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SO HOW DID YOU GET STARTED?

SUMMERFOLD RECORDS PRESS RELEASE

Bruford to retire from active service.

Yes, King Crimson, and Earthworks drummer and bandleader Bill Bruford will no longer perform in public effective January 1 2009. After an exemplary 40-year career that has moved through progressive rock to electronic jazz and on to acoustic jazz, Bruford will hang up his sticks and concentrate on 'related activities'.

"It's been an exciting four decades, but now it's someone else's turn," said Bruford. "I'd like to thank my friends and colleagues and the greater listening public for giving me a more-than-fair hearing. My ambition was always to try to contribute to drumming and music in the broader sense – to try to imagine a better way of doing things today, or the sort of things we might expect drummers to be doing tomorrow. If I've managed to push things forward an inch or two over the years, then that is a source of satisfaction."

Bruford will continue to talk and write on the subject of his career and the percussion scene in general, and will archive and manage his voluminous back catalogue of recordings on Summerfold and Winterfold Records.

called Carolyn into my room for a second opinion. She said something about it not seeming much after all those years of graft and went back to the kitchen licking the spoon. This was the worst thing – there was no gold watch in this game. I should have liked one of those. Presented with that bauble, the mothballed colliery worker, the creaky security guard, and the dusty academic with the elbow patches on his Lovett tweed jacket could all put a line underneath their lives' work and move on. But that seems beyond us in the music business, which requires that, like Sir Cliff Richard and Donny Osmond, we are all Peter Pans, forbidden to grow old. I have to write a book before I can move on.



It is 1965, and Ernest Marples has only recently opened the initial stretches of Britain's motorway network. The whole thing is a bit of a novelty. In a fabulously plummy voice, the UK government's Minister of Transport has spoken about "previously unheard-of speeds of up to 70 miles an hour". The Great British Public, attracted to these slabs of racetrack like moths to a flame, proceed to treat them as if they were no different to the tiny B3857 road to Worsley. They pull over and park on the slow carriageway. They enjoy picnics on them. They reverse up them, they go down the wrong side of them, and they fall asleep while driving on them. In these days before a central barrier, they even cross over and turn around to head in the opposite direction.

To this madness is added a small army of rock groups, in vehicles rented from a highly unsupervised and fledgling car-rental industry. Suddenly it's possible to get from Sheffield to London in time for last orders at the Speakeasy, a musicians' drinking club and home base to many of London's finest, if you pack up the gear quickly and put your foot down. And that'll save having to run out of the hotel in the morning without paying the bill.

By the summer of 1968, a long line of Ford Transit vans points north up London's Earls Court Road. It seems as if everyone, like me, is in a band – and the one I'm in is called Yes. Our transport

arrangements are pretty standard. We used to travel with our equipment in our cool-enough long-wheelbase Transit called Big Red, but at the first sign of success, musicians and equipment had separated. The gear could then be driven ahead by a road manager, and – untold luxury, this – the band could drive itself, or, for the wildly successful, *be driven to the gig* and swan in elegantly for the soundcheck without having had to lift, hump, plug in or set up, or otherwise spoil your hair.

In Yes, we have the use of an over-powered Volvo sports car, unwisely loaned to the group by its owner and our manager, Roy Flynn. Left to our own devices, we somehow have to arrange pick-up times at several addresses around London, get to the beginning of the M1 motorway at Hendon before the rush-hour kicks in, and make it half way up England to Kidderminster in good time for the show.

Mindful of Ernie Marples's unheard-of speeds, we have naturally set the departure time hopelessly late. A punctual arrival would have been scarcely achievable even if all the participants had actually been ready to depart when the car pulls up outside their pads. It is now, always has been, and will always remain a matter of status among males as to who keeps whom waiting and for how long. If I can enter the room after you, I shall have kept the occupants waiting a shade longer than you, and shall have successfully demonstrated my superior rank. When gentlemen held the door open for ladies and ushered them into the room first, I had always concluded that that was as much to do with the male indicating his dominance over the female as anything to do with being polite.

In Yes, this game is played to a high level of brinkmanship. The end result is that the five musicians will become familiar with the high-pitched whine of the Volvo's intercooler as we scream into the outskirts of town anything up to an hour or two late. I no longer care that, again, I am not going to get a bite to eat before the show or that the rehearsal of new material has again been postponed. I no longer care that audiences are by now being kept waiting, that I never get to check the drums before walking on stage, or that there is now a thin trickle of sweat running down the back of my neck.

