B.B. Let’s start with something pretty easy [...]; why drums? Why not tuba? [Both laugh].

You probably get a few more calls when you play drums, I think [both laugh]. I just think it was something directly connected to seeing [...] play. I always could see ... I was going to gigs so young and stuff, and I’m sure seeing you as a kid and [...] and stuff ... Maybe I was drawn to the drums because it was the most visual, because it was the easiest to work out what they were doing in order to make a sound, because it’s the instrument with the most exaggerated motion, isn’t it? (That’s really interesting. That’s such an obvious and simple explanation and I’ve never heard anybody say it quite like that. Of course ... because a young person is trying to understand what’s going on). Because if you’ve got a guitar or something it’s all really micro-movements, and you can’t really understand, like, how is that sound corresponding to the movement, but if you see the drums ... I mean if you hit a crash cymbal that’s so obvious or say you’re sitting at a kit and each of your limbs is applying to each of the sound sources it’s really kind of obviously right there in front of you. I sometimes think of that and think, yeah, that could have been the reason, and there was something more immediate with the drums, I suppose ... and then just first sitting at a kit, it just seemed to feel like it was something I could do, and so ...

Well how long between these early feelings of “oh, drums I can see how that works” to sitting at a kit?

I must’ve been maybe nine or ten ... I think the first time I sat at a kit that I can remember was when [...] were making [...] in Switzerland. They were rehearsing in that casino on the side of the lake, and then [the group’s drummer] was playing and I said “is it okay if I have to go?” or he said “have a go” or something, and then I just started to play or to make a noise on the kit. There was ... something happened (yeah) and I kind of thought “I like this”, and so then I began in earnest
to play, or to consciously think I should go upstairs and have a go on the drums again, when I was
ten or something. That was when it started I suppose.

INTERVIEWER

00:03:40 B.B. Were your Mum and Dad consistently supportive, or marginally supportive, or hesitant,
or did they ever express disapproval?

Y.O.

00:03:52 Y.O. I think they chose a kind of good middle ground which was almost to leave me alone
with it but always say “upstairs there is a drum kit; any time you would like to play, you can”, so that
I think was a good thing because a) having a room in a house that even though […] it wasn’t very
soundproof or very big […] but it didn’t really matter because there was room enough to play a bit,
so it was like a neutral encouragement; “okay; do it if you want to”, but they weren’t trying to groom
me to be some kind of classical child prodigy or something … which in the other kind of aspect I wish
they had a bit [both laugh] because I would have advanced faster if I’d been told “go up and practice,
now! Come on!”

INTERVIEWER

00:05:13 B.B. That’s interesting … we parents never quite know where to draw that line (I bet). It’s
very hard. You don’t want to put a young child off … you don’t want to turn him into a hothouse ...
But would you consider that you were a good student of the drums?

Y.O.

00:05:35 Y.O. Not for a long time [indecipherable]. I think if I’m honest, I didn’t know how to practice
for a long time. So probably not until into my early 20s when I got really serious. I think up until then
I’d just survived on whatever natural talent or aptitude that I had for it. Whereas if I had had that
Tony Williams type of thing “I’m going to practice eight hours a day as a teenager and just appear”,
then who knows? But maybe it might have stymied a kind of natural feeling for the drums instead of
seeing it as a kind of academic exercise. Because they did try to take me to a couple of teachers.
There was a guy called Joel … (Joel Rothman?) yeah, right, so I went over to his place and he had a
flat in the West End and all he had was a practice kit, and I just couldn’t get with practice kits (mmm)
… I just thought “this isn’t drums at all, I can’t really get with it at all” …

INTERVIEWER

00:06:56 B.B. How many lessons would you have had with Joel?

Y.O.

00:06:58 Y.O. Probably maybe two or three … the first thing he did was he said “I’ll play some piano
and you just do what you like on this kit, on the pads” and I was like “but there’s no sound coming
out and it’s just like playing on a table” [laughs] … but I think that was maybe an extension of … in
school I wasn’t really academic, so I didn’t really know how to apply myself. So I came at it maybe
round the other way really (yeah). So then when I was professional at 19 or something, I started to realise hey, there’s lots of really good players out there [laughs] ... I don’t really know what I’m doing and so I tried to find a way to practice. And then I went to see Bob Armstrong (yep) ... I went to him for six lessons, but he ended up saying “don’t come to me anymore” [both laugh] because I would turn up and just try to busk it essentially, he just said “look, there’s no point in you coming here if you haven’t spent any time on any of these exercises”, and absolutely right. But him saying that to me and I came home and just thought “wow; okay”... That actually kick-started my whole approach to obsessive like having to practice in a timetable, and split hours up, and then exercise into this and then into warming up ... so then it started then as a real approach as to how to practice. What did you do?

INTERVIEWER

00:08:58 B.B. This isn’t about me, Y.O! [...] Are you familiar with the idea of the 10,000 hour rule? (Yeah, I really like that idea) Malcolm Gladwell made it very popular.

Y.O.

00:09:17 Y.O. He’s got some interesting ideas, and ever since I heard that I started to try and add up all the hours I’ve done ...

INTERVIEWER

00:09:28 B.B. Well I was going to say; [...] would you feel you’ve done the 10,000 hours now, albeit starting a little late?

Y.O.

