be honest with you, with the band I mean it's, I got a family so my focus is more on the song writing really um, I spent a lot of years being out all the time and rehearsing and the thing is with what I'm doing it's, it's not like the band need to [inaudible] together I mean it's kinda doing my own thing and they just help me out and play on the record, play with me if [inaudible] something on, like Merthyr Rising

[inaudible] rehearsal then a month before, had a rehearsal twice a week for a month [inaudible] if I'm in the studio to record something, rehearsal then, we had a, we had a [inaudible] Martin Levine, first time we went there in Llandoverly, Red Kite Studios and Martin has won an Emmy y'know he did all the sound engineering for um, Joseph's Technicolour Dreamcoat and Les Misérables, [inaudible] so when we wanna do a session with him we rehearse then, it's gonna be perfect y'know.

AC: Where's this studio then?

SJ: It's in Llandoverly Red Kite Studios it's called.

AC: So um, do you use any of the studios or resources in Merthyr or do you tend to go outside?

SJ: Um, nah because, with, the reason you tend to go to a studio is not because of the equipment it's because of the person, so equipment is, recording now has become easy I mean the first record that I made which was um, called The Lightening which, which we used um, we were lucky enough to get into ah, ah, a film which is [inaudible] about Howard Winstone Y'know [I know yeah] and ah, it wasn't really successful y'know it went straight to DVD, at the time felt it was gonna be. But we recorded that in Merthyr on Ponststicill [inaudible] staircase y'know [laughs] it wasn't easy doing that way but um, it was cheap y'know [inaudible] um, if you got the right person you can make it work y'know 'cause, equipment is quite easy to come by, y'know it's quite cheap to come by, once you, if you [inaudible] once [inaudible] for quite a few years, a few add-ons [yeah] um, but then when I met some other people and Tim Hamill in Sonic 1 in Llanelli, I was going down there with him for about 5 years constantly recording different records, and that would be a case of then going down there when you got enough money together 'cause this £300 a day y'know it costs [inaudible] so I made an EP after that, and then, then I wanted to make an album, so I recorded the entire album then down there with him, but, some of the parts of the album I recorded with the guy under the staircase 'cause it was cheaper and then took that down to him to [inaudible] the record y'know what I mean.

AC: Yeah, okay, okay. So, is money, an issue? Does that get in the way?

SJ: Um...yeah, yeah, of course it does I mean what you'll come across doing this innit, come across [inaudible] haven't got any money, y'know it's impossible, if they're, if they're very young they can tour them, they can like tour like Florence Black and they can get in the van and they can work hard and tour and raise their profile and get money from the PRS [inaudible] constant touring is not very sustainable ah, as you're probably aware

AC: Yeah

SJ: Um, y'know if you, if you have a life [laughs] you gotta survive and so when it's [inaudible] what, what worked with me quite a lot that kept it, what funded a lot of that, do your time was of course, through PRS because then the [inaudible] another film I was involved in after that called The Reverend starring ah Rutger Hauer um, so we did the score for that more or less, me and a friend of mine called Nigel Jones plays guitar and we, we from that then of course it was getting a lot of play on Radio Wales, some play on Radio 2, so the PRS thing from that was paying [inaudible] we kept going back to the studio then, it was paying for itself [okay] but of course if you, if you haven't got that happening, it's gotta be sustainable I think y'know, it's gotta, you gotta be able, with myself there's only me, if there's five of you in a band [inaudible] you can all chip in [yeah] y'know but I got family and everything I can't

afford to just go off and be spending £300 y'know every now and again [yeah, yeah] so it's, I [inaudible] comes from it y'know, and now with Martin Levine [inaudible] approach businesses, ah local businesses who are doing well um, and said to them y'know [inaudible] get involved in a sponsorship capacity and they would, it's, it's kinda of a tax write-off for them [inaudible] they give us, two grand or a thousand pound and put that towards a promotion and recording then [yeah]. So yeah, so I employed a plugger then which is very, very expensive to plug the records to radio stations so to generate revenue from PRS.

AC: Is there any funding you can get your hands on with that?

SJ: There has been in the past, um but I think that it's, it's mainly to do with ah like Horizons and Forte ah which are probably worth looking into. They support bands but I think it's very much in a, insular kind of way, y'know it's not just money they want you to go to these classes, creativity classes and things like that and I just think I'm a little bit long in the tooth for that [laughter] I think if you have to be in classroom to be creative it probably [inaudible] not creative innit [laughter]. [I think there's an age limit on Forte as well isn't it and...] Yeah, yeah, I'd feel ridiculous going to a class with all those kids y'know what I mean [laughter] they say it's the start of the journey innit.

AC: Yeah, yeah. Um, so how would you describe your relationship with um other band members and the people crucial to you making your music?

SJ: Um, well, I mean, I mean, great relationship really, they're friends of mine and I think that not many bands have, it's probably, because I'm not with them all the time it's a different dynamic to what it would be if people in a band are together a lot there's a lot of friction y'know [hmm] it's like being in a marriage with four people sometimes, y'know, it, and ah, y'know anyone will tell you familiarity breeds contempt innit, it can be tough, in any band and I, what I, what I found [inaudible] 'cause my wife always said y'know being called Steve Jackson and Hotel Radio y'know you think you're more important than everybody else [laughs] I always say the reason for that is I'm never gonna leave [laughter] I'm never gonna leave so I don't want to change the band name every time [inaudible] leaves it's ridiculous y'know I, I've put in [inaudible] an investment daily so I'm not going keep changing the name [inaudible] all the time

AC: Yeah, absolutely [laughs] So, would it be fair to say that your all friends it's a social connection you all have?

SJ: Yeah [inaudible] we have a social connection before we had a music connection even though we met through music where we, and that's all we talk about, but I suppose it's really, yeah it's an organic connection came about with, by meeting up in the same place really.

AC: Okay, so what um, resources do you use in Merthyr then y'know as in practicing and performing?

SJ: There's a, there's a, there's a rehearsal room in ah, um, [inaudible] the guy who used to play drums for us owned a rehearsal room on Goatmill Road in Merthyr, it's not there anymore, so we used to rehearse there all the time then. Um, and now there's one in Aberbargoed called The Practice Pad we rehearse in um, and performance, well, ah, performed Merthyr Rising, in The Crown, um, ah, probably gonna do something in Hardie's, ah, ah Tapas bar top of town [oh the Tapas bar does that do music as well?] Portugales, well we played there once for my mother's birthday [okay] so I mean [inaudible] more around the song-writing really than the, the performing y'know 'cause if, if you can imagine for me to get, get all those boys

together and they're all in different bands is, is very much a challenge d'y'know, um, I, I, I don't really wanna be going out, 'cause I suppose the biggest challenge initial, initially I have really is having enough venues to play at 'cause someone might say can you come and play up in, in ah, in a pub or something, a party innit, I know it's not gonna be right 'cause we gonna be, if I take them, I, I, I can take rejection y'know a lot of the time but if I take the band there and [inaudible] and they have a really shit y'know return on it like, y'know [laughs] so I feel partly responsible for that y'know, but it, but as well that's, that's why you learn over, over the years you gotta make sure it's the right place y'know because it's pointless taking a thrash metal band to a Stevetening innit y'know [laughter] an, an, and that's what it's like, ah c'mon it'll be alright [inaudible] penny arcade or something and that, and that's not what it's about [laughs] y'know what I mean.

AC: Yeah, oh absolutely yeah Um, so, how often do you pay live in Merthyr?

SJ: In Merthyr?

