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Conversation with Jim Denley

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Strangely enough I have been thinking about it, but more in terms of that pride is a sin and that you should always be very careful of the delusions that are possible. So it's very nice that people say nice things about the music but I think, you always have to keep it in perspective. I think, truthfully I am more interested in what other musicians who I really respect think. So, if Tony Buck says to me : 'That was a really good concert,' and he really enjoyed what I did in that concert, then, that has a big impact on me because I know somehow, he'd sort of go: 'Well, that one didn't work so well, sorry – sorry to have to say that.' You'll be honest. Which isn't to say, you know, a child, a three year old kid's opinion is not important and interesting but, I guess, you gotta keep these things in perspective. And I think we can get things very wrong, like with Mural, the band, we were playing here [Irtijal Festival]. Their last concert was in Valparaiso in Chile and we thought we did a good concert and we were happy afterwards and the Chilean people really liked it. Lots of them were very complementary but when I listened back to the recording, there are bits of the music that are good but the overall shape of the music doesn't work, like, we kind of failed, as a group, in that concert, and, if we hadn't had the recording we probably would have gone home like : 'Yeah, we did a great job! The people loved it.' So I guess, recording is very important because it gives you a pretty good hi-fidelity notation of the event and you can listen back. And of course, it doesn't tell you everything and there is lots of information that isn't there, but I guess, as musicians who've lived with the tape recorder for a long time, it's probably one of the big reasons that we play the music that we do. Because the tape recorder was around and available as we grew up as musicians. So, I think, whatever anybody says about a concert, I'll go back and listen to the recording and sort of go : 'Nyeah, it's not really that good.' But equally, it's often very surprising when you listen back to a recording and think : 'Woaw, that was actually really good.' Like the record this group Mural made at the Rothko chapel : I came off stage and the audience seemed to like it and Kim [Myhr] and Ingar [Zach] liked it but I didn't like what we played. I wasn't happy with that concert but then, when I listened to the recording I had to agree that the recording is good and then we released it. I mean, I had to do all the mixing and editing, so I listened to what we played a lot and, I'm very happy with it. But, I think, what happened was that in the first ten minutes of this performance, we played very badly, so on the CD that came out, we cut that out. We actually start at about nine minutes into the piece. And from the nine minutes on till the end of the piece I think it's very good. But, probably, after the concert I was remembering this first ten minutes and, I think, sometimes you can make these moments very big, if something's not working and if it's not a good event, you're kind of sticking daggers into yourself, all through the concert. That first ten minutes was a disaster. *How does it work, remembering a concert or : how do you remember a concert?* Sometimes I don't remember a concert at all. You get off stage and you just go : 'What was that? I have no idea.' I think,

strangely enough, when I'm playing really well, when I'm really engaged and enjoying what I'm doing, I have no recollection of it afterwards. There is no kind of observer there, there's not a part of me which is a little homunculus observing my playing and if it is this total engagement, which I think it should be, then your awareness –I'm not sure– you are aware of lots of things but you're working, like crazy, in the listening, in the acting, making stuff and listening to everybody, analyzing space, analyzing what the audience may be making of it. It's like an incredibly engaging activity for me, and, consequently, I don't think there's a part of you which is some sort of recording device. But sometimes when it goes badly, when it's not working, there is. And so, that's what I mean about the concert at the Rothko chapel. I really remember that first ten minutes because there were real problems and so then you go into some sort of observational thing, trying to work out why you're playing so badly. *So you're starting analyzing what goes or went wrong already during the concert.* Something like that, but once again, I'm not sure there's any part of me that's observational. Or if there is, it kind of fucks up the whole process. As soon as you start removing yourself, pulling yourself outside of the event and observing it, you're no longer in there. I think, this activity that we're involved in kind of goes to the heart of trying to understand what consciousness is and what human beings are aware of. And sometimes I think, if a horse runs through the bush and there's rocks and stones everywhere, is the horse aware of where it's putting its feet down? No, I mean, you cannot, there's no time. You're involved in this active running and there is a part of you, I guess the subconscious, which is really calculating not to run into that tree and to avoid that rock, but your consciousness or your awareness is not on those things. So I think, there's something about that in music as well. You prepared yourself by years of work and practice to do things as a musician and there's many things that you are not aware of, that you end up doing. *So, that means, for every concert you play, or the next concert you play, your life was the preparation – if I'm right. And are there also short-term preparations for a concert, like yesterday, or for a tour, and what are the crucial things for you to do before a concert?* I mean for me –I don't know about other musicians– I have to keep myself really interested. I feel like I need to keep creating new modules or new materials, often that's in response to hearing other musicians or sometimes it's in response to records. You are searching for new things but I guess, I am the sort of musician who also is a bit archaeological, like, I keep things from older periods in my playing. Just before I've been doing solo concerts in Melbourne and I was particularly working with the balloon on the saxophone for that and developing these clamps on the right hand side of the instrument, so I had my right hand free to do stuff with the balloon. That's all quite new to me and I think a lot of that was in response to seeing Christine Abdelnour –she came to Sydney in January– it was just so refreshing to hear somebody play the saxophone in such a great way. I found her very inspiring. But then, the response is not try and play like Christine than just to be, once again, trying to

be creative with the instrument and come on with something that you hadn't come on with before. I do prepare and think about playing with different musicians as well. So with this band Mural, it's different to, say, the musicians I play with in Sydney. So I have to sort of think : 'Okay, we're gonna do a couple of gigs, I should start practicing on this instrument or this material because I know it can be useful with this band,' but then, they turn up, and because we hadn't played together for six months, from the last time in Chile, the other two musicians may be playing quite differently too. And I think that's true of Kim at the moment, he's changing his material quite a lot.