00:10:07 Y.O. Yeah I think I must have ... I must be approaching it [...]. I definitely feel like I must ... Even at the moment I’m doing between five or seven hours a day. I must be getting there soon, yeah! [Both laugh]

INTERVIEWER

00:10:40: B.B. I think you just had a later start than some, that’s all. I think you’ve done the 10,000 hours ... it certainly sounds like you done the 10,000 hours (I hope so, yeah). And the advantage to it of course is that it gives you the feeling that you can cope in so many different areas.

Y.O.

00:10:59 Y.O. It is that, isn’t it, and you feel like you don’t have to think about anything. The moment you’re holding a pair of sticks ... you’ve taken away that layer of having to think about it as much, and then it’s just like an extension of your ... it’s that the immediate straight line into the ‘out of the head into the hands and feet’ really.

TA-YO-2 CHOICE AND CONTROL
00:11:26 B.B. It’s a feeling I’ve never known but that would be [both laugh] (I know what you mean) 
... but that would be lovely! When you play how important to you is it to have choice and control over what you play?

Y.O.

00:11:46 Y.O. Like, how I play on the drums, do you mean?

INTERVIEWER

00:11:50 B.B. I think anything ... any way you like to think of choice and control over how you play; the musical material you use, et cetera.

Y.O.

00:12:01 Y.O. If you ask it from the point of just ... at the drum kit, how you can control your instrument then, yeah, then I suppose that’s the point of practice, isn’t it, really, is to have that multi-layered options at all times that feel like a natural thing and it isn’t so intellectual - it’s just gone into another stage of ... [....] The point of it is to not have any self-consciousness, so you’re not kind of thinking how it sounds or what other people might be thinking it sounds like; you’re just in the moment ... You’re kind of switching off the brain police and all that, I suppose that’s what you’re after, but it’s so hard to get into that ... ever ... But I think if you get, occasionally, flashes of those feelings when you play ... if you get that for a quarter of an hour or something or even less than that where you’re completely unconscious and in the moment, then that’s a result, I would think, because most of the time you’re nowhere near that.

INTERVIEWER

00:13:33 B.B. It is a result, and you know that feeling on occasion, right?

Y.O.

00:13:38 Y.O. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

00:13:39 B.B. I would imagine, although we’ll get to this in a minute, that the examples that I asked you to give me embody some of those moments. Presumably when I said to you “give me the most Creative stuff ...” those examples you’ve given me must have embodied that to some degree.

Y.O.
00:14:00 Y.O. They definitely are ... they just kind of illustrate when you’re not feeling self-conscious, when you’re not feeling you have to subscribe to anything particularly, externally. You are yourself, in the best version of yourself, so that’s what you want. Yeah, I suppose those examples ... they say that when I was doing that recording I was just as completely free as I can be, erm *(yeah)* and in the moment, so that’s something that rare, really...

**INTERVIEWER**

00:14:56 B.B. You’ve played quite a bit of music ranging from [...] through to [...], [...]; do you see that some areas of music or genres are more conducive to creativity or less conducive to creativity and how would you ...

**Y.O.**

00:15:18 Y.O. It’s an interesting one, because I mean when I was filling out that questionnaire [...] I felt kind of happy that there was somebody out there looking into this thing *(laughs)* because it’s something which I think everyone does think about ... especially if you play in the rhythm section, then generally what you’re there to do is to underline and support your role as the main point of your instrument ... so obviously with like the drums and bass, then our role is support and foundation and then occasional prodding or reacting ... But it’s very much a supportive role to the lead actors.

**INTERVIEWER**

00:16:31 B.B. To what extent could we say ... your creativity is enabling others to be creative?

**Y.O.**

00:16:41 Y.O. I think that’s definitely it, because they always say a band is only as good as the drummer, and if the drummer’s not happening then it is very hard for the rest of the band to sound any good or to function, so I think that that’s true. It’s just that when you break it down into genres, I would think that ... There’s a lot to be said for the art of just laying it down, so you sort of start to get like purely into groove and into taste and into the craziness, effortless undercurrent that everyone else is on top of. So ... obviously if you want to *(indecipherable)* a bit more expressive on the drums - or an any instrument - then you’re going to want a bit more than that, so I suppose that’s why a lot of us all go into jazz or into fusion, where drums are allowed to open up. But then at the same time you have to be able to play almost nothing but it’s extremely solid and it feels really good and all that.

**INTERVIEWER**

00:18:15 B.B. Some people ... well, some genres of music are much more constrained in their rules and regulations than other genres of music. If I said to Picasso the only colour you can use is blue, that’s a major constraint, but he might love that, he might think that’s really good. [...] Some people like that and some people hate that. [...] Does that engender creativity or not, for you?

**Y.O.**
00:19:20 Y.O. I think that’s a good point because sometimes you have too much choice and then what are you going to do with it? But if you give them, like, a boundary or something to focus on, or stuff that they can’t do, then I think that is another avenue into being creative as well, so if you say to someone “look, I don’t want you to play any fills on this track” or “I don’t want you to hit a crash cymbal” or … it’s going to make your brain operate in a way to try and find a way to be creative inside it. So that maybe sometimes when it’s a completely open playing field it can sound horrible, because nobody’s got any guidelines … Nobody is being marshalled or (channelled, focused) yeah, you’ve got to have something somewhere even if it’s just the leader saying something to you … Yeah, to have some kind of parameters is important, yeah.

