

When Two Worlds Meet: A Riffs Editorial

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 1 of *Riffs: Experimental Writing on Popular Music*. This is the third edition of the journal to be published, and I'm very pleased to have been invited to be your guest editor.

For this issue, the *Riffs* team aimed to explore ideas around the relationships between writers and musicians. As always, they start with a simple prompt. "There is nothing wrong with hating rock critics" is a line from a 2003 song by the band, Of Montreal. Setting my own ego aside, it seemed a useful, simple and – we hoped – provocative way in for prospective contributors. We were not disappointed.

This issue is informally organised into three main sections. Firstly we explore Ian Davies' Brum Creatives project, which was extended to include the musician and cover star, Anna Palmer. Then we begin the bulk of this issue with a conceptual consideration of the interview process: a cornerstone of music writing that has been reconsidered here through a range of approaches that deconstruct the expectations and execution of the form, in addition to the roles of critic and criticism.

So, earlier this year we asked Birmingham music writer, Lyle Bignon to sit down with Anna Palmer. Along with Ian Davies who was shooting her as the interview progressed, they had a conversation. Lyle asked questions, Anna answered. For all intents and purposes, this was the beginning of a 'standard' interview. This being *Riffs*, however, the team took that raw material – the transcript and recording – and used it to reconsider the idea of an interview away from its usual ties to promotional activity. As you will see, the *Riffs* Write Club team took sections of the verbatim interview transcript and – working in blind silos – wrote paragraphs that were then placed together as a composite piece. Building on this idea, two additional engagements with the interview text were undertaken by Simon Fox, a Birmingham-based musician, and our co-Managing Editor, Craig Hamilton.

Both considered the raw materials of the interview through frames they are familiar with. For Simon, the audio became a material to curate into a composition. And for Craig, the raw materials from the interview were considered through his research interests and analysed by machine learning algorithms. Each created new pieces and, alongside the Write Club remix of the interview, each engagement acts to shed light on the processes, tensions, and relationships involved between writer and musician that usually occur in the background, long before the final piece hits the newsstands.

The tensions between musicians/music fans and music journalists/journalism form the focus of the following articles by Camilla Aisa and Santiago Fernández Sánchez, but these distinctions are blurred by the photo essay that ends this issue: a collaborative project between Bulgarian photographer Neli Nedeva-Voeva and popular music researcher Asya Draganova. Through this issue's provocative prompt – "There is nothing wrong with hating rock critics" – a range of work has emerged that questions and prods the preconceptions we have about processes, tensions, and relationships within writing about music.

Unlike many other academic journals, this issue brings together music writers, academics, professional photographers, and musicians to create and recreate pieces. And as an editorial team, the contradictions and frictions that exist within these overlapping ways of thinking and writing about popular music have not been smoothed over, but left as a range of engagements with a common text or prompt. Even if you don't agree with an argument or an approach included here, we hope that this issue will challenge you to think a little differently than you did before.

Laura Snapes, Deputy Music Editor, The Guardian