

1 **Interview 8: ER**

2 **Place: Skype to Los Angeles**

3 **Date: 18.08.2014**

4 **Transcription begins: 00:00:02**

5 **Transcription ends: 01:26:44**

6 **Recording ends: 01:27:18**

7 **TA-ER-1 FAMILY & MUSICAL BACKGROUND**

8 **INTERVIEWER**

9

10 *00:00:02 B.B. Okay, we're all fired up here so you can go right ahead.*

11 **E.R.**

12

13 00:00:05 E.R. Okay, good. The 'ten thousand hour' theory has come under fire as of late. I didn't
14 read the book (*it was Gladwell ...*) so I have very little background on it but I've become familiar
15 with the notion. As I mentioned in the book, one day I was sitting in the hot-tub and just for fun
16 decided to try to calculate the number of hours in terms of practice as well as professional playing
17 time, and somehow it seems like I forced all that cumulative experience into this 10,000 hour
18 paradigm; it seemed to roughly fit (*yeah*). But let's look at it as not so much a specific bench-mark
19 but just the idea that in the practice of anything that requires some level of skill, be it sport or music,
20 the person who has put in the time has a much better chance of succeeding. Just an example off the
21 top of my head; the football players or soccer (*right*), as we call it here, who do all the exercises
22 running around cones and such – they don't, of course, run around cones when they're on the field
23 but that experience and practice manoeuvrability allows them then to express themselves during
24 the course of the game. [...]. So in the case of drumming, let's say; if we play something and all of a
25 sudden we hear an accent on the cymbal and we'd like it to be a particular Zildjian cymbal [*laughs*]
26 that happens to be located on the left side of our drum set up and as we play something we finish
27 off on, let's say, the less opportune hand, then all of a sudden, in an effort to reach that cymbal, we
28 don't stand nearly as good a chance of reaching it in the time that we anticipate or might wish for.
29 The drummer who has put in enough time practicing (*uh-huh*) automatically will do a combination of
30 stickings in such a way so that he or she gets there with no problem which then takes one mental
31 preoccupation out of the equation (*sure, sure.*) So ... yeah ...

32 **INTERVIEWER**

33

34 *00:03:53 B.B. Is it possible to be creative without such a level of skill or competence? (Oh, sure) You*
35 *know some people point to Ringo Starr as being one of the most creative drummers in some respects*
36 *because he changed so much. Was that a product of serendipity and luck and right-man-right-place-*
37 *right-time or was it the ten thousand hours? I don't think he probably had the ten thousand hours for*
38 *example.*

39 **E.R.**

40

41

42 00:04:21 E.R. Maybe not. My first instinct was to answer well Paul McCartney was probably *[laughs]*
43 the driving force for much of that but ... I'm no Ringo expert, but when they first appeared on Ed
44 Sullivan my jazz *(yeah)* snobbishness ... I actually did think "wow, how would they sound if Elvin was
45 playing with them?" *[both laugh]* and they would have sounded like a mess! *(Yeah, sure)*. Watching
46 Ringo from the perspective of now, and the way he would play beats on the floor tom as opposed to
47 on a hi-hat, and I don't know the historical precedent for that, but it strikes me as a particularly
48 brilliant solution to a time-keeping task, if you will. *(I was going to say 'problem' but task is good.*
49 *Because problem-solving is much associated with creativity, of course)*. So he instinctively came up
50 with something that in hindsight we would say, wow, that was the perfect beat. 10,000 hours ... let's
51 put it this way. 10,000 hours is not required for either creative expression or excellence. 10,000
52 hours gives you a lot more in your toolbox to be much more versatile *(sure)* which then opens up
53 more creative avenues.

54 **INTERVIEWER**

55

56 00:06:14 B.B. Absolutely. I think that nails it pretty well; I like that. There was something else you
57 had, too, about the role of the drummer, and we might just dwell on that for a second. I think the two
58 words you used were 'accompanist' and 'enabler' which are two good words for what drummers do.
59 Is there any creativity attached to those roles, and if so where might it lie? Tricky question?

60 **E.R.**

61

62 00:06:48 E.R. No no no; not at all *(okay)*. Completely creative, because in the role of accompaniment
63 where it applies specifically to the drum set, the drummer is faced with an infinite number of choices
64 that he or she can make. Ringo playing on a floor tom as opposed to playing on a hi-hat; Harvey
65 Mason on 'Chameleon' anticipating the snare backbeat with that 16th note syncopation as opposed
66 to just playing on two and four *(mmm)*; two examples that come to mind *(right)*. The relative
67 dynamic of the various parts of the kit to one another, the relative dynamic of the whole of the kit to
68 the rest of the ensemble ... erm, you know when I was trying to do some recording work here and in
69 LA when there was a bunch of it to be had and I would talk to some of the guys in the biz - not
70 drummers - and very often John Robinson's name would come up as someone who knew how to
71 come up with a part, and these are the kind of projects where they are recording the thing over and
72 over and over again, and he didn't fall prey to the jazz drummer's thing of "I'm going to, or I must,
73 play it differently every time". He would hone that part, perfect it, and craft what was not only a
74 creative drum part but a very reliable drum part for the song *(right, right)* and so that's a form of
75 creativity that to my mind is very highly developed, yet at first glance may not fit our expectation of
76 "oh, that's a creative part".

77 **TA-ER-2 CHOICE AND CONTROL**

78

79 **INTERVIEWER**

80

81 00:09:06 B.B. Yeah, I understand. That looks at it nicely. You mentioned choice there and selecting
82 from possible options and the guy maybe who's put in quite a lot of his 10,000 hours is broadening
83 his options and his choices that are available to him. So how important to you is it, to your creativity,
84 to have choice and control over what you play?

