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PROXIMITY, PERFORMANCE AND POSSIBILITIES

An interview with CJ Mitchell

Rupert Loydell

In 'Proximity, Performance and Possibilities' CJ Mitchell and Rupert Loydell look back at moments of confluence, influence, crossover and synergy between the arts — particularly music and performance — since the 1980s to the current day, as well as the nature of business and finance in relation to small presses, performance and arts funding in general. Drawing on their own friendship, shared and differing experiences, they chart a personal course through a history of alternative arts culture, the rise of the digital, and shifts and digressions in audience expectations, arts management and arts funding.

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CJ Mitchell has been General Manager of the Centre for Contemporary Arts (Glasgow); Administrative Director of the Master of Arts in Arts Administration program at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago; Company Manager of Goat Island Performance Group (Chicago); Executive Director of the Links Hall performance space (Chicago); and Co-Director at the Live Art Development Agency (London). CJ is currently a freelance producer, working in the performing arts; he manages Haranczak/Navarre Performance Projects, and the residency program at South House, a studio space in Faversham, Kent, UK.

*In the 1980s, CJ edited the photocopied, 100 copies per issue, **Magazing**; worked one day a week at Echo Records on Byres Road in Glasgow (alongside working Mon–Fri in an accountancy firm); and worked on a Masters in Cultural Studies, including a dissertation on Spiderman. He has been a Chartered Accountant since 1987.*

Rupert Loydell: I'd like to go back to the 1980s, when we first corresponded and met. We were both producing small press zines: your *Magazing* in Glasgow, and my *Stride* in Cheshire, both of which sometimes spilled from poetry and prose into the worlds of music and visual arts.^[1] On the back of submissions and letter writing we started swapping music and finally met. I wondered what your perception of some of what was going on in the arts was at the time.

It seemed to me a time of convergence, with some kind of knock-on effect, perhaps, from punk and

post-punk filtering through. I remember seeing post-punk band The Fall play live indie rock music for Michael Clark's radical dance ensemble, and Laurie Booth's one-person show with musician Philip Jeck's live vinyl remixing.[2] Is this a fair comment? Were you seeing the same shows in Glasgow as I was in Manchester, Liverpool and at the Alsager Arts Centre in Cheshire?

CJ Mitchell: 'Convergence' sounds like a good way to describe it. Looking back, I accessed a wealth of new ideas and concepts through music: including the music, lyrics, as well as reviews, interviews and articles in the music press. I was an avid reader of the weekly music newspapers *NME (New Musical Express)*, and at different times *Sounds* and *Melody Maker* — and looked out for particular writers whose opinions I trusted or who had distinctive perspectives. At different times, that included Paul Morley, Ian Penman, Don Watson, Simon Reynolds, and Chris Roberts.

Perhaps that time could be characterised as allowing for a cross-fertilization of ideas — particularly through punk and post-punk there were connections to all kinds of political, sometimes revolutionary, ideas, which expanded exponentially into a whole range of other issues, artistic and otherwise. For example, sleeve designs from new independent record labels such as 4AD Records, Factory Records and Paul Morley's pretentious, witty and engaging steering of record label ZTT's promotional campaigns infused the work beyond music, and pointed towards artistic, political, philosophical and other concerns.[3] The general discourse around much of this work in the music press also helped if not initiate these conversations.

At the time, I stumbled across a lot of things: through the music press, John Peel on the radio, through friends' recommendations and shared music on cassettes. Hearing from one friend that their favourite album was Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* (Reich, 1978) certainly caught my attention: I'd never heard anything like it before.

And moving to Glasgow from the Isle of Lewis at the age of 18, the Glasgow Film Theatre opened a window onto a whole range of work and film directors that I wouldn't have been aware of otherwise; while at the same time, Channel 4 had a short Jean Luc Godard season on Monday evenings which blew my mind in terms of showing what was possible through cinema. And through Peter Greenway's films, being introduced to Michael Nyman's music.

A lot of this was to do with proximity. Your exposure to the artists you mention certainly overlapped with what was going on in Glasgow, but without the internet what you were accessing was very much about what was being offered in your own town or city. In terms of overlaps, in Glasgow I was introduced to Philip Jeck when he worked with the dancer Marisa Zanotti; I saw Michael Clark and his dance company, initially performing to recordings of The Fall (and perhaps the Sex Pistols as well?), then a few years later performing with The Fall live in Edinburgh with the *Curious Orange* show.