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Derek Bailey once said to me that recordings were a quite striking –it's an interesting choice of words– he said : 'a very striking side-effect of playing'. *How can one understand this?* He actually said 'by-product', 'a quite striking by-product' are the exact words. I guess, maybe for the musicians of his generation. They grew up without tape recorders around, so maybe he had some distance to tape recorders whereas for musicians like me, they were a part of my life. As soon as I started playing music I started recording, so they feel less like a by-product as just being completely integral to the activity. But I like the 'quite striking by-product', that sort of other thing that is produced but it's another thing which is quite amazing. *Did you have a lot to do with Derek Bailey?* Not a lot, no. I played in his Company week in 1990 but there was quite a lot of musicians in that and I guess, as a young musician in London, I went 'round to his house a bit and used to play with him in his kitchen. I think, he would play with anybody, if you'd rang him up and say : 'Hey, I'm in London,' he'd sort of go: 'Come around and play!' I think, he was just sitting in his kitchen playing music a lot of the times. He didn't bother if he played solo or someone would play along. He was very open, which I think was an amazing thing for this established, important, older figure. He'd just sort of go: 'Yeah, come around and have a play', to some young dude from Sydney who had just turned up. *And why his kitchen? Didn't he have a playing room?* I don't know. *Was it a big kitchen?* Yeah, it was reasonably big, it wasn't huge, I think, maybe he just liked the sound in there. But, I cannot remember the living room. Maybe it was towards the back of the house. But, no, I didn't have a lot to do with him. I guess, the first time I ever went to Europe I was 19 and I remember seeing Derek Bailey playing with Anthony Braxton in London in the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Arts] – I've kind of grown up listening to Anthony Braxton and then I had this Derek Bailey and Anthony Braxton duo LP but I found Bailey a bit too obscure for me. I was more interested in

Braxton. But then at that concert at the ICA, it was a trio with Evan Parker, and because I was more attuned to Braxton's music, I found this other soprano player there kind of annoying – which, in retrospect, I feel really foolish about that. I was just listening out to one of the saxophone players and not aware of the overall music, you know, so I think, I was pretty stupid. But I remember seeing concerts like that, going : 'Okay, I really gotta find a way and go home and do lots of practice' because I, you know, really was inspired by these musicians. *And Braxton? Did you have his records at home in Sydney?* Ya, well, my introduction with recordings was quite strange. I lived next door to a saxophone player, Keith Shadwick [who would go on to be a music critic for The Independent (UK) and a leading contributor to Jazzwise magazine], when I was quite young, like eleven or twelve, and because I was into music, he introduced me to recordings, the Delmark recordings of the AACM. So, I remember : Lester Bowie's Sound and Joseph Jarman records – that's what I heard first. So I was listening to the AACM stuff on Delmark and ESP records and then at a certain stage Keith said : 'Well, you should probably check out some of the earlier stuff.' So he gave me some John Coltrane records, Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler and Charles Mingus. And I remember just thinking : 'Wow, this stuff is so conservative.' Hehe, so I came to the music in a sort of wrong chronology. In particular I found Mingus almost like Cocktail music and so it was kind of a strange introduction to the recorded music. But my father listened to a lot Avantgarde Classical music, so I think it made sense that, let's say Lester Bowie's Sound actually I related to more than the jazz influences. I mean, it's a bit of a cliché that one gets involved in playing music and is influenced deeply by all these recordings. I grew up in a town called Wollongong which is sort of nowhere [near Sydney]. There wasn't any live – there was lots of live music there but not much really interesting music. You know, there was a bunch of us who played a lot and I think we learned more of each other than listening to recordings. And then, once I started playing more in Sydney, there was Jon Rose and a group of musicians around Jon who were playing. I think, that was way more important than listening to any recordings. *This was in the 80s?* Yeah, late 70s, early 80s. I met Jon in the late 70s and, I think, he arrived in Australia in '76, so, he was quite new to Australia and then there was a group of musicians around Jon who are not very well known here or internationally but, they are really important in Sydney. There was an amazing drummer called Louis Burdett. And so I think, you know, all the people I was playing with at that stage had far more influence on me than listening to any Braxton record.

Jon and I, in the early 80s to the mid-80s, we used to organize kind of an international band. It was called The Relative Band and the first year Henry Kaiser and Greg Goodman from California came to Australia and we did some concerts with them with Australian musicians. The next year Maggie Nicols and Roger Turner came. We organized a tour with them. And then, the next year was like Eugene

Chadbourne and David Moss. So, Jon always had this internationalist agenda, he was reaching out. I mean, it was a very small scene in those days in Australia, probably there were three or four musicians in Sydney, we didn't have any real contact with Melbourne or Brisbane or any other city in Australia, there wasn't much interaction between musicians in Australia. So, it was very important, in that stage, to do these tours with international musicians. It's completely different now, there's so many musicians in Sydney and Melbourne like in Brisbane and there is a lot of interaction between those cities. People sort of constantly go in between those places and New Zealand as well now. But in the early 1980s there was none of that vitality. I think, Jon Rose was incredibly important to that scene – not necessarily the music but the ways of operating in it, the way you can think about being a musician and the activities you could do : you could put out your own recordings. He was sort of proactive in organizing stuff, so, yeah, he was an inspirational guy to have around. *Why did he come to Australia? Why did he move there? To Sydney?* He was actually living on an island, in the middle of the Hawkesbury River, Dangar Island, which is a little bit to the North of Sydney, it's not so far, like, on a train, you get there in about an hour, but then you have to get to the island which is in a river, it's not in the sea. But for a place close to the city it's quite remote and very dominated by nature. And I have no idea why he came to Australia, but he was living on this island and he built his own house with his wife. *From what? From the plants which grew on the island?* I think, he used natural stone that was just there and then other materials. It was kind of a semi-official house – once they had built it they realized that they built half the house on somebody else's land, so it wasn't that official, eventually it had to be taken down. But I think, that says something about Jon, in general, that complete disregard for formality and regulation. If somebody said: 'Do this', he'll do the exact opposite.

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You told me you were living for some time half of the year in Australia and the other half in Great Britain. How was that to live on two continents? Yeah, there was this idea that professionally it would be better to be in Europe, because there is not much money for culture in Australia. I mean, it's a big place for a small population and there's a kind of Anglo-Saxon attitude towards the arts and, so yeah, it seemed like a sensible thing to be in Europe but I very quickly understood : One of the main reasons I play music is about place. So, being in Europe for six months, I mean there are some beautiful and amazing places in Europe but it's not what I know and somehow the motivation why I play music and why I'm interested