85 **E.R.**
86

87 00:09:35 E.R. It's been said that the most important part of a pencil is the eraser *[laughs]* [...] so a lot
88 of the creativity comes from, let's say, a seasoning, of knowing maybe the best option, a note-to-
89 self "don't try that one again" (*right, right*). When I was younger, I always felt the need to mark a
90 recorded performance ... insecure ... a little bit like a dog needing to (*I know*) mark the spot. We
91 were listening back to a take of Mike Manieri and the thing is grooving along and then I did one of
92 these dopey things that I felt were like, my 'signature', and I remember Mike Manieri turned to me
93 with just a very disappointed look and said "Why did you do that?" (*Laughs*). I became confident that
94 my mark is just in, you know, attributes of touch, or however I played the subdivisions, and that was
95 signature enough and the song was more important (*yeah, sure*). And that's the thing that a lot of
96 pop drummers, if I may use the term, or rock drummers seem to get so well. So for example Levon
97 Helm, when I watch him it strikes me as a perfectly played drum part. There is nothing outstanding
98 drumming-wise except for the mere fact that it feels so damn good. It's just the right thing. So part
99 of the hours, whether it's 10,000 or not, serve I think to inform the developing musician what's best
100 for the music (*sure, sure*).

101 **INTERVIEWER**
102

103 00:12:00 B.B. *I think what I was getting at with choice and control is that when you move out of jazz,*
104 *you know, one way out here to rock or one way out here to (name's classical composer with whom*
105 *E.R. has worked) or one way out here to the movies, there are different constraints in terms of choice*
106 *selection. You know (yes), some things you can choose, some things you really shouldn't go near. Do*
107 *these constraints impact upon your creativity? As you walk into the Hollywood studio, do you feel*
108 *somehow "oh, today is not a creative day" or the toothpaste jingle "oh, today is not a creative day".*
109 *Is creativity pertaining to the genre?*

110 **E.R.**
111

112 00:12:44 E.R. No, I'm energised by the constraints.

113 **INTERVIEWER**
114

115 00:12:47 B.B. *Yeah, plenty of people are. So if you were an artist and I said to you only use the colour*
116 *blue, you'd find that attractive?*

117 **E.R.**
118

119 00:12:56 E.R. Yes ... and part of it is kind of just craft. It's the intrigue of the challenge of "what's the
120 best I can do this particular task?" (*uh-huh*). For some reason I'm reminded of when I work with
121 graphic artists, and generally that puts me slightly in the role of either client or producer, let's say
122 (*right*). My general instinct is to choose an artist based on the trust that I'm going to like what they
123 come up with, and I very really send them back to the drawing board (*mmm*). It would only be to
124 modify something if there is a particular need or call for something that has to function in a certain
125 way. So I would rarely go "Nah, I don't like that". As someone on the other side of the equation ... I
126 mean it's a little like [...] Seth MacFarlane recently did this movie, a comedy in the Wild West, he had
127 Joel McNeely, wonderful writer, do the score and Seth did not ask for any temps, there was no
128 demoing involved, and it was pretty much they went to the scoring stage ... wow, it was a surprise ...

129 because he trusted who he had brought into the larger creative whole, and he was able to let go. So
130 part of the creative equation often has to do with the other side; if people are willing to trust the
131 practitioner.

132 **INTERVIEWER**

133

134 *00:15:15 B.B. Yup, that's interesting. Trust and sharing are two qualities that have been very much*
135 *identified as essential to creativity. But just a nail you down a bit further, let's take a musical aspect,*
136 *let's say repetition. Now you have a jazz sensibility; repetition kind of moves in some ways in another*
137 *direction. Let's say you're playing with [names famous rock group with whom E.R. has played] and*
138 *you're on a tour and you've kind of nailed the parts. Is there a sense in which that repetition negates*
139 *creativity? Is it possible to be creative night after night in these stadium tours, let's say, with part-*
140 *playing?*

141 **E.R.**

142

143 *00:16:01 E.R. Yeah, I believe so because I would always ... when I was doing it there would always be*
144 *something just slightly different in the contour leading up to maybe an ensemble thing, something*
145 *like that, so I can get ... I'm one of those guys that easily amuses himself [laughs], so I can get pretty*
146 *interested in some minor aspect. But it's an interesting point and it came up yesterday because I'm*
147 *doing this [...] Concerto for Drum Set with the [...] at the [...] (great) in two or three weeks' time.*
148 *There are two cadenzas. Those form, to be honest, the bulk of the Concerto part of it. It's a great*
149 *piece, it's to be honest kind of densely written and because of the relative volumes of the drums to*
150 *orchestra plus the manoeuvrability of the orchestra, you know (yeah) it's a very large boat and I've*
151 *just got to paddle (mmm). I can't do the usual [snaps fingers and sings to demonstrate] kind of*
152 *ensemble things that I might enjoy with a big band or a very fleet-footed small group, so the*
153 *cadenzas become important. My instinct has always been to "okay, we'll see what happens", but I'm*
154 *actually kind of pre-writing the cadenza in a little more traditional concerto sense (yeah) because I*
155 *don't want to risk playing too long or too short (absolutely) and I want to get the good stuff in!*
156 *[laughs] (that makes a lot of sense!) [both laugh]. So I'm not going quite as far as our good friend*
157 *Neil Peart, you know, playing the same damn thing over and over again (right) because that's not*
158 *interesting, but at least shape-wise I am mapping out sort of what I want it to be, so I don't just go*
159 *off on a 'whatever' and then all of a sudden two minutes in I've got to wrap it up (yeah, I*
160 *understand) ... You know, it's not a jazz club! [both laugh].*

161 **INTERVIEWER**

162

163 *00:18:42 B.B. Funnily enough when you do have choice and control with your own bands and you*
164 *could play pretty much anything you wanted to play because you're directing the music - you may*
165 *have written the music at that point - how do you decide what to play under those circumstances?*
166 *Let me just refer you to something you said about 'finding the horizon line' I think was your phrase*
167 *and 'shaping the music'. Could you expand a little bit on that?*

