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THE ART OF FLYING

INTERVIEW WITH

# PETER BRIGHTON

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# Introduction

## URBAN MATERIALITIES & FLYING THE CITY

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Posters have been plastered onto city walls for nearly 250 years, surviving shifting technologies, hostile regulations, and the proliferation of new media. Their persistence is deeply connected to their material intimacy with the city, as paper and paste hold a layered record of urban life. This essay considers the enduring presence of bill-posters, tracing how their material qualities and unruly afterlives continue to shape the visual culture of the city.

In their influential 1953 manual, *Outdoor Advertising*, authors Richard Nelson and Anthony Skyes detail the elements of a successful fly-posting operation and offer some reflections on the wider social roles of posters. “The poster has a greater responsibility towards society than any other medium”, the authors declare, referring to posters’ impact on urban development and the imaginarity of the modern metropolis. And while this might not hold true 70 years later in a world of digital platforms and generative AI, many details in the book remain surprisingly current. For example, determining suitable display sites for posters is still a matter of negotiation between property owners and municipal authorities, there is still beef between contractors over who “controls” the sites, and audience measurements such as “opportunity to see” are still the norm in the outdoor advertising sector. Another thing that hasn’t changed is what the poster sees. Much like the authors’ whimsical illustration captioned “The poster’s view of its audience”, the city appears to the poster as relentless movement, with side glances, hungry birds, unwelcome showers, walls, other posters, and eventually the slap of wheatpaste followed by the back of another poster. Bill-posting paper-based media on urban surfaces continues to be one of the cheapest and most reliable forms of mass communication since the 19th century. And it still makes cities today, despite stricter regulatory frameworks, wider access to digital media, and increased accountability pressure for the sector.

Bill-posters were criminalised in the UK in 1839, when the Metropolitan Police Act made it an offence to stick bills on property without the owner’s consent. We see the same decision being taken in 1972 in New York in relation to graffiti, linking unauthorised displays on urban surfaces with the control of private property and of public amenity. Yet in all their messy, often unwanted presence, these visual forms of modern cities continue to generate discourses about urban publicness, namely, who makes the city, who consumes it, and who communicates in the city. This sense

of publicness is not restricted to the poster displays themselves, but also comes from the qualities of layered paper as a material that constitutes the city. Paper is warm, fragile, accessible, and multiple, all of which are desirable qualities that contrast with the cold materials of the modern city: glass, steel, concrete. In her study of outdoor advertising from 2010, Anne Cronin referred to this urban medium as “contribut[ing] to the generation and maintenance of an ambiguous sense of familiarity with the structure, look and feel of urban spaces” (Cronin 2010: 78). This paper city with peelable surfaces generates commercial, artistic, and regulatory urban imaginaries.

The materiality of bill-posters is the main object of containment in the pasting, maintenance, and municipal regulation of display sites. This materiality was even seen as a threat to public health, as Elizabeth Guffey remarks in her seminal study from 2015: “Not only did they exert an ugly, or even shameful presence, but they were also accused of being unsanitary. Posters were prey, some city physicians argued, to drifting clouds of disease, since they were ‘always decaying, thus providing a prolific forcing bed for all sorts of disease producing germs.’” (Guffey 2015: 70) Any bill-poster will speak about the importance of keeping a neat and clean display, through framing sites, replacing damaged or weathered posters, regularly removing the bulky layers that accumulate on the site, and generally observing straight, symmetrical, and sustained display patterns. When posters crack, crumble, and stack, they not only fail to meet the obligations of the contractor to their client, but they also become a burden to aspirations of urban order. However, these are also the moments when the urban wallpaper comes alive, and the paper makes space - not just for showing content, but also for birds to feed on the paste, for expressions to accumulate, and for surfaces to swell and soften. A new city is made by the space of the posters.

A group of French artists from the 1960s took inspiration from this exact moment when communication crumbles and the cumulative materiality of posters becomes an urban object. Known as décolagists (from the French word *décollage*, a process involving shredding and tearing existing images to form new ones, the opposite of collage), artists such as Jacques Villeglé, Mimmo Rotella, and Raymond Hains were tearing down street posters and affixing them to gallery walls. This centered the materiality of the posters and aestheticised their moment of commercial impotence: no longer having the integrity to serve their communicative

purpose, these peeling posters became a material feature of the city, and their aesthetic value could be recognised independently from their commercial mandate. Today, we can take this gaze back to the streets, to appreciate the textures posters bring to our cities, and the multiple agencies that contribute to this effect. *Décollage* is not solely the remit of artists: surfaces permeate posters and create a semiotic atmosphere of fragmentary messages, crumpled words, and weathered colours: “walls fuse with posters” (Hoek 2016: 76) and make urban worlds.

A threat of irrelevance has accompanied street posters for the latter part of their almost 250 years of existence. Angharad Lewis declared posters dead in the 2006 book “Street Talk: The Rise and Fall of the Poster” due to them being an indiscriminate medium, but this material precarity might just be their best asset. The strength of street posters as urban media comes from their nimble engagement with the city and their intimate connection with its hard surfaces, a relationship of paste, ink, and paper that will continue to outlive many developments in public media. Posters are resilient and agile urban objects that regenerate public discourse with each layer they stack or shed, often in defiance of orderly expectations. Alongside much graffiti and small-scale commercial signage, they constitute the semiotic texture of the modern city, a function as honourable as it is remarkable.

Remembering posters is not simply an equation of commercial success, as the authors of *Outdoor Advertising* suggested with the phrase “potential rememberers” as a way of describing urban audiences. Street posters also remind us that cities are not only made of steel and glass, but also of fragile materials that can sustain resilient forms of public communication. Posters continue to layer meaning onto urban life, as both ephemeral media and enduring makers of the city.

DR SABINA ANDRON

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- Refs Cronin, A. M. (2010). *Advertising, Commercial Spaces and the Urban*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.  
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28TH SEPT, 2023  
1.00PM - 2.49PM

VENUE

Marriott Hotel  
Regent's Park  
London NW3 3ST

PRESENT

Peter Brighton  
Adrian Burnham  
Richard Broadbent

# Interview with PETER BRIGHTON

BEGINS

PB I was born in Charing Cross, lived in Camden Town most of my life, went to school locally as well, just down here in Chalk Farm. Left school at 15, gas fitter apprentice. That took 4 years...

AB What did your parents do?

PB Well, my mum just used to do little odd jobs and all that, she didn't have a profession as such. And, my dad was in and out of jobs like lorry driving, that sort of thing.