AC: Yeah

SJ: In Merthyr probably once every four months, five months maybe [okay, and do you get paid for that then?] We get paid for the Merthyr Rising, yeah we get paid yeah, yeah, so, in The Crown we get paid, probably on a door take or in with us on the supporting band y'know um, I mean, I mean, at the moment I'm speaking to a [inaudible] Bob Harris's show y'know it's [inaudible] from ?? house, we did a session with him y'know, we played two or three years ago up [inaudible...possibly Bob Harris's?] show, so things, so ah, with me it's more of a case of wanting to be doing quality things rather than just going out and just playing every week [do you think that's something that comes with age and responsibility as well?] of course it is yeah, of course it is yeah, we can rehearse twice a week and to write songs, I can write songs every day which I do working on some, becoming a better song-writer daily, but, um, y'know, if you're away from family it's gotta be for good reason y'know not playing to 4 people in [inaudible] get in the van and drive up to Camden or [inaudible] this is the big night we're gonna get, y'know like there's one guy there y'know and he's semi-conscious y'know what I mean [inaudible] get back at 4 in the morning and get to work for 9 [laughter] and y'know you just think, you take, and that's why y'know I one of the things I'm most proud of is a lot of people just give up y'know they stop writing songs, stop playing, I don't think I'd be able to give up even if I wanted to 'cause it's something I've done for such a long time.

AC: That kinda leads into my next question, how serious do you take your music making?

SJ: Ah more serious than anything y'know it's ah, y'know it's, y'know it's, song, makes you feel [inaudible] feels right it's so important um, and ah, it's something you spend a lot of time doing y'now, it's like trimming a hedge y'know you cut, you cut one little leaf off and it's not right, go back [yeah] y'know and ah, yeah it's everything really it's up there with, I mean I think in my life [inaudible] thinking y'know [inaudible] that's alright, it's not the best, that's alright y'know [laughs] I can't, I can't do that with a song, it's gotta be perfect.

AC: What motivates you to keep going and continue to make music?

SJ: [Laughs] It's probably being so stubborn, and habit isn't it y'know and I like, the most important thing I like the way when you play a song to someone and, or into an audience it affects them y'know. Y'know I was taught years ago that what it's about is, I spent a bit of time in Nashville. What it's about is being able to change the

temperature in a room [hmm]so you play a song to someone and you can see that happen and you can see them thinking about something sad or something good or something better I think y'know, that, that's what your job is and that, that's the only criteria [inaudible] there's no other criteria.

AC: Okay, so, I know you're working and ah, you got a family so how do you find the time to make music?

SJ: Well you gotta make the time haven't you. I mean a lot of the work I do is from home anyway so um, I try and try and make some time in the day but you can't, um, like it's, it, it, it's quite structured y'know, one of those, I'm very superstitious [laughs] about it, you don't want to push it too hard 'cause at the end of the day who can, what you gotta realise is that it's coming from nowhere [laughs] y'know you haven't got a cupboard you open and take things out, you've gotta create it out of, out of fresh air isn't it. So I mean y'know I've got a few songs I'm working on together and I'm working my way through them y'know, not doing not pushing too hard adding to this that and the other and then um, and then once I've looked through them I start looking at new ideas, I've constantly got a list running through in my head or written down on a piece of paper or whatever, I'm thinking right we to be making an album, at this time of the year um, there's so many songs I got that are good enough, some I gotta throw away, I got a running structure y'know. Like at the moment now we're looking, I'm going to go back in with Martin Levine in um, hopefully in October, November for a couple of days, so at the moment I'm meeting a guy next week now to fund, the source of the money and at the same time I'm writing the songs and at the same time I'm sending the songs to musicians see what they think so it's all, it's all organically moving in the right direction y'know.

AC: Yeah. What, what inspires you to write? What sort of things give you the impetus to write?

SJ: Ah, it could be, it could be anything at all, ah, I do feel superstitious I don't like talking about it [laughs] It's one of those things, yeah, yeah, it's something you don't wanna mess with y'know what I mean, it could, it could be something someone said, it could be something y'know other, I listen to other artists, y'know, y'know things in your family, the way you feel about things, um, about um, injustice, intolerance, observation y'know it could be anything.

AC: And is that sort of like global issues or do you keep it quite local?

SJ: Um, a mix so it, there was, there was a song called Salt of the Earth, have you heard that? That was about the miner's strike kind of local and kind of global y'know it's no, um, it just depends really. I mean it's difficult 'cause you want to say things that are important, but you don't wanna, you don't wanna be too grandiose y'know um, [inaudible] innit.

AC: Yeah, yeah. Um, um what if anything limits what you do regarding music making in Merthyr and we touched upon it earlier, have you got any more things you can say about that?

SJ: Yeah I suppose it isn't um, the only, the only thing that stops ah, me progressing at the rate I'd like to is a resource issue y'know ah, when I think, that's something that can be done in Merthyr more y'know, for example, um, a bit political but the Redhouse has got a studio in there y'know um, the guy who plays guitar installed that studio in there, it's never been used, it's just sat there y'know so, they could easy

have an engineer and have local bands y'know recording in there no problem at all, but it's just like, just like a white elephant y'know.

AC: Why do you think it's not used as much as it could be?

SJ: I just think it's badly managed, [inaudible] some of those, some of those jobs in there, I think what happened is that people are put in those roles and none of them are incentivised to do well 'cause it's y'know, this funding pot they access for these projects and then, they just sit on the venue until the funding runs out and it's panic stations then what are we gonna do? Now when there's, if you look at somewhere like venues we talked b'there about cities they work 'cause people who work in them are promoters, now they want to make them successful they were pushing and then, the more you seek the more you sought isn't it, so they were pushing for acts from everywhere and musicians were looking to play there and then it becomes an entity of it's own. But y'know the thought of all, of all that recording equipment in that building is just sick in the gut that is. It's absolutely shameful innit.

AC: It is, very much so. It seems almost like there's plenty of resources but no sort of momentum or organisation then.

SJ: That's right and it's the same thing with Soar, I, The Soar Chapel y'know I, I remember playing there um, the last time I played there, it holds 250 people so I myself and two other bands, we rented the place out for the night 'cause they wouldn't just leave us play there, we rented it to play, I paid for the bouncers, I paid for the sound engineer and I sold tickets, sold it all out and then from the, from the return I had, I think I had about thirty five pence there's a cost involved but then the week later then they book there um, a Welsh speaking jazz band and y'know they paid them two grand and there's three people in the audience. So I went, I went I can't see where you're thinking? Wouldn't it be better to work with me [laughs] work with me and pay, give me it for free, I'll do every month and then y'know we can build something but nah, they don't wanna do that 'cause that's the way to approach it, it seems to me, look you can have the place for free y'know we, as long as you can bring the people, that's the model all over the country innit that's what they do in London. And then it can the venue, raises the profile of the venue, but otherwise it's sat there, y'know, and the thing is, the sound system in there, I mean it's, the only sound system that'll rival that in this, in Wales is in the Motorpoint Arena

AC: Right, really?

SJ: Y'know it's just not being used.

AC: And that's ah, do the college use it maybe?

SJ: I don't think the college use it anymore, they were using it, but y'know with the Merthyr Rising and all this is going on with Merthyr Rising and again, gets a bit political but with the Redhouse and with Soar y'know, y'know they are so badly run they're trying to integrate them into the events and have things there but it's, they, they don't do a very good job.

AC: Yeah, do you reckon it's a, it's a sort of Welsh speaking preference in Soar?

SJ: That's part of the problem in Soar yeah, it is that's part of the problem but ah, yeah, but it's also I think the people are not, ah, the people who are appointed these positions 'cause y'know I remember I said, can't say their name, I asked y'know why are you spending so much money on, not booking bands and you haven't got an

audience for them y'know they're not gonna come and she said, she said [lady in Soar] my, my job isn't to fill the venue and I said I thought that is exactly what your job is y'know so, if they can't see they're supposed to be filling venues and they're promoters y'know, not much hope for them is there [laughs].

AC: It's very odd isn't it? [laughter]

SJ: Yeah, yeah, 'cause y'know if you think the coliseum in Aberdare that's not a place where a lot of music would be played original music but it's still a place that has events going on.