168 **E.R.**

169

170 *00:19:17 E.R. Well, this is something I got from you [laughs] [...] and it's kind of, and I hope you'll*
171 *understand, it's an anti-drumming concept for lack of a better term. You had decided at a certain*
172 *point that you were going to kind of refocus your, let's say, emphasis or your drumming creativity*

173 into this ... when I say anti-drumming, not meeting the expectations of the drum dolts or geeks
174 (*right*) but also finding another path by means of the drum. So basically, following your lead of
175 establishing a creative drum expression by honouring things other than the obvious creative drum
176 expression. Does that make sense? (*Yeah, I think so*). I trust this sounds familiar to you? (*No, that*
177 *makes sense, absolutely*). So the creative impulse does not need to express itself in virtuosic flights
178 of fancy, it does not need to express itself in anything so apparent; in other words it may be so
179 creative that people don't even ... the listener's not even aware it's going on. Which is I think a very
180 creative way to do things. We can call it Ninja creativity (*yeah*).

181 **INTERVIEWER**

182

183 00:21:18 B.B. I remember once playing in a quartet and we were all set to improvise, all four of us,
184 and my contribution to the piece of music was silence throughout. Tacit throughout! [brilliant!]
185 Which of course had an enormous effect on the piece of music much to the amusement of ... [you just
186 gave me goose bumps] much to the amusement of the other three participants who then awarded
187 me 25% of the publishing royalties! [Both laugh][...]

188 **E.R.**

189

190 00:21:55 E.R. Years ago I went into a jazz club in Washington DC. The artist was a guy named Bob
191 Mover a saxophone player [...]. Paul Bley was playing piano. We got there in between sets: I didn't
192 hear any of the first set. The band gets back up on the bandstand, and Bley is just ... sitting there,
193 and let's say it was an eight minute tune ... he didn't play a single note until about six minutes in, and
194 the tension ... and of course there is a visual component because you're aware that someone is
195 there, different from a recording, so the visual component added an element of tension ... when is
196 this guy going to do something? (*yeah*) And so it made it quite delicious when he did play. The
197 silence is ... that's fantastic ...

198 **TA-ER-3 CREATIVITY AND SELF**

199

200 **INTERVIEWER**

201

202 00:23:10 B.B. Turning now to how you think about yourself ... do you consider yourself creative?

203 **E.R.**

204

205 00:23:17 E.R. Yeah [...] In other words, I'm not the smartest guy on the block but ... I feel like a
206 person who is compelled to find the solution to any given challenge or problem. I don't like to give
207 up, so ... whether it's these fucking computers, or [*laughs*] a door that is not closing properly or
208 something (*yeah*) ... I get intrigued by the challenge and I get interested and I just want the damn
209 thing to work (*sure, sure*) [*laughs*]. [...] If we equate creativity with some measure of honesty, this
210 makes you occasionally the ... I won't say the least popular but ... This started happening a few years
211 ago [unintelligible] plays a piece of music, it's horribly overplayed, it's to notey, annoying, all the
212 musicians are high-fiving each other going "yeah, yeah" (*I just missed the ensemble ... what ensemble*
213 *are you talking about or don't you want to tell me?*) This has happened on a few record dates (*okay,*
214 *fine, it doesn't matter*) ... some kind of quote unquote "jazz" thing. And were listening back and I'm
215 sitting or standing there and after all the high-fiving and self-congratulations I say "I'd like to ask this

216 one question". "Yeah, what?" "Why would anyone want to listen to this more than once?" and then
217 usually they are "oh, yeah..." They never thought of that (*yeah*). So for me, and it's not just a
218 recording craft question, it's an aesthetic one: is what we're doing worth a repeat visit? And I think
219 any good piece of art should be. Now some art is so wrenching to experience, in a good or bad way,
220 that it's hard to listen to again. I have some recordings that I've only listened to once because I
221 almost can't bear to go back to them even though (*mmm*) I intellectually appreciate how good they
222 are (*mmm. Yeah, it's interesting*). I'm not sure if there is an emotional component there or what ... I
223 think we've all experienced that with certain films. Wow, it's great, but I can't imagine wanting to sit
224 through that again (*yeah, yeah*). For me the repeatability of the experience is a pretty good ...
225 (*measure?*) measure, yeah; for me that kind of qualifies or quantifies it (*yeah*) [...].

226 **INTERVIEWER**
227

228 *00:26:47 B.B. Do you know what motivates you to be creative? Where does your creativity come*
229 *from? [...] You're kind of built like this in some way? I guess; maybe that was an early appeal of jazz*
230 *perhaps. The sense that people were living on some kind of an edge.*

231 **E.R.**
232

233 *00:27:18 E.R. My first instinct to be honest is, and I think it's partly why you and I both became*
234 *drummers ... I don't know you psychologically that well, but in my case there is a definite want of*
235 *some measure of control (*yeah*). When I play very open, just as you played by not playing, by being*
236 *tacet, the general obvious response would be "how selfless that is; why, you're so generous to the*
237 *music", but in reality I see that as we're being completely manipulative or we're the string-pullers*
238 *because we're determining the outcome with far greater results (*yes*) than if we just play in parallel.*

239 **INTERVIEWER**
240

241 *00:28:11 B.B. Absolutely, and isn't the drum kit and enormously powerful beast with which to do*
242 *that? (Exactly) [...] Instantly change everything [laughs]. Drummers change everything.*

243 **E.R.**
244

245 *00:28:27 E.R. Yes. A bad band ... well, that's the old quote ... a bad band with a good drummer will*
246 *still sound pretty good but a good band with a bad drummer is sometimes hard to sit through.*

247 **INTERVIEWER**
248

249 *00:28:40 B.B. Can we deduce from that lovely little epithet that there is something about drummers'*
250 *creativity or drummers' understanding of creativity that might be different from pitched-instrument*
251 *musicians' understanding of creativity?*

252 **E.R.**
253

254 *00:28:57 E.R. I think so (*me too*) in part because ... and I've used this expression before ... it's real-*
255 *time architecture (*uh-huh*). The best advice I ever got from [...] was "always compose when you*
256 *play". (*Yeah, lovely*). It's a playground. To use the word 'sandbox' again, you know, we can ... every*

257 piece of music we play is this marvellous three-dimensional spatial (*yes*) universe, however big or
258 small that might be, or dramatic, or non-dramatic, it's filled with those possibilities. So even ... I
259 mean, a 28.5 second breakfast cereal commercial doesn't give you a whole lot of elbow room (*right!*)
260 but still there are some choices, albeit far less than a larger-form piece (*yeah*).