in certain things about music is –and I don't know why– but it has to do with place and geography. So, when I'm in Australia I really feel like engaging with music, but living in Oxford or London I just run out of inspiration – I don't wanted to do it any more, for some reason. Then there was this idea to go between the two places and become some sort of a global nomad. And I noticed that Jacques Attali, the French philosopher and economist, in his recent book [A Brief History of the Future], which is kind of a history of the world but that continues into the future from an economic point of view. I don't think I liked the book, it's really right wing and really just believes in economies – I guess, he has to put limits on the book somehow but it seems unrelated to life, he's just talking about economies. His earlier book, Noise, I found an amazing book. But in the new book he's talking about global nomadism and I guess, if you look at the community of musicians who are involved in this music, they are some sort of precursor to what Attali is talking about. And Tony Buck was talking about this this morning. Magda [Mayas] and Tony were walking down the street in Beirut and Kim and I just met them, in the middle of Beirut and we just went : 'Ah, hi!' you know. And we checked out this coffee place – there was no surprise, because it's actually not that surprising to bump into each other and, you know, I've never met Hans Koch, but Hans Koch is here at this festival. We're not that surprised, we say: Ah, it's good to finally meet you. I knew, I'd bump into you somewhere. But if you think about it, it's really weird, this activity. And Tony was telling a story about a musician going into a laundrymat in Berlin and there was somebody getting his clothes out of the laundry machine and the musician, it was an Australian musician, he went: 'Is that you Chris?' And Chris Abrahams put his head up and went: 'Ah, hi!', you know, and then continued getting the laundry out of the machine. Because actually it's not so surprising that you're in some strange city somewhere and you bump into this person, but actually, it's really weird. I guess when these things happen, when you become part of the internationalist improvised music conspiracy, which is sort of avantgarde for globalization – uhm, I'm not sure if I can believe in that concept. So, increasingly I became very uncomfortable with the idea of six months in Europe and six months in Australia. I felt like: You do definitely loose something very important by not seeing the year in one place – the changing of the seasons. And I think, music has always had a very strong relationship to locality. And to suddenly just being in cities and flying 'round the world as some low caste jet-setter – I don't know, there is something about it, which is almost anti-musical, from my point of view. And increasingly I realized that what I really love about playing music is playing music outdoors, but it's pretty specific to Australia. I don't want it to sound like some sort of Australian nationalism, because I'm not interested in the idea of like, 'Australia'. I am interested in the landscape and the spaces and then how human beings in those spaces might bring meaning to that landscape and especially in Australia where the landscape –especially where I am from– has been emptied of culture. I

mean, there was culture there and there were people making music and calling the mountain something but a lot of that language is gone, a lot of the culture has gone out of the landscape, and it seems very very sad to me. So, when I go walking in the mountains, sometimes, you know, there are words for these mountains but they are stupid words, like, there is one area, the country where I walk quite a lot and some white explorer has named all the mountains after Wagnerian characters – it's just bizarre, I mean, interesting, these strains of stupidities that happened in these colonized spaces. And, then as a creative artist, this is a fantastic challenge : Where there is emptiness and the void, it gives you something to do : Okay, well, people aren't playing music in these mountains any more but they probably have for thousands of years, they probably came up here every winter or every summer. In this area where I go to a lot, traditionally people would have gone there to eat certain food, at different times, they would have been travelling through and there's examples where they have left what are called Bora grounds, where they would have ceremonies. On top of one mountain there is this collection of rocks in a huge circle, that's an ancient traditional Bora ground. People would have been singing and dancing there for thousands of years and now it's just the odd aeroplane that goes across – that's the only human sound. I don't want to sound romantic either, it just feels like the right activity for me to do, to go and play in these places. Above all else, that's the activity I really like to do, playing music. And the more I do that, the more it changes the way I play as well. I was listening to a lot of recordings and playing with Jon Rose, in particular in the early 80s and I was interested in instrumental virtuosity, but the more I was playing outdoors, I realized that kind of European, Northern hemisphere, sort of Avantgarde tradition, taken to those spaces just feels as out of place as playing Mozart. I remember, as a kid climbing a mountain in the Warrumbungle National Park with my father and I had taken my flute up this mountain and then on top of the mountain he said : 'Yeah, play something!' And I was twelve or 13, so I could probably play a bit of Jethro Tull and a bit of Mozart. And I remember thinking : 'I can't play that.' I mean, it's stupid, it doesn't make any sense to me whatsoever. And my dad is sort of going: 'Come on, play something!' And I remember that weird but also very exciting feeling, just going : Okay, I don't know really what to play here, and that is so strangely exciting. And years later, a guy called Rik Rue –he's a great musician from Sydney who plays tape recorder and uses mini-discs–, one day I went out with him in the wood and did some field-recording –he's still recording lots of stuff in the bush– and towards the end of the day he said : 'Yeah, you should play something'. So I got my instrument out and I was just standing there and he'd say : 'Okay, play!' And I had the same sort of feeling. I was probably 20, 21, at that stage. And I said : 'I don't really know what to play.' He said: 'Just plllay!' And I said well. And at that stage we were doing concerts in art galleries around Sydney and he said : 'Just play, you know, what you do at the gigs', and I

remember thinking : Ya, I can do that but it also feels a bit weird. You're bringing this tradition, which, I think in a place like Australia, is borrowed culture. Like people would come over and see little gigs in Berlin and then go back to Sydney and they start up a little gig in Sydney or maybe they go to Tokyo or they go to New York. Or they don't even have to go over there, they read about it in the Wire. There is this notion that this is the activity we should be doing. And then, the music has a sort of similar context which I think is hegemonic. And then I think, the content is hegemonic in borrowing stuff from other cultures from the other side of the world and the Northern hemisphere and I think a lot of musicians have struggle with that and some of them make an amazing sense of it, like Ross Bolleter, he's a piano player in Perth, he only plays on ruined pianos and a lot of these pianos he just finds in a barn or in an old pub somewhere and they are completely fallen into bits – they are kind of prepared by the environment and Australia is not a very easy place for pianos to exist, especially in desert areas. The soundboards crack and there are no piano tuners around, hahaha, and, you know, it's also the place where per head of the population there are the most pianos in the world, the figures are astounding. In the 19th century hundreds and thousands of pianos went to Australia. There was this aspirational desire for a kind of European culture which is exemplified by the piano. It becomes a symbol of like: 'Okay, we're out here in the middle of fucking nowhere, it's desert all around us but at least we got a piano.' And yeah, strangely enough, this is the one instrument that they can't actually fix. Once it starts going wrong, they can't fix it. So Ross' thing is to develop his art form around these ruined pianos and I think it says something very strong about Australia. Often he plays outdoors as well. The recordings he has put out become like field recordings with the environment and the piano shaped by the environment. Yeah, you know, it's a peculiar place, Australia. And I think, it's only recently that artists, musicians, really started to make any sense to it. But, going back to what we were originally talking about, of the six months here, six months there : I wasn't making any sense of Australia by doing that because working with the musicians in London I was playing with, I had to sort of learn how to play with them and develop orthodoxies about playing improvised music which, when I went back to Australia and I was playing in the mountains, yeah, it just was a different music. So eventually I thought : No, I have to really concentrate on what I'm deeply interested in, even though it's financial madness, to try and make a living there.