Oh no. What I really care about is running red lights. The first time it happens, my head is in a book and I pretend I haven't seen what I thought I had just seen. But the second time, the blood drains from my face and I cannot restrain myself.

"Christ, are you mad?" I scream. "It's red!"

"Really?" says the irritated driver, knuckles white on the steering wheel. "Looked green-ish to me."

"Bloody hell..." contributes a dozing keyboard player, woken into a cold sweat as the driver slams the brakes on at a T-junction. "Where's the fire? What time are we on?"

"Eight, I think," says the bass player. "Or is there a support group?"

"Micky said nine, I swear. But he didn't say anything about a support." Micky is the band's long-suffering road manager, now driving the equipment van. My palms are sticky. The Volvo ducks and weaves in heavy traffic on the Kidderminster ring road. I am going to die in this thing not because we are late – and this is very Yes – but because no one knows whether we are late or not.

Assuming we've actually survived the outward-bound journey, there is always the return to look forward to, and this has a number of blood-curdling variants. Inevitably, a majority will conclude that if we pack up the gear quickly and step on it, we can make the couple of hundred miles back to the Speakeasy in time for last orders at 2:00am. It always takes longer to pack up than you think. Dressing rooms have to be emptied of clothes and alcohol, strange-looking cigarettes have to be rolled and smoked, bits of gear forgotten, remembered, looked for, found, re-packed.

If we leave behind the lights of Kidderminster, or Accrington, or Boston around 11:00, we are doing well. Adrenalin-fuelled conversation will eventually give way to a lolling silence, while the Volvo howls down the motorway into the black night at around 90 or 100 miles an hour. Outside, parallel Morse-code streams under Cinturato tyres; inside, canned humanity nods, burps, snores. All except me.

I'm sitting shotgun, next to the driver. Because now the big danger is sleep, and my self-appointed function is to keep the driver awake. It has been a long day, a potent brandy, an energetic set, and some stately weed. I talk. I talk for England. I talk for my life. I demand answers from Jon Anderson, our singer and occasional chauffeur, his face lit by the glow of the dashboard, shoulders slumped, head dipping, drooping, drifting, nodding, dipping, dropping, drifting, nod ...

"Jon!" I scream. "Wake up! Are you sure you're all right?" The car jerks back into the centre of the lane. It's begun to drift toward the siren song of the central reservation, and there is no crash-barrier. "Sure, man. No problem." Another ten minutes or so, and the eyelids lower again, the head lolls, the vehicle drifts, and the whole sorry cycle repeats itself. Incredibly, we usually do get to the Speakeasy for last orders. Our manager Roy also manages the club, so the steak sandwiches and the scotch and cokes come at a very favourable price. From there the individuals will usually cab it home with various female companions in tow.

But sometimes they don't. Martin Lamble, the gifted 19-year-old drummer with Fairport Convention, died when their rental Ford, the same one that Aynsley Dunbar's band had used the week before, crossed the central reservation and ploughed headlong into an oncoming lorry. They had lorries in those days. Martin never got his steak sandwich. The more I dwelt on this, the more I realised our transport arrangements couldn't continue the way they were. I told the band at the next meeting that I'd make my own travel arrangements. I hadn't thought this through, and it would be expensive, but it didn't seem to bother the other guys. They said: "See you there." The next gig was in Amsterdam.

It seemed a bit weird on the plane all on my own, and, way before the era of cheap flights, this was a pricey sort of jaunt. But I had face to save and a point to make. I said I'd travel solo, and by God I would. Maybe if I could get the band to pay, they'd notice the extra expense and agree, as a way of reducing costs, to drive a bit slower. I cab'd it in

from the "aeropuerto" (all airports were so named, for some lark reason that I can't remember), checked into the small but mercifully clean two-star on the Leidseplein and, feeling unusually independent and sophisticated, settled down with a farmer's coffee to await the arrival of my colleagues.

After several hours of mulching around the area, I thought I'd better go back and wait by the phone in case they'd stopped to give me a call. Back in the room, I dug out practice-pad and sticks, and began my working day, in a routine that was to change little over the next 35 years.