261 **INTERVIEWER**

262

263 *00:30:28 B.B. Talking about, which weren't really, communicating, how important to you is it that*
264 *other people consider you creative? Is that important, or not?*

265 **E.R.**

266

267 *00:30:38 E.R. Only important to the extent that they're listening, if 'other people' would mean the*
268 *other musicians I'm working with. If they are listening, then they are tacitly acknowledging the*
269 *creativity and we get a better result. I did a project with [...] and [...]. [...]. He booked a hotel*
270 *ballroom in [...]. The same night there were two or three other events that were a lot louder than*
271 *this trio. I felt bad because the guy had spent the money and the audience turnout wasn't that great,*
272 *but [...] came to me near the end of the rehearsal and said "it doesn't matter what I play. It's having*
273 *[laughs] no effect [on the project leader]". Here's a guy, and this is useful in our discussion, here's a*
274 *guy that, typical of a lot of guitarists and pianists, practises and plays so much alone that they don't*
275 *know how to open themselves up through the collaborative or interactive experience. In that case,*
276 *you know, he's probably got more than 10,000 hours but it's to his detriment. So let's redefine the*
277 *10,000 hours. If that doesn't include a healthy combination of performance experience and*
278 *collaborative experience (absolutely) then ... If he wants to be another Segovia, great; 10,000 hours*
279 *in the practice shed will be terrific. But even then if he hasn't played in front of others ... [.... 00:33.13*
280 *- 00:37:24 Two stories about others with whom the participant has not performed were irrelevant*
281 *to the topic and have not been transcribed]*

282 **INTERVIEWER**

283

284 *00:37:24 B.B. Looking a little bit about composing and writing, could you tell me something about*
285 *how and why you came to that? Many drummers don't. [...] Was there something lacking about the*
286 *drum kit that couldn't contain your creativity? That might be one aspect of it?*

287 **E.R.**

288

289 *00:37:51 E.R. I just had seen that if you were a musician, you composed (uh-huh). I always remember*
290 *composing whole things, every time I walked to school, in my head, you know, I could hear all the*
291 *polyphony ... sometimes I would recreate an album, just sing the whole album as I walked ... other*
292 *times I'd just be fantasising about writing something. I don't possess the mechanical skills to do it*
293 *anywhere near the level of my fantasy, so I had to content myself with what I'm able to do (yeah).*
294 *Composing takes a tremendous amount of mental discipline ... there are rules of polyphony and*
295 *harmony ... I got a lovely gift from [...] years ago. I'd asked if I could study with him. He said no. I said*
296 *"Why?" He said "I want to keep our friendship intact!" [both laugh] (right, good answer). He gave me*
297 *a gift of Bach Chorales [...] and inserted inside was a full piece of paper with two words from the top*
298 *corner all the way down; voice-leading, voice-leading, voice-leading, voice-leading, voice-leading,*
299 *maybe 1000 times. If you're writing for a multitude of musicians, there are three ways to go about it.*
300 *You learn the craft and you write everything that needs to be written. You have the inspiration and*

301 you have an orchestrator flesh out all the mechanical (*yeah*) parts. Or you get a commission and you
302 show up with a couple of ideas on two dinner napkins, and then “okay everybody, let’s make
303 something out of this” and that can be a legitimate form of creativity.

304 **INTERVIEWER**

305

306 *00:40:41 B.B. I was more interested really in the ‘why’ rather than the ‘how’; [...] and we had touched*
307 *on control and of course there is an aspect for we drummers, and I’m only really giving you my view*
308 *which I should not do really, is that it enabled me to control the kind of audio environment that I was*
309 *going to be heard in [ah]. In a way you can design a suit that is most comfortable to you, there’s an*
310 *element of that.*

311 **E.R.**

312

313 *00:41:08 E.R. That wasn’t ... (didn’t enter your thinking?) ... not quite, no; almost the answer is like*
314 *why, why not? I like melodies. Sure, the trio I had with what I call my [...] trio with [...] and [...]; I think*
315 *I felt almost a responsibility to write something (yes, if your name is at the top I felt that too, yeah).*

316 **INTERVIEWER**

317

318 *00:41:50 B.B. Was it connected in any way with the idea of finding your own voice as a musician? [...]*
319 *I think somewhere in the book you mentioned that [...] was quite instrumental in getting you to find*
320 *your own voice and talking about that a bit?*

321 **E.R.**

322

323 *00:42:10 E.R. Writing-wise he was not all encouraging (no), he was dismissive. [...] The thing that*
324 *really got me into writing besides the occasional tune or being a member of a band and realising that*
325 *here was a chance to earn some publishing money, was when a friend of mine asked me if I’d like to*
326 *write music for a theatrical production (yeah, I remember this). I jumped at the chance. So the ‘why’*
327 *is a little bit connected to the ‘how’ for me, in that if I get a commission I immediately start to hear*
328 *some ideas. Otherwise I’m not brimming with ideas and my schedule’s been such that I haven’t set*
329 *pen or pencil to paper in quite some time (right, right). So the creative act in terms of organised*
330 *music, in terms of writing, let’s say, for me depends on a little bit of external push.*