INTERVIEWER

00:20:43 B.B. But yet one of the pieces of music […] that you gave me is you improvising cold with […] on something extremely free and open. Didn’t sound like there were any constraints at all…

Y.O.

00:20:58 Y.O. Which one? … […] I gave you two with drums and piano didn’t I, yeah. The one that is called […] I’m playing the piano actually on that (oh, are you?) Yeah, it’s a funny one. I thought it would be a very extreme example of creativity, if you like, because what I did on that was I played a drum solo and then I overdubbed piano on it, and I only did two takes. So I gave myself complete freedom but also only allowed myself to do two takes. So that one called […] is just essentially me completely improvising over me improvising.

TA-YO-3 CREATIVITY AND SELF

INTERVIEWER

00:21:55 B.B. That’s really interesting […] I just assumed you’d sent me two duo versions … not listening very closely, so first of all compliments to your piano playing … But we’ll get to that [laughs](that’s funny) in a second. But that’s very interesting (thanks). Just turning to how you think about yourself; do you think of yourself as creative? […]

Y.O.

00:22:27 Y.O. I think of myself more like that now than I have in the past, and I suppose that’s because I’ve had more practice or more reassurance that the things that I do are okay, so that I don’t feel like a total … I’m not just bluffing it out. I suppose you’ve got to feel like you done something which other people have said “that sounds okay” and then you think “oh, maybe my creative ideas are okay”. It’s a shame that you feel you have to have other people’s validation, but it always feels like that when you’re doing something which is your own and you’re the creator. You’re always going to feel “well it’s okay, but it’s not really as good as other people could do it”.

INTERVIEWER

00:23:26 B.B. That’s interesting because that was my next question; how important to you is it that other people consider you creative, and I think you’ve just answered it in advance of the question,
which is that it’s pretty important, because that’s given you a framework and an assessment level in some way to assess your own capabilities.

Y.O.

00:23:51 Y.O. Yeah … I think when you start to do something creative on your own after being a side man and just sort of doing what you should be doing in that context, I think initially you’re unsure, and if it goes okay and you get something that you like, and other people do, out of it, then that’s good. But I think that now as I’m a bit older I feel less inclined to look for anyone to reassure me on what I’m doing, because it doesn’t really matter now … because it’s what I’m doing, and so I don’t need so many people to say it’s good. Maybe that’s purely because other people have said, sometimes, it’s good … so I’m stocked up with enough kind of (yeah) confidence-inspiring things … But I would like to feel I can be a little bit more autonomous now, and just feel like erm … I don’t care if anyone doesn’t like it, or … I’m not doing it for any other reason apart from I like to do it and I get a good feeling from it, so it doesn’t really matter so much now. But that’s age though, isn’t it, really … that’s like maturity …

INTERVIEWER

00:25:24 B.B. It is; maturity, confidence, age, experience – it’s all these things. [....] What’s motivating you to be creative?

Y.O.

00:25:36 Y.O. [....] I think with anybody it’s always frustration. It has to be that …

INTERVIEWER

00:25:45 B.B. What are you frustrated with?

Y.O.

00:25:47 Y.O. You want to get out of the thing you have to do to make a living, maybe … and you want to make a thing which is your own thing because you’ve done so many things with other people and you’ve seen how they do it and generally … unfortunately I suppose I felt quite dissatisfied in those settings or have thought “if I was doing it I wouldn’t do it like that” or that kind of thing (yeah). And so you want to make a change … and then you think “well look, if I just get really good, undeniably good, then other options should naturally appear in the universe” because I’m saying “look, I really want to get good, and get it together, and I’ve got ideas”, so I think you generally only do things which take a lot of work and a lot of time and a lot of energy if you are not content (mmm) with what’s happening.

INTERVIEWER

00:27:08 B.B. It seems that change is a central characteristic of this creativity thing; is that the case with you? (I definitely think so). Change in something … probably change in Y.O. (Definitely, yeah). It may be that you’re using creativity to change yourself.
Y.O. Yeah ... I think it’s that feeling of wanting to do ... or to play with all the great people, and then wanting to be in really inspiring musical settings, and then finding out that maybe it doesn’t really happen like that all the time, or not that often, you know (yeah) ... So then you think “I’m going to make a thing ... I’m going to make that thing which I would like to be in and just make that the best it can be”, and then it’s always a constant (sure) evolution of yourself.

INTERVIEWER

B.B. This brings us rather to the idea of the personalised, unique, distinct voice of a musician. Is it important to you (yeah) to develop your own voice and work with others or resist the influence of others to be more Y.O ... to be identifiably Y.O?

Y.O. I think it’s a really good question because I don’t know how you thought about this, but I generally think as far as I can see to have your own voice on an instrument and to be more than a player and to have an innovative or immediately recognisable sound, you have to have assimilated and learned how everybody else was able to play. So if we take someone like, say, Tony Williams or Elvin Jones, you can hear that they just completely submerged themselves into every other drummer that had come before them, and then through either not being able to do it the same, as you can’t, because it’s impossible to sound exactly the same, so then through that they kind of found a style of their own which in some rare cases supersedes everybody, and then they become like a new innovator ... Because you can hear how Elvin took everything that Roy was doing and then slightly altered it. You can hear how Tony Williams somehow amalgamated everybody and then he’s gone “I’m going to jettison all that and then I’m going do kind of a different thing” so ...
time I’m like trying to get all of Roy Haynes’ fills down and Elvin’s ride cymbal or Tony Williams’ abstract solo ideas ... so if I hear myself all I can hear is that, not really being that successful, but it’s sort of okay [laughs], but then sometimes it (yeah, I understand) might be more than that ... it’s really difficult isn’t?