I sat myself on a chair with the pad on another chair or the bed, preferably in front of a mirror to check the hand positions. I use a matched grip: both sticks should move identically, describing the same slim arc of travel, and left and right wrists and fingers should look alike. Then, through a long-honed series of rudimentary warm-up exercises, sometimes with metronome, sometimes without, I worked on single-stroke rolls, paradiddles, and triplets, with and without various accent patterns. Then the various ornaments and embellishments, handed down through the dust of some American Civil War battlefield: the flams, drags, and ratamacues.

I was plugging into some deep well of rhythmic consciousness. Others had been here before; others were probably here right now; and others would be here in the future. This certainty made me feel connected. This routine and honourable labour had nothing to do with chart positions, styles of music, or record companies. It had existed since before all that and would exist long after all that had ceased to exist – the musician's endless struggle to master the instrument. As hotel rooms improved over time, I might be able to break this hour or two with tea. As practice-pads became even quieter, I no doubt irritated fewer occupants of the next-door rooms, but it was to be essentially the same ritual of connection throughout my working life.

I also knew the feeling and the result of over-practising, whereby after two hours or so of intense work I'd blown it completely for the

evening's gig – wrists and fingers too tired to co-operate to my satisfaction. And I knew the opposite hazard, of too little warm-up time, where the blood had not circulated properly to wrists and fingers, and my left stroke in particular felt jerky, without fluidity, and sounded like it.

“But I'm sure no one noticed,” would come the tender response when I brought either of these two difficulties to the attention of my girlfriend, Carolyn. “But *I* did,” I would mutter on the first few hundred occasions, after which I didn't bother any more. There are two principal questions that I've been asked a thousand times by everyone, but particularly by those who I'm surprised don't know the answer. One of them floated to mind again, as I turned back to the practice-pad.

“But what, exactly, do you do during the *daytime*?”

Without much noticing, it had moved from dusk to dark outside, and we should be at the club by now, setting up. I cursed to myself and felt my stomach turn over. They should have been here hours ago. Finally, the phone emitted a Euro buzz from the bedside. “Bill? It's Chris.” That was unnecessary; the drawling whine of Chris Squire, the bass player, was instantly recognisable if a bit faint. “Where the hell are you?” I asked.

“We're at a police station about 30 miles away. They are just taking down some details.”

“About what?”

“Well, Jon had bit of a nod-off, and we left the road and went down this embankment kinda fast.” My attention drifted with the detail. I didn't know whether to laugh at the stupidity, cry thanks for deliverance from potential disaster, or scream blue murder at their irresponsibility.

“As I said, good job it was grassy,” the voice was saying. “We just rattled along at 45 degrees until the thing came to a halt. Messed up the front bumper, though, but no one was hurt.” Idiots, I thought. Then I said, “How long will it take you to get to the club?”

“Thing is, Bill ...” I knew trouble was coming; it was always

preceded by a Thing-is “... if you pop down the club now, you could give Micky a hand setting the gear up and soundchecking, and it would be all sorted by the time we turn up, and we should just about be able to make it.”

This was the only man I was ever going to know who could impose upon me, give me a near heart-attack, force me to change my own plans, and then get me to set up his bass, all in the same sentence.



Born in 1949 in Sevenoaks, Kent, in south-east England, I was raised the third child in the post-war-Britain household of a veterinary surgeon. John Bruford, my dad, had a large-animal vet's practice that, before the war, had stretched as far east in the county as Canterbury. By the time I arrived, he was mostly servicing the farms that nestled in the idyllic nooks and crannies of West Kent. He knew the lanes like the back of his hand, and, in the halcyon days before instant communications, would potter gently from farm to farm, cowshed to cowshed, listening to *Woman's Hour* on the radio in his Morris Oxford, just about getting through his rounds. This work-rate, it must be said, was not conducive to the generation of a large income. We lived the modestly threadbare but always comfortable existence typical of many an elbow-patched doctor, rector, teacher, or solicitor in the austerity of 50s England.

We talked little, my dad and I, but words didn't seem very important to fathers and sons of that generation. They usually got us into trouble or led to misunderstandings. He seemed a contented man, as well he should have been, being well looked after by my mother and our always elderly Irish live-in help. The permanently stooped and ever-twinkling Mrs Young seemed the oldest living creature upon which I had set my young eyes. Every birthday I asked her how old she was, and every birthday I got the same reply in her broad County Cork brogue. “A hundred and eight.”