331 **INTERVIEWER**

332

333 *00:43:26 B.B. Where do you stand on the old hoary one about can you be creative on your own in a*
334 *room with no one else listening? In other words, is there an element of communication necessary in*
335 *this creativity? Has someone got to hear this, otherwise how do we know you’ve been creative?*

336 **E.R.**

337

338 *00:43:48 E.R. Good question. Bill Evans was asked that ... there is some video interview, I think it’s*
339 *his brother poses questions, and he answered if he were playing in a closet by himself or playing on*
340 *a stage, for him the performance would be the same (uh-huh). And when I’m practising this cadenza,*
341 *for example, I’m having as much fun or more playing it in the solitude of my studio than I anticipate*

342 I'll have ... [...] I mean it is just part of the gig, I have to do it. I'm having more fun just kind of working
343 on it (*yeah*). So creativity is definitely possible in the solo environment. It doesn't pay the bills
344 though so you have to ... [*laughs*] (*get out and about*) ... Sorry to bring that up ... (*that's always in*
345 *there!*). That enables us to be more creative in other realms; there's a practicality to it ... I mean
346 Stravinsky, if I understand this correctly, he didn't wait for flashes of inspiration, he had a composing
347 schedule (*yeah*). Every morning... (*yeah, I've heard the same thing. If you wait for inspiration you'll*
348 *starve to death!*) [*Laughs*] ... you won't get much done ... When we talk about the constraints
349 energising a certain creative impulse, the constraints of a particular piece of music or timeframe (*it*
350 *focuses the mind*).

351 **TA-ER-4 CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION**

352

353 **INTERVIEWER**

354

355 *00:45:53: B.B. How about creating with others collaboratively? Collaborative creativity ... You know*
356 *we drummers pride ourselves on ... being able to get along, to motivate, to enable, to enable others*
357 *sometimes to create. [...]. How does collaborating with others determine your understanding of*
358 *creativity?*

359 **E.R.**

360

361 *00:46:27 E.R. I guess in a larger more universal sense everyone is creative every day of their lives if*
362 *they choose to be open to receiving the other (yes, yes) and sometimes the more creative act is truly*
363 *listening, which I'm not good at ... Half the time when I'm talking to someone, you know, like*
364 *everyone else, I'm formulating what I'm going to say next (yeah, of course yeah). I like the sound of*
365 *my own voice; actually now I'm beginning to hate the sound of my own voice [both laugh]. Yeah,*
366 *collaboration allows for bigger things to happen let's say (mmm); opera, film ... these are the more*
367 *collaborative (yeah) and larger art forms. Before there was film there was opera – Wagner*
368 *[indecipherable] this is the shit, you know ... and it is amazing, the energy of so many people, not*
369 *always working in a unified sense, but somehow if someone has the ability to rein all that energy*
370 *towards some sort of goal-line, whether it is a common goal or not ... and so a Steven Spielberg, say,*
371 *excels and revels in that creative atmosphere (oh, yeah) he needs that ... If you just left him alone*
372 *with a word processor or a sketch pad ... nah [Both laugh]. I'm not demeaning what he could do*
373 *there, but here is a guy that needs a canvas that requires a lot of parts.*

374 **INTERVIEWER**

375

376 *00:48:39 B.B. If one talks to quite a lot of drummers, as I'm doing, you quite often come across the*
377 *idea of the drummer and the leader. So there's the leader of the band [...] and the drummer often*
378 *feels his creativity is collaboratively created with this guy, and this guy ... there's a mutual exchange,*
379 *isn't there? The drummer provides a lot to the leader, but the leader in return enables and creates*
380 *the [...] context in which the drummer can be creative. So, many times you'd be surprised how much*
381 *you're talking to drummer A and he's telling you about the creativity of bandleader B [...]. [Drummer*
382 *A would speak of leader B as being a helpful force or a pain in the ass?] Oh no, a helpful force; [oh*
383 *okay] occasionally a pain in the ass but broadly speaking a helpful person who gave drummer A the*
384 *creative context; the place in which he could be creative. So there's usually a sense of gratefulness to*
385 *that sometimes difficult bugger at the front of the band somewhere; in my case perhaps Robert Fripp*

386 [right], a difficult ornery cuss, my kind of [names principal leader for whom E.R. has worked]
387 probably.

388 **E.R.**
389

390 00:50:12 E.R. Exactly; and with that friction sometimes these guys intuitively ... you know, I guess
391 'Machiavellian' would be an apt word ... they like to lay fireworks and gasoline all over the place
392 (*laughs*) and toss a couple of matches into it – “okay, let’s see what happens” (*right, yes*). That’s not
393 my personality, and more and more when I’m working with leaders I enjoy the leader who trusts my
394 choices and lets me do my thing (*of course*); they concentrate on the bigger picture, but don’t
395 provide too much direction (*sure, sure*). [...] I think when you get to a certain age it’s just like ... a lot
396 of times they’ll go “oh, I’ve never thought of that, that’s a good idea” (*yes, yes interesting*). When I
397 do these orchestral concerts with [...], it’s almost all brushes. For much of it it’s so subtle what I’m
398 doing that it’s fairly unremarkable, but every once in a while I may shape something just a little
399 different, and I’m always watching him, but I’ll instinctively look up and I’ll see him smile (*laughs*)
400 and I enjoy that because he’s done all the writing and he’s conducting and I’m pleased that he enjoys
401 that thing. So I guess we could say the important part of the creative process, I think, is
402 acknowledgement or recognition (*that’s interesting*) by one of the collaborators. (*You have*
403 *communicated creativity to people, that’s right*). Right, and no acknowledgement would then ... in
404 other words, I think we could say Bill that, at least in the nature of the work we do drumming, we
405 are not 100% self-reliant in terms of what we come up with creatively or how we gauge the
406 effectiveness of it.