00:32:05 PAUSE to attend to audio delay.

**INTERVIEWER**

**Y.O.**

00:33:01 B.B. About creativity, is it something that has to be communicated? Can you be creative on your own in your own [...] room?

00:33:11 Y.O. Yeah, I think you don’t necessarily think you have to have other people around you. I suppose a lot of the interesting ideas usually appear in isolation though, I suppose, [...] when you’re thinking about something else. I think there is always going to be an element of detachment because the more you’re (yeah) thinking about something directly, the less I think it will appear. It’s always when you’re doing something else [laughs] ...

**INTERVIEWER**

00:34:01 B.B. There are those who suggest that creativity is a judgement by others; that somebody has to assess it as being creative, not just you. And before it can be assessed by others it’s got to be communicated. So you don’t feel those two processes – of communication followed by assessment by others - are necessary to your creativity?

00:34:29 Y.O. That’s interesting ... so what would be an example of that?

**INTERVIEWER**

00:34:35 B.B. You make a record which stuns all the other drummers who’ve assessed it and everybody says how creative you are.

00:34:43 Y.O. I see what you mean, right ... or, I do it and they don’t say anything but it’s the same album, does that change how I feel about it?

**INTERVIEWER**

00:34:53 B.B. It might do; it certainly could do ... but if you did it but you did not communicate it to anybody, you did not record it for posterity, you did not communicate it ... is it still creative, or is it a different type of creativity?
Y.O. You’d need proof that you did something, I suppose [laughs].

INTERVIEWER

00:35:21 B.B. Well how would you get that if you had not communicated it to somebody?

Y.O.

00:35:24 Yeah … you would definitely have to record it, or if you are playing live you would need someone else to hear it, but that isn’t to say it hasn’t happened and it’s not good … so it’s a bit more of a philosophical argument … like a tree falling in a forest ...

INTERVIEWER

00:35:47 B.B. It is, very much … the sound of one hand clapping in a forest. [...] There is a strong philosophical issue here (yeah) in terms of creative music performance [...], but I understand what you’re saying.

Y.O.

00:36:12 With this album I’ve just done at the moment [identifies latest album] I’ve got lots of really good reviews (I noticed … congratulations, it’s a great sounding record … at least the samples that I’ve heard) thank you, yeah … The funny thing for me was that no one said anything about my drumming … and I was like, oh my God, I did so many overdubs, I practised my ass off for this (uh-huh) and essentially it was really about being … I thought my best recorded drumming, and not one person said anything about it [laughs], and I’m like “have they got the same record?”... (that’s really interesting) ... it’s really weird ...

INTERVIEWER

00:37:07 B.B. I think if I may say so … I think you should take that as a great compliment (do you think?), because they are listening to the entire record. They have forgotten that you are the drummer, in some degree, and they are listening to the overall sound which is a huge compliment, and very much happened with me in the ‘One of a Kind/Feels Good to Me’ period (did it?) that I had when nobody said anything about the drumming (you’re joking …) and I didn’t even think about the drumming. (That’s so funny) [...].

Y.O.

00:37:42 I feel so much better now! [Both laugh]. [...]

INTERVIEWER
00:37:58 B.B. The drums are not showcased forward, they are not foregrounded particularly (no, no). They are part of the organic whole and it is the organic whole that everybody is hearing (that’s right), and I think you should take that as a grand compliment. […]. Just keeping on this riff a little bit, of composing and writing, could you tell me something about how and why you came to do this? […]

Why even get involved in any kind of composition or writing?

Y.O.

00:38:43 Y.O. […] I definitely liked the piano as my second favourite instrument (mmmm), and because it’s laid out there in front of you and because of the rhythmic aspects of it I definitely gravitate to trying to do stuff on the piano and I just feel like the drums and piano are just a kind of an extension of each other (very much, yeah), yeah, I really feel like that as I know you do as well (yes) … And really loving piano trios … I like that kind of harmony, that slightly modal or modern harmony stuff … it really leads its way into some more interesting corners of classical stuff as well. I’m not a piano player … that’s the only other instrument I’m able to get a sound out of.

INTERVIEWER

00:40:13 B.B. […] Does this imply that there is something missing or something lacking in ‘just’ the drum kit, quote unquote?

Y.O.

00:40:23 Y.O. Yeah, it’s a good point … Regardless of who is playing it, I think we have a limited attention span just to hear solo drums […] I mean, that’s something I obviously really like to hear, but you definitely need a tuned instrument, so as a solo instrument it’s probably the least viable [laughs] of any of them, which is a shame in a way … I suppose because you can’t get a true melodic tonality out of it. I’ve seen that Terry Bozzio has this enormous tuned stuff … I’ve not heard what he’s been doing with it but is he going for that kind of thing?

