

The Rebel Wheel Interviews

Bill Knispel's interview for Prog Blog

1. Let's start at the beginning...how did you first discover an interest in music?

DC: I can't really remember a time when I wasn't interested in music actually. I have kids myself and my youngest reminds me of me in that she is always singing a song or playing an instrument and at five, already has clear cut musical loves (Max Webster, Hot Hot Heat and Chumbawumba for example). Last week she said that there was a song she had heard that she had actually written and that was exactly the same thing I had said when I was her age. In my case I thought I had written "Roll Out Those Hazy Crazy Days of Summer" and "V-I-E-N-N-A, that's old Vienna, the happy lazy lager beer". I guess we had so internalised the songs that we had forgotten where we had heard them in the first place.

2. Who or what were your earliest influences?

DC: The Beatles ("Daytripper" and "Eight Days A Week" were my favorite songs in kindergarden), Antonio Carlos Jobim (Stan Getz' "Jazz Samba" was an album my jazz musician uncle listened to a lot) and Prokofiev (we had a record of Peter and the Wolf I adored). Those three styles still have a major affect on my musical life.

3. How did the first Rebel Wheel lineup come together?

DC: I was at Humber College studying music and I jammed regularly with a bunch of guys. Eventually we all started fronting various projects and typically culled players from our jamming sessions. In my case I was heavily into midi technology and I loved the fact I could trigger synths etc from my guitars.

I had a GR-303 system and a GR-707 so I could basically play into a board and avoid amps entirely making rehearsals a head-phone affair. The other players had similar rigs and although it was never an official rule, we ended up as a midi ensemble. We all loved jazz and fusion so that was the loose format, although we had the same line-up with other band names (depending on the leader/writer) so we were pretty comfortable going from a Steely Dan type song in one incarnation to a free-form jazz piece in another.

4. Diagramma, the band's first studio album, was originally released privately. How did 10T records come into the scene?

DC: I wanted to get on a label as I figured it would serve the then current band's interest more. I was interested in 10T right up front because I was a fan of Frogg Cafe and Man on Fire so I sent them the 5-song version of Diagramma. They got back in touch and offered a deal but they

wanted a seven-song release that clocked in closer to an hour, instead of the one I had already done which was only 45 minutes.

5. There have been a number of lineup changes between the release of Diagramma and We Are in the Time of Evil Clocks. How would you say those changes have affected the band's sound?

DC: Well Diagramma was a weird beast. The original 5 song version was pretty well all me. I used midi drums on some tunes, real drums on others and edited other's drum performances from the old Toronto version of the band and built tunes from there. The 10T release had two additional songs that featured the whole band in its then current line-up, so that even on that album there were two different forms of the band and different approaches.

For Evil Clocks, I wanted an album that featured the current band mostly live in the studio. I have found over the years that it is better to have the live line-up the same as the studio line-up as much as possible. At that point the lineup was pretty stable and although we changed bassists early on in the recording and replaced long-time member Gary Lauzon with ex-Nathan Mahl bassist Claude Prince, we kept the same line-up for the rest of the album. Unlike Diagramma, I wrote with that line-up in mind and the arrangements were done with a definite eye on how we would ultimately play the songs live.

5. What was the inspiration behind 'The Discovery of Witchcraft,' the epic that all but closes out the new album?

DC: The author Robertson Davies. He has a story called 'Mixture of Frailties' and in it, a Canadian singer performs a British composer's new work called "The Discoverie of Witchcraft". I think the composer in the story is modelled after Benjamin Britten as he is described as being modern (with-out having "wrong-note chromaticism") and as one of the most lyrical, voice-friendly composers England had produced in decades. In any event, I loved the story and didn't really pay more attention to the fictional composition, until one day I came across Ben Jonson's Masque of Queens and I recognized some of the words the Davies character had been singing in the book ("I have been gathering Wolfe's hairs" etc.).

It was then I realized the lyrics were actually real and not the construct of Davies (it is even mentioned in the book that if the composer had one fault it was that he used too many literary references, so I suppose I should have tumbled on to it sooner). I then did some research and found out the title itself came from Reginold Scot's book by the same name (again a fact mentioned in the book). So like Davies' fictional character, I took the Scot's title and Jonson's words and made my own piece (decidedly less lyrical and chock full of wrong-note chromaticism). Unlike the book I don't use any of Scot's passages as recitatives, but cover artist Francis Dupuis did take the graphics from the original manuscript and use them on the CD clock faces.