407 **TA-ER-5 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN OWN WORK** 408

409 **INTERVIEWER**
410

411 00:52:57 B.B. *Indeed not. [...] I did ask if you would be able to pinpoint areas of your own work [...] where you felt particularly creative and that you could somehow [...] pick out for me three things that you thought were as creative as you get, no matter how you value that, or how you define that [...].*

414 **E.R.**
415

416 00:54:50 E.R. One thing that really comes to mind was a recording with Bob Mintzer’s big band. [...] I
417 always mix up the album and the song; one of them is called [...] and one of them is called [...]. [...].
418 The reason I like it, and I think this may address a larger thing; as much as I love small group playing
419 and the creative moments in that are just very ... I feel most creative I think when I play in trio with
420 [...] and [...] because it’s so anti-drumming (*uh-huh*) ... every single cymbal pulse starts to carry a lot
421 of meaning (*yeah*), [...] we did a very nice arrangement of the old tune Wichita Lineman (*oh right*)
422 [...] (*I know it well*). It was just a little brush idea that I came up with that sort of combines this little
423 Jimmy Webb motif for flutes and piano with something that I heard Chico Hamilton play years ago,
424 so the Jimmy Webb thing cadences [sings to demonstrate] and Chico Hamilton would have [sings to
425 demonstrate] played over the bar line (*yeah*). I always liked that, I always thought that was a very
426 cool thing and that’s not something I’ve heard other guys do. So, in that case, even though it’s a trio
427 it’s a very ensemble moment. So my most creative expression, just by these two examples at least
428 (*mmm*), are completely in the context of an arrangement or, in a more academic sense, a
429 constrained structure. So I think my most creative work is within a framework. In other words, if, like
430 “okay, Peter, the stage is yours (*yeah*) play a drum solo” and partly because of all the toxic

431 associations we have about drum solos [...]. So that's two examples, erm ... and then one that's erm
432 [...] let's say with [...]. The one thing that comes to mind let's say, it's a simple pattern that I play on
433 [...] where instead of playing a ride pattern which is [sings to demonstrate] or doing the Billy Cobham
434 offbeat [sings to demonstrate], I had [sings to demonstrate] so I played everything but the downbeat
435 (*right*); the three 16ths after the downbeat. That always seemed ... that's kind of cool (*yeah*), like my
436 one contribution to the drum beat lexicon. I peaked at 24! (*yeah!*) [both laugh].

437 **INTERVIEWER**
438

439 *01:00:00 B.B. So in all these examples, something was different for you at the end of this. You'd*
440 *somehow understood something about the music in a way that you hadn't understood it before? You*
441 *played it in some way ... or something new had emerged from this moment of self-defined creativity*
442 *or you'd learnt something that you might be able to take on to some other thing? [...]* *All of those*
443 *things maybe ...*

444 **E.R.**
445

446 *01:00:42 E.R. My first impulse Bill to be honest is no; my reaction was just "that was pretty cool".*

447 **INTERVIEWER**
448

449 *01:00:47 B.B. Uh-huh; that's a very modest evaluation of your most creative moments if I may say so*
450 *[both laugh].*

451 **E.R.**
452

453 *01:00:54 E.R. Yeah, that's all ... I just sort of did it and went "yeah, that's pretty cool!" (uh-huh, okay).*
454 *That's as far as I'm willing to go with it (yeah, I understand). I think in a larger sense the people that*
455 *appreciate or enjoy whether it's a sense of touch or just the amount of space and even in those*
456 *cases, without engaging in false modesty, it's really an emulation of what I like most about the*
457 *drummers I've enjoyed listening to (mmm). I start off each semester with my students saying we can*
458 *do a year's worth of lessons in about 30 seconds if you're interested (laughs) in the secret; just play*
459 *what you would like to hear next (yeah, it's a great line). You can't play what I would like to hear, or*
460 *you think I might want to hear next, you don't know that, and I can't presuppose or waste my time*
461 *worrying about what Steve Gadd might want to hear next when he walks into the club that I'm*
462 *playing. I don't know (sure).*

463 **INTERVIEWER**
464

465 *01:02:04 B.B. There was a question earlier ... I think I brushed up against the idea of how do you*
466 *select what you're going to play, and there's the answer, right there (yeah). You play what you want*
467 *to hear next, that's the answer that question (yeah). It's a really nice answer too, really succinct.*
468 *(Rare for me!) (laughs).*

469 **INTERVIEWER**
470

471 01:02:29 B.B. *I've just got two; I've got [...] I've got [...] and was there a third one you were just*
472 *talking about?*

473 **E.R.**
474

475 01:02:35 E.R. [...] *Oh yeah I know it, I have it.* Just for a few bars I go onto the cymbal pattern; it's on
476 the restatement of the melody at the beginning (uh-huh). Yeah, it's no big deal. [...]. The [...] [...]
477 challenge was always to play something that wasn't typical (*yeah, same in King Crimson too*). [...] [...]
478 One time, I think I mentioned this in the book, I said to [the band leader] "I think this would be fun,
479 instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, let's just set up a groove" (*yeah*) and he said "well, let me
480 hear it". So I started playing something kind of simple, and he waves me to stop and goes "what's
481 fun about that?"! (*laughs*) [...] Get off your ass and play something original.