AB Did you have any brothers or sisters?

PB My sister, she died a year ago actually, she was married to Dave Walker, from Slater and Walker.<sup>1</sup> So that's how I got into bill posting. They got married in the 70s, about 1976, something like that. She was working in a pub and Dave Walker come along, and he owned a fish and chip shop, up in Burnt Oak. And the two of them got together. It was a long time ago.

Dave Walker's still around. He's rather poorly at the moment. He had cancer of the throat. The treatment, the chemo. and all that, really knocked him bandy. He was in Spain for a long time. Over twenty years. He's back in Suffolk, with his son Ben. Tim told me he wanted him to do this. If he gets better I'll let him know and I'll arrange that for you. But at the moment you can't [see Dave]. It'd be like reading his last rites sort of thing, you know what I mean? Trying to get a death bed confession.

AB What was school like for you?

PB It was alright. I was never gonna be an academic. I had to go into a trade. And funnily enough in them days you went to a careers officer, and they said, what do you wanna do? And I said I want to be a motor mechanic. No, you don't he said. He said they've always got dirty fingernails. So, I said, alright, you know. It's funny the way someone chooses your path for you.

Left school 1969. I'm 70 in November. Might pack up one day, who knows? I wouldn't know what to do if I packed up.

I don't play

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<sup>1</sup> London based UK wide fly-posting outfit headed by Terry 'The. Pill' Slater and Dave Walker.

golf, I don't go, you know, fishing, no. I'm not interested in anything like that. So, you know, as long as I'm useful...

AB You met Walker through your sister?

PB Yeah, at the time I'd had enough, 9 years on British Gas, covered in grease, working on someone's oven one day, thinking right, fucking horrible. So, I went into the pub in Kentish Town there, and Kevin and Dave was in there. They was already working in fly-posting. And I just said to them, I need a job. They were quite surprised. I said, no, I'd had enough.

So that was it. December, 1978, and I started in January 1979. That's when I first went out. And I worked with my cousin, Johnny Langer, but he wasn't around for long. He died young as well. So, Dave Walker was working for Vincent Stitt and Terry Slater [back then]. Vincent was a bit of a character he was. Vincent was old, yeah, in his 60s. And Terry was, probably in his 50s. Both had been involved in the music business, doing their own promotions, doing their own fly-posting as well. Then they kind of come together.

Dave started working for both of them, getting really busy into it as well. When Vincent died, Dave and Terry [carried on] the business together, and put Kevin in as a manager. That's how Slater and Walker started. Dave Walker. Terry Slater. Otherwise known as Terry the Pill, because he used to supply drugs to people in the music business. I think, he was definitely involved with The Animals, and Eric Burdon, Chas Chandler, and all that.<sup>2</sup>

[Quick recap of S&W evolution above] ...Dave gets in. Vincent dies. Kevin gets more involved. Nigel Daley comes along doesn't he, somewhere in the mid 90s. Something like that, with Rod. And Dave had made some, like bad mistakes, you know. I don't like talking about Dave 'cos he's still alive...

RB You don't have to say anything you don't want to.

PB No, he wouldn't mind me saying that anyway. He put too much money into a band. And he lost a lot of money. I think Nigel took advantage of that.

AB Bought into the company?

PB Yeah.

AB Tim says that Vincent Stitt was quite a character? Almost like going back to music hall times.

PB He was the old, you know, black tie, renting the town hall on a Saturday night. That's how he got me to put his posters up. Here, stick a few posters up for that. And he would be up on stage, and there was a [dance] band and that sort of thing. Yeah, like a compere, promoter.

RB So where did the posters come from in those days? Were you working for record companies? Gigs?

PB No, no not at all. Circuses, wrestling, boxing, Sunday newspapers and the odd promotion. There was no 4 sheets, at all. The biggest thing was a quad.<sup>3</sup> A landscape quad. And then half of that is obviously a Double Crown. They was really the [only] two sizes we used to do. And when 4 sheets come along, I can remember it was like, fuck, what are we gonna do with these? Where are we gonna put this lot, you know?

RB When did 4 sheets start?

PB Oh, God, you're asking me dates now. 88?<sup>4</sup> Summit like that. So, then the record companies, once it started, it just [flew]...

RB The record companies must've seen it and thought...?

PB Yeah, that's a good idea, we can do our stuff on these 4 sheets. Which pissed off the [other] promoters, instead of them getting up loads of their quads...

AB So how much were you doing them for?

PB Oh, I don't know. I wasn't a player then. Working for the man then. I just got a wage. Yeah, I dunno, it was less than a pound, definitely. 70 pence, something like that, maybe 80 pence?

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Victor Burdon is an English singer and songwriter. He was lead vocalist in the R&B group The Animals and the funk band War. Brian James 'Chas' Chandler was the original bassist in The Animals and went on to manage Slade and Jimi Hendrix.

<sup>3</sup> A quad is an imperial poster size measuring 30" high X 40" wide. Double Crown posters (aka a '1 sheet') are 30" high X 20" wide. 4 Sheets are 60" high X 40" wide (i.e. 4 x '1 sheets').

<sup>4</sup> Poster sizes in Britain were standardised with the adoption of the Imperial System in 1836. In the early 20th century, The Portsmouth System further defined poster dimensions (as above, e.g. sizes were multiples of Double Crowns or 1 sheets). The growth of cities along with the rise in rail and road transport networks saw the proliferation of 16 sheet and 48 sheet billboards. We know by the 1960s 4 sheet posters (aka double quads) were already a common format for movie theatre posters. And they were often displayed on authorised outdoor sites due to their eye-catching size. When the UK music industry boomed in the 1960s and 70s Double Crown posters gave way to 4 sheets being fly-posted on the streets to promote music concerts and album sales.

And then once it worked for some record companies, like Virgin, other ones as well, EMI, once they see it working, they bombarded us with music posters. And as I say, a lot of the promoters didn't like it.

[Re. Terry Slater] He had the connections, yeah. [REDACTED], which is in the South of France, a music festival thing down there.<sup>5</sup> [REDACTED], they used to drum up a bit of business like. So, he was good, the Pill. You know, he started it off. He was the one that almost laid out the format of what we're still doing today. I think so anyway.

It was all illegal, yeah. We used to get other people trying to muscle in on what we was doing. All that hard [REDACTED] shit, you know. But, we found that them sort of people couldn't really get up in the morning and go to work. And we had the most posters, and we had the team who could go out and do it.