AC: Yeah, yeah.

SJ: In, in the Redhouse last year there was one event in twelve months so yeah I think, but that's the thing, I mean, it's not so much about the venue y'know it could be in a barn, it could be in any old dump it's the person who's, who's doing it who's organising it.

AC: So it's having the right, like-minded people involved.

SJ: Yeah, that's right.

AC: And do you think you got a good network of people around you doing what you do?

SJ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah that's what comes from doing it for such a long time y'know, you know the people that can help who can do things, and that goes across not just locally, it goes across Wales as well y'know.

AC: Yeah, yeah. And lastly, is there anything else you would like to add?

SJ: Um, no I think that's fine, is there. Is there anything else you want to ask or has that covered most of everything?

AC: Well I'm gonna be transcribing these and reading through them and writing them out so I might be getting back in touch with you, if that, if that's okay?

SJ: Yeah no problem

AC: Just to clarify the odd question or things like that, we can do that via messenger that's fine, no problem at all.

SJ: Okay brilliant.

AC: Okay I'm gonna stop the recording there...

Follow up interview with Steve Jackson, 25-09-2021, Telephone, p.m.

SJ: As I remember it, it had pictures of The Beatles on the walls [...] and of course 'cause there's a drumkit there already and then there is um y'know a PA system there and microphones, um a bass amp and a guitar amp, we can just walk straight in there and get stuck into it straight away y'know. Quite often rehearsal rooms can be quite sterile and ah not very nice places, that was kinda a nice environment y'know and there was always a lot of ah y'know a bit of a laugh, messing around and like I said y'know his parents were always keen to come in and meet everyone, y'know it was very nice.

Then I asked about the benefits of LD's set up compared to a dedicated rehearsal space.

SJ: Oh, it's massive isn't it y'know things like cost and convenience are only small things aren't they, y'know compared to y'know going to a nice place where you know you've been before, y'know and a nice environment, it's in Lloyd's house and of course you can stay there as long as possible really as long as you're not too late, y'know you're not looking at the clock for other bands to come in. In between sessions, y'know in between rehearsals you can relax, and quite often what I find with musicians that's when they perform in the best situations y'know [laughs] musicians are very good at having a good time [laughter] so y'know what you'll find is as well as managing to be good at what they're doing they tend to enjoy company and having a laugh y'know wanna mess around, get drunk do other things and I think if you've got a nice like homely environment that's more likely it just feels like really you're hanging around with friends y'know rather than it being I suppose that's the difference from like Merthyr to other places I've been you never really feel like you're working with musicians they're coming in as hired guns y'know, they're there just to do their job [...] always feels like friends hanging around with each other particularly the people I've worked with because most of the people I work with either I've known for a long time or someone they know, or, it's younger boys only really now coming into things, coming into things in recent years. Lloyd would explain to you y'know some of the boys he's in bands with now are in their thirties. When we were starting out, they were in junior school [laughs]. Like his kids, Lloyds' boy Peri is in Florence Black who are doing very well, they are rehearsing down there, I remember when I used to go into the house y'know Peri was just a tiny little boy so it shows in Merthyr everything is very incestuous, incestuous can mean in a bad, negative way but I would slant it to a more positive way where everybody is kinda part of the same fabric y'know [.....]

SJ: The last time I played there y'know we did a memorial concert for him in the Labour Club and all the people playing on that bill, we'd all played together before and I think to rehearse for that concert we rehearsed in Lloyd's, in the back of Lloyd's house y'know in his father's house so. I goes to show that over the years we'd been doing that already and y'know we continue to do it, which is really nice.

SJ: Well, it always sounds better if you like each other [laughs] AC: You get better results then? [...] when it's live people can notice AC: Yeah definitely [laughter] and I think as well if you get a lot of musicians together, you're all telling stories and things y'know things that have happened in the past y'know the camaraderie y'know [...] it's always a really good time y'know

Follow up interview with Steve Jackson, 25-09-2021, Telephone, 4 pm

SJ – Steve Jackson, Participant

I asked Steve to clarify (from the last interview) his experience of rehearsing at Lloyd's side room:

SJ - As I remember it, it had pictures of The Beatles on the walls [...] and of course 'cause there's a drumkit there already and then there is um y'know a PA system there and microphones, um a bass amp and a guitar amp, we can just walk straight in there and get stuck into it straight away y'know. Quite often rehearsal rooms can be quite sterile and ah not very nice places, that was kinda a nice environment y'know and there was always a lot of ah y'know a bit of a laugh, messing around and like I said y'know his parents were always keen to come in and meet everyone, y'know it was very nice.

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Interview with The Idea, 23-05-2019, Hardies Wine Bar, Merthyr Tydfil @ 4.30 pm

AC- Anne Cleaton, Researcher

TI – The Idea - Carl, Freddie and Richie. Participants

AC: So, this is an interview with Tracy Island on the 23rd of the 5th 2019 in Hardies at, sorry what's the time please...at six minutes past five. Hello guys, how're you doing?

TI: Alright, not too bad, alright.

AC: I've just got a few questions for you and I'll be as swift as I can.

TI: That's okay.

AC: Um, right the first one, what music do you like?

TI: We like, ah everything. Everything and anything. A lot of different stuff. 80s stuff. I knew that was coming mind ha-ha. Carl's 80s, I'm not a fan of the 80s in particular like y'know, a lot. The cheesier the better. Yeah but I think collectively me and Freddie tend to be a little more well I... He's more my [inaudible] I'd say. Very eclectic. Yeah, I think me and Freddie dabble in a little jazz, in terms of like y'know, the type of things we like to do on the guitar and then musically I like a lot of classic indie and a lot of new indie, but these two [pointing to Carl and Freddie] are a bit more heavy. Heavy metal and stuff like that.

AC: And 80s?

TI: And 80s yeah.

AC: Metal in the 80s or anything in the 80s?

TI: No, anything in the 80s. Like I said cheesier the better 80s, Black Lace [laughter]. Yeah, Billie Ocean he's like. The greatest person [inaudible].

AC: So what sort of music do you play?

TI: Um, that's such a difficult question. Yeah, yeah [laughter]. At the minute because we're going through a transitional period where we used to play a lot of up-beat light indie, sort of like Chilli Peppers almost d'y'know what I mean like very downbeat and now we've gone through a phase of, we went a little more fast paced with the indie sort of thing and then, now it's developed into a, we've gone a little bit more to what these two like [pointing to Carl and Freddie]. Yeah, it's a bit heavier than that, a bit Musey almost, Musey yeah. Alternative rock, yeah, alternative indie, alternative indie rock, slap an alternative label on it, that's the, like a midway point between Arctic Monkeys and Muse at the minute. Yeah, [inaudible] it's got that, yeah,

AC: Any particular reason for that or is it just a natural development?

TI: Well, we had member changes originally, so we had our bassist left us first off and then we had Johnno come in who sort of solidified the rhythm section a bit more, and then we had our first guitarist Tom went to university and he couldn't commit or whatever so we ended up having this boy Jack and that's when we went a bit more fast paced indie and then once Freddie joined about a year ago, a year and a bit ago.

Yeah, it's been a year. Yeah, me and Freddie were let loose then [laughter] but I dunno even then I think I sort of matured as well and we all came to the idea that we wanted to do, a heavier sound. [inaudible] punk stuff. Yeah [inaudible] we found a nice middle ground now.

AC: Okay, how did you get into music-making?

TI: I was playing when I was like six. Y'know, I think playing the guitar was cool so I started playing the guitar at nine and then yeah sort of stuck with me then, that's me. I was later, my dad was a musician and he tried to sort of force it on me when I was younger and I liked it but was terrible, I didn't have any patience, so I just didn't do anything with it, and then I think I was about sixteen then when I picked up a guitar properly and ah yeah, I kinda stuck with it and went to college to do music and went to uni to do it and been going since. I was in a band before I could play an instrument I was [laughter] yeah exactly.