My father provided the income, looked after the local cattle, and

received a decoration from the Queen for his work on tuberculosis in the post-war milk supply. But it was my mother Betty who tended to all the serious matters in life: the social position and health of the family; her children's moral and physical education; sport, games, and exercise; and travel, which was much promoted and perennially said to broaden the mind. The small frisson of excitement I still get as I turn the corner into Heathrow airport, long since unwarranted in today's unglamorous conditions, seems left over from an earlier age.

Failure to acknowledge a gift, or to write a thank-you letter after any social engagement, was a capital offence, worse even than 'showing off' or 'boasting'. Two spoons of cod-liver-oil a day, moderation in all things, eating a little bit of everything off your plate, and no stealing – these were the fixed beacons of my life that, I was assured, would guide me safely though all the choppy water I was likely to encounter. Half a century on and safely through much choppy water, I see little to add to this modest list as I attempt fatherly advice to my own children.

I roomed with my brother Jeff, a few years my senior and a cheerful soul, whom I rated as marginally less important than my older sister, Jane, only because she had a boyfriend of some importance. This fellow had come into possession of a pair of brushes for a snare drum. Uncertain what to do with them, he gave them to Jane, a gesture of some magnanimity, I suppose, but hardly a token of undying love. Equally uncertain, my sister asked around, and gave them to me, indicating that if you swished them around on a thick-card album-sleeve of the day, it'd sound just like the real thing.

The brushes weren't bad as far as they went, but I thought they'd be infinitely more useful if applied to the red-glitter drum kit I'd noticed lurking in the small ads in *The Sevenoaks Chronicle*. It seemed reasonably priced at 17 guineas. A brief negotiation with my father, the extraction of muttered promises of renewed effort at school, a short car ride with my mother to collect, and the little beauties were mine. Initially they lived in my bedroom, but after an anonymous note or two through the letter-box, I was ordered up another flight to the attic space.

It was there, in the must and the dark and the smell of old suitcases, that I first got to grips with the mysteries of the percussive arts.



As a young boy, I'd beaten silent time with my fingers along with the windscreen wipers on my father's Morris Oxford. I'd shivered excitedly as I watched the rollers and the tides come and go on the longer rhythmic cycles to be found on Polzeath beach in Cornwall. As a teenager, I would synchronise my being with the clickety-clack of the fast train up to London from Sevenoaks to Charing Cross.

Rhythm seemed to be everywhere, but no one else seemed to notice it. And if it did raise its head, people pointed, looked the other way, and hurried on by. Instinctively, I knew it wasn't to be found in machinery but in the human heart – each one with its individual, measurable rhythmic pattern. With time and experience, I came to know how you could fine-tune rhythm and how you could deceive with it.

Early on as a young professional I loved to tinker about in the engine-room of rock groups. I always had a greasy rag handy, because setting up a drum set was a dirty job that required ratchets, spanners, the odd screwdriver, and some oil. Then I tinkered about in the engine-room of jazz groups – finer, more sophisticated mechanisms altogether. After that, I just tinkered about.

Later on, Yes had a manager named Brian Lane. A colourful man with a ready smile and a heavy beard – part East End barrow-boy, part con-man – he was the sort who would sell his own grandmother for an extra punnet of winkles, if they put winkles in punnets.

As is best with any manager, I'd studiously avoided the discussion of music or anything directly connected with it. One afternoon, fate had thrown us together on the tour bus, and, despite my best endeavours, the man seemed determined to indicate his knowledge of the subject. It clearly wasn't going to be a long conversation, and a discussion of drumming had only just got underway, when it occurred to me that this otherwise seemingly intelligent man beside me thought

that the drummer in a band hit any drum or cymbal as hard as he liked pretty much at any time that took his fancy – mostly, or even preferably, at random.

Nowhere could this misguided soul detect any pattern, any repetition, any logic, any thought, any passion, or any skill in the drummer's efforts. He was the type who would fail to understand that success at football, cricket, indeed all sports, is largely dependent upon rhythm and its close cousin, split-second timing. Brian, from whom musical understanding was not going to be required, was later to be the rocket fuel that propelled my career to unimagined heights, but the subtleties of rhythm were well beyond his sphere of comprehension.