So, with all these threats, South London, they loved all that shit, they loved it. Do you remember Jim?<sup>6</sup> What was his surname? Can't remember. Yeah, they loved all that down there, all that violence, and threats and stuff. But we just got on with it over here. I mean, I've been involved in a few little scraps before, but I was a bit of a hothead then. I had a short fuse, if you know what I mean. Keith Harvey and myself, like. I had a couple of fights with him out on the street.

RB We spoke to Jimmy about him last week.

PB Keith Harvey was a great fly-poster. He was so fit. Ballet dancer. Never drank. Didn't smoke. In the gym every other day, he was. I really liked him actually. It started off like you know we were enemies, and then we got to do business together. And then Tim wanted to buy, no, Keith wanted to sell out, right. He wanted to sell it to me. I didn't have the money. He wanted 30 thousand, for his business, for his client base and everything. So, I told Tim, I said, look Keith wants out. And he said, great, so go and get it. They couldn't deal with one another because they hated each other, so I just stepped in the middle and done the deal. We bought him out. Me and Tim started a little limited company together. Actually, it was our wives. My wife and Tim's wife, Trish...

RB What was that called?

PB Stage Display. We ran it for about 3 years. First year it made money. Second year it broke even. And the third year it just fell away. It just died. But that wasn't the purpose of it,

the purpose was to get Keith Harvey out of Tim's hair, you know. And it worked. It worked, so that was quite funny. No, I liked Keith, he was good. He's still around. I saw him two months ago, on the King's Road.

Getting back to Slater and Walker, the 4 sheets really just came along fast and thick. And that really just put them right up there. I dunno who started 4 sheets. But it's the old imperial measurement, isn't it? 'Cos like, billboards are still 48 sheets, 48 DCs. I got an old book indoors called Lost London, 's really good, there's a lot of photographs in it as well, and there's some photos of old billboards. Goes back about a hundred years ago, and they're still doing exactly the same thing.

[17m. 40.s > Chat about posting round Nelson's column when Trafalgar Sq. was being built and Charles Dickens' short essay on meeting the King of the Bill-Stickers...]

RB So, when did you actually, you said you were working for the guys but when did you come into your own?

PB Well, you heard of Geoff Massey? Geoff Massey, he had Harringey, Islington, half of Hackney...

AB How did he get those, hereditary?

PB Father, yeah, father before him and father before him, took it over. [REDACTED] He didn't like going to work. He used to get his work off Terry Slater and Dave. Get the work off them, take the money, he wouldn't put it up. They was always moaning, saying you're not doing it. And they were right. Because he wasn't going out doing it, he was just lazy.

So, I just saw a little opening there, I thought if I sling in with Jeff, if I go with Jeff, you know, guarantee that this work goes up, I remember that I wasn't making a lot of money then. I was charging Terry and Dave one pound twenty, and paying Jeff like a pound or 90p, something like that. So, there was no money in it for me but I realised I was getting, I could get in there and make it better.

Anyway, that went on for years. I built it up quite a lot. That's when, I met Tim I think in 1980s, 1990 I would say.

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5 Marché International du Disque et de l'Édition Musicale, an annual music conference for musicians, producers, agents, promoters, lawyers, executives, etc.  
6 Jim Conaghan used to fly-post between Wandsworth and Clapham.

Give or take a year, I'm not too sure. He was working the pub comedies, one was above the Cricklewood Hotel, do you remember that? I see him walking up the stairs. And Kevin said to him, you're not doing this. We wanted to keep everybody out of it, you know, Slater and Walker. We're not having any more fly-posters.

So, Kevin said to him, you can put your DCs up, but if I can get a 4 sheet up you've lost it, it's mine. And that was the initial first deal. I can't remember how long that lasted but, you know, then [they] started doing work together. I realised with Tim that, you know, he's doing well. He's getting the work in and that he was a fair guy. So, I started to get the work off Tim for Geoff Massey's area. Which is a lovely area, beautiful area all Islington. And yeah, that's how I started. Eventually, Geoff packed up, I took over on my own. I had, I didn't have many people out for me. I had Lee, Lee Barrett was working for me. Erm, Lol was working for me, Lol Moore.

RB Was Lee very young?

PB Oh, yeah, lying bastard, he was 15 when I took him on. I said, how old are you? He said 16. I said, well, what I'll do is next year I'll get you a form and you can get a provisional licence. And I'll get you out on your own like sort of thing. And when it came down to the time of getting it, he said, I got something to tell you. I said, what's that? He said, I'm only 15, and I'll be 16... I said, you lying little sod. You know, he's s'posed to be at school like, and I'm driving him round. So that was funny. So, that was it, with Lol [and] Lee.

RB Where'd you meet Lol then?

PB Lol? I lived in the same street from kids. Same as Billy Corral, he lived opposite. Camden, behind Prince of Wales Road, going down towards Camden Town. So, that was our childhood. Yeah, but when I think of it, it was Billy Corral, Stevie Jones, Nicki, Dean, all of them, they all started [fly-posting] through me. Even Mark Sexbury started through me, 'cos I said that he was okay to keep the job. Fred Rowe as well, do you remember Fred Rowe?

[Chat about Mark Sexbury once being arrested for having so many Ribena cartons in the footwell of his van.]

Mark, he was a funny kid. He went on to become a driving instructor. Moved out to Norwich, somewhere like that. He was a big fan of Madness, and they were based in Camden Town.

Or the record company was. And Fred Rowe, who knew him from there, because he was the road manager of, erm, Ian Dury. He said, this kid's always hanging around here like, it was Stiff Records? He said, this kid's always hanging round here he says, can't you give him a job? So, we gave him a job. Yeah, doing posters. Well, we took him out as a van boy first, you know. Then, Kevin sacked him, 'cos he would never pick the phone up to him. In them days we didn't have mobiles, you know. He sacked him, Tim took him on.

[Chat about Lol having a terminal disease]

Yeah, who've we left out? Jeff Massey, before him there was another guy, Bill Blackerby, but that's going way back. He had East London. He sold it to Dave Walker. I think it was a thousand pounds. It was about 1980. And I think he slung in the van as well. I think that's right. Again, the guy was old, wanted to get out, anything he could take, you know. Otherwise, what have you got? You've got nothing. You can't take, you know, two hundred fifty-seven in the High Street away. [Laughing] ...It belongs to someone else, doesn't it?

RB Yeah, it's strange, I never quite understood how these things can actually be owned.

PB Well, it's your client list...

RB I remember Tim telling me he'd bought an area off somebody, and I was thinking why didn't you just fucking take it?

AB It's heading off trouble, isn't it?