INTERVIEWER

00:41:49 B.B. Oh, it’s absolutely sensational (is it? Right). […] but in terms of Western tonal harmony and voice leading and melody development and things it’s hard to say it’s on the same level … It’s semi-definite pitch, but it is … if you listen closely, what he’s doing is absolutely sensational … It’s a different style of pitch … a different type of pitch perhaps is a better way of putting it (yeah). He does a lot in that world, so there is an element of melody but I grant you drums, of course, are principally about rhythm, and our culture seems to put a lesser premium on that, but that’s a slightly different issue. Just going back to this thing about writing again … there are those who feel that drummers are somehow lacking in something, and that if you start to write and compose you gain status, you gain some control … some control of the environment in which you’re drumming is heard. Do all these things play into your understanding of …?

Y.O.

00:43:01 Y.O. […] Drummers generally are third class citizens in the band, aren’t they … until you show yourself any different from that. Even though we are one of the most important aspects of any group … So you definitely want to elevate or free yourself from all the drummer jokes and all the
stigmatising or the like “you’re pretty low on the rung” … “anyone can do this” … “our guitarist can
play drums” [both laugh]. I don’t think that, but then also I think that a lot of drummers, because
they’re viewing the whole of the group from that spot, they generally have a very good idea on
arrangements and also of the road map of a song and how to get in and out of things. So I think if
more of them were to be appreciated as arrangers or even if they were to M.D. things a bit more ...
because they’re in the perfect spot in the centre of everything (aren’t they just?) … they are like at
the helm of the whole thing.

INTERVIEWER

00:44:52 B.B. Do you think this so-called, what you said, lack of appreciation impinges negatively
upon their creativity, or to put it the other way round, if their work was appreciated more they would
become more creative?

Y.O.

00:45:07 Y.O. I suppose it all depends who you are, but I definitely think that initially you would just
stay in that holding position and you’re kept down and just think “okay, well that’s all I’m supposed
to do”. But then you can use that … another way is to say “Right, well actually I’m going to prove you
guys wrong; I’m not this ape in the background that is only there to keep a steady beat” and then it
comes into … it all depends who you are, what you’d like to do (what you want, absolutely … and
how you interpret your function as a musician) [...].

TA-YO-4 CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

INTERVIEWER

00:46:03 B.B. [...] can you say something about collaborating with others and how, if at all, that
might determine your understanding of creativity? Is creativity something that happens with others,
or …

Y.O.

00:46:16 Y.O. I definitely think … I want to think that more and more. I think when I was younger I
very much subscribed to the ‘jamming in a room’ … everybody trying stuff out … “oh, I like that” or
“How do you do this” or “I’ve got a riff and then we can change that”. [...] I think when you’re
younger and maybe everybody’s on bit more of an equal experience thing, or everyone is a bit more
open, then creativity is a bit more of an exchange. But the older I’ve got the more I’ve found ...
you’re on your own! [Both laugh] (Yes, there is that, isn’t there …). It’s quite sad in a way because
musicians generally are untogether, selfish, egotistical, out-for-themselves kind of thing, so to find
some simpatico individuals that still (yes) can … it’s difficult.

INTERVIEWER

00:47:32 B.B. have you found or sustained for a while a collaborative creative relationship perhaps
with one other?
00:47:42 Y.O. Yeah, I think I've found that with [...] ... there's something easy working with him ... it doesn't really feel like work, we just mess around with ideas and stuff. But that could be to do with the fact that he's not really a kind of session guy, he's not getting loads of calls all the time for things. [...] I think the more successful people get or the more they are getting lots of calls for different things, they change ... they switch off a part of their interactivity. I felt that a little bit when I was going through a similar kind of ... getting lots of calls for stuff. I did start to see like “okay, so what’s next, is it the Sting gig, or is it this?” [...] and “I'll try to do everything I can” (yep) ... but there is a danger, you know ... a lot of these guys just turn into bread-heads that play well but they are not really present, and it doesn't feel ... it's the job for them now and [indecipherable] on the way.

INTERVIEWER

00:49:20 B.B. There seems to be a sort of quality of engagement that’s necessary, isn’t there, for anybody to have a musical exchange, that might lead to creative engagement. It’s a very subtle game, certainly, working with others (yeah) ... and you know in my own background, very frustrating, but also magnificent because I think all the great things happened with other people on stage and also all the worst things probably.

Y.O.

00:49:49 Y.O. Yeah, I think that’s so true isn’t it, [...] and you only get those kind of combinations of that special chemistry like you had very rarely, don’t you? (yes) [...].

TA-YO-5 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN OWN WORK

INTERVIEWER

00:51:47 B.B. Let me ask you about your selections, the three tracks that you sent me [...]. Of each tune really, did you come to understand something about the music in a way that you hadn’t understood before you played it? Is there anything about you or your music-making that you came to understand as a process of having selected these tunes?

Y.O.

00:52:24 Y.O. Definitely, yeah ... You only know everything you need to know about building a house after you’ve already built it [laughs] (yeah, interesting, very good parallel). With the [...] [...] and I spent a year rehearsing it and messing around with it and then we recorded it, but ...

INTERVIEWER

00:53:04 B.B. Were you surprised at the type of house you’d built after you’d built it?

