

guys are good at that, others less so. I've wrestled with it increasingly over the last few years, and recently it has started to get the better of me. Allan Holdsworth was pretty bad, but he may have got better at it. I get about 16 measures a year when I know I'm OK and there is a god in heaven. The rest of it is about trying to get there, to inhabit that little bit of sunshine for a little bit longer. Now I don't have to wrestle any more. Fabulous."

Art Blakey, one of your heroes, was a mentor as well as leader, and you partly had that with Earthworks. Couldn't you find you continue in a similar kind of role? "I should have thought that was exactly what I've been doing with Earthworks for 20 years. They (the younger members of the band) can't do the slog. I do the slog. I put an itinerary in your right hand and a cheque in your left. Everything in between is taken care of. I'd love to be a sideman in Earthworks. Ask Asaf Sirkis or Dylan Howe what it's like putting a national tour together, let alone an international one. I'm not complaining, but you need to have some idea of what being a band-leader involves."

Where does this leave Earthworks? "Without a drummer."

And Michiel Borstlap? What's he gonna do without his partner in the raggedy waltz of improvisation?

"He'll use Han Bennink. Look, musicians join and leave groups all the time. The last guy you want around is someone whose heart isn't in it."

"Be gentle with yourself", as the lyrics go to 'Adios A La Pasada'. You're severe on yourself at times in the book, dismissing yourself as unlettered musically, almost too white and too middle class to be 'musical'.

"That's how I felt. These feelings may be irrational, but that doesn't lessen their ability to disrupt."

When you talk about jazz in the book, you still burn with passion: you don't sound like a retiree...your description of jazz as a social model is intriguing and has that social model failed?

"How do jazz retirees sound? We've already agreed, as is rapidly becoming apparent, that musicians don't retire! I think a good musical group operates on a high level of social co-operation. A jazz group in full flight is like one organism making continual adjustments – brain balances arms balances legs – as it proceeds towards the goal, or successful conclusion of the piece. The co-operation of course is through the symbolic non-verbal language of music."

Of course you've not retired from music per se – you'll still be overlooking Winter/Summerfold.

"Indeed so. Turns out I'm good at this record company thing. Winterfold/Summerfold were my partner Rob Ayling's idea. We have some 35 titles across the two labels and I'm proud of my little babies. It was started at just about the time the majors had decided it was indefensible to squash the little guy like me by deleting the records and preventing you from putting them out yourself and thus deriving what little benefit there might be remaining. That is so close to 'Restraint of Trade' as to be indistinguishable. My colleague Robert Fripp went there and did all that first, for which I am extremely grateful. I've just followed along in his slipstream. Summerfold and Winterfold have just released a couple of Collections, one from each label, by way of introduction for those who might like to get a toe wet in the wonderful world of Earthworks et al."

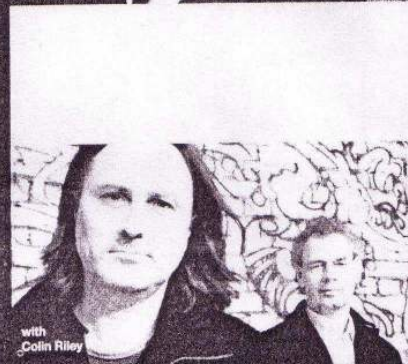
The forthcoming release with Colin Riley is quite

a departure for you?

"Yes, I'm thrilled at being asked to join him in this, and I've never operated in quite such an unclassifiable area. It's called *Skin and Wire: PianoCircus* featuring Bill Bruford play the music of Colin Riley in which a composer supervises a jazz drummer who used to be a rock drummer playing with a group of classical pianists best known for performing systems music. It should be available in



with Earthworks



with Colin Riley

the summer on Summerfold."

Some have compared the current scene to the 60s and 70s in rock when edgier stuff pushed into the market place? But equally the contemporary scene is knocked for going for the quirky over the lasting?

"We don't know whether the quirky will last or not. Monk was pretty quirky, but he's lasted, in no small part to tunes easily playable by others. Nothing wrong with sound over melody: it may be in the fabric or texture of the music these days that innovation is to be found. Part computer-generated, part performance, part real, part virtual. I love the blurring of the lines, but you can tell how sad I am because I still can't really get on with someone playing a laptop on stage. Always looks like he's doing his accounts."

Yours was one of the few Brit bands that could play America, Europe and the UK...what's your take on the 'jazz has moved address' theory?

"The 'jazz has moved address' sound-bite is neatly provocative, but I wouldn't count the US out just yet if I were you. It is true that Europe's relative lack of

reverence for the received notion of what jazz is has produced has some wonderful stylistic collisions, but US players still carry the confident authority of those coming from the country that invented the stuff."

Who's left to carry the Bruford flag?

"I think we should go easy with this flag carrying thing. I wasn't aware I was carrying a flag. Like so many others, I was just trying to get better at what I do, to define and refine it, to find what I was about. To find that magic little combination of musical gestures: Miles' muted horn sound, a handful of chords from Joe Zawinul – that define your essence. It ain't easy, but I enjoyed having a good rummage around. Plenty of others are rummaging more effectively than I ever did, right now."

What do you say to a new young thing who wants to be a drummer in Jazz whatever they may be?

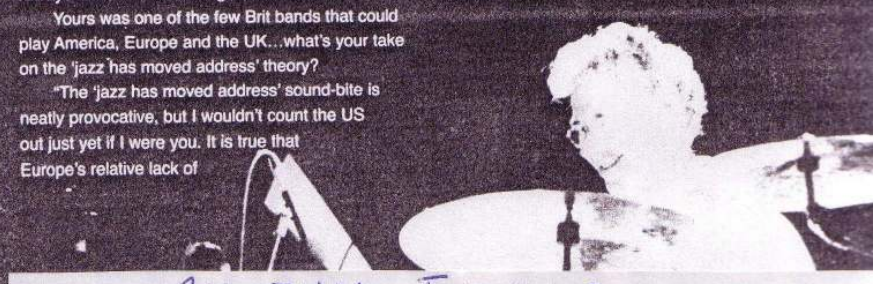
"Go for it flat out for the 10-year apprenticeship, and then take a view in your late-twenties, before you and your girlfriend consider a family. Aside from the very few exceptions that prove the rule, jazz is effectively too narrow a musical alleyway to earn a living at. I'd advise him to forget the terms jazz, rock, and classical and the imagined boundaries between the three, because if he's going to have any chance of upsetting anyone, he'll be living in the cracks between them. I'd advise him to develop the skin of a rhinoceros and the patience of Job. I'd advise him to get two passports; one so he can leave it at the Brazilian Consulate for the tour he's doing with Djavan, and the other so he can continue to work in and out of Europe while the Brazilians process the Visa."

"You always needed more than just a love of the music: you needed to be damned good at it. Now, you need to be good at a whole lot of ancillary things as well – record production, tour management, selling yourself, online marketing; the whole schmeer."

"Can I take a final opportunity through your pages to say a genuine thanks to the magazine, and all who bought or paid for the ticket, the T-shirt, the parking and the baby-sitter and supported live music generally, and my efforts specifically, over these last four decades? It's been very much appreciated."

And the final, final word, tucked away, at the bottom of the last page of Bruford's autobiography, beneath the credits and acknowledgements, you know, the bits you never read...

"The important thing is not what the author, or any artist, had in mind to begin with but at what point he'd decided to stop" – D.W. Harding, *Experience In Words*, 1963



RHYTHM JULY 09

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