RB He said, no, it was almost like some kind of bond.

PB Well, if you trust a person, you know, it's different isn't?

RB Tim to me, he's always been very honourable.

PB [Re. TH] He bought me out. When was that now, two thousand and ten? It was that long ago.

AB But you were kind of working together, weren't you, or accommodating one another?

PB Oh yeah, we had, er, well we still do have a good working relationship. And I remember meeting you [re. RB] in Edinburgh, that's thirty years ago. Fucking hell...

[Brief reminiscence about how good Edinburgh was and

Tim's first meeting on the street w. Kevin.]

Well, we were very protective of what we had. We didn't want anyone to, you know, come in on it.

AB Well, it was your livelihood as well, wasn't it?

PB Even last week, you know, there was guys sticking posters up on Redchurch Street, two guys, over our posters. And I had to tell 'em, I said, look guys you can't do this. Stop. I been doing this for fucking years, you know, confronting people. I thought, I'm getting a bit old for this now. I said, look, those are my posters. He said, which ones are yours? I said, all of them. [Laughter]

AB Go and find your own space!

PB That's what I said, I said there's a brick wall over there, there's nothing on it. Anyway, so we was always protective of what we had. But then we realised that, you know, we could work together. Tim getting all that work from Roland Muldoon, Hackney Empire, I liked him, is he still alive?

AB Roland, I think so.

PB And his wife Claire. He resurrected the Hackney Empire. He went in there and he squatted it.<sup>7</sup> It was empty. He went in there and he squatted it. And erm, he just turned it into a, it was rough and ready, wasn't it?

AB It was a bit squelchy.

PB It was yeah, sticky carpets. Like, you're at the bar and you could just about lift your foot up. But it was great. Friday night...

AB It was CAST New Variety wasn't it, new comedy acts.

PB That's right, new comedy acts. I remember going in there one night and seeing, with Lol, Lily Savage, Jack Dee, Jo Brand. All on the same night, all together, you know. Yeah, I liked him, Roland. It was funny, one day we was in his office down at Diorama, in Regents Park, down the road there. And they was, I never smoked that shit but they were smoking it right, you know. And Roland, he always used to say, you got any grass? And I said no, I don't smoke, Lol does, as I said.

So, they were all smoking in there and Claire picks the phone up and it's Prince Edward. He's asking her, he wants to book,

'cos you know he dabbled in theatre business, promotion, so we're all laughing, and she's going [waves arms to signal 'be quiet'.] And he said, is it Edward Windsor? She said yes. She'd got royalty on the phone. He was funny, I did like him. The angry socialist, that's what [Roland] billed himself as, the angry socialist.

RB We usually ask people if they had any nick names, but we know you have so...?

PB The Plumber? There's no story to it, there's nothing at all. I mean I was fixing a sink in the toilet at our old warehouse and The Pill went, oh look, it's the plumber. He came out with it. And that fucking stuck. You know, I certainly wasn't happy about it. It didn't bother me that much though but...

RB For years everyone thought you used to be a plumber.

PB Well, I s'pose I was in a way, gas fitter, plumber, pretty close.

RB Well, what was the first poster you ever put up? Can you remember?

PB Cor, fucking hell. No, I can't. I can remember where it was, it was in the Harrow Road. I think it was the second or third day we got stopped by the police. And my cousin said, oh it's alright, we spoke to the foreman, we can do this. He said, doesn't matter what the foreman said, you're not allowed, you need Town & Country planning permission to do this. And I'm thinking, fuck, I've just left a really good job to go posting, and the first week I've been stopped like this right? I knew it was illegal, don't get me wrong, I knew what I was getting in to but...

AB The reality!

PB Yeah! I was like, fucking hell. But then again, they was a lot harder then the police. There was one policeman based in Shepherd's Bush, er, Hammersmith police station in Shepherd's Bush Road. His name was P.C. Hearn [REDACTED], he nicked everybody. He had a thing about fly-posting. So, yeah, it was a lot harder then. But now it's, I don't know now, I haven't stuck a poster up in anger for like 15 years. Yeah, I had Lee working for me. He used to do most of it. I used to drive

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<sup>7</sup> Early 1980s the Hackney Empire theatre was almost demolished and turned into a car park. Roland and Claire Muldoon who ran a satirical, political touring theatre and comedy enterprise called C.A.S.T. ('Cartoon Archetypical Slogan Theatre' was one of many translations of the acronym) bid to have the Hackney Empire as their base. It's said they acquired the freehold for £1000. Source: [hackneyempire.co.uk](http://hackneyempire.co.uk)

around, and he used to put them up. And then I told him I was selling out to Tim. And I said to Tim, can you give him a job? And he did. So, I sold the van, the van boy, and the company, all in one go.

RB Any regrets about the business?

PB No, not at all. Yeah, I have enjoyed it. It's been a good laugh. But it's not easy, is it? It's hard at times. You know, you're out there, sometimes the snow is going sideways.

AB Breaking the ice on your bucket.

PB Yeah, but it's, it's given me a good life. It's given me, erm, I've travelled a lot. I've stayed in some of the best hotels in the world. I can't complain.

RB I thought you were mostly London based? Like, you went up to Edinburgh...

PB Oh, that was just for fun. Or, no, it wasn't. Tim said we need bill-posters, we're two bill-posters short. Time we got there, he said, we don't need you now. So I went, fuck, what do we do? So, what do we do? We let Richard take us out!

RB That was one of the best times! [Misc. chat while PB gets another drink...] I've lost track, were you married?

PB I been married twice. Divorced twice. I'm no good at it. I'm not doing it a third time.

AB Did you get Billy Power into the game?

PB No, Billy Power, he managed a garage. He was the front desk of a garage in Kentish Town. Dave was a mechanic. Kevin was the salesman. And the garage was called Salvage and Whites on Grafton Road. That's how all three of 'em met. Billy Power, he then got his boys into it.<sup>8</sup> Near enough all of them, they all worked for Tim. Liam, Thomas, Benji...

AB Benji was always at the back of the warehouse pasting up boards with Derek.

PB They all had exactly the same trait, they all took after the father, [REDACTED]. Couldn't stop lying. Well, you don't get a nick name like Billy Liar for nothing do you? He could lie. Fuck knows how many grandmothers he buried, I don't know, must've been about eight.

RB So, what's your favourite hotel?

PB What's my favourite? What's the best place I've stayed in? The Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok, the Adlon in Berlin, erm, a few. Yeah, my girlfriend used to work in the diamond business as a broker for De Beers, so she'd get a corporate rate for these places. So, I was quite fortunate. I love Venice, that's my favourite place. We don't live together...