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Are you familiar with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal songlines? Yeah, I listen to a lot of Aboriginal music and I'm very interested in it. Because, you know, living in Australia one knows that there are Aboriginal people but mainly, the people I know, are very sophisticated, urban people who are very well educated. I mean, when one travels in the country, you come across some amazing festivals around dance and music and a lot of that kind of purports to be traditional – I guess for an oppressed people there is this desire to hang on to and reconstruct language and culture and to maintain culture. It's incredibly important, politically, to keep stuff going. So a lot of the music and dance festivals are not exploratory in the sense that a festival like this [Irtijal] is. And it's often very difficult to play with traditional musicians because their aim is to keep the tradition going and, sort of, be conservative. Of course, there are musicians who are open but in general, let's say, and I completely understand this and I think, it's entirely appropriate in their culture, that they are not particularly interested in exploration. There is lots of crossover, Reggae, Country music, Rock with Aboriginal language but largely I don't find that so interesting. But a lot of the traditional music I find very inspiring, it's an amazing tradition but there is not a lot of great recordings and they're actually pretty hard to find these days. Jon Rose talks about this, that, it's not like, say, in the Caribbean. There are a lot of colonial places all around the world where the meeting of various cultures has produced whole genres of music and nothing like that has ever happened in Australia, like Calypso, or Reggae, these music genres. Nothing has ever sprung up, musically, out of Australia in popular music, and I guess, that suggests, I don't know why that is, but I think it has something to do with 20th century and Australia being a very urbanized country and a country that has almost ever dealt with modern communication technologies – radio and telephones were there very early. And there wasn't much time for stuff to develop before the radio and before television, maybe that's why, I don't know, it's a mystery. I think it's still a very difficult country, politically, and the issues are very raw and the white side is in denial of what has taken place there and the black community is still very angry and rightly so, there's a great deal of tension. I think it's not necessarily the time yet for creativity, like a deep fundamental creativity from society. These are very difficult issues to talk about or even to understand.

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There's an electronic musician called Phil Samatzis, he has done quite a bit of stuff with French musicians, he's an incredible field recordist and electronic musician, he had a festival up in a mountain area towards Melbourne and he lives now in the village up there, it's part of the Australian ski field. So in winter there's lots of snow and people ski there but he had this festival in the summer in a place called Bogong, and as I was telling you the other day, the first festival there was for a weekend but it just rained the whole time and it wasn't just rain it was serious rain, yeah, and we'd been working the whole week to find places to play and to develop the music in the spaces. It wasn't just a one night stand approach, we tried to spend a little bit of time there, we at least thought about where we would play and I mean, normally I try to find quiet places to play and interesting resonant spaces. But this is up in the high mountains and there's a lot of water from the snow and I found it really noisy, all this water sound from the river, and so I was there the whole week trying to solve this problem where to play and what to play. And then I just thought : If it's a problem then maybe the best way to solve the problem is to go to the place where the water is the loudest. So there was this small bridge across the river and the river is coming down, straight off the mountain and there's lots of rocks – so it's a very loud river at the best of times and it has this incredible white noise and you get all the frequencies, all at once, basically. So the plan was being in the middle of the bridge with the audience along the bridge trying to hear the saxophone across this very noisy river, but actually on the day there was this incredible storm as well and driving rain, so it was the river, the storm and the rain and then me trying to play the saxophone in this. I recorded there and I'm really happy with the recording, I mean, in a strange way, the space had no reflection in it and normally, when you play in a room or outdoors you got rockfaces and so the sound is coming back at you but the river is so loud and it's across all the frequencies, so you don't hear any reflection from anywhere. In a strange way it's the driest music. The saxophone only exists, you hear the sound directly from the saxophone to your ear, you don't hear it coming back off anything else. And I just recorded in an anechoic chamber and it reminded me of that, you know, the famous Jon Rose, uh, John Cage anechoic Chamber story. I had access to an anechoic chamber in Sydney for a recording.

As a musician I am interested in sound and space and I think the interesting in the anechoic room for lots of musicians is the lack of space or resonance. And the bridge across the river was also this incredibly noisy avoidance of space, the saxophone didn't go anywhere and I found that quite interesting. And where I go walking – it's quite difficult to get there, maybe you need two days to walk into the mountain area and there's nothing around, there is no roads, no shops, so you have to take your own food and sometimes you may not see anyone for a week. *You always go alone?* Yeah, the last four or five years, since 2006 I've always gone alone and I think that's also part of it. It's quite a

hermetic activity of spending a week or two weeks just with these spaces and there are incredible spaces for sound. But I like to go in winter too, the days are quite short and I like these long nights as well, with just a fire light. It's all about listening. I keep still asking myself, you know, why do I go in winter. I mean, there's some sense in that, the snakes are always dormant during the winter. Especially when you are going alone, that's actually pretty sensible. During the summer months you could be bitten by a Brown Snake, and then you're dead. So, it's good to go in June or July because it's not that cold, it's quite pleasant to walk during the day and it gets a bit cold around four o'clock in the morning, but it's okay. I tried to think about why do I like these long nights and I think it's, because often after I've cooked something to eat on the fire, I get the saxophone out, just in a cave, playing for two or three hours a night. And to go to a place where there is no electric lights and no distractions, I think it's my way of being at home with sound and music. Yeah, it's a strange activity. When I go with somebody else it's a bit different, it's not the same thing. I mean it's also nice, there's a trumpet player, Dale Gorfinkel, he and I spent some time in the mountains close to Sydney, the Blue Mountains, and that's very nice too but I think for me, going alone is an amazing experience. The one thing I really love about it is that you don't see yourself for two weeks. Being with another person is a way of seeing yourself as well, in conversation and the way they perceive you, you are aware of their look. So, I like not to see myself for two weeks, it does something really strange. And then you realize that, of all the technologies that we have, I think, the mirror is the one that I feel may be the most powerful. People are talking about technology, the internet or the telephone. Fire is incredibly important but I started to think that mirrors are very strange devices. And to go for two weeks without seeing yourself and without interaction with other humans. *And you don't even see yourself in a little lake, or don't you look or are there no lakes you could use as a mirror?* In this area, there's lots of water, not any lakes, there's some little streams where you could do that but it's usually moving too much and it's too broken because it's in the mountains. Maybe I'm avoiding it. *That means you go into nature and just listen and look or is it more about listening to find places to play and do you, when you are listening, already imagine yourself playing with the sounds there or is it just about listening first, looking for a place and space?* I think, there's this visual thing where you can go into a valley or a particular space, when you look at it you go : 'Wow, that's interesting!' and then you get the instrument out and you [! - !] clap or make a sound with your voice just to see what it sounds like. And often, I'm very surprised by the spaces – I don't think you can ever predict what's gonna happen. But I found it very complex as well and the complexity, the resonant complexity of the space, I find, has its richness to the sound which I really love. So, there's one particular place called The Hidden Valley in a mountain range and you could say it's a small valley with an escarpment all the way around, 360 degrees, probably about the size of three football grounds and in these valleys you also have lots of