A particularly strong integration of music and performance was Fad Gadget, the electronic musician, who I saw twice, both singular and very different experiences, and both infused with the unexpected and a great sense of risk. I was not prepared for that first gig, where his acrobatic stage antics were closer to a dance performance than the music gigs I'd been used to. At the start of the show, to a drone-like background hum, he slowly paced over to the front of the standing audience holding a wooden stick which he calmly moved closer and closer to my forehead, as he stared into my eyes

avidly. I noticed there was an electric wire from the stick's handle going up his shirt sleeve, and was rather freaked out as he continued to move closer — was I going to receive an electric shock? I broke the eye contact he'd established with me, at which point he moved on to do the same thing to another audience member, who *did* receive a light touch from the stick on their forehead. He then moved fully into the song, and we discovered that the stick was set with some kind of contact microphone setting off massive percussive sounds when he hit the floor with it. That initial exchange really established a hint of menace and unpredictability for the whole show. My second Fad Gadget gig was equally remarkable, at one point with him stripped to the waist and covered in shaving foam, hanging from the lighting rig. He was a remarkable performer.

And Test Department's collaboration with the Welsh performance group Brith Gof, *Gododdin*, was on a massive scale at Glasgow's Tramway space.[4]

At the time, I would usually read about new bands before hearing them, and whilst I would take a chance on quite a lot of new releases on the back of intriguing coverage, those choices were partly steered by, say, who had written the good review in the *NME*, or what label the band were on: I didn't buy everything on the 4AD label, but reading about Throwing Muses and Pixies and knowing they were on 4AD was part of the decision to buy their first releases without having heard anything by them before.

In contrast, I'd read reviews of Husker Du's music for a few years which often seemed interesting but didn't know anyone who had their records, and hadn't taken the plunge to buy one of their records.[5] I remember seeing them crouched in the doorway of a nightclub on Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow one Sunday afternoon about 5pm, presumably where they'd be playing that evening; they were recognisably distinctive as a trio! I said to myself, oh there's Husker Du, but it took me a couple more years before I purchased my first Husker Du record, *Candy Apple Grey* (1986), which opened the door for me to a range of bands on the SST label and a wider culture of American guitar bands. It's interesting the ways that you might have had awareness of certain work around that time but not necessarily have heard it — another example, I heard Firehose before Minutemen. Firehose were supporting Sonic Youth on the *Sister* (1987) tour, one of those gigs which was startling from beginning to end, and which ultimately led to learning about Minutemen: how great was *Double Nickels on the Dime* (1984), even though it was years after its release when I heard it.

You could say supply has always outstripped demand for me. In the 80s, despite my own acquisitions, and receiving cassettes of other music from you and others, there was always more I wasn't aware of. And now in the 21st century, with much easier access to music online, the sheer volume of new releases as well as releases or reissues of old work is just so overwhelming I'm always lagging behind — supply remains far ahead of demand albeit in different ways from the 80s.

The music world was certainly infused with ideas in ways that seemed distinct or specific to the time. You could probably identify strands or tendencies — for example, where bands came from art school contexts, like Talking Heads in the US or Wire in the UK (not forgetting U2's assertion that they didn't go to art school, but instead went to Brian Eno (Assayas 2005: 166)).[6]

Magazing was principally a place for poetry and prose, but I also wanted it to represent my own

interests and enthusiasms more broadly, which resulted in the foregrounding of prose poetry; a lot of visual material (often collaged); interviews with Glasgow writers Alasdair Gray and James Kelman (I tried to get a JG Ballard interview, but sadly received a postcard back from him declining the proposal); articles on other writers; and over a series of editions included a serialised novel from John Gimplett. Overall, it was meant to represent that convergence of ideas you mention.

RL: Along with a change in music there seemed to be a move towards contact improvisation in dance, where choreography arose from group work which took ‘the body and its energy as the raw materials for physical theatre’ (Houston, 1995), as well as experiments with duration and repetition, perhaps ritual, in theatre and dance. I’m thinking particularly of the extreme early DV8 pieces ‘My Sex, Our Dance’ and ‘Deep End’ where viewers ‘witness[ed] performers who push and punish their bodies for our pleasure’ (ibid) though I am not sure ‘pleasure’ is the right word; I think it was more a sense of challenging incredulous audiences.

CJ: It’s interesting that you’ve singling out contact improvisation, as for me there were multiple approaches of performance work being shown in Glasgow. Initially, I went to see a lot of theatre at the Citizens Theatre, which although rooted in the work of playwrights brought exciting formal experimentation to what was happening on stage, which subsequently led me over the course of the 80s to other devised, experimental performance and dance work.