Y.O.
00:53:10 Y.O. Yeah … You always think “I could have done a better one” [laughs]. With the [...] we play it better now, and we’ve found some other avenues to … It’s sort of always evolving and so with that one I think it was good for what we got there and then. With the [...] that can just stand as it is really [...], and then with the [...] track, that was good because that was the first track I’d built on my own at home with the synth and a bass part and then I did like a guide drums and then I took the track over to [...]’s house for him to overdub the piano on and then I re-did the drums to his piano and then added all these extra kind of sound effects and other sounds … (and other horn players?) On that track it’s just [...] and I and a bass player. (oh, and there are some keyboards? There’s something slightly ‘In a Silent Way’ about it). Definitely yeah … I did the keyboards, the synths and the sound effects and everything, [...] is doing the live acoustic piano, and then there’s an upright bass player [...]. So that in a way was the most creative for me, because I had to kind of create the track and then I was doing lots of overdubbing and then redoing stuff and re-editing, so that had the most input from me … it wasn’t just about what we played on that take. So I had an opportunity to really do anything I was after on the drums and then add a load of synth stuff and sound effects … [...] I liked it because I had more control over the end result of what I was [indecipherable] …

INTERVIEWER

00:55:59 B.B. Would you say with all three tracks that you learnt something that would help you to be more creative in future performances?

Y.O.

00:56:10 Y.O. Absolutely, yeah, yeah … I think every single time … That is so apparent [...] that is just in-built in it, really … (...) I don’t want to always say everything is just an early version of another version (laughs) because then you’re just like … well I can’t really commit to anything and that’s kind of sad in a way. So what I’ve learned is that in the future I’m not going to do things in the ways that I did, I suppose … I’m going to make it easier on myself in some ways. Maybe it was to do with a little bit of understanding the kind of practicalities of how to make everything a little easier so creativity is more immediate.

INTERVIEWER

00:57:22 B.B. Is there any thread running through these three examples, something that they have in common that enabled your creativity? Because they are quite different examples (they are, aren’t they). All three of them coming from three completely different directions somehow enabled your creativity. Is there a commonality in them or a thread somewhere that enabled this to happen for you?

Y.O.

00:57:44 Y.O. That’s a good question … I think basically it’s a sound in my head or a feeling I wanted to have primarily at the drum kit … to get a sound out [...] ...

INTERVIEWER

00:58:04 B.B. Oh I see, this has a lot to do with drumming then?
00:58:06 Y.O. Yes, drums are first in all of these …

INTERVIEWER

00:58:09 B.B. So you are creating the audio environment you want to hear yourself in?

Y.O.

00:58:13 Y.O. Exactly, I think that’s it really … I would have these kind of ideas or feels or approaches or something …

INTERVIEWER

00:58:26 B.B. And the three examples you gave me are vehicles for that to happen?

Y.O.

00:58:29 Y.O. Exactly, totally are, yeah … So they kind of cover those … what I wanted to get out on the drums, so I would build the car around this engine and each of these cars is slightly different, but (interesting) it’s still …

INTERVIEWER

00:58:54 B.B. You built the cars around the engines … very nice [laughs]. What is it that makes you describe what you experienced in these examples as creativity, rather than something else?

Y.O.

00:59:12 Y.O. [... I didn’t really have any self-consciousness about it. It was more of a visceral thing … I mean obviously there is the kind of intellectual and technical aspects to it (yeah), but I think creativity is a thing when … if you were to close your eyes and think of the first thing and then it’s got a kind of natural purity to it (mmm) … something individual that is just like, you like doing that and you’re after that sound and you want to make a thing that is going to have that in it, and then all of the structure and the content comes afterwards.

INTERVIEWER

01:00:27 B.B. Some say it is an expression of experience (yeah) and everything you have done, lived, thought, played up until that minute of playing constitutes your experience, every way you’ve related to those inputs constitutes your experience, and that is what you express during the creative moment, which you’ve selected in these particular three tracks.

Y.O.
01:00:54 Y.O. That’s so true, that’s exactly it really. [...] [...] Anyone is a sum of everything they’ve experienced at all times aren’t they, and it’s just another avenue of expression of that, isn’t it ... In a way, the fact that it’s on the drums makes it harder for us to convey or communicate that because a lot of people, they just can’t process drums as easily as other instruments. (Perfectly true. I mean the High Street understanding of drumming is appalling). [...] and people have to be exposed sooner to other kinds of musical sounds, so that it’s not such a jolt or a shock, so they don’t [indecipherable] switch off and just go “oh, I don’t like jazz” or “I don’t like …”, even though it’s not actually jazz, it’s just a thing that hasn’t got a relentless one and three on the bass drum (yeah) it’s just opening up how ... the guy in the street could hear something, which I don’t think is happening at all now (it’s not; it seems to be getting worse, I think) much worse, I totally see that. In the 60s and 70s there was a real chance of switching on the radio and hearing something which was asymmetrical and was against everything that was homogenised. At the same time I like soul and funk and stuff, and that’s all about repetition (yeah, it is, yeah) and momentum and stuff but, erm ... [...] 

TA-YO-6 CONSIDERATION OF CREATIVITY IN WORK OF OTHERS

INTERVIEWER

01:03:28 B.B. Can you give me the names of three drummers living or dead whom you consider creative, and why you would consider them so? I’m going to confine you to three (okay) ... that’s tough. I mean there are obviously plenty, but the three that might earn this attribution?

Y.O.