trees. So, the resonances are very complex. You play a note and it goes out into the space and there'll be a resonance from the rockface a hundred meters away, but then there's maybe a thousand trees also in that space, so you're getting multiple sorts of resonances and reflections. And also, say, if I'm playing in a cave area, the rocks in the cave never have a flat surface, like we're in this room now, there's these cement walls which have very flat resonances. The rockfaces in the bush have holes and different surfaces, there are very complex events and sonically I find the complexity of those shapes creates this incredible richness.

We did a performance in Alice Springs in the center of Australia a few years ago and there's the Todd River that goes through Alice Springs but almost all the time it's dry, there's no water in it. So we performed in the river – it's small stones and a really great place to perform and all around there is small mountains. So you got these resonances from the mountains playing the saxophone, I think it's fantastic. And the weather is usually magnificent. So why would I put myself in some horrible hole or box in Alice Springs when we have these spaces? But there is also this thing to be respectful to the traditions that people have had in Australia for many thousands of years. For thousands of years people have been playing in these spaces and to not play in those spaces, to go into a box, seems disrespectful to the tradition of music in that country.

I think, there's a large attempt among white Australians to try and find ways to make sense of the awful history of the place. Maybe that's wrong or misguided and has got nothing to do with the music. And the people in Europe – why would they care? But I think for Australians these are very important issues, you know, why music in Australia? How should one do it? What should one play? I mean clearly, out of Bruce Chatwin's book, the concept of songlines, it's a beautiful notion or way of thinking about landscape : That songs kind of sing up the landscape. I mean, I've been with Aboriginal people, when they're driving through the country, when they're in the car, they start singing and it's because they are going through this particular part of the country where you have to sing the song because there's a song for this part of the country. And this is a very beautiful idea and it kind of links human beings with place in a profound way. But the opposite of it, a sort of empty landscape where there are no songs and no words, is not just empty, it's devastating. So, the first time that I went out to the far West of New South Wales, in the desert regions in the West of Sydney, I remember looking at a geographical picture and saying to another person : 'What's that called?' A hill, or a dry lake. And they go : [deep Australian accent] 'Na, I don't know, this is bush.' And then thinking : 'This is really sad. Human beings, when they're in the landscape they name things, they talk about things. Europeans have been in America for a lot longer than they've been in Australia and there are so many songs about place in

popular music. The number of songs about towns and places there are in America, it's just ridiculous. And in Australia there is virtually nothing, in popular music. We don't have songs about towns or places. And yet we have this traditional music that was not just about the landscape, it *was* the landscape, the songs and the landscape were inseparable. So I think there's an immense sadness in that loss. You know, one man can't change that or you can't create a whole culture on your own that will go on but I think, lots of the musicians in Australia are really interested in this activity. So, increasingly, say in the festivals, these major city festivals, we're doing stuff like this. We were in Tasmania recently, at the Mona Foma Festival, in January, which is in Hobart, which is a very beautiful city on the Derwent River on the East part of Tasmania and the city nestles underneath this magnificent mountain, Mount Wellington, and so in the festival we played on top of the mountain which is probably a really stupid thing to do because the weather up there can be very unpredictable but luckily for the two days that we played it was fine. The musicians I was playing with was Monica Brooks on piano-accordion and Dale Gorfinkel on trumpet. Yeah, with musicians like that, we have a long tradition of doing these concerts outdoors and there's the Acoustic Ecology thing of the Canadians, R. Murray Shafer, and that movement did a lot. They call it Sound Walks, where you take a group of people and walk in the environment but all being quiet and all listening. There's a lot of that happening around some of the music festivals now. The NOW now festival traditionally always had Sound Walks as part of the festival, even though it's in the urban environment, after the concerts, late at night or before the concerts, 20 or 30 people go around in a group, walking and being quiet and just listening to what's around. And Dale Gorfinkel, the trumpet player, almost like on a weekly basis in Melbourne, he has concerts or walks. Not always outside, sometimes in the middle of Melbourne but it's this concept of listening to the environment. And Australia is a confronting continent in that regard. I mean, I noticed in Beirut, there are some amazing soundscapes in the city as well, like the Palace where we're having lunch every day – the bird songs, it's absolutely magnificent. And even in the center of Sydney there are kind of natural events that are sonically really wild. There's tens of thousands of bats that live right in the center of the city and every night they travel from the Botanic Gardens to all the fruit trees in the suburbs and they make a lot of noise, yeah, in these high pitch squeal and then there are some very noisy parrots, the cockatoos, all around the urban areas. *They are wild parrots or do they live on balconies?* They're wild but you'd also say they are very adapted to urban life. It's interesting, there is the white cockatoos who seem to like the city and then the black cockatoos who avoid the city. Sometimes you see them fly over the top but they don't ever hang around in the city. The black cockatoos are much quieter, smaller family groups, the white cockatoos they are kind of like humans, they coexist in large groups and have complex social situations, black cockatoos seem to go around in little family groups, three or four.