7. Where do you think The Rebel Wheel is heading next, musically speaking?

DC: We are now a three-piece band as Ange has just had a baby girl (Amy) and we all decided she should take an extended leave of absence. As such we are looking at a creating a somewhat sparser, more aggressive sound. The music I have been writing is harder-edged than before and as the lyrical themes are examining substance abuse (something I am far too familiar with) there is a gritty Charles Bukowski-ish tinge to the outing. We will still use keyboards and

electronics, but they will approach a noise-like ambience instead of being mysterious and lush. The arrangements so far are leaning towards a more "power-trio" core sound.

8. Does the band get much opportunity to play live?

DC: Yes it does and lately we have all agreed to take any and all gigs we can. In fact we are doing our first gig with the new line-up tomorrow at a local bar in my hometown (Editor's note: this show has passed since the interview was finished). We have a new bassist (again!) and in the last few months have been rehearsing new stuff and re-arranging existing material for live performance. Guy Dagenais is our new bassist and was actually the player on the title track of the CD so has been in the wings for awhile before he joined proper.

9. How much do you think downloading has affected the band, either positively or negatively?

DC: That is a tricky question, and a subject that tends to get volatile. Generally I think that illegal downloading has a dramatic affect on all music and ultimately the attitude the general music user has toward intellectual property. Truthfully, ours is not the kind of music that flies off the shelves in any type of scheme, but given the sheer amount of torrent sites that gladly offer high quality illegal mp3 versions of the album, it is naive to think it has helped sales in any way.

10. What would you say the future holds for the (mostly) independent progressive rock band?

DC: I think that despite the down side of illegal file sharing, the internet is perhaps the single greatest distribution tool in the history of music. I think the future is bright for bands right now, not necessarily as big money-making outfits, but for dedicated artists who can have an international appeal to people whose tastes are similar. I think that with the plethora of musical styles and the bringing to light of musics that once were totally underground, we are quickly entering a world where musical boundaries are becoming less firm. The distinction among bands doesn't seem to be stylistic so much as "how good are they live?"

11. When you're not working with The Rebel Wheel, what musical projects are you involved with?

DC: Tons! I play jazz guitar in various ensembles, I play keyboards in a cover tune band, I have two original quirky pop bands I write for and/or play guitar/bass and sing in, I have a twisted electronica band I write for and play bass in, I write a ton of electro-acoustic music that does pretty well in the somewhat rarefied and academic circles that like that kind of thing. I write concert music and arrange big band stuff for other people, I write and produce a ton of production library music and background stuff for TV and corporate clients, I play local sessions on guitar, bass and keyboards, I am the bassist in Bob Drake's Cabinet of Curiosities as well as the latest guitarist in Nathan Mahl.

12. Is music your 'day job,' or something you do to escape from the stresses of a non-music job?

DC: It's my day job and Prog bands are my escape from the pressures of THAT.

13. You've written a number of chamber and orchestral pieces; how did these come about?

DC: I love that kind of thing and in a perfect world would write pretty well mostly orchestral stuff. I consider guitar and bass playing something different so that doesn't in any way mean I wouldn't do prog or jazz gigs as a musician, but as a composer I would certainly write less TV stuff. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to earn a living writing for modern orchestra and even those who are successful at it, usually have to teach music as well.

I started doing that kind of thing from day 1 and in fact, the only reason I went to music school in the first place was to learn orchestration and have players available to play the stuff I was already writing. By the time I graduated I was earning a living arranging, orchestrating and copying other people's stuff when I really only wanted to do mine. In 1991 I took the plunge and went totally into my own symphonic music. I was pretty successful at getting it played, but even then was barely able to pay my rent.

14. How did you first connect with Bob Drake (Thinking Plague, et cetera), and how did you come to perform with him?

DC: Through Progressive Ears actually. When I first discovered PE back in 2003 I was elated to find that there were people who liked the same kind of stuff I did, and that while I had been immersed in modern classical music, there had been a lot going on in Prog I knew nothing about. As a result I discovered a lot of stuff I hadn't heard before like Thinking Plague, 5uus and Bob's solo stuff (among a ton of others). When I heard he needed a bassist/guitarist I emailed him and we hit it off. It helped that, by then, I was pretty familiar with his material.