AB I don't live with my partner either. Rich doesn't live with his.

PB That's how it works. Two nights a week and send 'em home. She's retired now.

RB Children?

PB Me? Four. Two grandchildren. One from the first. Three from the second. I just had my son stay with me. He lives in the New Forest, in Lyndhurst, he works in a hotel down there. How do they feel about my fly-posting days? Well, obviously when they're young they don't really know that much about it. But I don't think they've made any real comments, you know. Dad pays the bills, he pays the mortgage, puts 'em through college, university, private school, blah, blah, blah. Always had nice cars to drive around in.

RB My daughter's still asking what I do. She's, I just don't understand what you do dad. And I'm, it's just advertising.

PB I've always told them, well, a bill-poster. I don't say fly poster. Simple as that. They don't need to know do they? [...] I been out working with Tim a few times. We used to do the gay march, Pride march, down in Victoria Park over in East London. And I had a job, he had a job, forget what it was, anyway we done it together. We put DCs on [sheets of] Corex plastic. And we was nailing them on the trees. And he's going, we'll kill the bloody trees! And I said, we won't kill the fucking trees. It's only if you cut all around the bark...

RB I never thought Tim would put a tree before a poster!

AB We did a big, you, me, Tim, Lee probably, did a big paste-up near the Emirates once...

PB We done it under the bridge. D'you remember. That was Stanley

Road, the Paul Weller Stanley Road.<sup>9</sup> So that would've been the day after the Irish gig wouldn't it? The Fleadh, they call it? The 'flur', the 'flar'? 'Flur', something like that. It's a big Irish day isn't it. I think Billy Power, not Billy Power, erm, Vince Power. He bought Dingwalls didn't he? Dunno how that's going.

[Chat about Vince popping up in different conversations.  
How he bought a square metre of land to stymie early  
Reading Festival organisers, etc. ...]

Talk about Dingwalls, I mean, that was one of my favourite places to go. It was great. In the early 80s, yeah, to see gigs. I saw Martha and the Vandellas there, it was fantastic. Must've been a favourite, one of 'em. So, Terry and Dave worked for [Dingwalls], Slater and Walker. And they gave me a card, a little card, still got it, a little like credit card, and it had on the front, 'What? Me Pay?' You know with that, little [cartoon character] looking over a wall.<sup>10</sup> And on the back, it's got Slater and Walker, Peter Brighton. I just used to go in there.

RB VIP stuff?

PB Yeah, sorta like that. It was great. That would've been '83, '84.

[Brief chat bout 30 year anniversary company party next week.  
How AB left the company and went into tech.ing and teaching.]

AB I left the company in 2000.

PB Did you? You created Build Hollywood didn't you?

AB No, originally that was the name of a project we ran as a theatre group, 'Build Hollywood and Film It'. I think I made the first pamphlet or something like that. I left in 2000 because, as you know, companies grow. And as you're growing you have people who say, yeah, I can do this, I can do that. But eventually you have to get professionals don't you, because effectively you're [an amateur] doing about 3 or 4 people's jobs. When I left, they seemed to employ 3 people to do the work I was doing.

PB I mean he's done so well, he's got so many people now. I really admire him. What he's done.

AB What was your first impression of him? I met the guy who chased Tim round Islington for years, council man [in charge of streets]. It was an event at Central St. Martins where

there was a 'library' of people, you could hire people out and talk [to them] for 20 minutes about what they did. He didn't know I knew Tim but his assessment of him was, he looked like a farmer but was sharp as a pin! I mean, he's a negotiator, isn't he?

PB Yeah, I dunno what my first impression was. I can't remember. I don't think we ever had any 'brush off' thing. All I knew was he was a go-getter. And was working his fucking socks off to get more and more. And do certain things that I wouldn't have done. He was quite, [laughter] you know. I remember when he took on Stevie Jones, the General. William Road, that was, so I drove round there. [...] I knew he'd got Billy Corrall who'd got him on there 'cos they were mates and all that. I thought, fucking hell. And I went up to Tim and I said, that guy you've taken on there, he's a thief. I knew he was a petty thief. 'Cos I'd seen him, he used to like sell his stolen fucking stuff in the pub my dad drank in down the road there. I said to Tim like, you see that guy there, he'd nick the jacket off the back of your chair, he will. I said, he's a low-life thief. I mean he might've took it on board but he kept him on, but there you go. And there he was for over 20 years. We didn't get on by the way.

RB I didn't have any time for him at all. I thought he was horrible.

PB Oh did you? I'm glad I'm not alone. Ian couldn't stand him. All that stuff, like he's a diamond geezer. I'm sorry he died obviously. I just wish that he'd gone, retired, or left, just not died. I mean he had kids, and family.

RB Do you remember that time he hit Michael at a Christmas party, I thought, you're really hard aren't you? Michael doesn't want to fight anybody.

PB He was a [REDACTED] thief. It's funny that you talk about Michael 'cos we was in a pub called the Betsy Trotwood, which is in Farringdon, and they had a Christmas party there, upstairs in the pub. So, [Michael] Ches. walks in and he says, oh, hello Steve, how you doing? What you doing nowadays? And he goes, as little as possible. And I thought, can't you just keep your stupid mouth shut? And then like the other week, Adam dying as well. I mean, that was terrible. 39! Nice fella, such a nice

<sup>9</sup> Stanley Road was Paul Weller's third solo album, released May 1995.

<sup>10</sup> A bald man peeping over a wall with the caption 'Kilroy Was Here' was a popular WWII-era graffiti phenomenon.

fella. He was on the night team, he lived out near, Billericay, somewhere like that. He was a bit of a loner. Wasn't married, I don't think he had a girlfriend. Lived on his own. A quiet, really nice guy. That was a fucking shame though.

RB What did he die of?

PB I don't know, I asked Ian the other day, he still doesn't know. He was found lying on the floor by one of the other night guys as well. He died in his flat but his friend Dmitri was calling him and calling him. And he realised something was wrong because Adam was like, got his work the same time, done his round, his life was like that. He wasn't getting a response, went round there and he was lying on the floor. Such a nice guy.

RB So, before I forget, who were the main people in the evolution of fly-posting? Before Slater and Walker?

PB 'Cos, as far as I knew, before that, it was all bits going on here and there like, people doing lots of things. I think Terry Slater and Vincent Stitt bought it together. And Dave Walker getting in there as well.

AB Did they have anything to do with the regions?