AC: Can you explain further?

TI: Yeah, basically all my mates were all musicians around me and I just didn't have anything to do so I was 'oh yeah d'you know what I'll play drums' why not let's give it a go. I just started playing like in school, I can't really say, I was sixteen as well. I didn't have a drumkit in my house until I was like seventeen then so I was really late, but, once I started, I couldn't stop y'know what I mean.

AC: So the friends you mentioned are they still in bands now? Are they active?

TI: No, none of them, none of them now.

AC: None of them?

TI: Well, one sort of is but it's not [inaudible] coz he's doing medicine in uni now. They're all doing different things but I just stuck at it, but I think between them and you lot [the other band members] I didn't do anything in-between did I really? sixteen, seventeen and then I played on my own but there weren't any bands for like, yeah and then we formed, six years innit. When I was fifteen, I asked Carl to join and he said no [laughter], he said no, coz of my commitment issues, yeah, we were supposed to be in a band a while ago, asked me to play bass in a band but I never turned up to the practice. Two hours we waited for him and he just kept saying yeah, I'll be there now, two hours later he's still not yuh, rang him again, ahh I'm not coming now. Yeah. Booked practice space y'know spent money. So I asked him then do you wanna join my band? And a few weeks later he's like... ah...no [laughter] so then I think it was about a week later I rung him back and was just like...please? [laughter] oh okay I'll come, borderline begging then, I'll come and have a look innit. [inaudible] it clicked instantly.

AC: Okay, so um, tell me about your musical practices and what I mean by that is sort of rehearsals, recording, performing, so what you do and where you do it.

TI: Hmmm, I think we try and practice once or twice a week y'know, it's not, we're not very regimented, yeah, yeah, we just do it when we can. It's usually once a week different days [inaudible] yeah, when we speak to other bands we seem to be practicing y'know, more than a lot of other bands, yeah, two in a month, yeah, I think if you try and get one or two in a week then you're always sort of caught up and fresh, I mean we didn't play for a, because obviously I've become a father [inaudible] for a week and a half, two weeks something like that and then we went and had a

practice four days ago I wanna say? Something like that? And it was all still fresh because the amount we practice like so, in terms of practice we try and keep that as y'know loose but regimented as possible. Recording, ah, now we got a guy down in Cardiff, Andrew Sanders who's a terrific guy really good producer so, [inaudible] coz we fished about other places before and we weren't happy with the product, we weren't happy with the experience and then...

AC: Is there anywhere in Merthyr? Anywhere local?

TI: No, well yeah originally, originally we went with a mate of mine. We just did a couple of quick tracks with. I remember that, a guy in Pant? Yeah, and y'know they didn't come out terribly but it wasn't y'know [inaudible] experience. It wasn't a professional recording, there's none of that in there, yeah.

AC: There's nowhere at all?

TI: No, not really no, [inaudible] you got the, not that they do it but the college facilities are good. Yeah. But it's not really open to. It's not just down to the technology it's the [inaudible] recording it as well, we found that sort of connection in Cardiff. Yeah.

AC: What was the thing then, what was that?

TI: It wasn't a, mine's because he's a drummer, yeah, easy to get on with. He's a drummer and you can hear that in his mixes, you can hear that he's very drum influenced and, yeah. And yeah, it's not just musically, just him as a person we get on with him really well. And he brings a lot of ideas to the table as well, he don't just. Yeah. We've been with producers and you just said, what we say they'll just go okay. Yeah. But he's not afraid to go, why don't you try doing this b'here, why don't you make this simpler. Got more [inaudible]. Yeah, got a bit more [inaudible] Yeah so he was, comfortable, as well we were comfortable in his presence. Yeah, at the end of the day you gotta spend, well sometimes, we go down for 3-4 days sometimes. We done two last time, been there for like 6-8 hours, maybe twelve hours sometimes. Yeah. So to be able to cope for that long in a small space you need to be able to. Yeah. He's somebody that [inaudible] especially keeping on top of all the ideas that are popping up and remembering where things are going and all these sorts of stuff, he's just, he's great and then in terms of performance we try and do one or two gigs a month innit, but recently, coz we recorded our, we got four singles? Yes. And we got an EP ready to go after the release of our next two singles, so we've been working on that and concentrating on that and getting our product. [inaudible] behind us [inaudible] as a full band we've been together four years. Yeah. In that four years we've had, well, a couple of things out innit? But nothing major. Yeah. [inaudible] singles on every major streaming platform. It's literally this year the fourth year, that's when we've started pushing. Yeah.

AC: What do you think's changed that it's actually getting some traction?

TI: Four committed members. Consistency. Yeah, and having four people who genuinely want it and y'know can work their lives around it do y'know what I mean, are willing to juggle things and y'know because it is difficult, it is hard like y'know, but [inaudible] fine line. And I think as well as in someone who we connected with like sound wise as a person as well so we had Freddie come in and it felt like a breath of fresh air. Much the same with Sanders as well isn't it? Finding Sanders in that gap as well. To be able to produce that exact sound that we wanted, coz we recorded [inaudible] do we want to put that out there, so. Yeah. I think it's a mixture of everything really innit. The line-up and the producer and everything. Everything [inaudible] We're enjoying

our music a lot more, it's ourselves as well. Oh yeah, like beforehand there'd be a few songs in the set where I'd sort of be like... plodding along, but now it's a case of like, we got only really one song in the set at the minute that we want to get rid of and the rest of them are like. Just look forward to playing them. Yeah. So yeah, like I said we try and do a few gigs a month innit and that's our aim one or two gigs a month and...

AC: Where do they usually take place then? Her or...?

TI: We've been quite fortunate in that regards, we've had gigs in [inaudible] yeah, we've done a few in Merthyr, but we don't tend to do Merthyr. Cardiff's more of a... in terms of consistency, I'd say Cardiff is the place we gig the most, but we've done gigs, Swansea, Bristol [inaudible] London, yeah, um Manchester? No, we did, where was it? Dunno um? Bedford. Bedford, yeah. We've played Bedford, we've done y'know all around the valley as well, like y'know what I mean every little pub place and [inaudible] at some point.

AC: Are there any reasons why you don't play in Merthyr much?

TI: You don't want to over saturate it because the problem is when you're a local band it's very difficult to get people interested. And when you got venues [inaudible] yeah. Red house aren't dealing with that side of things much anymore. You got the Crown, when we first got together we came to the Crown. It was a [inaudible] every Friday but we needed that right at the start and then y'know there's only so many times people in your own town are gonna come watch you and are gonna start going, they're playing again, yeah. Yeah especially in the same venue and stuff so [inaudible] I think now we try and make it every time we gig Merthyr it's a new iteration of the band like y'know. It's more [inaudible] we play, we played Merthyr Rising what 4 years now? Four years we've been together we've played, yeah, managed to play every year, and this year because we spent a lot of time away from Merthyr, once we'd done our set, we were lucky with our time slot as well. Once we'd done it the amount of people who'd come to watch us. Yeah. Plus we think that's a lot to do with putting the music out as well. They got something they can listen to so when they come and watch us they can sing. It's a buzz for us. Yeah. Because when we played, we only got one single out at the moment but we played that song last when we played that [Merthyr Rising] forever, people singing, yeah, singing our lyrics like. But it's really good if you stay away from Merthyr it'll get people a little more excited to come and watch you if you play back in Merthyr again, coz it's too many bands that like disappear and don't come back... or either the opposite end of the spectrum where people literally play all the time and then and they don't get out of Merthyr then because they're so used to playing Merthyr it's almost getting themselves... Plus it's like if you do the rounds or if you do a gig in London or [inaudible] do a gig here and there maybe you get to support a band that's got a bit of notoriety or something, that's happened once or twice, ah it just feels then that [inaudible] creates a buzz, oh they're doing quite well, they do come back round and they're like ah I'll go and see what the buzz is about. Some people follow the popularity rather than the music itself. A lot of people will. Exactly, it's all about the buzz. My friends listen to these I haven't heard them but I'll go and watch them coz it's a bit, they played with this band so I went to see them, I'll go and watch them for that reason, which is odd coz you want to listen to the music but... I know it's the way it works, coz I [inaudible] an audience member as well y'know [inaudible] it's not often, we used to go to gigs all the time like coz we'd be at them all the time and playing them all the time, but you'll notice now when you go to a friends gig or whatever but you only go to the big ones so you'll only go to the ones that seem to have a bit more importance, a single launch or a y'know an end of tour show or

something like that. Coz that's the thing, if you went and saw the same band all the time in the same place they're going to get boring for you, you're not going to get the same energy from the crowd and then it's just a dull experience compared to what it could be like.