Again, proximity helped: through the Third Eye Centre (which in the early 90s became the CCA, Centre for Contemporary Arts, where I worked for a time), Tramway, the National Review of Live Art festival and the New Moves dance festival, an extraordinary range of work was being introduced, which talked to the cross-fertilisation of ideas we’re talking about. There’s a book to be written about those venues and festival programs.

Many folk reference *The Carrier Frequency* by Impact Theatre Co-operative, which involved Russell Hoban’s writing, as particularly influential on other artists, although I wasn’t aware of it at the time.^[7] Similarly, Robert Wilson and Pina Bausch were producing work across the 70s and 80s which was having an enormous impact, but wasn’t being seen in Glasgow.

RL: And obviously gender politics, and race were sometimes forefronted here. Michael Clark’s naked bottom costumes, DV8’s *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, a performance written about a killer in the gay community, and Phoenix Dance Company, all young black men, were making various statements.

CJ: DV8’s *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, which I saw at the Third Eye Centre, allowed for ideas which could be explored viscerally, durationally, and bodily, in ways that couldn’t be done in theatre or film. I went in knowing nothing about the company or their work, and it was a devastating experience — I recall that at the end of the performance, the performers didn’t come back on stage for their applause. I’m not sure if that was the case every night, but it added to the grim bleakness of the experience; the performers had brutalised themselves in the performance. It was fascinating to see where DV8 took their work in subsequent pieces, many which for me thankfully shifted the artistic agenda each time — physical theatre from many other groups seemed lacklustre in comparison.

Forced Entertainment from Sheffield certainly felt tuned in to what you might call ‘the state of the nation’. Their work was infused with culture and politics, and the fusing of popular culture with performance strategies produced a fantastically rich body of work. By the end of their first decade, it already felt that they’d marked the scene significantly, and it’s remarkable that they’re still making work together decades later. But even with their high profile and reputation in the performance and experimental theatre world, awareness of the work in a much broader sense culturally is not there — performance’s scale and ephemerality often makes it the runt of the litter.

RL: Theatre seemed to be taking on similar ideas. I remember at one point simply longing to see a performance with scenery and some sense of illusion that didn’t go on for hours, and didn’t involve repeated moves and speeches.

CJ: I’m not sure what work or type of work you’re referring to here, partly because your description is general and might refer to specific artists or works that I’m not thinking about. But for me, some interesting theatre was still going on alongside the Live Art and performance I was seeing. I was as interested in the work of the Canadian theatre maker Robert Lepage as I was Forced Entertainment, despite their quite distinct creative strategies.

Lepage had the opportunity through a residency at Tramway in Glasgow to work on *Tectonic Plates*, a devised and collaged work which had an inclusive, internationalist outlook, and had a tenderness and quietness quite at odds with much theatre work, which can often feel like it’s shouting at its audience.

In some ways, these separate theatrical and performance strands came together for me in the work of Goat Island Performance Group from Chicago, who presented a retrospective of three different pieces at the CCA in Glasgow in 1994. Their integration of text and movement, fusing very physical work with conceptual strategies, was one of the most distinctive performance experiences that I’d had. (And, full disclosure: in subsequent years, I married one of the company members, and became Goat Island’s Company Manager.) They explored ideas of repetition, duration and installation, all combined with a mix of found and new material, resulting in a poetic or associative collage of material. It was work which asked something of its audience to piece together, it asked for their patience over the course of each piece, not to worry about what they were experiencing as the performance unfolded, because perhaps it would eventually make sense or make a kind of sense as it continued to unfold or even after it finished.

RL: Community art had previously been entangled with theatrical ideas of spectacle and entertainment as well as empowerment, yet again, at the time, there seemed a move away from the Welfare State (Theatre) model towards something else. Of course, the older model has refined itself and there are still the likes of Truro’s City of Lights parade and the Watch puppet and fire events in Chester.

CJ: I’m less connected with these issues perhaps, although I am interested in the examples of the National Theatre of Scotland and the National Theatre of Wales taking national platforms to develop and present their work across those nations rather than being rooted in one concrete shell, like the National Theatre in London.

The responsibilities of local arts centres can be significant, and thinking about An Lanntair, the arts centre in my hometown of Stornoway, it is central to local cultural provision, through its exhibition, cinema and other programs, and aspiring to meet a broad community need or demand which is distinct from, say, the Barbican, which exists alongside so many other cultural possibilities in London.