15. What do you listen to for fun or relaxation?

DC: Pretty well anything. I have an abiding love for bands like Incubus, I Mother Earth, Screaming Headless Torsos etc. but with three kids I listen and enjoy a lot of stuff I might otherwise avoid (like Chumbawumba for instance). I love star-watching and am fortunate to live in area where the skies are free from light pollution. When I am out looking at stars I mostly listen to modern classical. Regardless of how atonal and angular it might be, I find it very relaxing.

16. Are there any newer bands or artists you find particularly inspiring?

DC: Right now I am on a 5uus kick and especially enjoying the Mike Johnson live version of the band I see on You-tube. As for newer stuff, I am really liking Zevious, Mirthkon, Belew's trio, Tyondai Braxton, and the latest offerings from Frogg Cafe, Mars Hollow and Helmet Of Gnats. All great stuff.

17. Do you have any final words for our readers today?

DC: I'd say it is important to keep your mind open and avoid the "it was all better when I was younger" mentality. Lately I have been seeing a lot of people acting like my grand-parents used

to when I was young, asserting that everything was better back when. I find that attitude stifling for art and more indicative of closed mindedness than having any real intrinsic truth.

Alain Quaniere for Prog-Resiste

Your music isn't very easy to approach : a blend of progressive music, fusion/world music and strong north American rock ? Do you agree ?

I'm not sure about the world music aspect (although the first album had some) but otherwise, yes I agree. The drummer and I love bands like Soundgarden and STP as well as bands like Nerve and Screaming Headless Torsos so there is a strong North American hard-rock element for sure. We tend to like groove-oriented harder edged projects it seems. As well I have always been a huge fan of Gentle Giant, King Crimson, ELP, Yes and Jethro Tull although those influences aren't really as obvious.

Personally, if I had comparisons to do, your music reminds me King Crimson, Anglagard, Maxwell's Demon and ... Weather Report, but with a very personal style. Any remarks on that ?

I think that we have a similar approach to those bands in that we like tricky riffy passages and a somewhat extended harmonic tonality combined with more lyrical accessible stuff. I'm pretty flattered to be considered in the same camp as those artists actually!

In my opinion, the sound is particularly "rough" and a little bit underground. This confers a really "weird" mood to the music, which gives a real personality to it. Do you agree ?

Yep! I like the sound to be a little lo-fi (the drummer more-so) but more than that, we seem to use a lot of dissonance and what others describe as "unresolved" harmonies. Along with that we like a pretty strong groove and lots of angular riffs. I think some of the weirdness comes from those combinations.

We also use a LOT of contrasts and I think that is considered somewhat unsettling at times.

Did you use a special studio, vintage instruments, modern ways of work or a mix of all of these possibilities ?

We use a variety of methods, none of which are written in stone. We often track the whole band live and fly in parts when necessary. We record anywhere we can get the whole band set-up and then transfer the recorded tracks to my personal studio for further production and mixing.

I use Logic Audio and it is a full-blown Digital Audio Workstation with a ton of plug-ins so a lot of the processing that would typically be in the analog domain (ie compression, eq and fx) can be done digitally after tracking. Usually though, we try to get the best sound we can to tape in

the first place so we tend to use a lot of current and vintage analog gear during the tracking stages.

The band is always on the edge : rock in one hand and jazz oriented on the other. A common vision or some of the musicians are pulling the music in opposite ways ? The names of the "bad guys" ...

Well the line-up on the album all come from different back-grounds. Ange is a concert sax player and studied jazz at school but she loves heavy-metal bands (Dream Theatre and their ilk). Claude is a big fan of sophisticated '80s bands like Level 42, Steely Dan and Toto. Aaron loves modern bands like Nerve and JoJo Meyer's stuff. I write a lot of concert and classical music so I tend to prefer more atonal classical stuff.

We all like to rock-out though and that tends to put us at ease with each other when our disparate influences pull us separate ways.

Is there a concept behind de music and the title, which make me think to the darkest side of something ?

Well the concept is a loose one. The title itself comes from a story my son made up when he was 10. In it a wii controller fights an evil clock. After being beaten and as a punishment for being evil, the clock has to get a job at Walmart. It's a silly little story but I really liked the sound of the title.