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I mean, often when I talk about what I've been talking about, it sounds like that I'm only interested in nature and I don't think that's necessarily true, I mean, I don't find urban environments uninteresting, they are really amazing and yeah, Beirut seems like a really specific and interesting sonic environment – all the traffic with constant horn use but then, as soon as you get off the main roads, you find some very quiet, sleepy places which are fully pedestrianized and slow. When I was walking around on Friday, which was Good Friday, it was amazing because there was so much music and singing everywhere. And it occurred to me that in this music festival there is some very complex music or ambitious music, structurally, in terms of its ideas, you know, as in most Experimental or Improvised music festivals. People are not playing simple music, it's often way too complex. But it occurred to me walking 'round yesterday, the music coming out of the churches and even the car mechanics workshops, is actually quite sophisticated. These long melodies and even the quite popular voices have so much inflection and melodic complexity. To the audiences here in Beirut, it may be different but it occurred to me that the traditional music here, is already quite ambitious music, it's not simple in the way that I find a lot of Western music, and not just pop music, I think, say western classical music, has almost like attention deficit disorder. Its need for resolution and change often is, I don't know, it doesn't have an expansive idea of time. So there needs to be something happening at the end of this eight bars, something happening at the end of this eight bars and I mean Mozart is the perfect example of that sort of succinct and divided concept of time whereas here just walking round the streets the music has a much more expansive view of time. And it occurred to me that coming from this environment may make listening to the music we play a lot easier, that people are used to longer structures in the music and to be patient with those longer structures. Western classical music and pop is just kind of asking for resolution way too often, for me. *Yeah, they told me. I never had musicological training or I don't read notes, I don't know anything. I'm just in the music with listening and concentrating on rhythm and sound. I have a more vibrational access to the music. And you apparently have both?* I never studied at university. I mean when I was young I studied flute at the Conservatorium but probably by the age of 18 I was pretty dark about academia. My first instrument was the violin but that was when I was five years old. My dad was a violinist, so at the age of five he bought me this little violin and, I hated it. It was only when I was ten, I started playing again. *So, you know about reading and writing music and you have some training in that.* I was never great

in the reading and writing of music, I did it and I studied it and I took it pretty seriously for some time but then I completely rejected it, as a lot of 20th century musicians did, I mean, the fundamentally important one seems to be Scelsi, this Italian composer. In the mid-50s he had been using conventional notation and then he bought a tape recorder and that took notation out of his life, basically. He started recording his improvisations and then giving it to somebody else to transcribe. So, in a way he didn't really reject notation, he just got somebody else to do the dirty work. Trevor Wishart outlines in his book *On Sonic Art* –for me that was a really important book– why he would reject this notation. He talks about western notation as being the grid paradigm. You got a sea of sound and you put this grid over the top of that to chart it and by putting the grid over the top of the ocean of sound, you're asking certain questions of sound but not others. And so they're prioritizing the answers you can get about sound : if it's f-ness or it's d-ness or d-sharp-ness is very important to western notation. And I guess Scelsi in the mid-50s and Trevor Wishart 20 years later and me, 'round about that time as well, just sort of went : 'I don't want this kind of passive-aggressive perception shaper, that, on the surface, looks like a tool to help us but is actually shaping the way we perceive,' and so I think it was, then, fundamental that you wanted to not have that tool. I remember Chris Mann, this philosopher kind of word guy that I work with, he'd sort of go : 'Yeah, what's wrong with the tape recorder as a form of notation?' And then you go : 'Of course,' I mean, it's great to have notation, but the tape recorder is fine. I can set the tape recorder up and play something and then I listen back to it. Scelsi's rejection of notation happened in the same moment as he bought his first tape recorder and I think that's the issue. Musicians like me grew up with the tape recorder and I don't have to write stuff down any more, I can have this really high fidelity version of what I've just done and there is no need for notation. Of course, the great thing about notation is, you can get other people to play your ideas and I guess, I was fundamentally not interested in that as well. Because one has pretensions to be a composer –and that's something one should try as a musician– I remember sort of composing stuff and then going to other musicians and saying : 'Hey guys, I've got this piece, do you wanna try?' and feeling really uncomfortable with that process and this idea that I would control these other people to play stuff. They can play stuff themselves. So I guess, like a lot of musicians of my generation, this seemed politically not the way to go to. I was never really interested in that, trying to get other people playing my ideas. And then, increasingly I realized that I didn't like that sort of music either, as complex and as interesting a lot of compositions are, to me, they have this sort of monophonic intention. So even like Brian Ferneyhough's detailed and complex music, you know it's coming from one person's mind, that's their one train of thought and then other people are interpreting that and bringing something interesting to the interpretation but the large structures in that music have what I perceive as intentional

monophony. And even simple, collectively made music, to me has an intentional polyphony which I find totally inspiring. So, even a band like The Shaggs, this 1960s teenage girl band, they couldn't really play anything properly or sing properly but there's this sort of crazy polyphony about the music which you couldn't possibly write down. It's like three people, probably because they can't play or understand music properly or in any conventional sense and they're trying to do something conventional, they end up going in these different directions and there is this wonderful kind of rub between these different intentions in the music and I totally adore that in music and I hear that in a lot of traditional music where there's no attempt to play in unison. For me, what I really hate about a lot of jazz-rock is lines in unison that happen, you know, and almost have to happen in that music, which, I would say Miles Davis never had in his Rock inspired projects, which are kind of self-releasing and free. In the conventional jazz-rock version is everyone playing in unison. It's very difficult to me, this idea that everyone has to be in line. I never liked that in music.

If you don't have had a traditional training in music, you don't realize how stifling that can be and how much unlearning you have to do. So, in many ways I think you are lucky, you're coming to the music with fresh ears and you say you feel and you have a vibe and that stuff – I think that is absolutely fine. In the academic approach you are being taught that you don't use consecutive fifth. There's regulations and rules that you learn and I think, luckily I understood this is absolute bollocks and don't take any of this seriously. Maybe learn it to pass the exam, you shouldn't take any of these regulations as being anything but, I don't know, anti-music.

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I think, gesture and the body clearly have a huge amount to do with music, and traditionally the phrase and the phraseology you have in music is clearly related to the pretensions of human breath, for instance. So even on the instruments that don't need to breath like the bagpipes, the melodies can still have this phraseology which is kind of periodic. So, it's not like Phill Niblock's music, it has this humane periodicity, kind of rhythmic structure which has to do with breath and I've been thinking : is that true all around the world? And I think it's pretty much given all around the world, I mean, I've been trying to think about music that doesn't have this corporeal phraseology. I can't think of any. But then, towards the end of the 20th century with the introduction of computer and electronic music