01:03:46 Y.O. I definitely think Roy Haynes is underrated in a lot of ways. In the 50s he was really avant-garde and he kind of informed and inspired all of the drummers, I think. And then I’ve been listening to a lot of Tony Williams at the moment (wonderful) before he went for overplaying and loud and everything, so the 1964 version of himself. [...] I’ve been collecting all of the live recordings of that group in the mid-60s, and just unbelievable ... He’s 18 or something, so he’d just arrived really. [...] How do you do that? [...] And I think you have done a lot for that kind of ... what you were doing in Yes, I mean I always knew that, but especially transcribing [...] your stuff ... I’ve learned a lot and how you melded the stuff you were into another context, into like ...

INTERVIEWER

01:05:43 B.B. Well, that’s a fairly standard creative procedure, is to take something from one domain and stick it in another domain, is to make unlikely juxtapositions ... so classically if you put a jazz drummer in a rock group it’s going to sound different (yeah) or vice versa.

Y.O.

01:06:01 Y.O. But quite often it doesn’t work [laughs]. You were able to make it work, so it’s great.

INTERVIEWER

01:06:12 B.B. I think another approach I might have had is to make the creative gesture and move on, and let others decide over time whether it was creative or not (oh, okay, yeah). But as soon as I
was bored I think I’d done my bit. That was the way I looked at it, I think. By the time it had got into
too much repetition of the idea, I think I fell asleep, and naturally - without thinking about this, and
I’m only thinking about it now - naturally wanted to move on to get another adrenaline shot of “what
the hell is this and what can I do that would make it sound better or different?” (Yeah, well, that’s
great). So I suppose of the English guys that was a relatively fresh idea; certainly anywhere near rock
that was a fresh idea (very, massive).

TA-YO-7 REFLECTION ON THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO
ENACT CREATIVITY

INTERVIEWER

01:07:00 B.B. […] You’ve been around for a while, and so of course have I; have any of the changes in
the drum scene since you started […] made this creativity thing more or less possible? (Do you mean,
like kind of studios?) … Well, anything. I don’t want to put words in your mouth but you could say the
cymbals are better. You could say that, but you might also say the digital age has made things hell on
earth.

Y.O.

01:07:40 Y.O. […] I don’t want to sound like every other middle-age man [both laugh], but the
cymbals, the drums, everything … it’s not as good. Because it is all mass-produced, it’s not hand-
hammered, it’s not a family company anymore. I’ve tried to use all of the new stuff but I generally go
back to all the vintage stuff I’ve got, and unfortunately there is a legion of new players that sound
really good but they want to use all the new stuff but it doesn’t sound good […].

INTERVIEWER

01:08:53 B.B. Just going back to this idea of automation and the digital age and digital technology …
It sounds like you’ve espoused this very effectively, and of course it was very helpful, you’ve just been
saying, in the writing of the new album (yeah) … There are multiple ripples out from this into
homogenisation, has it been a bad thing, then there are click tracks, there is computer use versus the
analogue kit … Some people have been reaffirmed in the idea that everything is crap and the only
sensible thing is human beings, because of digital technology. Other people have gone straight to
digital technology and espoused it and used it fantastically and feel that it is an enabler. Where are
you on any kind of sliding scale of this?

Y.O.

01:09:47 Y.O. I think what was good is in the 80s […] when they introduced or they started to make
click tracks and stuff … I mean, yeah, everyone had to up their game, and so we are more used to
hearing everything that is really in time. You might say that can go against creativity but I think, as
we were saying about having boundaries and stuff, it’s good to have a point of absolute time and
then it’s okay to float a little bit around it. I’m okay with click tracks … I just treat it as a guy in the
band who’s got (yeah) amazing time on a cowbell, […] that’s fine …

INTERVIEWER
01:10:50 B.B. I think what I’m getting at is if there was a government edict tomorrow which said
there is no more electricity (ah, right) and you have only the old steam version of doing things - let’s
say human beings in a room with a piano and bass and a drum - would you feel sad about that, in
any way impinged that your [...] ability to be creative had been curtailed, or would you function
perfectly well under those circumstances?

Y.O.

01:11:22 Y.O. I would just say the latter really ... I mean all of these things are just tools (yeah) to
help or to express the intangible idea anyway, so it doesn’t matter if you’ve got a MacBook Pro there
or an old cassette player [...] (They are tools, they are simply tools) ... Obviously there’s a lot to be
said for utilising some of the editing and overlaying and a lot of the new stuff that is out there ...
Obviously is a new kind of learning curve which I had to take a bit ...

TA-YO-8 PERFORMING IN PUBLIC

INTERVIEWER

01:12:24 B.B. [...] I just want to ask you to or three more things; one of which is about audiences and
listeners. How do you see the audience or the listener in respect of your creativity? Is it a help, is it a
hindrance, are they essential partners in a kind of co-creation?

Y.O.

01:12:59 Y.O. It’s a good question ... Who are you playing for: the audience, the group or yourself?
Things always go well, or better, if you feel there is a good feeling in the house and there are enough
people, and they are enjoying it, and they are with you, but generally that only happens if you
completely ignore that they’re there [laughs] and you play to the other guys on the stand. Everything
is about ... you have to create the thing and the feeling yourself and then it will ... I mean that’s the
only way round to do it. I think the moment that you try and second-guess what you think the
audience would like you’re on a hiding to nothing then.