What, then, was this rhythm thing that seemed to fox Brian and to cause such mirth, such embarrassment, such covering of table legs? Was it a bang on a drum? No: no rhythm there; that's merely a single event in time. Was it the banging of two notes on a drum, one following the other? No, not really. It seemed to me that rhythm was the space *between* the two notes, and that was what counted. Rhythm was a hole, an emptiness, a negative, a place you put yourself. It was a nothing – the silent space between two musical events.

The wind and the waves also had their own rhythms, of course, but they were so large and blurred they made the heart leap in a different way. Plenty of great drummers had become experts at coming and going in waves upon the drum set, boiling masses of white foam crashing over the cymbals and drums and then retreating over the shingle into a lull before returning with renewed power.

Over four centuries, the West had developed and perfected the marvellous machine called tonal harmony and its cousin, counterpoint, but had allowed its rhythm to wither on the vine. The elemental power of rhythm atrophied in the face of the new invention, and in my corner of the world, rhythm was everywhere in retreat. The three-quarters of the world's population that, through ignorance or indifference, had failed to espouse the new system of harmony, continued as usual. For them, melody and rhythm remained the primary carriers of music.

Africans, Indians, and Chinese developed sophisticated drumming cycles of enormous subtlety and complexity, but these systems were usually denigrated in the West as 'primitive' so that the sophisticated new invention of harmony should be given precedence.

Britain was living through the halcyon lazy summers before the Great War, when, seemingly out of the blue, Stravinsky turned up in Paris with *The Rite Of Spring* and scared the living daylights out of everybody with what they imagined 'pagan' rhythm sounded like. Rhythm was back in a big way. For British middle-class youth, it was time to uncover the table legs.

Britain hurriedly looked to America and began to import something it thought was jazz but immediately became confused. The gentleman's approach to rhythm lay with the swish of patent leathers and coat tails on the dance-floors of the Trocadero and Quaglino's. Popular music was dance music, and dance music was popular music. After World War II, the seductive rhythms of Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans were suddenly sashaying down the gangplanks of ships. There was no turning back.

This was the rhythmic terrain that greeted the very young Bruford as he set about his mother's pots and pans with a couple of old wooden spoons. I listened, liked what I heard, and found it to be good. All of it.

I loved it when my mother rolled up the carpet and danced with my father, a graceful man whose quickstep must have made the girls' eyes flash at the West Kent Hunt Ball. He was Fred to her Ginger. I loved the smell of the wooden cupboards by our fireplace that housed a huge collection of mostly cracked 78rpm shellac discs by people like Charlie Kunz and Caruso. I loved the show tunes of *Oklahoma!*, *The King And I*, and *Salad Days*. But overnight they were eclipsed by Scotty Moore's guitar break on Elvis's 'Hound Dog'. How could a guitar sound like that? Where was Memphis? What was the Cumberland Gap? Who were the Puerto Ricans, and what were they doing on Leonard Bernstein's West Side? So many questions, and no one to ask.



Upstairs in the attic, my efforts began to bear fruit as I played along to Kenny Ball's trumpet on 'Midnight In Moscow', determinedly swishing my new brushes around on my red-glitter snare drum and, for relief, picking out the melody on our tired and little-visited upright piano. It wasn't until I landed at boarding school, seven miles away in Tonbridge, that I fell upon grittier musical fare. I wasn't entirely sure my father knew where the place was, and I can remember him setting foot on the premises on only three occasions. Sent there to learn how to behave and be self-reliant, I was nonetheless grateful to be left alone and in peace to get on with my growing-up and my musical studies.

As an impressionable young teenager, I gravitated toward some older boys at the school who were jazz-hungry, and they had a pretty decent quartet. These guys weren't much interested in the British version of dixieland jazz purveyed by the stripy-vest brigade of Chris Barber, Kenny Ball, and Acker Bilk, you understand. They hung on the cutting edge – Miles, Monk, Gillespie, Parker. We checked out the Stones, and we quite liked The Beatles, but there just didn't seem to be enough action happening in the music. The drummer, Mike Swann, was leaving the school, so he taught me how to swing on the ride cymbal, said something about bebop, and told me I was his replacement.