The idea then was to assemble songs that had a common relationship to some dystopian future where man-kind was held in thrall to clocks. Considering how bound we are now to them, it was an easy and fun thing to work with. The Evil Clocks aspect of the album comes out in with the first batch of songs as well as the closing one.

The big concept piece, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, is based on a story I read by Robertson Davies called A Mixture of Frailities. The story dealt with a soprano vocalist who at one point becomes a student and lover of a composer who took texts from Ben Jonson's The Masque of Queens and Reginald Scot's "The Discoverie of Witchcraft" and wrote an opera around it. In this fictional opera the Jonson pieces were sung and the Scot ones were used as transitional recitatives. Robertson mentions that the composer had an elegant lyricism and eschewed "wrong-note modernism".

I decided to do something similar and took just the Jonson pieces as lyrics and wrote music around it. It, like the music for the album's title, really has a loose association and even though there is a plot of sorts, we were more interested in the evocative aspect of the title, than any real hard and fast program or concept. Unlike the fictional composer, I LOVE wrong-note modernism and as I was excited to use a 12 tone technique in a rockier context, much of Discovery is based on 12 tones rows and permutations therefrom.

All in all, you're in a 'Seventies' state of mind, no ? What are the main influences of each of the musicians ? Which ones influence your way of composing music ?

Well I grew up in the 1970s (the golden days of prog I guess) so I guess I tend to hear guitar and keyboard sounds that kind of that way. I listen to all kinds of stuff and am a full-time composer (concert and TV) so my influences are all over the map but as far as '70s musicians go, I'd say Ray Shulman, Chris Squire, John McLaughlin, Carlos Santana, Steve Howe, Kerry Minnear and Robert Fripp are all big influences both in my playing and writing .

From a strictly compositional aspect I'd say Bartok really had a big influence on how I approach harmony, meter and muscular riffage.

As far as the other players; Ange loves prog-metal and her influences mainly come from that camp. I know she loves Daniel Gildenlow's bands and pretty well all of the guys from Dream Theatre.

Aaron's influences are pretty broad. I know he grew up practicing drums along to Jethro Tull records, but nowadays I'd say his main influences are Jojo Meyer and Keith Carlock. He loves groove-oriented music and one of the things both he and I strive for is keeping a strong groove element in all the odd and shifting meters we use.

The bassist on the album, Claude Prince, has cited both Gentle Giant and Rush as influences and that shows in his playing. I'd say there is a good dose of Red-era John Wetton there too. I tend to write most of the bass parts but whenever we left him to his own devices he'd use a lot of slap and tapping stuff, so those kind of influences are there as well.

Your process of writing music is ... ?

As trite as it sounds, the process is to basically record what I hear in my head in either Logic or on paper. I record fairly detailed demos and give them to the band, but the final results are often far from what I had originally imagined as each player shapes their part and the overall feel during our rather intensive rehearsals.

What kind of public is interested by your music : rockers, progsters, jazz addicts ?

I don't know for sure, but one of the best nights we ever had was playing to a crowd who had just gotten out an Ottawa jazz-fest concert. They were very receptive and appreciative. This was especially gratifying as none of them had heard the band before.

Lately though, with the three-piece unit (with newest me member Guy Dagenais on bass) I think we have been appealing to a younger more "extreme" crowd. The last couple of gigs we've done had very strong responses from the "almost-twenty" crowd who see us more as an off-shoot of "math-rock" with punky stylings, than as a typical prog band. That suits us just fine!

What is the actual success of your albums ?

Hmm, they're critically well-received but they're not flying off the shelves. This last one seems to be doing stronger sales right out of the gate than all our others combined.

What do you think about the actual musical scene ?

I think because of the internet we are in a golden era. There is more quality music being distributed by quality musicians than ever before. Certainly the market is fragmented and polarized, but the actual music being produced is incredible.

The whole downloading-torrent issue is one that needs to be reconciled I think, and that isn't an easy problem to address and discussion tends to further polarize people.

Regardless, I think we've past the era of the superstar, but in my experience, there is enough global access to peculiar niches that resourceful bands can still survive and often thrive.

10T Records seems to be a very good label, one of the most dynamic actually (Fromuz, Mars Hollow, you). What kind of collaboration do you have with them ?

Well we are in touch with them through-out the whole process of writing and recording an album. They prefer to have each band maintain its autonomy so there is a lot of latitude given on the creative side, but they also make suggestions. Often when our band was dead-locked on creative issues, I sought and took Steve and Jeff's advice on resolving them.