INTERVIEWER

01:13:58 B.B. It seems to me your dividing the audience into two types. There’s the ones on the far
side of the stage who are merely listening, and there are the other audience who are on the stage
who are also very much listening (ah, okay), and you’re privileging those others - your colleagues
(yeah) - in respect of your creativity, rather than those guys out in the house.

Y.O.

01:14:19 Y.O. Well that’s a good question, yeah ... but then you’re getting to you’ve got to play with
people who like how you play, and you like how they play, and that only comes from how you feel
amongst each other or ... [...] I think the way I’m looking at it now is that I play ... not really trying to
play to how I think other people are going to want me to play like [laughs]. It’s complicated [...] (It’s
interesting isn’t it?) Because the moment you start thinking “they like this; I should do this more”
than you are not being very natural. It has to come from you and then your concentration and
enjoyment … Mel Lewis is always saying that if you're always listening, that's the first thing that you're doing, and if you can't hear anyone else on the bandstand then you're not listening, are you … so you have to have that in there. It's quite a complicated psychology, isn't it, because it's kind of emotional as well ...

INTERVIEWER

01:15:57 B.B. This is the psychology of music performance. It is extremely complicated; people write volumes on this. Tell me, what bits about performing in public do you particularly like or dislike?

Y.O.

01:16:13 Y.O. Well I've gone through all of these feelings about it, and now I'm just really always focusing on that hour and a half on the stage and I like it when I feel slightly detached and I feel like I'm kind of … if it can get in any way into a slightly altered state of being not really there but completely there, then I know I'm enjoying it [laughs]. (Yeah. Being there in the moment is so important isn't it?) Yeah ...

TA-YO-9 REFLECTION ON MEANING AND CHANCE TO ADD

INTERVIEWER

01:16:51 B.B. Given everything you've said so far about creativity, and you've said quite a lot - we both have - in your work, what does it mean to you? Is it meaningful, meaningless? Is it something you think about periodically and then put back in the cupboard?

Y.O.

01:17:14 Y.O. […] With the gigs I might do that there isn't that much of an avenue for creativity, then I focus in on the technical aspect and doing a good job (mmm); with the other things where it's a lot more open on the drums then I'm just … kind of erm … I don't know … trying to make it feel the best it can, and not try and over-think (yeah). But it's complicated because you're in a situation where you can kind of do anything, so then therefore what do you do? [laughs] (there are a lot of paradoxes in this).

INTERVIEWER

01:18:07 B.B. Is there anything special drummers’ creativity?

Y.O.

01:18:12 Y.O. I definitely think […] as what drew me to it at the start is that it definitely has an immediate … some kind of subconscious primal thing with everybody, I would think … There's something about it because it's in a way so simple and in a way so complex, and you've got the
polyrhythmic, erm ... there is an element of magic ... maybe it’s that ... when you see somebody that
is really good and there’s that element of watching a person and not knowing how they’re doing it,
because they’re doing a couple of things at once (one might argue that applies to all musicians
though) ... maybe, well it does, but the something about the drums with having two or three things
happening at the same time (yeah, yeah) and it’s very visual and there’s something very simple
about the sound of a skin on a drum or a cymbal. There’s something sort of naive about that, which I
think appeals (mmm).

INTERVIEWER

01:19:39 B.B. I think that’s just about all the questions that I’ve got. Is there anything else on the
subject that we haven’t covered? Is there something that you’re sitting there thinking “why on earth
hasn’t Bruford asked me this unbelievably obvious question about creativity? The first question you’ll
notice I haven’t asked you is what it is [okay]. I’ve only asked you how you construct it, what you
think it is.

Y.O.

01:20:05 Y.O. […] Quite often some people say that everybody only has maybe two or three ideas ...
writers, artists (interesting) ... and generally they just redo those in varying options and versions. Do
you think that’s true?

INTERVIEWER

01:20:32 B.B. No, I was going to ask you; do you think that’s true?

Y.O.

01:20:32 Y.O. I think there is an element of truth, because a lot of authors, they generally have a
couple of ideas and then they ... I mean, there is that thing of like when people separate artists into
the ones that once they get to a successful point they plateau, or the ones that are constantly trying
other things, and it seems a bit confused, but if you see it over the course of their whole career it
starts to make sense. Maybe it is true that we’ve only got two or three songs (yeah, sure) or ... (well,
let’s hope they’re good songs) well then you’ve got to make them really good [both laugh].

INTERVIEWER

01:21:38 B.B. […] Just about the interview itself, and how it felt. Have there been any positives, or
have there been any horrible negatives to taking part? (I think it’s been really, really interesting, it’s
great, yeah) It’s the kind of interview you’re not going to get more than once. (Off the scale really,
yeah. You can’t really measure it) [...].

TA-YO-10 PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERVIEW
INTERVIEWER

01:21:17 B.B. Do you think taking part in the interview has had or might have in the slightest way in the future any effect on the way you might think of creativity now in terms of drumming?

Y.O.

01:22:28 Y.O. Well, it already has actually. Ever since I saw that questionnaire there was a feeling of relief actually.

INTERVIEWER

01:22:39 B.B. That’s lovely; and you were very quick to ... and very favourable to kind of join in and participate quickly, as nearly everybody else has too, because there is a sense somehow that this has never been asked of drummers.

Y.O.

01:22:54 Y.O. It’s kind of important ... It should be out there.

01:23:00 Transcription ends

01:23:23 Recording ends.