developed a completely different concept of the phrase. The phrase can now be extremely long, you could say some of Phill Niblock's music or Peter Rehberg's music has these structures in it. You call 'em phrases or you call 'em blocks – they're not phrases in a body sense, but then you have musicians who would play conventional instruments and they pick that up and react to those new structures in the music. Axel Dörner and Robin Hayward, they can play any length of phrase, that can be 20 minutes, a fraction of a second, they're kind of freed from the tyranny of the obvious phraseology that has happened in music for thousands of years. Personally I find it really amazing because it's a rethinking of the body and music. I think it comes through the technology because the early electronic music –if you listen to the composers from the late 50s, 60s– they were using all these crazy new sounds but it was sounding like virtual orchestra music, there's still a human breath in that music. But if you listen to Electronic music from the late 90s and into the 21st century, it has completely lost the human body. I am not sure if that's true. But I think as with so much technology it's unpredictable where it's gonna take us. I think in music, the releasing of the phraseology of the body has actually allowed us to rethink the body in relationship to music. And, I mean, Axel Dörner's trumpet playing is still intensely humane, it's a body, it's just not a body thinking conventionally about phrasing. His music is, you know, wonderful in its invention of and rethinking of the phrase. Maybe the computer taught us that we can think of sound and layers and blocks of sound in different ways that then allow the trumpet players and saxophone players and guitarists to rethink their relationship to the body. It seems –I don't know if that is true, it's just a theory– it seems that the potentialities of the technology are inspiring musicians to do something different. And it takes some time for that to lodge in the Electronic music world and then it takes some time for instrumental players to work out how to do that on their instruments.

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I think, a lot of these theories and thinking about music come after the event, that you rationalize afterwards why you were interested in this musical idea. At the time you're just going : 'Fuck, that sounds good!' You know, 'I wanna play like that,' or : 'Wow, that's exciting! That musician sounds amazing.' And so there's this desire to play with them or play like them, to try and find things on your own instrument that would work with playing with them. I remember like through the 90s and early 21st century, I was playing a lot with Electronic musicians, so there was the desire to try and match – not that you wanna copy and mimic, but you wanna be able to meet, to have the ability to meet with

structures and to work with their structures. So it's often that the need for change just comes out of practical problems. I mean, in a way, art is just about solving problems and maybe you put yourself into a problem by sort of going : okay, I'm gonna work with this laptop player or I'm gonna work with this turntable player and so then that creates a different set of problems to working with a drummer and in that thing, maybe, just by creating the context, you do show the desire to change or do something. But then, it just comes out of pure excitement and it feels good to do that. Like, the musician I mentioned earlier, Rik Rue, he uses lots of tapes in performance and mini-discs. I can remember in the late 70s, early 80s wanting to play with him! And at that stage – I mean, there were some very good double bass players around, like technically very good, you know, lots of very fine musicians, but I was tired of playing with those people. So, there was a desire of me to play with somebody who was doing something different and to put myself in the situation of having to solve problems that I've never come across before. There was that intent, but it came from excitement, it just came from hearing him. I listened to Rik and thought, 'Wow, that's crazy! I wanna play with that guy.' And then five years later you think back : okay, I stopped playing with that double bass player and I stopped playing with that drummer and I started playing with Rik and then I started playing with a poet, Amanda Stewart, and then Chris Mann, another poet. So we formed this band [Machine for Making Sense] and I wasn't really playing with other musicians : I was playing with this guy on tapes, who didn't really think of himself as a musician, and two poets and a hurdy-gurdy player, Stevie Wishart. And all the other musicians I have grown up with and had been playing for ten years were going : 'Hey, why are you playing with those guys!?' They are not really, like, musicians, none of them can play.' And I'm going : 'Yeah, that's right, they don't play conventionally, they play differently, and that's what's interesting.' So, five years later you think : okay, that was a decision. But I recognize it as a decision in retrospect. By the time you're just : 'Yeah! This is cool, let's do this!' So I think a lot happens like that. Five or ten years later you look back and say : 'Okay, I did that. Why did I do that? Oh yeah, that's interesting.' The first time I heard Axel Dörner play, I just went : 'That's incredible! I sound really old-fashioned!' I remember this thing where Charles Mingus is talking about that he was listening to the radio late at night and he heard Ornette Coleman for the first time. And he said in this interview, he realized that music had changed, from that moment on. Like, he couldn't pretend that he was the happening thing anymore. There was this happening thing which was just different and sounded amazing.

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When I first was a musician I was playing a lot of concerts in commercial music and, you know, playing at weddings, in clubs, pubs. You're trying to do stuff that was functional for people, like when you played at somebody's wedding, it's important that you play something they like, it shouldn't be what *you* like. And so, obviously to play well, you have to have some relationship to it but, I mean, somebody's wedding, it's a really important moment in their life and you don't want to fuck it up. That was an important part in my early part of me being a musician. I was in this town called Wollongong which is South of Sydney and we would do till five or six gigs a week in commercial music, playing in pubs and clubs and restaurants. *And was it well payed?* Not really, but I was probably getting more money then than I do now, but in relative terms, ya, I was kind of better off in those times. There was a lot of live music around, it wasn't well payed but it was payed and it was better than being a waiter, you know. *Mhm.* Jon Rose talks about it too. I don't know if it was like this in other countries too but there's a strange moment, I guess maybe a hangover from the days before television – I just caught the end of it and then it disappeared. I mean, there's still a lot of live music in a place like Melbourne, in the inner city but virtually everywhere else in Australia there's not a lot of live music. And it's not something young musicians can do anymore, even if you wanted to play commercial music you're only playing one or two nights a week, not five or six in a small city. So, I think it was a strange moment in history, from the mid-70s on, maybe I did it for like ten years. And then I got increasingly more interested in the music and this became more and more difficult. I wanted to do much more ambitious music. But I guess why am I saying this : I actually think it was a good training. One had to be incredibly adaptable, like, one night people wanted to dance in a bowling club and they're older people, so you have to play tunes from the 50s and the next day you're in a pub where people want Rock and roll and then you're in some Blues band. I don't think, we played any of that stuff very well, in fact, I'm sure we played it pretty badly a lot of the time but, you know, it was okay, it was functional. And I remember, years later there was a singer in Sydney, an amazing singer, fantastic voice, and she asked Jon Rose : 'What should I do for my career?' And Jon said: 'I think you should join a club band and go around the clubs and sing for people.' And she was mortally offended because she was an artist, you know, doing avantgarde music. She thought he was taking the piss out of her but I think he was absolutely serious. To understand function in music and to understand acoustics, to be placing yourself night after night in different acoustics and to have to solve the problems of playing into this room with this audience and in the next night solve a whole other different problem with a different audience. Yeah, it's kind of thinking about music on the move, everyday, I think it was a really good training for what I then became interested in, which is so much about space and resonance and making sound working in different spaces. But it's not particularly relevant to what I do now, it was a different job.