My public debut came at 14. After a handful of lessons with Mike, I was sitting in with the hotel band on a skiing holiday in Saint-Cergue, Switzerland. Egged on by my friends, and with my mother's encouraging "you can do anything you put your mind to" ringing in my ears, I flailed away precociously to, if not roars of applause, then at least smiles of approval.

This was hip! This was a breeze! These people loved me! I did it some more. Back at school, Mike brought me down to earth with a bump, the first of several occasions on which I would require that particular service, and set me to work on the jazz drummer's bible of the day, Jim Chapin's *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer*. I frequently wish I'd mastered a few more beginner's techniques, the bypassing of which was to fester within my playing for many years.

My academic diligence at school was rewarded with permission to go up to classical concerts in London's West End, back in the dormitory by 11:00 sharp, sir, promise. These 'classical concerts' were not usually in any concert hall but in some pub or club down the fabulously exciting back-streets of neon-lit Soho. The musicians were classic but certainly not classical: a minor semantic difference. There appeared to be no age restriction getting into these over-heated and cramped little jazz and blues places, or if there was I never encountered it.

Here I heard, by the age of 18, just about everyone I needed to hear: the Harlem stride pianist Willie 'The Lion' Smith; organists Jack McDuff and Jimmy Smith; British rhythm-and-blues stars John Mayall, Cyril Davies, Graham Bond, Long John Baldry, The Yardbirds; guitarists Eric Clapton and Johnny McLaughlin; Ornette Coleman; Jimi Hendrix jamming with Roland Kirk. The list was long, varied, and distinguished.

At Ronnie Scott's Old Place in Chinatown it was drummer Allan Ganley, tenorist Tubby Hayes, Ronnie's group, saxophonist Evan Parker, and a host of others. But British jazz was becoming rough work. In the late 60s, it adopted a hard-left political posture, indicated musically by the squeaky-bump improvisations of The Spontaneous Music Ensemble. It came to occupy much the same political ground as the Italian Communists, who insisted all music should be free and then broke down the barriers outside the Palazzo Dello Sport in Rome – and helpfully let down the tyres on King Crimson's truck when we turned up to play for them in the early 70s. Presumably they thought the truck was free, too.

The good drummers were mostly jazz drummers, but they were fast becoming ex-jazz drummers. Peter Baker was about to become Ginger Baker of Cream; Charlie Watts was a Stone; Mitch Mitchell of Riot Squad fame was about to have an experience with Jimi. Any red-blooded rhythmist who could handle his instrument well would have preferred to play with Hendrix rather than The Spontaneous Music Ensemble, and jazz in Britain sulked accordingly for a couple of

decades until the arrival of a whole new corps of revitalisers with names like Django Bates and Iain Ballamy in the early 80s. When I started with Yes in 1968, I wasn't sure if it was going to be a rock, pop, or jazz group – and we didn't care, so long as it sounded as far removed from all three as possible.

Meanwhile, I drank it all in: the way these people walked, the way they talked, the way they sat, the way they held a cigarette, the way they played. I noticed what they wore and delighted in their eccentricities. I sweated and then shivered and sweated again, more with the excitement of the sheer visceral power of the music than the temperature in the room. It was the nearest thing to my childhood memories of the Cornish beaches, of the salty swirling rollers smashing against the rocks. The only thing I didn't notice were the other people. I was as oblivious to them as they were to me. When the music started, there *were* no other people.

Then the drizzly walk to Charing Cross station, the illicit No.6 cigarette, the endless clickety-clack of the old slam-door train as it lurched through the night, the walk up Tonbridge High Street, and, yawning, bed. Those clubs were my university. I wasn't quite sure what course I was on, but I was definitely learning a lot about something in a hurry. School finished, and armed with a place at the more tangible Leeds University as a fallback if I could make no headway in the Industry of Human Happiness, I struck out boldly on what is now called a gap-year, to see where my drums would take me.



Early and brief discussions with my parents about what I might do with my life were not promising. My father had only two recommendations, the first being that any occupation under consideration should be something that made you happy. This was a revolutionary idea in post-war Britain, where a whole generation of men viewed any work that you were lucky enough to possess as an unpleasant duty, suffered only to support the family. What made me happy was intense concentration

upon my red-glitter drum set, to the exclusion of almost everything else. My mother frowned upon this, believing that obsession and over-concentration on any one passion would surely bring ruin. Both were deeply suspicious of the notion of being a musician, deemed in the Bruford household, with some accuracy, to be a sophisticated but underpaid form of showing off.