AC: So what's involved in creating a buzz then? Y'know what sort of things do you have to actually do on the shop floor to...

TI: Too many things [laughter] [inaudible] now, when Freddie came we did a whole re-brand so Freddie came up with a new sort of website for us, well that first website wasn't really good and created, we had merch created, we had. Logo, yeah we had a logo. The logo made a big difference in terms of... because we had a multi coloured sort of like psychedelic artistry [inaudible] it didn't really match what we were playing. Yeah, and then... simple palm tree, yeah simple, bold, eye catching. And pink, coz it's a statement colour, definitely a statement colour [inaudible] when we had the stickers by the bar, whenever we post on social media now it pops up, yeah, it does. Since we changed the logo we put it up on Facebook and it's getting more likes [inaudible].

AC: Is it expensive to do all this promotion?

TI: Yeah. Yes. [laughter]

AC: How do you get the funds to do that?

TI: Work. Work. Yeah work [laughter] we self-fund it yeah, unless somebody else like. I mean we've had friends in the past like, there was a guy who didn't so much manage us but just a good friend of ours like, who saw we could use some help like.

AC: What's his name then?

TI: Rory Knight, so he's a, he's sort of, been on the scene before and he's a musician himself and I think he likes to find a local band and try and push them a bit. So he helped us in terms, he give us some gear and paid for some recordings and stuff. But like lately obviously we've become a lot more self-sufficient and the sales of our merch went towards our music video and stuff like that. Yeah, the merch once we brought the merch out that helped. Yeah. Coz obviously money, get more money out and we can use that profit to, like you said. Yeah. Find the music video, fund other things like, yeah exactly. This is the thing coz all of us are dedicated as well it's not too difficult 'cause say we need to go to the studio then it might be 4-500 pounds when you say that number it's quite big don't you, when you say 100 pound each it's not like, it's more manageable like y'know because if you book it two months in advance realistically you can put twenty quid a week away and there y'know. The same with the mastering now, we just as soon as our guy's ready for mastering like there was no question like pay him and yeah how much. Yeah... It's almost [inaudible] I haven't paid yet coz he hasn't mastered it yet [inaudible].

AC: What do you do for a living?

TI: I work in a bar [Freddie]

AC: Where do you work?

TI: Wetherspoons, literally so over there

AC: Up the road there?

TI: Yeah.

AC: What do you do?

TI: I drive fork lifts construction [Richie]

AC: Is that local then or do you have to go far?

TI: All over and bits and bobs, wherever the work is because I'm self-employed.
[inaudible]

AC: And you are full-time here [Hardies bar in Merthyr] are you?

TI: Yeah, this is my home away from home this is [Carl]. Lee [owner of Hardies] is really good, band stuff [inaudible] the band stuff he supports things like that. I ask him straight away, whatever I ask him he says yeah. [inaudible] and our bassist John who we, is in the same thing as me, we work together so, it makes it quite convenient to be fair. Another thing we need to pay for as well is boosting on social media [inaudible] that's what really gets us the [inaudible].

AC: Does it really pay of?

TI: Yeah, yeah. Especially on Instagram now. Facebook seems to be [inaudible] they cut their numbers, wouldn't send so much money on it because you could get for like a grand you could get like close to a million views y'know and now a grand will get you like half that.

AC: That's on Facebook yeah?

TI: Yeah. Instagram is the way forward. [inaudible] get most of our stuff from there. We want our demographic to be I suppose like eighteen to maybe like mid-thirties? Yeah. And that sort of the Instagram sort of... Everything's visual again. Yeah. [inaudible] people want to listen to a song but something to go with the song [inaudible] we spend like 100 quid on a two weekday [inaudible] on Instagram, we can hit, get towards a thousand likes and then sixteen hundred views so sixteen hundred people, no, sixteen thousand people seen it and probably about a thousand of those will like it then.

AC: What stems from that then? Do you get gigs or funding or sponsorship?

TI: This is, this is the thing right, this is the sort of loose grey area where like the only thing it really does is make you look better on Facebook and Instagram, it makes you look more notifiable which in turn creates a hype around you. Yeah back to that old, people want to follow you because they think you're more popular than what you are. It's about creating it, not ah, not a fake image yeah but you do, gotta make yourself look more famous than what you are and that's what gets, and that's what we found [inaudible] yeah. [inaudible] hang on a minute pay more money for music videos and stuff like that we [inaudible]. Like, even with the next one... for like... I think [inaudible] people wanting to follow people because of. That's our strategy anyway [laughs] yeah at the moment. Pay it off then bit by bit [inaudible] it is definitely a science innit? Because it does definitely pay off [inaudible] once you've put out a video or something you get a bit of hype around it and pay for the promotion and people have liked it the following few posts you put up that normally wouldn't get half

as many likes will now sort of double in likes because people will just be like oh Tracy Island, they're relevant and y'know they get involved like.

AC: So it's better online then?

TI: Yeah, you're persistently posting as well, you gotta just, you gotta keep y'know not daily but like as soon as you say you're off a week, you don't post anything for a week then we post something it don't get anything then so you gotta literally [inaudible] you post something then three days later you post something again it's [inaudible] but leave it too long and [inaudible] short memories. It might seem like you're bugging people but you have to. Yeah. There's so much stuff on social media that people have forgotten about is because someone. You gotta become annoying. Someone said. You gotta be that annoying person on Facebook it's all online. I think there's a cap once you get to a certain level then you can sort of mellow out a bit. Then people sort of, then you do the opposite you post less frequently and then they want more so [inaudible] when you start it off yeah you just got to be [inaudible] there's a definite cause and effect in it because we've been turned down for support slots for gigs before. The Night Café were playing in Cardiff and I love the Night Café, I really wanted to support 'em, and they turned us down but they said the reason why, they said you've not been very active on your social media, you haven't brought out y'know, any singles and your traffic isn't that good, so we're not gonna risk putting you on 'coz your not [inaudible] Every venue and every band needs numbers through the door don't they. Yeah, yeah. If they got somebody supporting them and you can bring maybe a quarter of the crowd. Yeah. You're obviously not going to do that if you've not got the presence unfortunately. Yeah. Yeah.

AC: So we were talking earlier before we started recording about rehearsing up in...Cefn?

TI: Yeah, in the Taber chapel up there.

AC: Um, can you just tell me a bit about why you rehearse there and not elsewhere, the benefits or limitations?

TI: Yeah, well it's free for a start and we've got our own PA. Well Knight bought us a PA a long time ago. So we just realised we could be self-sufficient, we got all our own guitars and amps like [inaudible]. Plus we had a nightmare with rehearsal space. Yeah, we had another place before this, so originally we'd do which is what most bands do and is rent a local y'know rehearsal studio.

AC: Where was that then?