482 **TA-ER-6 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN WORK OF OTHERS**
483

484 **INTERVIEWER**
485

486 01:03:50 B.B. [...] *Could you point to three drummers living or dead whom you consider world-*
487 *beating, nuclear-level creative; as creative as you get?*

488 **E.R.**
489

490 01:04:12 E.R. Elvin Jones. [*Laughs*] (*funny, his name comes up a bit!*). I bet it does. In part because ...
491 well, he was a whirlwind of not only creativity, a whirlwind of polyrhythmic expression, but
492 stylistically it's almost impossible for me to find a lineage that you might find with most other
493 drummers. I mentioned once to Chick Corea, I said Tony Williams was like a gift from the moon, I
494 think I said, and Chick said well, I know what you mean, but ... [...] there was a laboratory of sorts in
495 Boston and there were two drummers he mentioned, guys I'd never heard of, but I actually met one
496 of them a couple of years back - he works for the Post Office - I forget the names of the two
497 gentlemen but they would get together every few days, and okay, today we'll set the drums up
498 backwards, or today will do this or today will do that (*uh-huh*) [...] but Chick, having come from the
499 Boston area, felt that that there was some lineage from these guys to Tony to beyond, but then
500 Chick raised the rhetorical white elephant "tell me where Elvin's style comes from" and Elvin talks
501 about Shadow Wilson (*uh-huh*) ... probably Jo Jones and then even Philly Joe, undoubtedly some
502 Max but ... not only the triplets but the dynamic shape of the way he played on the kit (*in between*
503 *the cracks, as they sometimes say*) well, not even that, but something a little more ... just the soft to
504 loud and the loud to soft, and I sometimes wonder if it was just the way the drums were recorded,
505 that some drums seemed to leap out a little more than others. It might be the case, because the
506 floor tom always seemed to be a little softer, because they only had that one ... (*yeah that's*
507 *interesting, I hadn't thought of that*).

508 **INTERVIEWER**
509

510 01:06:55 B.B. *Another nice line you used about Elvin - I think it was you - about him trying to sound*
511 *like 300 drummers at once? (yeah) that's a lovely idea too (yeah, that was me). He succeeded! (The*
512 *African drum choir incarnate) yeah.*

513 **E.R.**
514

515 01:07:11 E.R. The other two names that come instantly to mind; Mel Lewis, even though his choices
516 were almost never outrageous but they were always perfect. The contemporary equivalent to Mel
517 Lewis would have been Carlos Vega (*uh-huh*) in that it just seemed like everything they played was
518 just kind of perfect (*interesting*) and there's a wonderful creativity in that. And then Paul Motion
519 (*yeah, yeah*) because he was kind of outrageously ... he was the closest thing to an abstract painter
520 (*yeah*) [...]. He thumbed his nose at convention in a much more interesting way to me than a guy
521 let's say like Han Bennink (*mmm*) who certainly flouts convention but (*there's something of the*
522 *circus act in there, isn't there?*) A little bit. So those would be my three candidates.

523 **INTERVIEWER**
524

525 01:08:27 B.B. *You've got Elvin, Mel, Carlos and Paul. You have to kick one out for me.*

526 **E.R.**
527

528 01:08:35 E.R. Okay; I'll kick Carlos out unfortunately [...]. [...] I felt Bernard Purdie also took whatever
529 [...] ... whatever was happening with R&B he codified it and did a thing in the delivery of it (*yeah,*
530 *yeah*) that I never heard before or since. Maybe I'll put Bernard in there, instead of Mel.

531 **INTERVIEWER**
532

533 01:09:21 B.B. *A possible way of defining this is ... was drumming different from the time before they*
534 *were to the time when they weren't?*

535 **E.R.**
536

537 01:09:32 E.R. Put Bernard instead of Mel; Mel was definitely a lineage (*yeah he was, yeah*) sort,
538 although his solutions to it were brilliant ... he came out of Shelly ...

539 **TA-ER-7 REFLECTION ON THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO**
540 **ENACT CREATIVITY**
541

542 **INTERVIEWER**
543

544 01:09:45 B.B. *And we all know that pinning this stuff on one person is difficult because we're all part*
545 *of this massive family that's sort of bumbling along in some way, not entirely sure of what we're*
546 *doing at any particular time, borrowing begging and stealing from everybody, and that's fine ...*
547 *that's just how creativity works, there's nothing wrong with at all. You've been around for a while [...]*
548 *and you've seen a lot of changes in the drum scene. Is there anything that's happened to make*
549 *creativity more or less possible you think? [...] Is your job easier now or harder? [...]*

550 **E.R.**
551

552 01:10:54 E.R. Music making's easier but it's less often in terms of going into the recording studio ...
553 that ritual is something I experience with far fewer frequency. So that's changed.

554 **INTERVIEWER**

555

556 *01:11:11 B.B. I suppose I'm steering you towards automation; computers and automation. Music*
557 *technology ... is that making anything easier or harder?*

558 **E.R.**

559

560 01:11:25 E.R. In the old days you could never fix a drum part (*right*) [...] Now you can actually, you
561 know, with the cutting and pasting and editing possibilities move one thing slightly to the left or
562 right. That's pretty great, because you can have a terrific performance and just one thing misfired, or
563 one of the other players didn't quite hit something, let's say in the last chord ... that's an easy fix. So
564 the creative energy in a recording session ... let's say we're doing a trio recording, and on the last
565 chord the bass player came in a little early or late, and instead of worrying about shall we re-cut
566 that, the engineer just fixes that [snaps fingers] and we go to the next tune (*right*). To fix little bugs
567 doesn't impede the arc or flow of, let's say, the creative energy of that day (*excellent*). At the same
568 time, if I get called to do a project, we are recording to tape, there's going to be no fixing ... I love
569 that. I love the commitment that is required by everyone in the room (*I like that too*), the attention
570 level is just a little bit sharper ... (*yeah, I think we listeners instinctively know that*).