What do you expect for the future of the band ?

A lot of gigs. We are excited about getting out there and doing more of them. We used to have a fairly elaborate stage set-up and we are currently simplifying it so we can play pretty well any venue. We still have the big productions for the places that can afford the space etc., but we also have a more streamlined production that has a much smaller footprint. Right now we are also writing music for our next album and although we are just beginning to tour for Evil Clocks, we already are thinking ahead to the next recording

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ProgArchives Inetrview

Your biography has been covered in your ProgArchives profile so let's bypass the biography details. But which bands were you influenced by and why did you choose that name ?

The name came from the book Doctor Rat by William Kotzwinkle. It is the story of a bunch of lab rats lead by one who has evolved into a bit of a genius (I think the cartoon Pinky and the Brain actually was loosely based on that as well). Dr. Rat would get the lab animals to create a rebel wheel and spin around communicating with all other animals around the world inspiring them to attack man-kind and thereby change their status.

The sound of the words resonated with me more than the image, but I suppose because I read the book just before I scored the music for the Nature of Things award winning and controversial episode "Animals In Research" which dealt very much with the idea of animal rights versus human rights, it probably carried some other associations as well.

As far as bands are concerned the original was very much influenced by Bruford's Earthworks albums. I have had an enduring love for Gentle Giant, King Crimson, early Yes, the Beatles, Led Zepplin, Soundgarden, Charlie Mingus, John Coltrane, Mahavishnu Orchestra and lately Incubus, so I imagine there are aspects of all that in the music.

Were any of you involved in any other bands before you started Rebel Wheel?

Certainly. The current line-up is as a three piece and the bassist Guy Dagenais comes to us from Nathan Mahl, Blue Zinc and a host of other bands. I was in/am in a bunch myself; The Synics, Bob Drake's Cabinet of Curiosities (with Dave Kerman and Kavus Torabi), electronic-acousmatic project "Filth Therapy" as well as any number of pick-up jazz gigs etc.

I was in a band in Toronto back in the '90s called The Barbara Lynch band that had UK engineer John Punter as producer and Rush engineer Rick Andersen as head engineer. I ended up programming synths and computers for them on various projects after Barbara's band. They were great people to learn production from.

Our other member Aaron Clark doesn't have quite the background as Guy and I (being a young lad and all) but currently he is involved in another band (a funk prog project called "Auto-Racing") that is doing quite well and of course played in any number of local acts before us.

Let's go straight to the first album. Please tell us more about The Rebel Wheel from 2003

That was the residue from the Toronto association of the band. I had weekly jams with a bunch of musicians and over the years we would assemble any number of various jamming members to go and do live gigs around town under different names. I wrote a bunch of music for them and as we would often practice in a garage with headphones and use midi instruments as much as possible, I visualized a sort-of jazz fusion midi ensemble and wrote accordingly.

We recorded most of it to sequencer and tape but unlike a lot of Atari-based studios (this would have been 86-96) we seldom quantized the stuff, rather we would treat the computer like a big tape deck that was easier to edit upon. Even though most of the sounds we used were keyboard or sampler based, the performances were usually live-off-the-floor. That paradigm of using real players and electronics was basically the thrust of the project since day one and really hasn't changed much since.

The piece "Crystal Rain Suite" reflected the new technology I was using as I was just getting my feet wet with soft synths and all that they could offer. I already had an extensive computer-based sampler collection (Sample Cell and EXS-24) as well as a ton of hard-ware synths from Korg and Roland but I had never used a virtual organ or synth before so it was very inspiring. The suite relies heavily on sample-based ambiances and soft-synths in the transitions among the songs themselves which also have a lot of sample-based percussion. Again it followed the basic idea of using real-players and electronics where the parts are played in real time, even if they are being triggered on synths and samplers.

Please tell us more about your second album Diagramma from 2007

That album was a transitional one. There are 5 songs on it that were just me playing or programming everything, then two songs that featured the whole band. By then I had realized that prog had a small but enduring audience and I geared the album towards that aesthetic instead of a jazzier one that the earlier album had. The album was a lot more keyboard-oriented than I was used to being and instead of using a guitar synth to trigger stuff along with

the occasional keyboard-based synth, I spent as much time playing "traditional" prog keyboards as I did guitar.