TI: It would be NU Studios in Pant so that would be, the problem with that is you'd call them up and they might not have a space on the time of day that you want it and when you're on a tight schedule trying to work between four people's lives y'know if there's one day a week [inaudible] you need that day to be free. Um and also to do with times y'know how late you can be, how long we can be there for, coz you're paying by the hour in those places. So then, ah, Knight helped us get his fath, his uncle owned an industrial unit, he owns a group of industrial units on the ICI so originally we rented one of those for...how much was it? 200 pound a month, 200 pound a month, so we, we had a good deal there. We basically set up our stuff there but it was a bit of a nightmare other bands started using it then to help fund the costs and noise sorts of things, stuff started to go missing and the place was getting trashed. Yeah, the other units were complaining about noise and times of people

being there, we knew our times but then like obviously other bands going there. Silly o'clock. Yeah, and leaving gates open and stuff.

AC: And this is NU Studios?

TI: No, this is a different place, this is a place up the road. This is a place we rented privately. That was after when we realised we needed our own space, we rented there then we had those issues so my Grandfather said y'know we can practice in the chapel so he give us the key, we went up there and the space was bigger and was. Warm, dry. Not wet. Yeah, coz we. It kept leaking yeah. And aesthetically the place is beautiful as well you go upstairs and a big open chapel like where you can go and roam around. [inaudible] Yeah exactly I mean it's more convenient coz we can just meet up there if we wanted to we can be there all day and all night and all day and night if we wanted to be. Yeah exactly, it's very central. Yeah. They don't complain about the noise. We've never had [inaudible]. We try to get out of there before 10 o'clock usually. Yeah, we've been there almost a year [inaudible] never had anyone complain. Yeah.

AC: Um, so, we're talking about resources. Um, you've kinda answered this but one of my questions is how serious do you take your music-making? From the outside it seems very serious.

TI: Yeah. We try to run our, our image like a business. Yeah. Coz you got to. Yeah. I'm professional about it but when it comes to the actual product that we make we don't have a strategy. No, we're definitely passionate about it, we do have times when like y'know we do get stressed don't we? We, [laughs] you. You. I'm yeah [laughter] there was a reason for that though wan it? The writing dynamic changed last week, for some reason everyone decided they wanted to grill me. Usually we just play and I'll just play along and get stuck in. Last week it just become [laughter] let's everyone talk and criticise the drums last week I dunno what happened. We spent, how long have you been with us now? We spent a year and a half writing a certain way and last week without even consulting it just changed [laughter]. We did have some time off before it, we hadn't practiced in ages so we sort of forgot how to write [inaudible]. It was more forced last week it seemed, coz we knew we wanted to write we went in specifically to write and we've tried it in the past, never works, if we [inaudible] let's write a song, it just don't work. So like last week we went in and we were like started playing the set all the way through, you start playing a riff he write initially we all started playing along. Yeah. And then we just done it [inaudible] gets busy when we jam, we jam and keep things and move stuff. But nah, it changed two weeks ago it was just all stop and stare at Carl, telling Carl what to do [inaudible] with my drums [laughter]. He wasn't quite a victimised as much as he's making out, it was, it was a sensitive... We were all stressed as well though. Yeah. Yeah, so um. I've forgotten what the question was [laughter] Yeah but no we take it. We take our music-making. We take it seriously [inaudible]. We have fun with it. Yeah. If you don't that happens [tension in rehearsals] [laughter] [inaudible] but when it comes to marketing ourselves it's business. With song writing what comes comes innit, we don't go in and go right we need to have a track in this key that ends like this so it can go into this or. This BPM. That's why it was so different last week. Yeah. It was too forced. [inaudible] chart music then. Definitely too forced. But yeah it goes widely varied in genre and stuff. We got two songs we're writing at the minute, one of them is Jazzy and the other one is y'know. Probably a heavier song. It's the heaviest we've ever done. Like Lullaby is quite heavy but this one... it's definitely more. Yeah. It's more me and you [Freddie] than anything else. So I mean, like I say there's no structure, we take [inaudible] coz it's like. We take it seriously but we have fun at the same time, it's not taken too seriously [inaudible] when we start, like you start treating

everything like a business it's just going to become a chore. Yeah. It's one of those things you either wanna do or don't, that's the thing. The reason we [inaudible] because of how passionate we are about it as well. Yeah. It's something that we want we just get frustrated. Yeah. If we didn't care about it a lot. Yeah. Yeah, but it's one of those things like y'know I think, I think a lot of people invest their entire soul being into it and it messes them up inside but I think we've managed to have that lovely thing of like finding a happy medium of being like y'know this is where my life is this is where the band is, and I can push them both y'know. Yeah, yeah. It's hard y'know because as soon as you start to prioritise your band over your life or your life over your band one's gonna slip so you gotta find that nice middle ground where I can [inaudible] sit quite nicely. I think that definitely helps because you can take it seriously and then you can take a day off or two days off. We've got lot of commitments outside of it as well haven't we? Yeah, yeah. Work, all of us are in relationships [laughter]. Yeah. Yeah. Which again is another thing [laughs]. I got a baby now. You've got a baby now exactly. Two of them are engaged. Oh yeah two of us are engaged so one's got a baby now.

AC: How old are you if you don't mind me asking?

TI: I'm eighteen. I'm twenty three. I'm twenty five. Johno's thirty two.

AC: So he's a bit more experienced than you guys then? Life experiences I mean.

TI: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah he tries to. He's the wise one yeah.

AC: Does he have any influence on the writing because he's older?

TI: Yea, well... I couldn't do it without him [laughs]. The rhythm section I think definitely when it comes to an idea of a song maybe but he. Yeah. He, we never tell him what to play on bass. Oh I don't know, Johno gave me, Johno wrote Sail, the original riff for Sail. Yeah. Well he just gave me the chords and the actual structure of it. Yeah, he's a lot sort of experienced in, because he's been in bands for... Nearly ten years probably. Longer than that probably innit? We worked it out the other day me and him there's fifteen years between us. Yeah so he knows [inaudible] what people want to hear and he wants to hear as well so like. Yeah. He's not afraid to voice his opinions [inaudible] none of us are afraid to voice our opinions really are we? If something sounds wrong we're like [inaudible]. I think a lot of the time he gives me a lot of free reign to be like [inaudible] and confident in what you're doing. But he'll turn, we'll all turn like maybe you've gone a bit too far the wrong way there. Yeah. Or something like that. So, yeah, he's. My thing with it is if John tells me something I know it's right [inaudible]. Exactly. He just makes me relaxed he does [inaudible] the thing is, the problem is he's got a wonderful talent of knowing exactly what's going on in my head, twenty four, seven [laughter] even when I don't want him to. And I'll say something and he'll know exactly what I mean really and just look at me and smile and say ahh I know you [laughter] so. That's how we spend a lot of time together as well. Yeah, yeah it is yeah.

AC: So with your song-writing then would you say it was a fair analysis...ah that it's a collaborative process?

TI: Oh yeah. Yeah. Definitely yeah.

AC: There's not one person doing more?

TI: Nah, we've got a song-writing agreement in the band that all royalties are split twenty five, twenty five, twenty five and twenty five.

AC: Do you have a contract with one another?

TI: Yeah, well we've got a... we did have a signed contract I dunno if you actually signed? I Haven't signed anything? [laughter] I haven't signed anything either? [inaudible] We did, we did with Tom and [inaudible] we signed a piece of paper that said twenty five, twenty five, twenty five, twenty five put it in an envelope [inaudible]. Coz he, that was when he left. I think I might've been yeah. That was on the songs that we got. Yeah. Yeah. But we've got a verbal agreement that would continue into a contract y'know if we were to have one, that would say, ALL recordings, royalties and song-writing royalties are twenty five, twenty five, twenty five, twenty five [inaudible] distribution [inaudible] everything goes straight to the bank account then anyway. Yeah. So any royalties [inaudible].