571 **INTERVIEWER**

572

573 *01:13:10 B.B. The opposite end of that is of course when you listen to some math-metal drummer*
574 *with three bass drums playing ridiculously computerised. You know that the hand of God has*
575 *separated you from him, that science has come in the way there between whatever he could do,*
576 *which might have been great, but he's been computerised to death and there is no humanity left in*
577 *the performance. It's the exact opposite of that.*

578 **E.R.**

579

580 01:13:37 E.R. Right ... all the pioneering work that drummers have done in terms of metric
581 modulation, superimposition, and then you know like the mind-blowing stuff which Weckl and
582 Vinnie did which then led to ... when I hear what Chris Dave is doing now I'm fascinated by it, I
583 appreciate it intellectually. Do I want to hear it again? No, I can barely make it through a whole
584 performance (*yeah, yeah*). I get it, it's amazing (*can I leave now?*) yeah, exactly [both laugh]. If I go
585 somewhere where the drummer is just playing brushes all night but the shit's swingin' (*mmm*) you
586 know, I'll stay all night. [...] When we are younger we might put posters of Ferraris on our dormitory
587 wall, or photos of a swimsuit model we get off on and all that stuff and maybe when you get older
588 it's not quite as interesting (*sure*). I don't know whether that's a universal in drumming or in all art
589 [...]. We like what we like.

590 **TA-HT-8 PERFORMING IN PUBLIC**

591 **INTERVIEWER**

592

593 01:15:19 B.B. Tell me a little bit about performing in public and audiences, these funny people on the
594 other side of your drum set. There are some people out there called the public. How do you see these
595 people, this audience in respect of your creativity? Are they a help? Are they a hindrance? Are they
596 essential partners in co-creating some sense of creativity?

597 **E.R.**
598

599 01:15:50 E.R. Depending on the lighting, half the time you can't see them, and if you can see them
600 you're watching some jerk checking his iPhone. It's fun when they like it, I enjoy playing for people,
601 it's a part of the equation of playing music in public and it's gratifying when someone likes it, but
602 actually a weird thing happens to me, Bill, when I play. A lot of times by the end of the concert the
603 last thing I want to do is say hello to anybody. I want to hide away (*uh-huh*) and so if the audience
604 liked it, or didn't even, doesn't affect my perception of what happened on the stage (*yeah, yeah*).
605 I'm not that ... I don't really give a fuck about the audience. You can quote me on that (*okay*).

606 **INTERVIEWER**
607

608 01:16:47 B.B. So a couple of thousand people in a tent in Germany digging [...], obviously (oh, it's so
609 annoying just the thought of it) [laughs] ... quite a level of communication going on there. It is
610 different ... but you may say that has very little impact upon you ...

611 **E.R.**
612

613 01:17:12 E.R. I think if you're playing music that has a fair amount of kinetic or actual energy ... if the
614 audience responds in kind, sure, then there's something bigger than the sum of the parts going on
615 (*right*); there is an excitement level, and with a good band, the band will focus (*yeah*) a bit more.
616 They get very like ... alright, we're really in the zone. But for a lot of the music I play, the stuff that's
617 at the softer dynamic level, if the audience is very quiet and you sense that they're listening (*that's*
618 *another pleasure*) that's helpful. (*It's helpful and it's another pleasure, yeah, that's interesting*).

619 **INTERVIEWER**
620

621 01:18:02 B.B. Do you ... so those are some of the things you like (sorry, I do care about the audience)
622 no, no, I understand, those are some of the things you like and dislike about performing in public. But
623 supposing there was a decree from the White House tomorrow which said you are not allowed, you
624 are longer licensed to play in public - you could still play with your friends, you could still play at other
625 people's houses and stuff; maybe even make records - but there is no public performance any more
626 for E.R. Would that be a real sadness? If I put it that way round maybe you think it's slightly
627 differently ...

628 **E.R.**
629

630 01:18:41 E.R. Yeah, that's a good point. I would miss it. [...]

631 **INTERVIEWER**
632

633 01:18:58 B.B. *I think I see drumming as a social inter-reaction between me, other musicians and an*
634 *audience (yeah. It's fun when it's swinging and you happen to look out and people have a smile on*
635 *their face, it's fun. Okay, point well taken!) [...].*

636 **TA-ER-9 REFLECTION ON MEANING AND CHANCE TO ADD**

637 **INTERVIEWER**

638

639 01:19:29 B.B. *Just five minutes; we're nearly there. Some reflections; given everything you've said so*
640 *far about creativity in your work, is there anything that you don't think we've covered? Just*
641 *something that came up briefly; do you think there is anything special about the way drummers*
642 *construe creativity in music performance as opposed to other musicians? [...]*

643 **E.R.**

644

645 01:20:03 E.R. [A lengthy story about the lateral thinking of war time mathematicians has been
646 omitted 01:20:03-01:22:13]. A drummer does not have the means at his or her disposal of melodic
647 expression, excepting of course we have implied melodic ... we don't have harmonic functionality in
648 the traditional sense. Therefore, we are the one member of a collaborative that's [indecipherable]
649 improvising group. [...]. Therefore we function in a very different manner of shaping harmonic
650 movement, of implying melodic content, of inferring (*very good*) things which we do not expressly
651 play on our instrument because it's not in the traditional sense a tonal instrument, you know (*right*).
652 [...] So I think the drums are unique and it gives the drummer and interesting form of power or
653 influence with the other instruments in that regard, because we don't meddle in those areas (*very*
654 *interesting; very succinctly put*). [...].

655 **TA-ER-10 PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERVIEW**

656 **INTERVIEWER**

657

658 01:24:13 B.B. [...], *is there anything else you think ... "why didn't this guy Bruford ask me that thing*
659 *that was so obvious that he should have asked me" that I've now forgotten to ask you? [...]* *Maybe*
660 *we've covered a lot...*

661 **E.R.**

662

663 01:24:39 E.R. I think we did. I think the questions are all excellent; several unexpected ones ... (*good*)
664 which were very fun (*good; we like unexpected!*) yeah ... and you got me thinking, I'm grateful for
665 that, and for your attention and honouring me by including me. I can't wait to read the results. [...]

666 **INTERVIEWER**

667

668 01:26:41 B.B. *I just want to thank you a million, I really very much appreciate it.*

669 01:26:44 Transcription ends.

670 01:27:18 Recording ends.