As before, I was very much interested in merging electronic elements like drum machines and samplers, loops and synth based sounds with the more traditional sound of guitar, bass and drums but as computer technology had advanced radically since the first album, I was able to create far more complex atmospheres and treatments.

Please tell us more about your third album *We Are in the Time of Evil Clocks* from this year. That was a real band effort and was recorded in various places throughout a 13 month period. I don't think I have ever taken so long to track and produce music before in my life, but when you have 4 players to account to and for, it takes a lot longer to reach a consensus. The idea was to have a darker sounding, more mysterious vibe than before and we really wanted to have a windy hill in the Autumn as a sonic returning point through-out.

How would you describe the musical developments on your three studio albums?

Well, as I mentioned already, the basic thrust is to maintain a performance-oriented aspect regardless of the technology used. I love gear and I love trying out new stuff, but I don't want the real-time performance of music to get subsumed by production techniques or digital audio workstation assumptions.

Every album has some part that is basically an Acousmatic episode not intended to be performed (ranging from nature and city ambiances to a clamorous industrial sounds). Every album features songs that use a mix of sample based percussion sounds mixed with real drums. That element has remained constant. The sound of a huge and busy bass has also been a constant. The variables have been the guitars, keyboards vocals and other instruments like sax. That changes according to who is in the band at the time and what they bring to the table. For instance, on *Evil Clocks* album, Ange has a pretty voice so I wanted to accent that. She's a really strong soprano player and able to improvise easily so I wanted to accent that as well. Bassist Claude Prince was excellent re-creator of parts and wanted a challenge so we gave him lots of tricky things to do. He is also a formidable slapper so we set up areas where he could do that. Aaron has excellent technique and a real feel for grooving in odd meters so that was played up on the album. He also was in the process of shifting his grip from a more traditional jazz-like one, to a harder-edged rock one, so we wanted to get both on record.

On *Diagramma* Alain was a heavy-hitter on drums with a very idiosyncratic technique so I wanted to showcase that side of things. Gary was a wonderful tapper so we played up that aspect. Both of them were given tons of room to do that on *Arachnophobia*. Paul Joannis was a HUGE Rush fan and had that sensibility so the song *Awakening*, was mostly his showcase.

How is the availability of your three albums?

Diagramma and *Evil Clocks* are easily had at 10T and various other places. The first is essentially out of print as it was only a CD-R release through CD-Baby. I have had quite a few requests for it actually so I may print up some real copies or alternatively, start getting some more available for download.

Just to give those of us who are unknown with your music a bit of a reference point or two: How would you describe your music?

I'd say it is performance-oriented stuff. It is full of contrasts and very eclectic, but is unified by a strong rhythmic feel. Even when we are playing in odd meters (a lot of the time) we try to keep a groove-oriented pocket. We have been compared to a lot of people but the one that seems to be used most is King Crimson. I think that is because we are edgy at times (although we do have some very pretty little ballads) and have lots of angular riffs and dissonant chords. The vocals are often described as sounding like Dave Gilmour so there is that as well.

From my point of view the music is jazzy in nature, not in the swing sense of the term (although we do have some sections that rely of swing grooves) but in the underlying approach to the songs and the players. I like distorted guitar and tricky riffs so there is lots of that, but mostly it is twisted song-oriented stuff.

How is your gigs situation?

We're doing tons of them lately, mostly small clubs and dives. There have been some dismal turn-outs to be sure, but we also have had some amazing response. I think it is important for a band to be out there dealing with gigs both good and bad. It not only makes you so much tighter, it also helps you grow as a band. After awhile you can deal with pretty well anything a gig throws at you and bit by bit you find that you're making a mark and people of all ages and back-grounds begin to get into it.

What is your experience with the music industry and the new internet music scene?

I have been doing music full-time since I was 18 (with the exception of two years pounding spikes in the mountains) and I have had a ton of experience working with lots of players. I've worked with world famous people and total unknowns and everything else in between. I find that musicians are generally a lot more tolerant than fans, music buffs first and foremost and easily approachable on that level. The few that I have had tons of attitude from usually don't seem to get far in that field.

The internet is amazingly difficult to deal with. At once it offers a distribution network unlike any before, can target niche markets better than any other media ever could, but is rife with piracy and seems to be inspiring the gradual dissolution of the concept of intellectual property. It is an interesting time to make music that's for sure.