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I don't think I'm that interested in the flute. For instance, Alessandra [Rombolá] who played last night, is clearly a flute player. She's really interested in the tradition of the flute in western music, and I don't think that I ever have been that much. For instance, some of the flute music that I really love is from Brazil, the rain forest regions, some 1960s recordings I have : Flute music from the Amazon, and flute music from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, I really love all that flute music and what some of that flute music has is the opposite of what the Western flute has : this opening up of the spectrum of sound. So, there is no fundamental note. A lot of the Amazon flute music has this kind of spectral quality, the air crosses the lip and it's kind of broken up into sound in the way that light –it's a prism– kind of breaks up into color. And the Western flute seems to me just to go for blue, or just to go for green, whereas a lot of flute music from other parts of the world is interested in revealing the spectrum. It seems to me that the flute in western music – because it has been developed in the orchestra, where the composer only wants it to do this one specific thing and that specific thing is purity. The composer can then mix that into more complex sound, but its role is to be pure and simple. And taken out of that context, the western silver flute is pure and simple and pure and simply boring. Whereas in the flute music from Papua New Guinea and Brazil and the Solomon Islands, there is no composer, just a guy or a woman or a bunch of people with some flutes and they wanna produce beautiful and complex sound, and they don't have this huge resource of the orchestra and so the last thing you want is something pure and simple, you want something rich and warm. Consequently I've always been against the flute, in a way, and trying to get it stuff to do that it wasn't designed to do. The balloon on the saxophone, an idea I picked up from Thierry Madiot, a French trombone player, immediately opened up my playing. It's actually on the saxophone but it's really functioning as a flute – it's a long tube and when I pinch it, it kind of produces a flute lip sound, but it's one that has no fundamental tone, kind of harmonic series, splayed open. It immediately reminded me of the Amazonian flute playing, so I went with that. But I mean, people don't even perceive it as a flute, because you're playing the saxophone and coming through the saxophone, it just looks like a prepared saxophone. But similarly with the saxophone, I have been interested in the tradition of the saxophone but it seems to me if one takes what John Coltrane and then Pharoah Sanders and Anthony Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell and Evan Parker and John Butcher, they are pushing forward – you don't go back

and try and sound like Jackie McLean. It seems to me, if one is interested in the tradition, being traditional, one should be opening up and explore : that's the traditional thing to do. The conservative thing to do is not traditional. It's not what Pharoah Sanders was doing in 1965.

What I am really interested in is just breath, resonating through things, it doesn't matter if it's a flute or a saxophone or if it's a bottle. I guess, some of them are designed quite well to do some good things at particular times in your life. The bass flute has been useful for me various times in various groups. The thing is, they are kind of vehicles for the breath to be expressed, so then, I think, maybe that's what I am as an instrumentalist : a breather. And, once again, in retrospect I kind of understood that. Because in 1984 I went to Japan to study shakuhachi, but even then, people said to me : 'Why are you studying shakuhachi?' I remember saying : 'Look, I am not interested in being a shakuhachi player, it's just, I grew up with all these records and I find that traditional approach to breathing and resonance of breath through that instrument to be inspiring.' And so I wanted to understand a little bit more. I spent six months with this teacher in Tokyo, but it wasn't about how to learn shakuhachi, it was more about to learn breath control. The teaching there was very traditional. I didn't speak any Japanese and he didn't speak any English but I don't think that was a massive problem because they don't really instruct you anyway, you just copy what they do. The lessons were often four hours long because you arrived and you had to sit and wait while other people went through their work with an apprentice and then you got to work with the apprentice and just playing the piece that you were working on, so you just played it together, and the aim is to play it exactly like he plays it. And once you had that process and were attuned, you then went to the Sensei, the really great player. My Sensei was Yamaguchi Goro, and so eventually after three hours of listening and playing you went through your work with this really great player. Occasionally he would call somebody who could translate and, I remember he got very angry one day because he was always saying : 'Don't use any vibrato.' The whole idea of the shakuhachi is this untainted channel of air, so the purity of the air is incredibly important to them. Because in the west we have this sort of diaphragm vibrato, so when you learn a wind instrument you are often taught this wüjüjüjüjü, kind of produce this vibrato from the diaphragm. Once again, going back to this academic stuff, it's very hard to unlearn these things. When you've been taught at the age of 13 or 14 to play a particular way and your body gets good at that, it's very hard to undo that. So, I remember, in these classes, perhaps I was doing this vibrato from the diaphragm, one day the Sensei just got seriously angry, I thought he was gonna hit me with his shakuhachi, and he called in this American guy who could translate and he said : 'In this music we do not use that device.' But that was virtually the only thing he said to me in six months. It's just all about listening and I think, that was a really great lesson. And then, a few years later, I remember Don Cherry came to Sydney. He did a workshop and there

were about twelve of us with wind instruments in this room and he walked in and he opened his trumpet case, took his trumpet out and just started playing. But it was like a simple tune and we were all sitting there and he was playing and just looked at us and eventually one of us got his instrument out and then everyone got their instruments out and started playing. And it was easy to pick up this tune, it was a simple tune. So we were all playing together. After four, five minutes, everyone is playing this tune together and Don Cherry starts improvising but we were all still playing the tune and then he's improvising and kind of looks at people and then they start improvising and then a few more people improvised and he'd go back to the tune and people kept improvising, you know, so it just happened. We were all playing music together and after ten minutes we were sounding really great, everyone was playing the tune and improvising and maybe we played that tune for like 20 minutes, and then he brought it to an end and started playing another tune. Over the hour we played three or four tunes and then he finished the last one, packed his trumpet up and left. And he hadn't said a word to anyone, the whole hour. I thought that was fantastic because in so many of these stupid music workshops, people say all this stuff, but I've been used to that with the Japanese thing too. I think, that music and sound is so complex, it's so difficult to talk about, that maybe in the end, it's just the best approach, like, Don Cherry had it right. You could stand up there and talk about scales and chords and structures but maybe in the end it's just better to play. With a lot of the musicians I really love and appreciate –in the last few years I've been playing a lot with Chris Abrahams, the piano player, in Sydney– I talk a lot about films and books, maybe about records, but we don't really talk about what we are doing musically. But we do a lot of playing. I go around Chris' house and we play and record and have cups of tea and talk but we don't really discuss the music at all. And maybe that's how it should be.