AC: So you've got a band bank account?

TI: Account for the band yeah so.

AC: The distribution, can you say more?

TI: There's an online service called [inaudible] there's loads of ones that are like it, you just pay a yearly subscription, I think it's like twenty quid. Yeah. And you can upload [inaudible] editing as well and it distributes all to Spotify, iTunes [inaudible] rather than going to like labels and doing it that way.

AC: How did you know about these? How did you find out about it?

TI: It's the way that's why there's so much independent music coming out. Yeah, it's common knowledge in the music scene. Yeah. Google search on how to get your music on Spotify would lead you in the right direction. There's other one's like CD Baby, Tunecore, yeah [inaudible]. People use different ones don't they [inaudible] and they all have different agreements [name of their service inaudible] don't take any percentage of the royalties we make so all [inaudible] goes into the band's bank account, just so we can re-use [inaudible].

AC: So this is common knowledge then?

TI: Yep, yeah. Basically, I mean maybe we knew about it a bit sooner because and me and him [Freddie] studied music and music business and stuff like that so y'know you sort of get clued up a little more but yeah it's generally how people do it these days now that you'll have to upload to them [inaudible]. There's not a lot of money in streaming. No [laughs] [inaudible]. We brought one single out the other day and we've had the one dollar 92 pence in the last. That's just [inaudible] Spotify? Is that Spotify? Zero point zero pence. Point zero, zero six. Point zero, zero, six. [inaudible] Yeah a thousand plays [inaudible] so what's that? [inaudible working out how much they have earned]. Pennies. Like a quid or something. Yeah. ten pound maybe. No, it's not ten pound. Then there's also, we did. two pound, two pound. You know a bit more about [towards Freddie] it but basically its essentially a service when... Do you use Spotify much?

AC: Yeah, yeah.

TI: Do you know there's playlists on there. Like the Spotify official playlists and then there's playlists that people have made which have just happened to get traction behind them and essentially streams we've, pay, say pay like a fiver and they give you credits and then there's different playlists then you can use those credits to apply to be on them and you're guaranteed to get um at least a bit of feedback of why you weren't chosen. That's what I like about that, if they say no they gotta give you feedback as to why they didn't pick your song [inaudible] on their playlist which is [inaudible] for writing our next songs. Yeah, so we applied for like five and we managed to get on two or three? three, three, three playlists we got on? A few more now, there's a couple [inaudible] so yeah we've managed to get on a few. Um that's another good way to just, say one of them has say 200 thousand followers as soon as you're on that 200,000 people have the potential there to see the song. Which again it works like, straight on Instagram and we're down to the visual side of it.

AC: Would you say that, maybe some of the music then is taken to fit with these certain different platforms in order to get in there.

TI: I'd say, I'd say it wasn't the music tailored around it but I think the way that we've released to has been tailored towards it, so some of them said hey, we like the track, bit too heavy for me, or a bit too rocky for me, or one of them said like the solo was too heavy for me, so then you know that next time we'll send our lighter tracks to that one and we'd send our heavier tracks to another one, but I think. Yeah [inaudible] how it works [inaudible] yeah you can start to strategize and market who will be best to hear what tracks. I think that's the way forward these days innit, as well it's so difficult. Like people bring out albums, people haven't got the attention span anymore to listen to a full album, because playlists are such a big thing. Yeah. You need that one single that someone will put on their playlist and unfortunately, like me, I [inaudible] if I like I band I'll go out and support them but I don't know if that's just me coz I'm a musician as well, knowing if I go out and buy a hard copy it's better than streaming, but yeah... I think... albums are down and out. There's big bands just releasing EPs now. Yeah. You can do a single once a month and by the December you got an album. You don't have to release it as an album then. It again goes back to that consistency thing [inaudible] if you keep releasing music people can look forward to it, they know it's gonna come. Yeah. Rather than dropping it all at once [inaudible] listen to it. Loads of people listened to it that one time, it slowly trails off. Yeah. People can love a band and I still think they can only pick three or four songs out of their favourite bands' album. Yeah. To put in a playlist with their other favourite bands and then, and y'know why not because y'know if you can listen to twelve songs on an album you don't like why not take four from one and four from the other and make your own. Yeah. Yeah. Make your own thing that's why it gets more difficult then coz you gotta focus more on individual [inaudible] which is bands years ago would focus on the record. Yeah. [inaudible] keeping up that constant positive correlation. It does make that it's expensive [inaudible] coz each single we gotta say, say we're recording on this cheaper end of the spectrum. Dan, does us a good deal and he's quite a hidden gem in terms of he's very talented but quite small. We paid I think it was 400 quid for the last, no 500 quid to have, two recording days and then [inaudible] for the mix, we already had one that needed mixing. So we paid 500 quid for that, so roughly you're talking about. Do the maths. [inaudible] So you're probably talking roughly about 150 to 200 pound per individual for a single in terms of recording and having it mixed and mastered then you're talking 350 to 500 quid for a video for that one single then you're talking a 100 quid to boost that single. The money it'll cost you to get it [inaudible] a brand. Yeah you're not getting hardly any of that money back en. But um, you trade the money for... for, not for popularity but, yeah exactly, you're trading the money for listens building a fanbase basically. Yeah. We're willing to put that money in and not get anything back from it. One day it will.

Yeah, it's like an investment, well it is an investment not like an investment [inaudible] you put all this money in and hope one day enough people from [inaudible] buy and connect with your product then. You can justify doing it. I mean in terms of, like that's the thing y'know we had a lull for a long time we didn't release anything like our first single we put out we had a good video for it, twenty eight thousand views, really happy with it at the time like. And then the next one we didn't do a video for and it had six thousand, yeah and we thought oh visuals definitely make a difference. Then we took a long time off and I noticed then that other bands were releasing y'know singles [inaudible] I was constantly on [inaudible] right we gotta do something [inaudible] we need to re-brand and re-strategize like and then once we'd released I dunno, well once we released our last track, I didn't expect it to get as many as it did [inaudible] No it went [inaudible] fifteen, sixteen thousand something like that? [inaudible] the last one we did, I was expecting that to have gone down into about four thousand coz other bands around here were releasing, y'know smaller bands were releasing getting about four thousand to ten thousand, so I was happy that we at least kept a bit of that momentum over the time as does happen when you [inaudible] up a more long lasting fanbase that isn't there for that time. I think that's definitely the good thing about a progression over time is that yeah you'll have spikes and lows but each time you have a Steve you're more solid fanbase [inaudible] hopefully, eventually [inaudible] [laughs] Like our merch sold really well y'know when we play a gig now we'll did one in Cardiff y'know in [inaudible] bar a couple of weeks ago [inaudible] I'd say about thirty to forty percent were wearing our t shirts just like that y'know. Each [inaudible] and we've learnt from that as well now. Five different colours didn't we and now we've learnt certain colours didn't sell and like with the next lot we know exactly what people want. It's a lot of trial and error, like releasing the first single, trying to [inaudible] ? find an error? Find an error. Everything's like you gotta [inaudible] gamble really haven't you. Yeah. And then at least if it doesn't pay off you know and then you can change the next step then [inaudible]. We have to crazy [inaudible].

AC: I'll just knock out a few more questions.

TI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. [laughter] That's it as well if you ask us a question we will talk [laughter].

AC: So we talked a little bit about what motivates you but I haven't asked you explicitly. What are your motivations for doing all the work that you're doing? And what do you get out of it?

TI: We just enjoy playing music together, and we hope one day for it to be our career. Yeah, just earn money by doing what we do. [inaudible] I've been doing it for 10 years and music is still... my main focus like, I don't think it's going away any time soon but... to make a living off doing it would be, I think everybody wants that job where they gotta get and make a living or y'know everybody wants that job [inaudible]. Yeah, but I think it's one of those things, if I played, if I played Reading on one of, one of the medium stages once I could die happy [laughter] that's all I want to say. All of us. A massive crowd who understands singing the music back. I just wanna, have one of those moments like on the films [inaudible] seeing people as far as you can see and y'know the guy there like. I've always pictured that so like if I get that I'm happy [laughter].

