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Introduction

This anthology came out of a shared enthusiasm for and addiction to music, along with a certain middle-aged nostalgia which emerged as the result of failing to be moved by so much of the music we have greedily devoured over the last few years, and thankfully being intensely moved by some. Music can excite, delight, goad, amuse or bore the listener – it also has the capacity to lodge itself in your brain and be heard in the imagination at the strangest times.

This anthology is about that, about spiralling back into memories, about yesterday's music today: music that has lodged itself in these poets' hearts and souls, and which never fails to move them when recalled or listened to anew.

It has to be said, we didn't get the work we expected when we sent out our call for submission. Whilst we share a taste for 70s rock and have differing individual tastes that lean more towards blues and west coast rock or free jazz and post-punk respectively, our contributors here are moved by different things. Squat bands, contemporary and romantic classical composers, singer songwriters, improvisers, glitch artistes and trad jazzers all get a mention here in this fascinating and engaging cornucopia which we hope will surprise you as much as it surprised us as the work arrived.

Thanks to all the authors who contributed their work, and to Alec at Knives Forks and Spoons for his support and hard work.

Yesterday's Music Today

for Mike

Now, when I think of my favourite albums
I don't need to play them, know them too well,
can recall excerpts in my head. I don't want
noise or sound to interrupt my day, prefer
libraries of possibilities, memories lined up:
the past shelved in tattered record sleeves.

Couldn't find one particular LP this morning –
filing gone awry – so sat in the sun and let music
hang in the dust by the window, wondering where
that record has got to, imagining torn corners,
pops & scratches in the grooves, my small signature
scrawled on the back; yesterday's music today.

Long Play

for Rupert

Spiralling back into memories, black in the pain spun at the time by its sound, the ache then in some bliss of discovery and now a pang of how far ago – these records both played and chronicle in one long line. Covers too delight and hurt in recalling: outer, inner, gatefold, and almost origami in trying to go beyond; how the liner notes tell stories about creating, influence, histories – and writers wrapped up in their own words to spin out of control. Always the music pulling you back into the one true groove. I will forever want their noise reminding me, the vicarious haunt or a new thrill, and silences are interruptions that need filling, the circle on a turntable to round upon itself again and again in a constant of sound.

Guitar

It's a silver glinter, a finger singer. Perhaps I will never be able to tease tunes from it as others do. For me it's a digit torturer, a chord former, a voice companion, a rhythm-maker. I take it in my arms for a hug. It feels at ease there, comfortable and comforting. It takes the song I am singing by the hand like a loving friend, to help it on its journey to tonic.

But when you play, it's a love machine, a steel sounder, memory maker, heart lifter.

The Hippest Man to Walk the Planet

(London Road Odeon 1964)

for Robert Hampson

reeling and
laughing the band
scuttles along lime
street towards the blue angel for
an after-hours jam

sour-mouthed hillman minx
glistering headlights
and one yellow
fog-lamp glint...

brother ray's glasses
flash across the keys
his teeth he stomps

the floor with a
polished shoe one
leg of the trousers his
sharp suit hitched white
sock jumping he

almost slides
off his
stool as he buries
his hands in
the piano's key-
board a sculptor's in clay

the band roars his
sandpaper gasoline
voice whoops
choked screams skip
the riffs

the raelettes
in their pleated
skirts raise their
sequined arms
soar into hit the
road ray rocks

and rolls his
torso a sentient metronome leaps
to his feet at people's applause then
twists to hug
them all by hugging himself
still

I was not at the UFO Club in 1967

By the time I made the club scene, it was time for punk
which I laughed out loud at, until I got the joke...
and post-punk was next, raised collars in rain
that drummed on roofs of abandoned plants
and went on for years. Brief Rio visitations
and Roxy/Velvet nostalgia, baggies, anoraks
and indie twang, then the second summer of love...
brief stirrings of revival in acid house and beanfield
before the lads marched in, smelling of morning glory
and gangstas posed glaring on the stairwells of the 'hood.
Everything became hard-boiled, the bliss
was beaten out of the culture, melody pulped by rhythm
and mind contracted as the space missions failed
and we were rat-trapped, Thatcher-majorblaired
into street-smart compliance. So I was not there -
it might well have been elitist, precious and fey
and I might well have lurked at the dance-floor's edge
cringing from the volume, but why was I absent,
seven years old, in a Thirties suburb
of a gun-grey concrete port, not knowing that Eden
was rainbow-eyed and cellular, kaleidoscope-orgasmic
and two hundred miles away, along the narrow vein
of the Paddington line? The hair of that absence clothes me
at the brink of sleep some midnights, as I dance and laugh
on a hillside in a desert, so very far from my name.

Alba

First take

the sound
of light

rising

in a bird's beak

the sun

Rehearsal

A boy feels arpeggios form against positioned tips of fingers. A treble cast of light dismantles window sheen from small percussive insects in shade trees. No one else home, his brain, streaming July, repeals the rules of breath. Why rehearse unlikely depth? Oak leaves, glove-sized, manipulate the timbre and the steps. The boy hears notes he does not play. Returns unnoticed syllables to their rightful place assigned by rote dream, as if to place grace notes along the edge of stress. A quality of reed held down by wind retrieves the lone perfume of blossom in a field beside his home. He hears her speaking voice, curled provenance of lettered fence she has imported from her continent. He talks to where she used to live. As home becomes the ritual of choir loft, Kyrie made simple with next steps, new quarter tones of ritual without a place to go.

Calluses in formation, open source melodic pitch, reed unaccompanied

Announcement

Gentlemen and Ladies.
Tonight's performance
is about

to end.

Would you be so slick
as to turn on

your mobile phones?

Some fraud always forgets
and is caught

listening

to music. Remember – this
orchestra has come

a mighty long way
to hear you. And the world
is broad-

casting

into this very auditorium
in constant waves of blight

– how it craves

to know you are *not*
on the train.

Together

we can turn this entire
planet

into Porlock. So –
turn on your phones. Wait
for those same

few bright

bars. And in that mock tone
answer *Yes?* to your own

thin applause.

The Claremont Road Can of Rhythm Sound System

Dub bass BOOM
rimshot scatter
BOOM shakka-lakka
ground glass darkly
I
can hear
for miles
Youth and heavy Ever Sonic
hex Daxaar rhythm;
the snare where
and echoed drum crashed
fighting with each Lee Perry
over smear
this gashed
and improvised
wall
of sound
I
can
hear
for miles.

Outsider's Soundtrack

The soundtrack
Is it a marching band gone mad, estranged?

Dressed as for carnevale
as for hospital

The biopsy shows scarring
A wounded organ

What rapier thrust,
Gut shot or hot water (it's true)?

Strut on a frisson's whispered backbeat
An outsider's dance
Guerrilla or trance blues
Elide and Oulipian rules
Pass muster on this parade

The bars we squeeze through
Playing