There are ongoing challenges around arts funding, which have been in place for some time now with austerity in the UK, alongside which society's increasing levels of bureaucracy and accountability have significantly added to the administrative responsibilities placed on arts organisations. The need to continually prove or make the case for the impact of your work in some ways is understandable or reasonable, but it undercuts the arts' role in research, experimentation, risk-taking, and providing room for potential failure. In the past, there was room for more trust in the fact that if time, space and other resources were being provided to artists, interesting work could and often did take place. The impact of that work was not always measurable in the short-term and it may have had a whole range of indirect impacts in ways beyond the time of making and presenting that work.

RL: Performance, or 'performance art', has in many ways remained 'other', despite being a wide ranging multidisciplinary umbrella term. It is in sometimes attached to theatre and fine art, yet it remains a distinct and often confusing term and world to most people. How do you perceive what has been happening in performance over the last 30 years?

CJ: Many developments have taken place in the last 30 years. Performance and Live Art's increased presence and impact on mainstream culture is one example: in the UK, this includes the embrace of performance broadly and in more established contexts, including arts museums. Tate Modern now has a dedicated Live Art space in its Tate Tanks, and performance has a regular profile in the programs of venues and festivals across the country.

My work at the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) includes advocating for these practices, alongside charting their impacts on the mainstream, including over the long term where indirect and elusive influences can be seen. The LADA program 'Live Culture' in 2003 took place at Tate Modern, and was one of the first significant examples of a national museum foregrounding performance and Live Art through its programs in ways that we now take for granted internationally: Marina Abramovic's recent show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York is one example of the kinds of shifts that are taking place in terms of the profiling of this work. That's not to say that there's necessarily a widespread embrace or indeed understanding of the work, and given its ephemeral nature it's still challenging in many ways for these practices to enter into the visual arts market, nonetheless these issues are shifting.

Similarly, you can point to a lot of experimental theatre practices having a presence and influence on many of our mainstages.

Performance is now foregrounded within Higher Education in ways that weren't the case 30 years ago. LADA has recently partnered with Queen Mary University of London to establish an MA in Live Art.

Shifts in digital technologies have also played a significant role in these developments. As a result, awareness of work which is taking place nationally and internationally, the archiving of that work, its documentation, and publishing around that work, have all been infused with new possibilities as digital technology has allowed for faster and cheaper ways to share video, photos and writing online. And promoting the work through email, web, blogs and social media has allowed for significant changes in terms of how people are engaging with the work and choosing how they see it.

And in the UK, there's a collegiate networking of promoters, producers, artists and also audiences in performance, and I would say those networks have become more complex and rich in recent years. LADA coordinates the Live Art UK network of 30 arts organisations, which advocates for this work for the benefit of artists and audiences.

The points above don't even refer to the art itself, which of course also continues to evolve and change, as well as refer back to prior work as new generations of artists come along. Over the past 30 years within performance and Live Art, but also popular and mainstream culture, there's been a foregrounding of experiential work — and some might argue that experiential work has been at the root of performance for some time, and could be another example of performance's indirect, long-term impact on the mainstream. This includes works for smaller audiences or even audiences of one audience member at a time, promenade performances, and site specific events. At LADA we often use a *Guardian* quote: 'If you want to know what the mainstream will be doing in 10 year's time, look at Live Art now' (Keidan, 2015).

RL: You spent a decade in the USA. Could you talk about cultural and artistic differences between the UK and the USA?

CJ: Funding is organised differently, which affects the provision of arts organisations, artists, and networks, and in turn the agenda and discourse around the work. The national provision of arts funding is on such a different scale between the UK and US, and the slow erosion of arts funding the US nationally and at the state and city levels in recent years has placed a lot of pressure on cultural production. Philanthropy leads the agenda in the US in ways that are also beginning to happen in the UK; will there be increased pressure to adopt that US model as the UK's public arts provision is reduced further?

The geographical scale of the US also affects possibilities for travel and touring of work, which in comparison the UK and Europe allows for much more. This might mean there are examples in the US in some towns and cities of local networks and cultures which are very distinct, strong and powerful.

RL: You grew up on the Isle of Lewis before moving to the mainland, and you trained as an accountant, and took that skill into the arts, firstly at Glasgow's CCA Centre for Contemporary Arts, then with Goat Island Performance Group and the Links Hall performance space in Chicago, and now at the Live Art Development Agency in London. How do you see the role of finance and business in the arts? Why do the arts need subsidy?