PB Yeah, who was it, Myles? Yeah, they'll send up to him. There'll be other ones as well. Dave Hall, I remember Dave Hall, when he first came down.

RB We talked to him two weeks ago.

PB Did ya? Yeah, he was looking in our dustbins. I thought, what's he fucking? Who's that bloke? What's he fucking doing? I was going to go and have a word with him but I didn't bother in the end. And he was like that, climbing up them, they were big paladin bins.

RB Well, he does look like a copper doesn't he? He still does. I went with him a couple of weeks ago into a Pakistani shop to propose a display panel on their wall, and all these people ran out the door. They thought he was immigration! He's like, come back, I've got a visualisation. He's Leeds. Always been in Leeds.

PB The Johnny Cash of Leeds. Anyway, they came down to the pub, the Cricklewood Hotel once, this band came down and I think they were from Birmingham. And it was quite funny. They was hoping to get signed, and they was in there, you know, and we

were all in the pub. And they were going, we've been punks, we've been new romantics, and now they were summink else.

The funniest thing though was when, when Eric Burdon, Eric Burdon was writing the book, I Used To Be An Animal But I'm Alright Now, that was his title. So, he came over and The Pill put him up. He come over from Los Angeles and The Pill was helping him, not helping him with the book but just 'cos they go back a long way.

So, Eric would come down to the pub in Cricklewood, it was called the Cricklewood Hotel, next to our office. And he'd go in there and he'd, now this was a big paddy pub, this is a big Irish pub, they're covered in mud, right. So, Eric Burdon's at the bar, with his aviators on, and his embossed leather jacket, standing like that, saying, can I have a large bourbon please? And they're all thinking, who the fucking hell is this? [Laughter] It was a classic actually.

But Kevin, Kevin Thomas, he said to him one day, it was about November or something, he said, Eric will you play our Christmas party? And straight in there, he said, yeah alright. And he got, not all the band together but he got other artists, you know. And we had him playing upstairs, above the pub. Playing all his fucking hits. It was great. And people were coming in, promoters and people from record companies, they're going, who's? Is that? And we're going, yeah. And they're, you know, how'd you get him?

RB Didn't he write House of the Rising Sun?

PB Don't know if he wrote it but it was a big hit with it. And Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood. Brilliant. And he's doing all that there above a pub. And Kevin stopped him half way through to put a stripper on! And as she went off we put [Burdon] back on again. You should talk to Kevin, he lives up in Harrow. You should've got us together, the two of us because what I miss, he's got. If you get him, I'll come along.

RB Is he the famous trio then, Tim, Kevin and Nigel?

PB Yeah, yeah.

[Chat about AB going out with Kevin early 1990s to 'repair' some of S&W posters that had been covered up in Covent Garden]

What was the other? Little fella, London Calling wasn't it? Leaflets yeah but before that they was fly-posting. And Tim, they were like that, you know [signals at loggerheads], not

so much fights, you know, but they was battling one another for space, for superiority. I can't think of his name. I had a little run in with him once. Down on The Strand.

So, they done all the boards. But, at the time, Keith Harvey was around, they was around. And it was all getting a bit, you know. The councils went, fuck this. We got shopkeepers saying, why are the columns in between our shops covered? And paste all over the floor. You could see it was bad. You can understand why.

RB So, Lol worked for you? And did he end up working for Tim as well. 'Cos I ended up working Saturdays with him for a while.

PB Kevin sacked him. Twice. For being Lol, right, you know what I mean. Too much up his nose, too much to drink. And just not turning out, just not coming in. You know, we've sacked, since I've been doing this for Tim, I've sacked about six guys now. For the same thing. For missing Sunday nights. Not turning up. But Lol got the sack so Tim took him on. Lol got too busy, he kept telling Tim what to do. And I kept saying, he knows what he's fucking doing, he don't need you saying, do this, do that, right, you know. And then he laid him off. And that was quite a while ago. Must have been 15 years ago, maybe more.

AB I remember taking Billy Corraall out for the first time, doing the Hammersmith round.

PB Billy was useless at fly-posting. Didn't have a clue. Never been a practical person. Cab driver. It just wasn't for him. Lol was okay but he was a messy bastard. He'd have paste everywhere. All over the place, yeah. No, the best fly-poster I've ever known was Keith Harvey. Fast [sound effects], first time I saw him as well was in Fulham High Street. And he was working out of a 500 SL red convertible Mercedes. He had a little bucket at the back. And he had on a pink polo shirt, and a pair of white shorts, and I was like, fucking hell! Dave always reckoned he was gay. Yeah, but I don't think, he'd been with women, like, you know. Perhaps he's both ways. Perhaps he's left and right-handed, I don't know.

RB I think the most precise one I met was Mark Sexbury. He was so precise, wasn't he?

PB Mark Sexbury, yeah. Crafty. He was so regimental, yeah. He said to the guys, if a poster's ripped when you go past, I want you to, you know [repair it]. So, Mark would go round and pull the corner off [posters], like that. And then he'd wait across the road. He'd wait for them to come past like, and if they didn't [repair the poster site], he'd sack them.

AB But he was super into cleanliness wasn't he. He was famous for wiping his hand under his armpit every time he posted. Who invented tennis balls, half a tennis ball on the shaft of the brush to stop drips? I think that was Mark.

RB The first time I met him he did all that backing to things.

AB I did that first Richard. It was art school training.

PB Yeah, yeah. I remember you doing that. That was good. No, I remember you doing that for that Paul Weller. You have all the 4 sheets, like, and then he had it blanked out and put a quad in the middle. And it looked really good. 'Cos it was like the London Underground [roundel].

RB So, who's been the funniest person you've encountered on this voyage, this career?

PB Er, yeah. We used have a guy called Geoff Bartley who was a bill-poster when I was working for Slater and Walker's, and he was really nice, public school, very well spoken. And he was a bit short for money, like. He had his own florist shop in Flitwick, just up the A1 there, somewhere. And we was out bill-posting one night, and we got stopped in the West End. And this copper like, he comes up to me, he's talking out the side of his mouth, and he goes, who's been nicking all these car stereos round here? I said, I didn't fucking know, I'm a bill-poster. He thought because we was doing something dodgy we'd know. And he asked Geoff as well. And he's [posh voice], how on earth would I know?!

RB So, have you made some quite good friends then, or just met loads of dodgy people?

PB Yeah, I have made some. I always thought South Londoners were fucking nuts, the lot of 'em. Glen, and Jim, I always thought that. [REDACTED], d'you ever meet him? I mean he was just a braggart, I got six companies, this is all mine. I got more land, what was it? More land than fucking Duke of Westminster. That's what he used to say.