Oddly enough I came across an article from the turn of the century (1900 ie) and it was talking about the demise of music because at that time illegal Canadian reproductions of sheet music were threatening the American publishing industry. Perhaps nothing has really ever changed and music just chugs along regardless but I do know lots of people who simply aren't earning money anymore and that needs to be reconciled with the perceived right of the end-user to take whatever is available for free.

What is your latest update and the plans for the rest of this year and next year?

We're planning to record the new album early 2011. The material is all written and we are rehearsing it now.

To wrap up this interview, is there anything you want to add to this interview?

Keep your minds open; check out new stuff, music is still vital.

Robox Lindgren's Interview

Have any of you played in other bands?

David: Yes. We all have. In lots of bands in fact.

Andrew: Too many to count!

How is it that you started playing music?

Alex: I took piano lessons as a kid, but my dad would tap along to songs while in the car which is what got me into drums.

Andrew: I started off taking piano lessons when I was 5 and hated them. Luckily, shortly after I quit piano my dad bought himself a guitar and showed me some chords and then I was off to the races.

David: No choice in it really: it was something I always wanted to do.

What are your names? / Who plays what? / How old are you?

Alex Wickham: drums, vocals. 23

Andrew Burns: bass, synth, vocals. 35

David Campbell: guitar, vocals, keyboards, bass. 59

Have you had other previous members?

A ton! Way too many to list here. This version is the 8th iteration, although Andrew and Alex and I have been playing together in various bands since 2013

Did you make music even when you were young?

David: Yes. I played my aunt's keyboard when I was four onwards. Then I graduated to my cousin's guitar in my early teens.

Alex: Yes, I had a metal band called Alien Understatement.

Where are you from?

David: born in Trenton Ontario and I lived in all over the country since.

Alex: Montreal/Ottawa Canada

What year did the band form?

2003

What's your style or genre?

Progressive Rock, experimental, jazz-rock, psychedelic

What inspires you?

Andrew: Strange new synthesizer textures and loud volumes.

David: Music of all sorts. usually stuff that has passion and precision in equal measure.

Alex: Playing with other skilled musicians.

How often and where do you rehearse?

We aim for once a week generally. We will do more if we need. We generally rehearse at Andrew's studio.

How have you developed since you started with the music?

David: I am far more lenient in playing different styles than I was starting out and I have learned that you don't have to have every facet of your playing revealed in one song.

Do you have other interests of work outside the band?

Andrew: Cooking, reading and alcohol.

David: I love farming and star watching.

Are you looking for a booking agency, and what are your thoughts around that?

David: Yes, we are. I think it is a great idea to have one but our style of music is vastly under represented around here so we are not the first choice of a lot of agents.

Are you looking for a label, and what are your thoughts around that?

David: We have had two deals with labels since our inception and have released independently as well. Labels give you a lot more credibility and industry clout, but they also can limit a band's autonomy. I am not sure that they are strictly necessary but a good label can make a good career.

What made you decide to make this music?

I love it. It seemed natural.

What are your songs about?

Lots of different things. Love, life on the curve, witches, science, relationships; nothing is taboo.

Who does the composing and writes the lyrics?

Mostly David, but we all contribute.

Do you start with the music or the lyrics?

We start mostly with the music; sometimes the lyrics. There are no hard and fast rules.

Do you compose in a certain environment?

Andrew: Despite my early aversion, mostly at a piano.

David: Anywhere is good, as long as I have a pencil, some paper and guitar. And an eraser.

Have you done any covers live?

Some. Not many.

What language do you sing in?

English.

What are the least and most people to attend one of your gigs?

The most was probably a wee bit less than a thousand (although we all played onstage together in another unit for about 14,000 or so.) The least was probably around twenty.

What ages are most of your concert attendants?

It varies. Just as the age in the band does.

Do you always play the same songs live, or do you vary?

We switch it up. We tend to rehearse sets of songs, but when we build the sets we like to bring in favourite songs, or ones that go over well live, as well as the new material we work on.

Do you have a regular place you play live often?

Not really, although we have done a lot of gigs at a bar in Ottawa called the Avant-Garde. We play locally as well as at various Prog Rock festivals, but obviously the local places are ones we go to more often.

What was your first gig like?

David: It went really well. It was at a bar called Cafe Dekcuf. That was a while back though and the band has changed a lot since. All of our gigs in this current line-up have been excellent.