CJ: Financial and business concerns are really important to the arts, and its impact, survival and

growth. But I'm wary of foregrounding these issues before the importance of artistic ideas. The arts provide opportunities for experimentation, and the possibilities of experimentation — and that's hopefully experimentation which can take place at all skills levels and in all contexts, from individual, independent artists right through to the big opera stages.

Research and development is central to the growth and vitality of any culture. R&D is central to the medical world, industry, and defence, and is equally important in an artistic sense. This artistic R&D need, however, is often put down critically or dismissively, where financial support is referred to as 'subsidy', a word rarely used when it comes to, say, defence funding, which is also from the public purse.

For me, it's problematic to compare different national needs and agendas against each other in terms of making the case for funding priorities. Government supports through its funding a whole range of different activities, and political questions are all to do with what that funding mix should be. For me, the arts need to be central to that question of national and local provision. You could argue that the arts and cultural agenda being held within the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) places it in the wrong context: might it actually be more productive to consider the arts in other contexts, including education, by which I mean education for all ages.

RL: Your current role involves not only financial and organisational support for artists, but I believe you and your partner have opened a residential rehearsal space for others to develop work in. Is that correct?

CJ: Karen and I recently moved to Faversham in Kent, having found a house which unusually includes a gymnasium space (where the back garden used to be), which we're developing as a residency or rehearsal space for performance work, both for Karen's own work and the work of others.

The space hasn't opened in a formal sense yet — we're in an initial phase, testing the space, improving its heating, and seeing what work it's good for, by offering it for free to a few artists to come and use it. We believe that it's a good space for the early development of performance and movement work, and we're going to see where those ideas lead us. Longer term, we could continue to operate in these informal ways offering the space for residencies, or becoming more structured in terms of how it is offered more broadly to artists publicly. And as we make more connections in Kent with local artists and arts organisations, we're excited to see the space continue to develop. Space for some kinds of creative work is a key resource, and we're hoping to meet a range of needs.

RL: And what does the future hold, personally and in wider terms for you and performance art in the 21st century? Put your prophesy hat on!

CJ: Of course it's difficult to predict specifics, but generally it feels like we're heading towards a really challenging time. Between the development of populist discourses, the confusion and downsides of Brexit, the divisiveness of political debate, and the potential downturn in the economy, all of these may combine to create a really tough time for our culture. That of course would be particularly

lamentable given the range of extraordinary developments that the arts and culture have contributed to the UK in recent decades.

Within performance there is often a culture of being able to work with minimal resources, and it's been that way for a long time with artists finding ways to make and show their work no matter what. However, who gets to make and perform their work will definitely be constrained with more austerity, and it's timely that many are currently grappling with questions of access and privilege following our recent austerity; the possibility that there may be more austerity to come and on a larger scale is sobering.

RL: Thanks for your time.

Footnotes:

[1] *Magazing* ran to 14 issues (1982–88) and was the central element in a 33-booklet series published by Tape Books (1981–89), all coordinated by CJ Mitchell. Rupert Loydell's *Stride* started in 1982 as a bi-monthly poetry and reviews magazine, became a quarterly paperback, then an occasional arts magazine before moving online from 1999-2016. Its final incarnation was as a daily blog from 2016 until early 2021.

[2] 'The Fall originally formed in Manchester, England in late 1976, making its live debut in May 1977. For over 40 years, the group continued with founder and sole constant Mark E Smith at the helm, until his untimely death in January 2018. Around 50 core members have passed through the group's ranks, bolstered on various occasions by additional guests. To 2018, there have been 32 studio albums, more than 50 singles and approaching 100 live albums, compilations and box sets.' (Cooke & Patton, 2020).

Michael Clark's current website (2021) claims that he is 'a defining cultural figure. Since emerging in the 1980s as a prodigy at London's Royal Ballet School, he has remained at the forefront of innovation in dance', whilst Sanjat Roy (2009) recalls that Clark 'launched his own company in 1984, which quickly became as big a scandal as it was a success. Clark poured a heady mix of clubbing hedonism, rock, fashion, sex and transvestism into his works, which featured earsplitting music by acts including the Fall [...]. There were outlandish costumes by designers BodyMap and Trojan, and major parts for non-dancers'.

Jack Anderson (1985), reviewing the same Laurie Booth and Philip Jeck show I witnessed in Cheshire, notes that '[i]t took nerve to present "Yip Yip Mix and the Twentieth Century" ... But Laurie Booth and Philip Jeck had lots of nerve, and some imagination as well. The two artists from London improvised for almost an hour, Mr. Booth dancing while Mr. Jeck played records of compositions in various styles. The program notes suggested that no one could ever be sure what might happen next.'