AB I know him I think 'cos I used to have to go down to, where was it, Wandsworth way to meet up, did he have a son, was it Eugene?<sup>11</sup>

PB Oh Eugene, yeah. [REDACTED] I went in his house once, I looked in his back garden and on the back fence

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11 Eugene Conahan, Jim's son, also a South London fly-poster.

there was about 20 number plates [nailed up]. I didn't ask but I thought, what the fuck's all that about? Obviously, a dodgy lad. But they was always in conflict. So, Fred Rowe supposedly encroached on, erm, Jimmy's patch, something like that. Or Dave Hutton's patch.

AB Dave Hall said that Dave Hutton used to ring him up and say, this is the most important job you're ever gonna have...

PB I had lunch with him Tuesday, not just him, quite a few people, in the Army and Navy club in Pall Mall. Yeah, so him and Fred was in conflict, over territory, I dunno where it was now. Then it calmed down. And Fred and Dave met up again. Dave said, yeah, that was getting a bit serious that was. He said, we was gonna send the guys round to your house. And all that, you know. And Fred said to him, well, it's a good job you didn't Dave, 'cos I would've fucking shot them!

I remember Fred telling me this, a long time ago, erm, down in Hammersmith. And I said, well, you wouldn't would you Fred? He said, oh yeah. I would've shot him. He said, I've shot and killed eleven people. And then he went, straight away he said, for my country mind you. As a soldier, in Korea, in the 1950s, 55 or something? He was nineteen, right, he got sent over there. I said, fucking hell Fred, what a start to life! You know, to do that. How does he end up? [Not surprising...] He ends up a bank robber. And then a fly-poster.

[Chat about forthcoming 30 years celebration party next week.]

AB Have you ever met any women fly-posters?

PB No. Well, the only woman I ever worked with is Penny, you know. I've had a great working relationship with her. When I first started doing the photo.s, she was doing the photo.s and I came in and took over. She went and done something else like. But we worked together so well for years. She's lovely.

RB So, what do you think, from when it started, a couple of buckets and paste, to now, it's massive. What do you think of the trajectory of the company? [100 employees and counting...] Did you ever think that?

PB No, never. No one who I knew that was in it had that vision. No one would think like that. And the ambient side of it, advertising. I saw it on an email. But I remember it, I remember dropping the big biscuits from the sky. And putting jeans on statues. And Portishead, as well. I just thought it was brilliant.

[Chat about Maryanne McNamara, currently in Melbourne but worked for the company for many years.]

AB Did she ever marry that warehouseman? Just had a fling with him?

Tony, he was the guy who lost his finger wasn't he? Fell off a ladder while he was posting a lamp post site. Dave Cooper had to pick it up and take it to hospital...

RB Demo Dave, how'd he get a nickname like Demo Dave? [Laughter] I must have seen him, it must be about 18 years ago, I'd come back from Spain and he was at the warehouse. As I was bringing the van back, I said, alright Dave, how you doing? And he said, just [picking up] a few crumbs from the table. I thought that was a really dry, dry thing to say. Crumbs!... So, a lot of people did quite well, didn't they? And I suppose a lot of people didn't, that's the way it goes I suppose.

PB Yeah, some people stick with it. And some people don't, opportunities pass them, and they don't even know. You got to get on with it, get up early, none of that warm duvet. The rain's going sideways. It's dark. And it's cold. Yeah, I used to start about that time, 4(am) and finish at 9(am). It is hard work. But it's always suited me. To work mornings and have the rest of the day to yourself.

RB There must have been a lot of breakfasts?

PB Yeah, I used to do a lot of that. We used to go, me and Lol used to eat down the Fulham Road. And we used to go to the bakers there and get beef rolls, and cakes and stuff like. [Camden café chat] Yeah, I remember Tim liked it there didn't he? And he also like the one round the corner, the Camden Brasserie as well. I remember taking Carmel, Anna, a few of the other girls, there was a girl called Crystal, I remember taking her down there. I took them there round about Christmas time. Treated them all to lunch like, you know. That was back in the day.

RB [Relating to fly-posting] You've probably done everything...?

PB Yeah, knock the paste up. Stick 'em up. Talk to clients. I used to do it differently to how they do it now. Now you get posters up, and you go out and take photo.s straight away. I used to go out, put the posters up, go back, get on my motorbike, go round, take all the photographs but I never used to give them to the clients. I used to keep them. I used to wait for them to get on the phone and say, you know, have

a moan. And I'd say, yeah, I done it. And when they [phoned] again, I'd say yeah, my guy was out and he took some photo.s, shall I send you them? You know, and then when they got them, this was like, I've had them for 3 or 4 days. They'd go, oh it's lovely. And that's the way I worked because I knew I had that [photographic] ace [up my sleeve].

I suppose the way we do it today works but I couldn't afford to do it any other way. I used to buy those throw away twisty things, you know. And I didn't even [develop them], I just, there you go, drop them in at the office somewhere, and then, you go and sort it out.

[Chat about disposable cardboard cameras]

I remember Myles, when the mobiles came in... People used to call him 'Air Myles' 'cos he never stopped fucking talking.

RB What was he like then Terry?

PB Terry? Oh, he was a [REDACTED] chancer. Oh yeah, he was a real chancer. Jewish boy from Liverpool, you know. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Funny as well. He was really funny.

[RB recounts story of someone visiting a remote northern countryside record shop, fly-posting was mentioned and Terry The Pill's name cropped up in conversation.]

Yeah, yeah, a lot of people say like, he was a bit of a mystery man as well. People would say, like, I met Terry the Pill. I saw that documentary on TV about 4 months ago. It was in 2 parts.<sup>12</sup> And it said, when he was dead, she told so many different stories, this German bird? And they was all conflicting, and then it said the two people that came in were Eric Burdon and Terry Slater. Because Terry was interviewed by CID up in the office we had, not Cricklewood, Harlesden. And Anne, d'you remember Anne? She was sitting there listening in on it like. She said it was classic, Terry was going, well, I don't know [him]. And I thought this is fucking Jimmy Hendrix!<sup>13</sup>

RB Wasn't there a thing about burning some tapes or something?

PB That's right. Hendrix gave The Pill some tapes. He said, I don't want Chas Chandler to get hold of these, he said.<sup>14</sup> 'Cos they were incomplete or something. So, he was in a dilemma, and he didn't know what to do with them. And this is what he told me. He said, I didn't know what to do with them so he asked his wife Eve, and he took them out in the garden and

burnt them. [...] What was in them I don't know. Some incomplete works or whatever. But no, that's what he done, he burnt them.