Alex: Fun! It was fun to challenge myself.

Andrew: My first gig with the band was at a prog festival in North Carolina. We drove 13 hours each way and I had a water pistol fight with a child.

What was your latest gig?

Andrew: At a Soviet-themed bar four blocks from my house. I walked. No water fights...

David: A few weeks ago. At the Avant-Garde.

Have you had to cancel a gig?

Never.

Where have you played live this year?

Montreal, Ottawa, Calabogie.

Where do you plan to gig the coming year?

Ottawa, Montreal, Pembroke, Toronto,

When did you start to sell merchandise, and what do you have for sale?

We have several CDs from our old label (10T) and having been selling them since they were released in 2007 one 2009 (when we remember to bring them).

We also have been selling T-Shirts for about as long.

Where can people buy your merchandise?

Our page on Bandcamp has a link to merchandise like CDs and T-shirts.

What do you think about people downloading music instead of buying records now a days?

Andrew: Great for the consumer, not so great for the creator. It has created a culture where consumers feel they should be able to get any music they want for free (and often can!)

David: It seems a little like a step back. I remember people buying high fidelity stereo systems growing up. Now that paradigm has been supplanted by i phones and ear-buds and mp3s. While music is a lot more accessible now, which is good, it also seems to be listened to in less than ideal settings so that a lot of nuances and inner magics are unheard. I also think the sheer volume of new music is such that people tend to get overwhelmed by quantity and probably spend less time sinking into songs.

Alex: I like records, but I don't mind as long as they pay for it.

How do you think the music industry have changed because of this?

Andrew: There is far less money than in the past, but on the bright side the traditional gate-keepers are more easily circumvented.

David: What he said.

What do you think of my work?

I like what you are doing. I grew up getting all my information about bands through interviews and articles.

How do you think and know that this interview will help you in the music business?

Well, any information is a good thing. It seems that people take interviews a little more seriously than they do a band's self proclamations.

Do you have any role models or idols?

David: Certainly. I think my favourite band ever is Gentle Giant and I strive to capture a similar groove-oriented hard rock live sound with intricate arrangements and "outside" structures and harmonies. I love Stravinsky and Bartok and King Crimson and Jethro Tull. Much of the music I write has similar elements. Not only does their music inspire me, their work ethic and lives are inspiring too.

Alex: Benny Greb, and Gavin Harrison.

Why do you think that they exist?

Not sure really. In my experience, if music is in you, then spending a life expressing it will be far less miserable than not.

Is it easier to find inspiration from older bands, or bands that are more active today?

David: As far as composition and arranging go, older bands trump newer ones hands down for me. There was a much broader vocabulary and far more musical nuances. As far as energy and show goes, the newer bands have that in spades. Production techniques have come a long way when it comes to broader sound spectrums and that is very very exciting. In general though, while there are probably more amazing musicians now than ever before, the average seems to have gone down as well.

Alex: Both, I take inspiration from many different types of music.

What have been your biggest obstacles?

David: Prejudice and narrow mindedness.

What advice would you give other bands or artists?

David: Follow your heart above all else. Be idiosyncratic. Don't worry about what your perceived audience will like.

How do you get psyched for a gig?

Alex: Warm up.

David: Just going to a gig is energy building for me. I have been performing for decades so I really don't get nervous, but I do get excited.

Do you have any new material?

Yes. Always.

What are your web sites?

www.therebelwheel.com

<https://therebelwheel.bandcamp.com>

<http://therebelwheel.blogspot.com/>

<https://soundcloud.com/therebelwheel>

How can people reach?

We have contact info on our contact page at www.therebelwheel.com

What are your plans for the future?

Record another album (we are writing and rehearsing it now). Do more gigs. Get tighter. Keep on keeping on.

Do you have something to add?

I think Progressive Rock is becoming more popular now that a performance element is being respected in music again. It will probably never be as popular as it was in the golden era, but it seems to appeal to a lot more younger people than it has in quite a while. I have seen a few bands lately that have a proggy feel to them and am amazed at how popular they are. Our last few gigs seem to attract a far younger crowd than before and they were great!

Your bands fb and youtube link to interview.

<https://www.facebook.com/TheRebelWheel>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ucdPsV2Pr8&list=PLQI6dCsg_GARFGWRFZok8_RibDXS3zS4O

can I get your autograph?

Certainly!!!

my address

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