[3] For an intelligent overview and history of ZTT see Paul Lester's 'Label of Love: ZTT' (2009). For Paul Morley's own take see 'Paul Morley Interviewed: The Rise Of Zang Tuum Tumb, and the Fall Of ZTT' (McNamee, 2008).

[4] Test Department ‘rejected the conventional and developed a style that reflected the decay of their surroundings scavenging the unregenerated wastelands for raw materials, and transforming found industrial items into designed, sculptural instruments. Suitably armed they forged a hard rhythmic sonic battery, fusing found sound samples and cutting edge electronics in the construction of a dynamic physical totality. Their infamous sonic assaults were challenging and demanding for audience and performers alike’ (Test Department, 2021) *Gododdin*, a performance based on the epic 6th Century poem of the same name, ‘recalled the plight and heroic struggle of a small band of celtic warriors against the might of the invading Angles. A parable of minority cultures struggle for identity against the superior forces of colonialism and homogenisation.’ (ibid)

[5] Reviewing a compilation of the band’s early music, Alexis Petridis note that ‘[m]ore than any other band that emerged out of the US hardcore punk scene, Minneapolis’s Hüsker Dü paved the way for what would happen next ... their earliest years reveals a band already sporting an advanced case of split musical personality: Midwestern punk rockers unsure whether they wanted to scream their way through songs called Obnoxious and Guns at My School or do something more thoughtful and arty and strange. [...] It often feels like you’re listening to the birth of something more than a band: the contradictions at Hüsker Dü’s heart would fuel American alt-rock for years to come’ (Petridis, 2017).

[6] U2 is a rock band from Dublin, Ireland (1976—present). After establishing themselves under the names The Larry Mullen Band (the name of U2’s drummer) and The Hype, U2 have since released 14 albums and made a name for themselves worldwide for their crowd-pleasing performances (cf U2.com/band).

Informed by his art school background, which often involved the deployment of conceptual procedures, Brian Eno became a member of the glam/art rock group Roxy Music (1971—73), until he ‘decided to leave ... in 1973 when he found himself contemplating when he was going to do his laundry in the middle of a gig’ (World Entertainment News Network, 2005). Eno’s declarations that he is a non-musician and dilettante notwithstanding, he has had a significant impact on culture through his own album releases and productions, as well as visual art and writing (Boon 2020).

Eno’s long-term relationship with U2 has seen them collaborate on album productions and co-writing material. Notably, Eno insisted the band take a two-week holiday from recording their acclaimed album *Achtung Baby* (1991), at a point when he felt ‘everything seemed like a mess’ (Gill, 2001).

‘It used to be said that a lot of English rock ‘n’ roll bands went to art school. We went to Brian [Eno],’ says Bono [U2’s lead singer], of the former Roxy Music keyboard player — turned-producer’ (McCormick, 1995).

[7] Impact Theatre Co-operative made experimental theatre between 1979—86, and were founded in Leeds, England. ‘*The Carrier Frequency*, Impact Theatre’s collaboration with the novelist Russell Hoban, was one of the Eighties’ most outstanding and influential theatre shows. It is set in a post-nuclear world, where brutalised steel and concrete structures rise from a giant pool of water. It depicts six figures lost in an absurd and exhausting ritual, trying to revive a departed civilisation. Despite it’s [sic] harrowing subject matter, the show retains moments of ludicrous slapstick and verbal wit. When it exploded on the world in 1984 it caused a sensation’ (Stan’s Café 2020).

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ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER

Rupert Loydell

Rupert Loydell is Senior Lecturer in the School of Writing and Journalism at Falmouth University, a contributing editor to *International Times*, and was the editor of *Stride* magazine 1982 — 2021. He is a widely published poet whose most recent poetry books are *Dear Mary* (Shearsman, 2017) and *A Confusion of Marys* (Shearsman, 2020). He has edited anthologies for Salt, Shearsman and KFS, written for academic journals such as *Punk & Post-Punk* (which he is on the editorial board of), *New Writing*, *Revenant*, *The Journal of Visual Art Practice*, *Text*, *Axon*, *Musicology Research*, *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice*, and contributed co-written chapters to *Brian Eno. Oblique Music* (Bloomsbury, 2016), *Critical Essays on Twin Peaks: The Return* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and *Music in Twin Peaks: Listen to the Sounds* (Routledge, 2021).

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