I remember in the early days coming home proudly with my first record with Yes, but the music fell on deaf ears. Both parents winced at the clanking bass of Chris Squire, Tony Kaye's churning Hammond organ, the warblings of Jon Anderson, and the sheer aggression and drive underpinning the whole exercise. I also produced an early appearance in the local newspaper, which caused my father some consternation. For him, the only people who appeared in newspapers were attention-seekers, criminals, or those for whom something had gone badly wrong in life. Which one was I?

His attitude was broadly correct, if perhaps wanting in detail. This business of being a musician is not all it's cracked up to be, really. We Brufords, philistines to the last, had never met one – if you discount gnarly old Pilbeam, who had turned up at my sister's 21st birthday party in 1963 to play some foxtrots. He came in by the back door, with the caterers. When I announced my intention to join the profession full time, my father thought I wanted to be gnarly old Pilbeam.



For centuries, musicians have necessarily tended to combine their musical activity with some other trade or profession, and a separate occupational group did not appear until the Victorian industrial revolution heralded the division of labour. What people like me do is relatively new. Two-thousand years of recorded history shows that while music itself is highly valued, the social position of those who perform it is rather less exalted. It's generally been a low-prestige job, accorded ambiguous and often dubious status.

In ancient Greece, musicians were scorned as merely manual

workers; in ancient Rome, female instrumentalists were ranked with the courtesans and prostitutes; and in other times and places they have been slaves. By the 13th century, the social roots were clearly evident of the distinction between popular and art music, between the scholarly music of the elite and the oral tradition of the people. The pop guys were always, and always will be, a dodgy lot.

Medieval jongleurs and minstrels were regularly under suspicion because their mobility, unusual occupation, and often scandalous behaviour put them on the margins of society. So the rock idea of Mrs Average having to lock up her daughters as The Rolling Stones, The Sex Pistols, or Arctic Monkeys come to town, is not new. In fact, the reverse is the case. This is such a well-imbued convention in popular music that perfectly pleasant but reluctant beginners have to work hard to adopt sufficient anti-social standing, or street-credibility, to give their efforts a suitably dangerous air.

Elite medieval or renaissance musicians were in the service of the royal court or the church, or both, under patronage. Mozart is traditionally cited as the paradigm for that most heroic and romantic of figures: the artist no longer prepared to tolerate the constraints and servitude of patronage. It was Mozart who sought to establish himself as the first freelance professional musician. Such a risky move was economically incomprehensible to his father Leopold, brought up in the old world, but Mozart continued, with relatively little success, dying poor but not in penury. He was a model for so many things, but particularly as the first to suffer while trying to reconcile artistic ideals with economic reality, God with Mammon, art with commerce – an unavoidable struggle for the creative musician in today's highly competitive market.

I was blissfully unaware of all this on January 1 1968, the day I had chosen to become a professional. Seemed like a propitious kind of day to me, a good day to start something. I had loftier, infinitely more romantic ambitions than hanging around chasing hits. I was going to be Max Roach, the American jazz drummer and MacArthur

Foundation award winner. Never mind the skin colour, cultural background, and level of musical ability. I'd been told by school and parents alike that I could be anything I wanted. Well, I wanted to be Max. Effortless, elegant, and economical: three adjectives you could readily apply to his work. To me, they sounded like something worth aiming for.

Many years later I was to meet Max backstage at a King Crimson show. Aged past 70 and as interested as ever, he'd come to check out the latest deal in electronic drums, to see if these toys could really do anything. My friend who brought him, Steve Apicella, said Max had managed to sleep through most of the music – which was a first for anyone within the first 30 rows of a King Crimson performance.



After a couple of false starts and an eye-opening trip to Rome, I met Jon Anderson and our bassist Chris Squire courtesy of a small ad in the *Melody Maker*, a national music paper of the day. The students may have been a-rioting at the LSE, a-sitting-in at the Sorbonne, or a-burning effigies of Nixon at Kent State, but all that summer of '68, Jon, Chris, and I were engaged elsewhere.