AC: Just two more questions guys, um, what if anything limits your music-making in Merthyr only?

TI: Money...I think the main thing that people have an advantage with, there's bands like the Hunna right, they've obviously got to where they were because they were talented but they paid they were, and this is a fact, they paid out something stupid like ten grand on a promotional campaign for their one song Bonfire and they just went [clicks fingers] because everyone had heard it, everyone in the UK pretty much have heard that song [inaudible] so many people are gonna like it [inaudible] and that's the thing then if once that lands on say some radio DJ's desk, it doesn't matter if he hates it, if he's going right everyone's listening to this song [inaudible] on the radio, selling out tours and that was one of the reasons, [inaudible not that band in particular, that's one of the reasons why Facebook had to change their marketing strategy was that there was like an ethics thing that said there was a big thing about it, an ethics thing that basically said people can now pay to become famous so they wanted to sort of limit that, but... There's an unfair advantage, I think. Yeah. Yeah. You can be super talented but not have the money. Yeah, so I think there's definitely, if we had more money ready to go all the time we could be in the studio every day. Yeah, it's not about being, money does help [inaudible] towards it innit, it's 'orrible but...especially in this day and age with social media and everything it's, like again it's part of that everybody wants to be part of a group, popularity. Yeah. Go to listen to a band because it's popular than...

AC: What about the Forte Project, did you find that that had any impact?

TI: Bunch of [inaudible, laughter] sore subject. Yeah. They set us back...

AC: Don't go there?

TI: Yeah, they set us back by about a year, because I, when we joined and Steve basically they give you a road map of what you're gonna do for the year. At the time I was working on festivals for like, when I went away on March [inaudible and laughter] March 21st I went away I didn't come home until September 2nd We were just on these festivals. So when we joined Forte I said to Spike, y'know, he told me the road map and I said look we need to get recording now, not saying we want to release now, we need to have the product there so when we come to [inaudible] stage later on I'm not going be there, it's not gonna matter coz you can still release.

AC: Yeah

TI: And he told me that we were rushing things, it was stupid and I was [inaudible] about to go away for a long time. So we had this argument with him and 'en I went away and he was like oh! Oh, you've gone away and I was like, yeah I told you [inaudible]. Me and you used to went to meetings though and we still went, workshops and all that but...[inaudible]. It basically [inaudible] they basically pick, there's ten of us in there and... They pick two bands. They pick two bands and they [inaudible] that they like the most. They fund them. That's from our experience or whether they've done it in previous years but? We know they have [inaudible]. Yeah, we went down by the third or maybe fourth workshop and me and Freddie went to one and it was like [inaudible] Yeah. We were like, non-existent band, coz the one's been picked [inaudible] they've gone off together and done something together so we were just like sitting in this room when everyone's like did you go out last night? Coz a lot of them are from Cardiff as well. Yeah. But like, coz they were doing stuff together me and him were just like, alright then, we can see how it is, we'll just sit ya for the rest of this workshop and... Yeah. [inaudible] Not that we felt pushed out, we didn't really... It sounds harsh, we weren't that bothered were we? We can see where this is going [laughter] [inaudible] But then [inaudible] was dangled in front of us coz we were gonna record with Sanders originally before we'd even met him [inaudible] and

then sand, ah Steve was like no, you're going to record with this guy Gethin Pearson, we don't know [inaudible] big people and he was really, really expensive and we were like yeah, let's do it like so, we when, met with him, ready to go. He come to two gigs as well, didn't he? Yeah. Months to record, months and then we had a separate [inaudible] and then it came to the December and we were like, ah Steve we're all booked in with y'know Gethin, he said ah [intake of breath] we don't think you should go with him. We were like why and he said ah y'know we think it's really expensive and we were like so, we got funding.

AC: Is that because you weren't one of the favourites?

TI: Because we went with [inaudible] they'd spent all the money, they'd spent all the money. Well that's our theory... We're not naming names, no. Al Moses [laughter] Yep there it is so, [laughter] [inaudible] they got given 1000 800 pounds for a PR campaign [inaudible] Rich, no it wasn't it's bollocks...no know that i didn't...[laughter] What they're trying to say is that the money... 1000 800, they'd already recorded three or four singles at this point y'know and then the... we ended up going to Steve and being like right you've messed us about y'know, we not recording any of our, we're going to go with Sanders and you pay for that. [inaudible] and then we [inaudible] We had two days left [inaudible] two days before it ended, wasn't it? And they still hadn't given us anything [inaudible] You owe us this, this and this...

AC: Did you get that?

TI: Yeah, yeah, we... In the end we just got ballsy and just... We...[inaudible] with a laptop with nothing even on it [inaudible] you're laptop wasn't even on I was like [laughs] [inaudible].

AC: Do you feel you were making the numbers up then?

TI: Yeah, because at the end of the day they need...Yeah, it's just publicity...They need [inaudible] ten acts and [inaudible] stuff on there... And if one or two of the acts becomes successful then that's great and they'll get funding for the next year...Yeah funding for the next one then...They don't need all ten to... Nah they don't. So from a business point of view you can see why they're doing it but it's not right [laughs].

AC: [inaudible] that middle management sort of...

TI: Yeah, exactly, yeah and y'know people who've worked for them in the past have all left. Funnily... Yeah, so that's let's you... again, y'know what I mean. We've ripped Forte enough now right [laughter] Yeah exactly, yeah it's a soft subject [laughs].

AC: Is there a turnover of staff that you were working with?

TI: Yeah. Oh yeah [inaudible] I think everybody that we worked with is not there now is it? Yeah, they've [inaudible] and Steve are still there. Yeah. Louise is gone. We made good contacts... Yeah, we have [inaudible] parts of it yeah...

AC: It was kinda useful...

TI: Worked for us but I think that was [inaudible] Because we were on the project that's how we met [inaudible] but we put all the effort in with them didn't we? Yeah. They should [inaudible] this place and this place then [inaudible] being our mentor... Massive help of the likes we really needed [inaudible] yeah, yeah. I'm pretty sure she left Forte as well. Yeah, she has, She's got [inaudible] there were some useful things

but they were badly structured and badly represented... and...detrimental to the bands that they didn't favour y'know favouritise...

AC: The ones that they favour, favoured were they from Cardiff?

TI: It didn't matter where they were from, it was more you could just tell was y'know they were gonna pick from quite early on [inaudible] and then they pushed them like some bands went and played Reading off the back of it. Some of them got pushed into BBC Horizons on the back of it. We haven't had BBC Horizons, four years we've been applying for it and we have never had anything from it so... No. And the thing is they favouritise people who speak Welsh coz it's in the Welsh music scene, if you speak Welsh you're getting money, compared to if you don't...

AC: Oh right.

TI: And that's a genuine...Yeah. From the, from the like Welsh arts funding places mainly...Yeah. [inaudible].

AC: Right okay...

TI: [inaudible]...

AC: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

TI: Um, fuck Forte, fuck 'em and yeah [laughter] Yeah we're quite open with that...Yeah. Well not so much with the fuck Forte bit [inaudible] Forte are alright really, well not alright but like y'know we don't, we don't have a go at them regularly [inaudible] they stay in contact with us, the thing is they want nothing to do with us and then we release a song and they want everything to do with us...Yeah. [laughter] We don't openly bitch about them in interviews with people and stuff... No but [inaudible] Al Moses [inaudible] Yeah [inaudible] Richie [inaudible] is the man [inaudible] Al Moses [inaudible] there are, there are...

AC: Okay...