RB Did you meet any of the [music] superstars?

PB I only met Eric Burdon. I met a couple of the guys that was out of ELO. Because Dave Walker had got ELO when Jeff Lynne had left, and he called them Orchestra. Yeah, and they went on tour. [...] So, Jeff Lynne had gone, the rest of 'em, I think it was Mik Kaminski, I'm not sure of all the names, I can't remember.<sup>15</sup> But Dave Walker got involved with them and put on a UK tour. Doing, not big places like, I mean, the Working Men's Club in Burton-on-Trent, ain't exactly the fucking O2 is it?

I remember, I think it was Myles who said they put them on after the bingo. [Laughter] No, but they were good, they were good. They [also] played the Town & Country Club in Kentish Town. Was the Town & Country Club, now it's the Forum. So, they played there. And they were good. You knew all the numbers like, 'Evil Woman', all that stuff. And they done it without [Jeff Lynne].

AB I liked the Britpop era, when we were putting up Pulp, and Blur, and Oasis. Oasis posters were great, weren't they?

PB They were good, yeah. Pulp, Blur, erm, at the time it was Lighthouse Family, wasn't it? And The Beautiful South, of course. When was that, 96?

AB Maybe earlier, I went into the office in '95.

RB That was when Tim took off wasn't it?

PB Yeah, it was. It was. I was making a lot of money then.

AB Well, they'd give us like 5 thousand posters for London wouldn't they?

PB It was mad. It was mad... Getting back to The Pill, I remember we all went to Hamburg right, the Beatles went to Hamburg, obviously in the 60s wasn't it? Early 60s, and The Pill was there with them. So, there was me, Lol, we [all] used to go for 'a drink'. We'd choose somewhere to go, you know, close

12 Documentary about the death of Jimi Hendrix.

13 The truth about what happened the day Hendrix overdosed is still hotly contested.

14 Bassist with The Animals and later Jimmy Hendrix's manager and producer.

15 Mik Kaminski was the violin player with the original ELO line up.

by so Amsterdam, Hamburg, Antwerp, the last one we done was in New York. But when we were in Hamburg, the Pill knew it well, we was going round certain bars and bits and pieces. And we went in this club and it all started coming back to him. And he was there with Epstein and everyone, I wished we'd taped him.

RB So, you always went on trips?

PB Every year yeah. It always involved drugs and sex and drink. [re. New York] Yeah, that was good. Richard Branson had just started his flights. So, you could fly over there for a hundred and ninety-nine pounds. And get it included in the hotel, the hotel was called Central Paramount, what a shithole like. Lol got on the phone, me and Lol were sharing a room. He said, there's 2 cockroaches in my shower. So, the guy comes up with two towels? Just funny things like that.

It was really good. I love New York. Dave [organised] a tour in the morning. He said, right, doing New York. So, we're going, oh no. And we got in a helicopter. [Flew] all around like, you know. Come back down again, that's the tour over. That's the tour done. [...] Glen used to come as well. Glen from South London. No, they were good fun. But that was back in the day. I would say [the last jolly] it was mid 80s, I would say about '88, something like that. That would'a been the last one, yeah. We had to stop, it was all too much.

ENDS

Transcribed by AB  
(9,143 words)



[FIG. 1]

[FIG. 1] RB, AB and PB outside the Marriott Hotel.

[FIG. 2] PB at a fly-posters' Xmas party.

[FIG. 2]



# UNCLE

PRESENTS

## THE ART OF FLYING :

AN ONGOING ORAL HISTORY AND  
MULTI-MEDIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE

This series of booklets shares for the first-time in-depth conversations with individuals whose involvement in unauthorised commercial fly-posting circa 1973 to '93 is deemed significant.

Transcribed conversations are each prefaced with a short introduction that explores broader material, social, ethical and political issues relevant to the subject of fly-posting in the city.

There are several stakeholders concerning the illegal display of commercial posters.

- (i) Entrepreneurial promoters and big corporations who commission the activity.
- (ii) Practitioners who put posters up.
- (iii) Individuals and agencies who take it upon themselves or are charged with enforcing laws against it.
- (iv) Finally, the urban dwellers who are either oblivious to fly-posting or variously informed, entertained, offended or intrigued by it.

Research began with MYLES COONEY's many decades of 'adventures' north of the border in Scotland. Next up, DAVE HALL's local Bradford and Leeds 'misdeeds' as well as accounts of fly-posting every capital city in Europe. JIMMY MILLER's wide-ranging memories, not least of confronting 'The Ballerina' - universally acclaimed as one of the finest with brush and pavste - were classic. Flautist DAVIE CARLTON's shift from musical protégé to master baker to fly-poster was a journey.

PETER BRIGHTON shared tales of working on the streets, post WWII fly-posting history and his famous maxim, "We don't mind competition. But we just won't stand for it." JIMMY WREN told fascinating, sometimes hairy tales of Birmingham and beyond. Promoter and printer Dave Hutton reminded us that Fred 'Spider' Rowe - Ian Dury's sometime minder - covered his van shelves with pink faux fur to stop posters slipping around. MANDY BROWN shared her memories and adventures fly-posting in West Yorkshire and beyond. Tracking down and talking with Trotskyist music collective inspired ANTHONY 'TOSH' RYAN in Crete took us from the 1960s Manchester Jazz scene to Tarantinoesque activity that curtailed his posting days in the 1980s. Interviewing DAVE WALKER - ably assisted by Paul Carr - was a roller coaster, and great to hear from half of Slater & Walker, for our intents and purposes, one of 'the originals'. JOHNNY MURPHY had a stranded Christmas tree delivery to thank for his life as a fly-poster. KEVIN THOMAS went from a teen flogging tat in shop doorways to luxury car sales, then an eight pounds a day, two days a week wage at Slater & Walker, to eventually running the whole show. LOL MOORE loved doing Notting Hill Carnival, not so much wintertime breaking the ice on the paste when it had frozen overnight in the van.

The oral histories collected since 2023 illuminate aspects of an industry hitherto enveloped in secrecy. While accounts unfold, we are also made critically aware of the changing face of cities across the UK: the many and diverse music scenes; variations in public attitudes; policing and the law; council corruption, condemnation and eventual cooperation; the bitter rivalries and competition for wall space and wider territories. There's also the laughs and life-long friendships made along the way.

# THE ART OF FLYING

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