We beavered away with guitarist Peter Banks and organist Tony Kaye in the basement of The Lucky Horseshoe coffee bar on London's Shaftesbury Avenue, and by September we were airing the results in a handful of small venues in and around town. My place at Leeds university had to be accepted or declined in October. Vacillating horribly between two possible futures, I eventually decided that there wasn't enough evidence that this music thing might sustain me, that 'straight' life should be given a final chance. I announced, rather sheepishly, that I wanted to quit the group to pursue an academic future.

The band was not unreasonably as astonished at this turn of events as it was to be at my permanent departure four years later. They picked themselves up and found a replacement who could just about do the job. Temporarily more concerned with the quality of my accommodation

in a grimy back-to-back in Eldon Place in Leeds than anything to do with music, I was thrilled to hear they were coming up to play shortly after my arrival. I could bask, surely, in a little reflected glory.

I duly assembled my new friends, put the word out that this lot were worth a serious listen, and turned up at the show, both pleased and proud that the old firm was in town. Unfortunately, it turned out that the new boy on drums liked to hit the sauce on a regular basis, including this evening, and he wallowed along at the back of the music, about a beat behind everyone else. They sounded like they were dragging a sack of coals uphill. Even my tone-deaf student companions noticed, and they began to slope off to something more exciting.

Humiliated, I went backstage to commiserate, only to find that the problem was worse, or maybe better, than I could have imagined. The band had an offer to play London's Royal Albert Hall the following Tuesday on a career-making show supporting Cream at their farewell concert, and doing it with this clown was out of the question. They begged. I played hard to get for about 30 seconds. "Never turn down an opportunity" was the second of the two invaluable pieces of career-advice my father had offered.



The subject of money, its presence or absence, had been rarely mentioned in the Bruford house, except on the occasions when our increasingly upmarket neighbourhood began to be populated with those who clearly had too much of it. Our neighbour on the right was a civil servant with something called an index-linked pension, a new-fangled machine that meant you had all the money you were ever going to need forever. I was reminded by my mother, who noted these things more keenly than my father, that this was something not given to a professional man like him. A few others of her acquaintance she tartly dismissed as being "rather too pleased with themselves", this being one of very few sins – one rung below 'boasting' in fact – that

would occasion serious disapproval from this generally warm-hearted and welcoming woman.

In our later teenage years, however, it emerged that there were insufficient funds to provide further education for all three Bruford children. My brother Jeff, hard-working to a fault but diagnosed as non-academic, would not be in need of an expensive university place. That left my immensely capable older sister Jane and me, but the available funds were unlikely to stretch to more than one set of fees. Until even the 60s, it was commonly thought that a girl would have less need of a degree because she would surely be married shortly, so Jane's continuing education was probably sacrificed on the altar of bright little Billy's future.

What was it that finally caused me to take leave of my senses, surrender my valuable place at Leeds, and lurch unwisely toward a precarious future in the music industry? Was it the lure of the Albert Hall offer, or the disinclination to say no, or the overbearing confidence instilled in the arrogant young student, or all of these? I had ignored the signs and looked the other way for years. I had pretended I couldn't possibly be a musician and persevered with this double existence for my entire adolescence. Enough, already.

The innumerable hours spent covering the 198 miles from Leeds to London and back in a VW Beetle, the magnificence of the red-velveted venue, the show itself, the swift rejection of my application for a sabbatical year from the university ("best wishes for the new work to which you will be turning ..."), the breathless phone call home from the call box outside the Brotherton Library ("leaving the university, dad; I know you and mum will be a bit upset but ..."), all sped past in a blur.

Bright little Billy's sudden rejection of the academic path brought an understandable and tearful sobbing on my shoulder from my sister, with wailings and lamentations about what this would do to mum and dad. Happily, mum and dad, in an admirably pragmatic British-middle-class sort of way, perked up no end when I turned up two or three years later with some gold albums. I couldn't fail to notice that

the notion of a career in music, bathed suddenly in this warm, golden light, was accepted as quickly as the unhappy rejection of the much valued university place was forgotten.

Finally, I packed my bags and drove south from Leeds for the last time, green around the gills but utterly committed to my new occupation. Never was there a keener recruit. I hadn't written the word musician in my passport yet – that would take a while. It seemed to me you had to earn it. You could call yourself what you liked, but it didn't mean anything until it was written in your passport.